

## **The Staying Power of Stars: Addressing Teacher Retention in Urban, High-Poverty Schools**

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### **Abstract**

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A qualitative content analysis was employed to examine what factors contributed to effective teachers' selection and retention in urban high poverty schools. First, the Star Teacher Interview was used to identify effective urban educators. Then, verbal interviews were conducted with star subjects to determine factors that contributed to their selection and decision to remain in urban high-poverty districts. An inductive analysis process revealed emerging and reoccurring themes. Four major factors were identified that influenced STAR teachers' decision to begin their career in an urban school district and/or Title I school: giving back to the community, diversity, location, and autonomy. Three major factors were identified that influenced STAR teachers' decision to continue their career beyond five years in an urban school district and/or Title I school: job satisfaction, effective with population, and perseverance. Implications of this study suggest that urban districts work closely with practicum and observation students from the universities who show promise in working with culturally diverse children. Providing teacher candidates with rich experiences in urban schools may positively impact their decision to work in urban settings.

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### ***Introduction***

It is well documented that urban, high-poverty schools (defined in this article as those schools with more than 80% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch prices) have experienced high levels of teacher turnover for several decades (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Haberman, 1986, 1995, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003, 2004; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Whipp & Geronime, 2017; Wronowski, 2018). It is estimated that between 20% to 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Haberman 1995, 2005; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Latham & Vogt, 2007; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). Wronowski (2018) and Haberman (1986, 1995, 2005) argue that even when there is a decline in the teacher shortage nationwide, there still is a greater number of teacher vacancies in urban, high-poverty schools when compared to their suburban counterparts. Urban teachers cite a variety of reasons for departing a particular school, district, or the profession after a brief period, including poor

working conditions, (Allen, 2005; Bloom & Owens, 2011; Haberman, 1986, 1995, 2005; Haberman & Richards, 1990; Horng, 2009; Kozol, 1992) limited, if any, administrative support, (Russell, Williams, and Gleason-Gomez, 2010; Worthy, 2005) and problematic classroom management and discipline (Haberman, 1986, 1995, 2005, 2017; Haberman & Richards, 1990). While teacher attrition continues to be felt among many urban, high-poverty schools, many districts have responded to this dilemma by offering incentive initiatives, such as financial awards, additional retirement years, and housing allowances (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Council of the Great City Schools, 2000; Evans & Leonard, 2013; Shifrer, Turley, Heard, 2017; Simon & Johnson, 2013; Stotko, Ingram, Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007). However, the research is mixed on whether such initiatives retain quality teachers for our urban schools (Milanowski, Longwell-Grice, Saffold, Jones, Schomisch, & Odden, 2009; Wronowski, 2018).

Not surprising, urban teacher turnover negatively affects student learning and success in a variety of ways (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Haberman, 1995, 2006, 2016; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Students are more likely to have less experienced and less effective teachers who may not have the necessary licensure credentials in urban schools with high attrition rates, thus affecting student achievement (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Burstein, Czech, Kretschmer, Lombardi, & Smith, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 1997, 1999; Haberman, 1995, 2006, 2016; Rockoff, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kane, 2005; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006; Stronge, Ward, Tucker, & Hindman, 2008). For example, Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2008) examined the effects of teacher turnover over in an 8 year period that involved over 850,000 New York City fourth- and fifth-grade student observations. They concluded that students in grade levels with higher teacher turnover scored lower in both English language arts (ELA) and math.

Although there is a profusion of research focusing on urban teacher retention, it continues to be problematic for many urban, high-poverty districts and schools. Wronowski (2018) argues that existing research may have problems related to methodology, particularly defining the characteristics of "successful" urban teachers that remain in urban schools, leading to oversimplified or inconclusive recommendations. To address this concern, the research team set forth to explicitly define "successful" urban teachers. For the purpose of this investigation, participating subjects had to meet the criteria of a "*star teacher*," a term endeared by Haberman (1995, 2005) to describe effective urban teachers. He defines star teachers as

“. . . teachers who, by all common criteria, are outstandingly successful: their students score higher on standardized tests; parents and children think they are great; principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; cooperating universities regard them as superior; and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers (Haberman, 1995, p. 1).

