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## Reviews

# Addressing urban high-poverty school teacher attrition by addressing urban high-poverty school teacher retention: why effective teachers persevere

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**Recruiting and retaining quality teachers specific for high-poverty schools in urban areas is a national concern, especially in light of the “No Child Left Behind” federal legislation. The educational realities, detrimental effects of poverty, and human despair that often depress low-income communities can prove to be quite overpowering for many teachers new to the profession and significantly contribute to high levels of teacher absenteeism, attrition rates, and teacher shortages. Examining this issue through a new lens, that being through the eyes of effective urban high-poverty school educators, has the potential to spark spirited conversations and debates among policy makers and educators alike so that significant policies and efforts can be developed and implemented. Therefore, the intent of this study was to develop a profile of high-quality educators who remain in urban high-poverty schools within a large metropolitan school district, and identify the indicators that influence them to remain. The results indicated that teachers who are African American, older, and more experienced define the profile of teachers most likely to remain beyond the first three years in this demanding setting. Additionally, these teachers reported that they remain because they believe they are well suited for teaching in high-poverty schools. Unless more attention is given to teacher retention, and why some educators are successful and persevere in even the most hard-to-staff schools, teacher attrition will continue to be a national concern.**

**Key words:** Urban Teaching, teacher retention, teacher recruitment.

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary educators agree that teaching in an urban high-poverty school can be a challenging and demanding endeavor, even for the most experienced and competent teacher (Brown, 2002; Delpit, 1995; Haberman, 2006, 1995; Jones and Sandidge, 1997; Kopetz et al., 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Stafford and Haberman, 2003; Dill and Stafford-Johnson, 2003; Weiner, 1999). Yet, many educators tackle the unique and often pervasive difficulties of teaching in high-poverty schools in urban areas

with overwhelming student success and personal moral commitment (Brown, 2002; Haberman, 2006, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000). The educational realities, detrimental effects of poverty, and human despair that often depress high-poverty communities can prove to be quite overpowering for many teachers new to the profession and significantly contribute to high levels of teacher absenteeism, attrition rates, and teacher shortages (Haberman, 2006, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Olson and Jerald, 1998; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004; Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2004). Kopetz et al. (2006) reported that nationally, high-poverty schools located within urban communities have higher teacher turnover rates when compared to more affluent school districts. Specifically, 50%

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of high-poverty school teachers leave within the first five years of their career, and in some urban districts, this time frame can be as short as three years (Haberman, 2006, 1995).

The practice of placing new teachers to the profession in the most hard-to-staff schools also impacts teacher attrition and transfer levels. According to Haberman (2006) and Kopetz et al. (2006) students attending high-poverty schools are taught by more novice, uncertified, and less experienced teachers. Furthermore, many of these novice teachers were enrolled in a traditional teacher preparation program with little or no emphasis on urban school teaching (Haberman, 1996). Despite the overwhelming challenges that come with teaching and working with low-income students with greater needs, beginning teachers are often given little professional support or mentorship opportunities to help them develop the necessary pedagogical knowledge, attributes, and dispositions needed to help this student population to succeed, which, unfortunately contributes to high attrition levels (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Haberman, 2006, 2003, 1995). Take for example, Virginia's first urban high-poverty school to close under the "No Child Left Behind" federal education legislation. Plagued by low test scores for years, over two-thirds of the faculty resigned after the 2004-2005 school year. The 2005-2006 academic year began with 18 new teachers, who, according to the state, "struggled to maintain order." (The Virginian Pilot, April 21, 2006). Kopetz et al. (2006) summarized the phenomenon of urban high-poverty school teacher turnover and transfer by stating:

It would appear that when teachers in low-achieving schools find an opportunity to move to schools serving children of higher social economic status, they will often do so. In many cases, the rate of turnover is disturbingly high and results in teachers generally unprepared to accommodate the student population. Thus, in those schools with the greater need, the teacher turnover rates are at their worst levels. One can readily understand how teachers are drawn away from urban schools by higher pay and better working conditions. Teaching in urban settings can be stressful, an unsettling, leading to high levels of teacher burnout over a short period of time.

If public school systems are to move forward in meeting the guidelines set forth by the "No Child Left Behind" legislation and improving the academic achievement of students in urban high-poverty schools, teacher attrition must be addressed. Perhaps by examining this issue through a new lens, that being through the eyes of effective urban teachers who remain in this demanding setting will spark spirited conversations and debates among policy makers and educators alike so that significant policies and efforts can be developed and implemented.