The Star Teacher Selection Interview, a protocol interview developed by Haberman (1994) was utilized and followed to identify such subjects for participation in this research investigation. We sought to address the following essential questions:

### **Research Questions:**

1. What factors influence effective teachers' (Star Teachers) decisions to select an urban district for a teaching position?
2. What factors influence effective teachers' (Star Teachers) decisions to remain teaching (5 years or beyond) in an urban, high-poverty school?

### **A Review of the Literature**

The literature review concentrates on those areas related to effective urban teachers and retention: (a) Characteristics of Effective Urban Teachers and "Stars," and (b) Factors Contributing to Teacher Retention.

#### **Characteristics of Effective Urban Teachers and "Stars"**

The educational realities of urban teaching and the injurious effects of poverty and its' impact on the human spirit can prove to be quite overwhelming for even the most experienced and qualified teacher, yet alone those new to the profession (Haberman, 1995, 2004; Hill-Jackson & Stafford, 2017; McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, & Campbell-Whately, 2007). Haberman (1995) states that teaching in an urban school is not a job, or a career, but rather "an extraordinary life experience" (p. 1). He describes this experience as a "volatile, highly charged, emotionally draining, physically exhausting experience for even the most competent, experienced teacher" (p. 1).

In *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* (1995) Haberman identifies 15 characteristics, or functions, which include 7 midrange functions of star teachers. He further expands on the ideologies of these teachers, and how these belief systems enable them to be outstandingly successful with children facing poverty. Haberman (1995, 2005) argues that a teacher’s ideology and disposition to working with at-risk students is probably the most powerful indicator or function of an effective urban teacher. He states that those individuals who tend to “blame the victim” (e.g. home life is inadequate, or parents don’t care) will ultimately fail as teachers. However, Haberman (1995, 2005) contends that star teachers tend to fault the school, the curricula, or teaching methodologies and practices for placing students at-risk of failure.

Professional-personal orientation to students is another function of star teachers (Haberman, 1995, 2005). According to Haberman (1995), this function is centered on a combination of both teacher behaviors, and the beliefs that lead these behaviors. Stars are able to establish and maintain supportive relationships with their students. Most importantly, these teachers do not fall under the spell that their students need to love them to learn, or use their relationships to fulfill or resolve any emotional need. Instead, they use these supportive relationships with their students to enhance learning and classroom management and discipline.

Star teachers also have the necessary skills and knowledge to work effectively with students in spite of the demands of the bureaucracy. Urban school bureaucracies can be quite overwhelming, and can infringe on a teacher’s time and efforts (Haberman, 1995, 2005). Stars learn the informal structure of their schools, (e. g. which secretaries and janitors that will offer the most support), and use this understanding to the advantage of their students. A complete listing of the 15 Star Teacher Characteristics are listed in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Star Teacher Characteristics*

Characteristic	Description
Protecting Children’s Learning	Teachers are able to capitalize on all learning opportunities.
Persistence	Teachers constantly pursue strategies and activities so that all students can meet success.
Approach to At-Risk Students	Teachers take responsibility for children’s learning, regardless of the conditions they face.
Putting Ideas into Practice	Teachers can relate theory and practice.
Professional/Personal Orientation to Students	Teachers expect and are able to develop rapport with children.
The Bureaucracy	Teachers can adjust and cope with the demands of the bureaucracy.
Fallibility	Teachers take responsibility for their own errors and mistakes.
Emotional and Physical Stamina	Teachers are able to endure the challenges and crises of urban settings.
Organizational Ability	Teachers have extraordinary organizational and managerial skills.
Explanation of Teacher Success	Teachers believe that success is met by effort and hard work and not by ability alone.
Explanation of Student Success	Teachers are committed to student autonomy and individual differences.
Real Teaching	Teachers engage in active teaching instead of direct instruction.
Making Students Feel Needed	Teachers are able to make the students feel needed and wanted in the classroom.
Gentle Teaching in a Violent Society	Teacher’s ideology is promising, even in light of a violent society.
The Material vs. The Student	Teachers find approaches that will assist students in mastering the material.