### **Factors contributing to urban high-poverty school teacher attrition rates**

There is literature identifying various indicators that in

fluence teachers to leave high-poverty school environments after a brief tenure. Haberman (2005) cited poor working conditions and classroom management issues as the most common reasons teachers leave. Additionally, he identified (a) an overwhelming workload, (b) discipline problems, (c) low pay, (d) little respect, (e) lack of support, and (f) clerical paperwork as other typical reasons for leaving. Haberman (2005) also brought caution to these indicators since the teachers involved in the investigation may not have wanted to appear prejudiced, or say anything that might indirectly influence their chances of gaining a position elsewhere.

Haberman and Richards' (1990) study focused on the issues that influenced urban teachers to leave the Milwaukee Public School District, the largest public school district in the State of Wisconsin. For the purpose of their investigation, the term "urban" was used to refer to those schools in high-poverty areas and which serve low-income students. They indicated that (a) discipline, (b) inadequate support from administrators, (c) heavy load, (d) lack of parental support, (e) underachieving students, (f) clerical burden, (g) dealing with students' different cultural backgrounds, (h) inadequate support staff, (i) inadequate resources and supplies, (j) salary, (k) communication with staff of different cultural backgrounds, and (l) class size as the main factors that influenced their decision to leave the district. The research team noted that these findings were based on teacher perceptions and were not confirmed using more objective measures. Similarly, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2002) reported that (a) lack of adequate planning time, (b) heavy workload, (c) problematic student discipline, and (d) lack of administrative input contribute to job dissatisfaction, and often ignite a teacher's decision to transfer. Furthermore, teachers leaving high-poverty schools tended to cite lack of administrative support as their reason for leaving, while those teachers leaving more affluent school districts mentioned salary as their reason for leaving (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002). Kopetz et al. (2006) reported that issues related to diversity (e.g. socioeconomic status and race of students) were included among teacher's reasons for leaving. Kain, O'Brien and Ravin (2005) also reported similar findings; they concluded that teachers who transferred schools within an urban district tended to seek out schools with fewer disadvantaged students. Moreover, Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) descriptive analysis collected from teacher interviews found that teachers who left the profession after a brief tenure (3 years or less) experienced high levels of frustration, with many viewing themselves as failures. Clearly, there is considerable correspondence across researchers in the identification of factors that influence teachers in urban high-poverty schools to leave this type of school environment.

### **Implications of teacher attrition**

The issue of teacher attrition in urban high-poverty school

has implications for cost effectiveness as well as educational quality. Separation costs, hiring costs, vacancy costs, and training costs burden a district's annual budget by utilizing funds that could be spent on student's education (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002). The Department of Labor estimates that teacher attrition costs districts about 30% of the leaving employee's salary, which, in turn, costs taxpayers over \$2.2 billion a year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Existing empirical studies suggest that teacher stability rates for high-poverty schools also directly impacts the educational outcomes of students. For example, Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien and Ravin's (2005) investigation found that student achievement gains were considerably lower in classrooms in which teacher turn-over was a factor. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) also reported that high teacher attrition rates have negative effects on student achievement. They further stated "A major result of teacher attrition and inadequate induction is that poor, urban, and minority children are taught to be less experienced, less qualified teachers who do not stay long enough to become an expert, high-quality teachers their students desperately need". Likewise, Ingersoll (2001) argued that when qualified urban teachers depart their positions, the students are more apt to be then taught by inexperienced, less qualified teachers, which both have been associated with lower student achievement. Additionally, Boyd, Lankford, Grossman, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2007) concluded that teacher attrition can negatively influence a school's learning environment. When the teaching force is constantly changing, administrators find it difficult to implement policies and standards that create a school climate conducive to student learning.

Current data on high-school graduating rates of minority students make clear the effect of teacher attrition on student achievement. Quite alarming, only one out of ever two African-American students earns a high-school diploma, and in some urban high poverty districts this rate can even be lower (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Haberman (2006) reported that approximately half of the low-income students who attended high-poverty schools within the Milwaukee Public School District, a district plagued by considerably high teacher attrition rates, graduated from high school. He also called attention that this rate may be even higher because it doesn't address those students who drop-out of high-school, or those middle school students who never make it to high school. These numbers clearly mark the urgent need for urban high-poverty school systems to concentrate their energy on addressing the particularly high levels of teacher attrition.

### **Those that persevere: Characteristics of "Stars"**

Dr. Martin Haberman, a nationally recognized scholar in effective urban teacher research, described teaching in

high-poverty schools as ". . . an extraordinary life experience—a volatile, highly charged, emotionally draining, physically exhausting experience for even the most competent, experienced teacher" (1995). However, many teachers are able to meet the demands and challenges of urban teaching with overwhelming success and commitment.