Other scholars have investigated the characteristics and behaviors of effective urban teachers, as well. For example, using a questionnaire format and serving as a follow-up to a 1981 investigation, Campbell, Dempsey, Margolin, Mathewson and Reichbach (1983) compared responses of teachers identified as outstanding by their building administrators to those not so identified. A few of their findings include using direct and indirect methods of presentation and teaching skills that assist students in developing their own values, attitudes, and beliefs, and using different techniques for stimulating student interests as essential behaviors of effective urban teachers. The research of Baron, Rusnak, Brookhart, Burrett, and Whodley (1992) identified nine behaviors and practices of successful urban teachers based on an assessment of their interactions with students. Encompassing both internal (classroom practices) and external practices (outside school), a few identified include positive classroom management, applicability, and a variety of teaching methods as important behaviors.

Abbate-Vaughn, Frechon, and Wright (2010) investigated accomplished urban teachers and found that participants agreed with the dimensions proposed by Ladson-Billings and Darling Hammond (2000). These dimensions included foci on relationships and shared authority, connecting subject content with student experience, incorporating cultural communication patterns, and challenging typical conceptions of at-risk students. Moreover, Poplin, Rivera, Durish, Hoff, Kawell, Pawlak, Hinman, Straus and Veney, (2011) sought to determine the instructional strategies and personal characteristics and behaviors of highly effective teachers in low-performing urban schools. Following 31 teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools, they found common characteristics among effective urban teachers included strictness, instructional intensity, movement, traditional instruction, exhorting virtues, and developing strong and respectful relationships. This research team also identified five common beliefs among the identified effective urban teachers ranging from seeing the potential within all students and believing that they can turn any situation around to a more positive manner. Further,

Robinson and Lewis (2017) provided a typology of effectiveness for urban learning environments. They concluded that qualities such as kindness, caring, loving, knowing, and seeing are essential characteristics and behaviors of effective urban teaching. For example, knowing the likes and dislikes of their students are essential to building relationships with them. An analysis of these findings of effective urban teacher characteristics and behaviors clearly illustrates considerable agreement across multiple research teams over the last forty plus years.

### ***Factors Contributing to Teacher Retention***

Identifying those factors that impel a teacher to leave a school, district, or the profession is a continuing problem (Lytle, 2013), especially for urban school districts. Lochmiller, Adachi, Chesnut, & Johnson (2016) found, “The average attrition rate among teachers and administrators was highest in school districts with the highest proportion of students eligible for the federal school lunch program” (p. 16). Understanding and responding to these factors is essential for urban schools if teacher attrition and retention rates are to be addressed.

Studies have communicated mixed results in the identification of factors impacting a teacher’s decision to leave (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). However, working conditions are identified as one of the most powerful determinant for teachers when selecting their locations to teach (Hornig, 2009). There is much debate over defining working conditions. Regardless, Allen (2005) reports that there is sufficient research to indicate that working conditions should be of utmost concern, especially schools serving “at-risk” populations.

Studies have shown that teachers are more likely to remain in schools that have a social culture of collegial relationships, built on professional culture of respect and trust (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009). Maclaughlin & Talbert (2001) concluded that schools that established a strong professional community, influenced teacher’s intrinsic motivation to teach. Additionally, Weiss (1999) reported that a collaborative school culture was a distinct factor that influenced a teacher’s longevity. This notion is supported by Johnson (2011) who reported that social conditions (e.g. productive, working relationships) tend to matter the most in regards to teacher retention. Hughes (2012) states that schools interested in increasing their retention rates need to consider their cooperation levels and practices. Clearly, teacher collaboration is a key factor impacting teacher retention.

In addition to professional relationships among teachers, administrative leadership and support play a role in teacher retention. Undoubtedly, effective leadership is fundamental to teacher retention, especially if teachers are provided with timely support, mentors, and professional networks (Burkhauser, 2016; Ladd, 2011; Larkin, Brantley-Dias, & Lokey-Vega, 2016; Saleem, 2015; Trace, 2016). The work of Dou, Devos, & Valcke (2016) support this research,

as they state “Our results confirm the importance of both instructional and transformational leadership in influencing teachers’ job satisfaction and organizational commitment” (p. 13). Kraft and Papay (2011) reported that teachers who felt their administration team was invested in their professional success had a higher inclination to remain in teaching. There is an abundance of research that concludes that the higher teachers perceive the value and worth of the administrative leadership of their school, the less likely they are to leave (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, Morton, & Rowland, 2007; Useem, 2003; Whipp & Geronime, 2017). Because of the pivotal role that principal’s play in the culture and working conditions of their schools, their behaviors and ideology surely impact teacher retention (Burkhauser, 2016).

Professional development opportunities and mentoring programs are also crucial factors that impact teacher retention. Providing novice teachers with continuing and relevant feedback and directed professional development are vital to teacher retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guskey, 2014; Workman & Wixom, 2016). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found that in-field mentors for novice teachers reduced the attrition rate by 30%. Furthermore, common planning time with experienced, master teachers also reduced the risk of attrition by 43%.

Moreover, teacher autonomy is considered a necessary factor when addressing teacher retention. When teachers are involved in the decision-making process, and feel a greater sense of professional autonomy, Ingersoll (2001) and Weiss (1999) found lower rates of teacher attrition. Teacher autonomy is often disregarded or overlooked in many urban districts (Ingersoll, 2001). Glennie, Coble, & Allen (2004) found that teachers’ perceptions of their work environment in hard-to-staff schools were less satisfied with their input in the decision making process when compared to teachers in schools not so identified. Ingersoll and May’s (2012) study of math teachers concluded that the degree of teacher autonomy was the most significant indicator of teacher retention. Tye and O’Brien’s (2002) investigation involving teachers who left the profession, found that 70% ranked diminished teacher autonomy as their main reason for leaving.

Finally, teacher self-efficacy needs to be considered when addressing urban teacher retention. Freedman and Appleman (2009) and Martin, Sass, & Schmitt (2012) found that teacher self-efficacy not only influenced a teacher’s decision to remain, it also influenced a teacher’s decision to select an urban school in the first place.

### ***Methodology***

This study used a qualitative content analysis to examine what factors contributed to the retention rate in urban high poverty districts of effective teachers. First, the Star Teacher Interview was used to identify effective urban educators. Second, verbal interviews were conducted with star subjects to determine factors that contributed to their retention in an urban high-poverty district.

### ***Subjects***

Purposeful sampling was employed for this case study, providing the researcher with “information rich” and “illuminative” responses to the questions under study (Patton, 2002). A total of 16 teachers from urban high-poverty schools who have remained at this setting for more than 5 years were administered the Star Teacher Selection Interview, and received a ranking (Low Average, High Average, High, Star). Demographics for the initial 16 urban teachers include 12 females and 4 males; 12 were African American and 4 were Caucasian. Ages ranged from 26-65 years old.

### ***Star Teacher Selection Interview***

The Star Teacher Selection Interview (Haberman, 1994) measures 7 of the 15 effective urban teacher characteristics, and are referred to as “mid-range functions.” They include persistence, response to authority, application of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal/professional orientation, burnout, and fallibility. These mid-range functions are translated into a series of oral questions, allowing the interviewers to grade (0-3) each response. The interview team then discuss the responses and rank (Low Average, High Average, High, Star) with each subject accordingly. The interview takes about 40 minutes or so on average to implement and requires extensive training for the interviewer. A content analysis was conducted of the star teachers’ responses to identify major themes.

### ***Reliability***

Several reliability studies have been conducted on the Star Teacher Selection Interview. Predictive reliability ( $r = .93$ ) was established using the previous interview score as the criterion for all those that were later re-interviewed. In reference to content validity, identifying factors that discriminated between “Star Teachers” and “Failures” were developed and tested. One hundred percent of the “Star Teachers” passed the interview; where as 0% of “Failures” did not pass. The interview protocol has been periodically tested to revalidate the level of discrimination; results indicated that no changes in the original seven mid-range functions were necessary. Additionally, there are no significant differences between male and female respondents and age in pass/fail rates. Haberman reports that 60% of African Americans and 51% of European Americans passed the interview. No test bias has been identified among other cultural groups, e.g., Southeast Asian or Hispanic (The Haberman Educational Foundation, 2017).

### **Data Analysis**

The original population of this investigation consisted of 16 teachers who met the criteria of remaining in an urban district for 5 or more years. To focus specifically on the retention factors of effective teachers, the 16 subjects were administered the Star Teacher Selection Interview. Those teachers were ranked accordingly: Low Average, 5; High Average, 3; High, 3; and Star, 5. Only five teachers were identified as star teachers and continued on in this study. The demographics of the star teachers is presented in Table 2. For reasons of confidentiality, pseudo names were used for each of the participating subjects.