### **Star teachers**

The Ideology and Best Practice of Effective Teachers of Diverse Children and Youth in Poverty, Haberman (2006) identified fifteen functions of effective urban teachers, and referred to those educators who possess them as "star" teachers. These urban educators ". . . 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). Haberman's extensive research on effective teachers of children in poverty has extended over a period of 50 years. By interviewing and observing teachers since 1959, Haberman identified the functions and ideologies of these teachers that enabled them to be outstandingly effective with this population of students and in these school environments. For example, Haberman (2006, 1995) argued that a teacher's Approach to Working with At-Risk Students is the most powerful indicator of an effective teacher of children in poverty. Ineffective teachers tend to fault factors such as concentrated poverty, violent neighborhoods, and single-parent families as the cause of low student achievement. These teachers also tend to blame the child for their lack of success in school. However, Haberman (2006, 1995) contended, star teachers believe that the schools, curricular, and teaching methodologies are the factors that place students at-risk for academic failure. Furthermore, he stated:

Of all the functions that discriminate between stars and failures, this dimension [Approach to At-Risk Students] is the most powerful predictor. There is no question that those predisposed to blame the victim will fail as teachers, while those whose natural inclination is constantly to seek more effective teaching strategies, regardless of youngsters' backgrounds or the obstacles youngsters face, have a fighting chance of becoming effective teachers of children in poverty. Persistence is another function identified by Haberman (2006, 1995). Persistence is intimately linked to teachers' commitment and effort. Effective teachers of children in poverty hold a deep and abiding belief about the potential within each child. They believe it is their responsibility to search for and create instructional practices that will engage all students in the learning process. Stars are also committed to responding to the needs of all students, regardless to their personal or life circumstances (Haberman, 2006, 1995).

**Table 1.** Effective teaching functions and description as identified by Haberman

Protecting children's learning. Teachers are able to capitalize on all learning opportunities.
Persistence. Teachers constantly pursue strategies and activities so all students can meet success.
Approach to at-risk students. Teachers take responsibility for student'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 students.
The bureaucracy. Teachers can adjust to and cope with the demands of the bureaucracy.
Fallibility. Teachers take responsibility for their personal errors and mistakes.
Emotional and physical stamina. Teachers are able to endure the challenges of urban, high-poverty 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 children's success. Teachers are committed to student autonomy and individual differences.
Real teaching. Teachers engage in active teaching.
Making students feel needed. Teachers are able to make their students feel needed and wanted in the classroom.
The material vs. the student. Teachers find approaches that will assist students in mastering the material.
Gentle teaching in a violent society. Teacher's ideology is promising, even in light of a violent society.

Star teachers have the dispositions to demonstrate a "Professional-Personal Orientation to Students". These effective teachers develop relationships with their students based on ". . . caring, respect and trust" (Haberman, 1995). They take a personal interest in the students' out of school lives, and are able to foster their intrinsic motivation to learn. Effective urban teachers also have extraordinary organizational ability and managerial skills to successfully manage their classroom environment (Haberman, 2006, 1995). Because star teachers do not conduct classrooms that solely rely on teacher directed instruction, but instead involve their students in active ways, they are able to manage space, time, materials, activities, and equipment, as well as grouping of the students. Additional effective urban Teacher functions as identified by Haberman (2006, 1995) are presented in Table 1.

The literature clearly identifies the indicators that influenced teachers in high-poverty schools to transfer to another school or district, or leave the profession all together and the implications of doing so (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002; Bradley and Loadman, 2005; Boyd et al., 2007; Guarino et al., 2006; Haberman, 2005, 1995; Haberman and Richards, 1990; Jones and Sandidge, 1997; Kopetz et al., 2006; Villegas and Clewell, 1998). However, the research literature is limited in regards to why those teachers who are effective with high-needs students decide to remain in an urban high poverty school setting. Therefore, the intent of this study was to develop a profile of high-quality educators who remain in urban high-poverty schools within a large metropolitan district, and identify the indicators that influenced their decision to remain. As such, we conducted a study which focused on the following research questions: 1. What are the characteristics of teachers who are successful and remain teaching in urban high-

poverty schools within a large metropolitan district? 2. What indicators do effective teachers perceive to be influential in their decision to remain teaching in this school environment?

Outcomes of this effort will assist urban school districts in understanding how best to retain quality teachers for their high-poverty schools. Data from this investigation can also provide teacher preparation programs much needed information to determine if they can play a more instrumental role in urban school teacher retention, and a venue to examine how to identify and ultimately foster critical characteristics of preservice teachers who have the potential for urban high-poverty school teaching success.