Table 2

*Star Teacher Demographic Data*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Ann	25-30	5	African American	Female
Betty	60-65	38	African American	Female
Cindy	25-30	5	African American	Female
Daniel	55-60	37	Caucasian	Male
Emily	55-60	37	Caucasian	Female

The 5 star teachers were presented with 2 open-ended interview questions. Oral responses to the interview questions were recorded and transcribed. This method of analysis involved the identification of interpretive themes and categories that emerged from the data (Creswell, 2007, 1998; Patton, 2002; 1990). The inductive analysis process began with the researcher’s thorough reading of transcribed interviews to gain a sense of the range of the responses and to identify any emerging and reoccurring themes. Tentative themes were then refined after the researcher reread and reflected on each of the subject’s transcribed responses.

### **Results and Discussion**

Question 1: *Tell me about the factors that influenced your decision to begin your teaching career in an urban school district and/or Title I school.*

Four major factors that influenced STAR teachers’ decision to begin their career in an urban school district and Title I school were identified as: giving back to the community, diversity, location, and autonomy. Response distributions are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

*Factors that Influenced Decision to Select an Urban School District*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Response Number</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Giving Back	5	100%
Diversity	5	100%
Location	4	80%
Professional Autonomy	2	40%
Teacher Preparation Program	2	40%



All the star teachers reported “giving back to the community” as the main factor influencing their decision to select an urban district to begin their teaching career. In the eternal words of Gandhi: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” When teachers give back to the community they are offering their knowledge, expertise, and skills to their students. Interestingly, many employment research studies conclude that an employee’s perception of the organization, whether or not they achieve their desired goals based on a set of values, and the suitability of the work environment are areas of concern for prospective applicants (Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997). Education students, in particular, tend to place greater importance on contributing to the community than other employment domains (Luckett, 2016; Shipp, 1999). The results of this study supported this claim. Star teachers’ primary reason for beginning their career in an urban school district was to give back to the community. Many of the teachers attended school themselves in an urban school district. Now, as a successful teacher, they wanted to share their experiences with students who came from similar backgrounds as they did. Many of the star teachers also commented that they wanted to be a good role model for the student because they remembered they did, or did not, have a good teacher role model as a student. The star teachers also reported that they wanted to contribute to the overall common good because a strong community with a high quality of life means safer, healthier lives for everyone.

All the star teachers reported “working with diverse populations” as a factor influencing their decision to select an urban district to begin their teaching career. The teachers felt they would be most effective working with diverse populations because they could understand their students’ needs which would allow them to build relationships with the students. Anne noted, “The kids really need me, and I am good at building relationships with them.” Many of the teachers also reported that being exposed to diversity and high-poverty schools during their teacher preparation program influenced their decision to seek employment in an urban district. Cindy reported, “I was exposed to diverse populations during my schooling, and knew I wanted to work with different cultures.” Both Anne and Cindy commented that their teacher preparation program afforded them opportunities to teach and work in high-poverty schools under the guidance of a professor who had taught successfully in a high-poverty school herself. Cindy further commented, “I knew what to expect. She [the professor] was able to explain the dynamics of urban teaching; I was able to understand what I was seeing and experiencing.” She was authentic because she had been there. The research does suggest that preservice teachers who are exposed to multicultural opportunities during their teacher education program develop positive attitudes and a sense of efficacy toward teaching culturally diverse students (Bodur, 2012). Star teachers strive to meet the needs of all students.

Most of the star teachers reported they sought employment near their residence or in a district with which they were familiar. Location was a common factor influencing their decision to select an urban district to begin their teaching career. This finding is supported by the literature; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2005) reported that new teachers tend to apply to school districts near the area in which they grew up. The teachers are comfortable staying in their district because it is familiar to them, in turn, they have strong ties to the school and community. In addition, the star teachers claimed they know other teachers in the schools which would allow them to have an additional support system and mentor. Baker-Doyle (2010) termed this phenomenon the social network perspective in which there is a feeling of support and trust that develops through social networks.

Two star teachers, Betty and Emily, reported professional autonomy as a factor that influenced their decision to select an urban district to begin their teaching career. Teacher autonomy is a teacher’s perception of control over classroom activities (Ingersoll & May, 2012). These teachers reported that they could use creativity during their instruction in the classroom and with the students. Emily reported, “During an interview, I was told by a principal in a suburban district that I was just too creative. At the time, I wasn’t sure how to interpret that. My teacher education program really emphasized creativity, and I always thought that was my strength. However, when I interviewed for an urban school teaching position, the principal was amazed at my creativity, and I knew that was where [in an urban environment] I belonged. ” Daniel said, “[I want to] show the students the world through a different lens.” The teachers claimed that they could use creative instructional methods to meet the students’ needs and keep the students engaged in the lessons. As reported, several studies indicate teacher autonomy indicative of job satisfaction (Brunetti, 2001; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Sparks & Malkus, 2015; Perie & Baker, 1997). In a study of 300 elementary, middle, and high school teachers, Pearson and Moomaw (2005) found a positive correlation between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction. The star teachers in this study also conveyed that they were not only autonomous, but they would encourage and support their students’ autonomy as well, a life skill that is often not taught in schools.

Question 2: *What factors have influenced your decision to remain at this school beyond 5 years?*

Three major factors that influenced STAR teachers' decision to continue their career beyond 5 years in an urban school district and/or Title I school were identified: job satisfaction, effective with population, and perseverance. Response distributions are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 4

*Factors that Influenced Decision to Remain in an Urban School*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Response Number</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Job Satisfaction	5	100%
Effective with Population	5	100%
Perseverance	4	80%

All the star teachers reported job satisfaction as the foremost factor influencing their decision to continue their career beyond 5 years in an urban school district. The teachers felt they were satisfied with their jobs because they were giving back to the community, advocating for students, making a difference, enjoying their career, and being challenged. The following are excerpts from conversations with the star teachers, "I feel like I am making a difference," "I am completely happy in this environment," and "I want to be happy in my career, change lives..." Many teachers find leadership rewarding in itself because of the opportunity to share their passion, values, and inspirations with others increases their job satisfaction.

Additionally, all of the star teachers reported effectively working with this population as a major factor contributing to their decision to continue their career beyond 5 years in an urban school district. Multiple aspects were provided which influenced the teachers' effectiveness. Anne reported that she "understands their [the students] needs." Betty said, "I used to be a social worker, and I can use those skills to give a voice to those that couldn't speak. In fact, many of the skills and behaviors I learned as a social worker, I can directly use them with my urban families." Two teachers described their abilities to build relationships with the students and their families. Yet Anne said, "They come to me in kindergarten not being able to read. It's so rewarding to see them leave reading." Other facets that teachers mentioned were liking the students and learning from them as well. It is interesting to note the broad differences between the teachers' perceptions of being an effective teacher; advocating for the students, academic accomplishment, building relationships and understanding, and mutual respect. It would make sense that teachers who were not highly effective with their students and community are more likely to leave an urban school district than teachers who were highly effective with this population of students. In fact, Lockett (2016) found that more than twice as many ineffective urban teachers reported that they were leaving than did effective teachers. A star's ideology of teaching in urban schools and working with diverse populations is part of their core; they are effective with the urban population, and, as a result, remain teaching in this environment.

Most of the star teachers reported perseverance as a major factor contributing to their decision to continue their career beyond 5 years in an urban school district. Cindy shared, "I like being challenged, I like the students, and I feel I am making a difference." Overall the teachers agreed that teaching in a high-poverty school can be difficult and challenging, however, the teachers appeared to welcome the challenge and persevere. Betty commented, "I'm not a quitter." Emily said, "This is what I do. I don't see it as work." Haberman referred to teacher perseverance as "explanation of teacher success", in which "teachers believe that success is met by effort and hard work." (Haberman, 1995, 2005) Lastly, students may recognize teacher perseverance and potentially appreciate and respect teachers that cope, adjust, and change in the face of obstacles.