## METHODOLOGY

### Setting and subject selection

An urban, metropolitan school district located in the Southeastern United States served as the setting for this investigation. Within this district, fourteen elementary schools where more than half of the students qualified for free or reduced-price school lunches were identified. Olson and Jerald (1998) define such schools as high-poverty schools; this definition was utilized for the purpose of the investigation. Purposive sampling was employed; the research team wanted to specifically focus on effective, or star teachers as a means to distinguish the characteristics and indicators from other educators who remain in this contextual environment that maybe be highly-qualified but have not proven to be outstandingly effective with this population. Therefore, a total of fifty-four tenured teachers who have remained in urban school settings beyond the first three years were identified by their respective administrators. A member of the research team was trained by the Haberman Foundation and received certification to administer the Star Teacher Selection Interview (Haberman, 2003). This instrument was utilized only for the purpose of subject selection.

**Star Teacher Selection Interview:** The Star Teacher Selection Interview can identify potentially effective urban teachers in regards

to their success in terms of their students' learning, across all grade bands and in all content areas. It also predicts a teacher's ability to successfully relate to and work with diverse children in urban poverty schools and teacher staying power (Haberman, 2006).

Haberman's instrument measures seven of the functions, or characteristics that discriminate completely between stars, and quitters/failures. Quitters and failures are defined as those teachers who know the content material, but are unable to teach it and are incapable of connecting with the students. As such, some teachers leave this environment all together, while some remain, even though they are ineffective with this population (Haberman, 2005, 1995). The seven functions assessed include: (a) persistence, (b) response to authority, (c) application of generalizations, (d) approach to "at-risk" students, (e) personal/professional orientation, (f) burnout, and (g) fallibility. These seven mid-range functions are divided into two subcategories, and yield fourteen characteristics, thus allowing the interviewer to develop a profile of the teacher's predispositions and ideology (Haberman, 2005; 1995)

The instrument has been periodically tested to validate its level of discrimination, with no changes being made. Furthermore, there is a predictive reliability of  $r = .93$  for those being re-interviewed (Haberman, 2003). Numerous doctoral dissertations have also validated the assessment instrument; they supported the stability of the identified functions, and their resistance to traditional teacher education courses and experiences (Haberman, 2005). Legal validation was also established in *Rodriguez vs. The Chicago Board of Education*. In 1996, the court held that the Star Teacher Selection Interview was a valid instrument that school districts had the right to use (Haberman, 2006, 2004).

## Procedures

The Star Teacher Selection Interview was administered to each of the fifty-four participants, and from this population, thirty-two subjects received passing scores. Those who passed were identified as star teachers by the researchers, and served as the subjects for this investigation ( $N=32$ ). This sample consisted of 81% female and 19% males. In regards to race, 56% are African-American, 34% Caucasian, and 9% Hispanic. Experience levels and ages of the subjects ranged from 6-27 years and 32-49 years, respectively. A complete profile of the subjects is provided in Table 2. Upon identification of the participating subjects, they were then asked to complete the Urban Teacher Retention Survey.

## Urban teacher retention survey

A survey instrument was developed based on the work of Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996), and Haberman (2006, 1995). Through their investigations, they identified the relative indicators of teaching as a professional career, including both monetary and non-monetary factors. The survey contained 25 indicators, categorized according to six broad factors (Familial, Societal, Situational, Socioeconomic, Individual, and Psychosocial-Emotional), and allowed for participants to write in other indicators not addressed. The instrument was based on a four point Likert scale, ranging from No Influence to Major Influence, as to allow the subjects to rate the degree of influence for their identified indicators.

The developed instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts comprised four university faculty members and the Director of Human Services for the urban school district involved in this investigation. Based upon the recommendations of the panel, modifications were made to the survey instrument prior to field-testing. We established validity of the instrument using think-aloud, debriefing interviews conducted by the lead researcher with identified star teachers from a different urban school district. The teachers involved agreed that the indicators were representative of

reasons for remaining in a high-poverty school district for an extended period of time. Peer, debriefing sessions are an accepted practice in the research process (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Participating subjects were asked to address the extent to which each indicator influenced their decision to remain teaching in an urban high-poverty school setting. The assessment instruments' degrees of influence used a Likert scale, 0-3, which ranged from No Influence (0) to Major Influence (3). Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3. Also included is the percentage of teachers that rated each indicator as an influential indicator (Minor, Moderate, and Major) as well as the mean average of the degree of influence. The assessment instrument took approximately 15-20 min to complete.