Overall, it is noticeable that teachers are influenced by intrinsic factors (Walker 2004) such as desire to help students achieve, desire to make a difference in society, and the sense of accomplishment felt when they see students learn. Notwithstanding, we find it interesting that many of the factors that influenced the star teachers' decision to *begin* their career in an urban school districts overlap with many of the factors that influenced their decision to *remain* in and urban school district. It is interesting to note that two of the three factors that influenced a teacher's decision to stay are directly related to the factors as identified by Star teachers. "Effective with Population" and "Persistence" are characteristics of effective teachers; star teachers possess those characteristics. These findings also suggest a slight difference in perspectives of retention factors between star teachers and teachers from other environments. Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction are similar among urban district teachers and non-urban district teachers.



However, star teachers view Job Satisfaction in terms of working with their students, and having intrinsic needs met.

### ***Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations***

The findings of this study on star teachers' decisions to select and remain in an urban, high-poverty school are hopeful in that the factors the star teachers identified have more to do with the individuals themselves. It is plausible to assume that if urban, high-poverty schools focus on hiring individuals that possess the ideology of star teachers, attrition rates may decline. In light of the challenges of teacher attrition and retention in urban, high-poverty schools, we need a star teacher in every classroom because it is a star's overall ideology that contributes to teacher retention. Not only are these teachers effective with urban population, these are the teachers with staying power (Haberman, 1995, 2005). Based on a review of the literature, star teachers intentionally seek urban, high-poverty schools because they seek challenges, and they know that they are effective in a culturally diverse population. They understand that urban schools are a good fit for their professional aspirations and commitments. It has been shown that teachers, historically, chose their profession based on intrinsic rewards, or benefits (Lortie, 1975), and stars are no exception. Urban districts might benefit from seeking these teachers out and follow an interview protocol or using a validated selection instrument, like the Star Teacher Selection Interview to identify potential candidates with staying power. This action may require extensive time and energy since only 5-8% of teachers meet the criteria of stars (Haberman, 1995). We believe, however, that it would be energy well spent since star teachers have proven to make a difference in the lives of urban students. Urban districts may also want to work more closely with practicum and observation students from the universities who show promise in working with culturally diverse children. This established relationship may influence the teacher candidate to select a position in an urban district.

An unanticipated finding of this investigation was the role that teacher preparation programs could play in urban teacher retention. Two of the candidates mentioned the influence of a particular experience during their teacher preparation program. As a result, they selected an urban school to begin their professional career and had set reasonable expectations of what their position would entail. They felt that they had no reason to leave because their expectations were being met. There is limited research that links teacher preparation programs and teacher retention. Kirchoff and Lawrenz (2011) concluded that practicum and student teaching experiences in high-needs settings, supported by course work highlighting high-needs settings, are persuasive factors for selecting and remaining in this environment. Further, Whipp & Geronime found that urban experiences during a student's teacher education program, in addition to a strong commitment to urban teaching may be an equally important factor when compared to age, race, credentials, years of experience, and school culture.

This finding has many implications for teacher preparation programs. Attracting potential candidates who are committed to urban teaching must be at the forefront (Haberman, 1996; McKinney, Berry, Dickerson, & Campbell-Whately, 2007; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2009; Whipp & Geronime, 2017). University faculty must also encourage and monitor a teacher candidate's commitment to urban teaching (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). Additionally, providing candidates with rich experiences in urban schools and the community must also be offered. If colleges and universities are to address and break the existing high turnover rates of teachers in an urban environment, it stands to reason that preservice teachers must be identified and provided urban teaching opportunities early-on in their training so that they develop an appreciation for the factors that later will impact their willingness to seek initial teaching positions in an urban environment, and develop the factors that impact their teaching persistence in an urban environment. Colleges of Education may want to review and reconsider hiring practices of professors who will be working with the preservice teachers. More often than not, professors are only required to have limited classroom experience (3-5 years) in an identified content area. Discussions should begin on extending the required classroom experience, as well as hiring individuals with expertise in the urban context. This expertise can then be extended to potential urban candidates, and may also address the concern and criticism regarding teaching education programs adopting a universal approach in preparing teachers (Haberman, 1995; Siwatu, 2011).

The research team also strongly encourage those leaders in urban school districts to review and consider the findings of this study. Implementation strategies and recommendations provided have the potential to ensure that *all* students will be taught by effective teachers, or stars. (Lockett, 2016).

## References

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