## Data analysis and findings

Using the subject profiles of this sample, those who met the criteria and received passing scores on the Star Teacher Selection Interview were females, who comprised eighty-one percent of the population. This is consistent with the high percentage of females in elementary classrooms across the country. Additionally, subjects were between the ages of thirty-two and forty-nine, with between six to twenty-seven years of experience. Hence, it appeared that females who are older and more experienced are more likely to remain teaching in high-poverty schools beyond the first three years.

Of the 32 subjects who participated in this investigation, 57% were African American, 34% were Caucasian, and 9% were Hispanic. Guarino et al. (2006) reported that minority teachers in high-poverty schools tended to have lower attrition rates when compared to Caucasian teachers. Adams (1996) and Ingersoll (2001) reported similar findings. Adams concluded that Caucasian were 385% more likely to leave the profession than African American teachers. Likewise, Ingersoll (2001) found that minority teachers were less likely to quit than Caucasian teachers.

Quantitative data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the indicators that influenced highly effective teachers to remain within an urban high-poverty school context. The results indicated that, Make Contributions to Society/Community (43.8%, Minor Influence; 31.3%, Moderate Influence; and 25%, Major Influence), Working with Diverse Populations (31.3%, Minor Influence; 21.9%, Moderate Influence; and 43.8%, Major Influence) Teacher Efficacy (21.9%, Moderate Influence; 78.1%, Major Influence) and Well Suited for Urban Teaching (21.9%, Moderate Influence; 78.1%, Major Influence) were cited by 100% of the sample as Influential Indicators, followed by Making a Difference for Students in Poverty, (12.5%, No Influence; 75%, Minor Influence; 9.4% Moderate Influence; and 3.1%, Major Influence) with 87.5% of the sample. Approximately 62.5% of the subjects indicated Need for Teachers for Children in Poverty (34.4%, Minor Influence; 15.6%, Moderate Influence; 12.5%, Major Influence) as an influential indicator. It's worth calling attention to some of the indicators not identified by any of the subjects as a reason for remaining in an urban school setting, such as Job Security, School Calendar, and Age. One interpretation for this may be that these teachers have the option to transfer to less stressful school environments within the same district, hence questioning their importance as an influential indicator specific to the urban context.

It is equally important to call attention to the factors Salary, (96.9%, No Influence; 3.1%, Minor Influence) and Benefits and Incentives, (84.3%, No Influence; 12.5%, Minor Influence; 3.1%, Moderate Influence), and the minor attention given to them as influential factors. Currently, many urban school districts are using these very indicators to recruit teachers, often awarding them to teachers if they agree to remain for a short period, sometimes

**Table 2.** Profile of subjects identified as Stars.

African American				Caucasian				Hispanic			
Male 3 9.4%		Female 15 46.9%		Male 2 6.3%		Female 9 28.1%		Male 1 3.1%		Female 2 6.3%	
Mean Age	Mean Experience Level	Mean Age	Mean Experience Level	Mean Age	Mean Experience Level	Mean Age	Mean Experience Level	Mean Age	Mean Experience Level	Mean Age	Mean Experience Level
33	8	38	19	27	7	39	18	43	18	43	10

not more than three years. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

**DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The first research question under consideration was to identify the characteristics of teachers who are successful and remain teaching in urban high-poverty schools. Although working with a relatively small sample, the majority of the identified star teachers were females, between the ages of thirty-two and forty-nine, and had six to twenty-seven years of experience. This profile meets several of the criteria set forth by Haberman (2006, 1998, 1995) as the best and the brightest for urban schools. For example, Haberman (2006, 1998, 1995) reported that older individuals (over age thirty) and those that are not Euro-American background (typically African American, Latino, members of a minority group or from a working class white family) define those that have the potential to become effective with staying power. He further elaborated that older individuals have reached a level of personal identity and maturity that enables them to be successful and effective in challenging teaching environments (2006, 1998, 1995). He also suggested that minority teachers tend to have staying power because they have shared the “. . . urban poverty experience”

(Haberman,1996). Furthermore, he stated that “These individuals have been successful in similar contexts facing similar life challenges and opportunities [as urban students] (Haberman, 1996). Because of past life experiences, these teachers tend to understand well and have empathy for the life conditions urban children are confronted with daily. Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) asserted that teacher attrition is relatively high for young or novice teachers, and lower for older, more experienced teachers. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) also found that teachers who left the profession were generally very young and inexperienced, or much older and approaching retirement eligibility. Likewise, Ingersol (2001) found that minority teachers were less likely to quit than Caucasian teachers. Subsequently, the high percentage of African American teachers involved in this investigation is not representative of the national average. According to Branch (2001),on average teachers of color account for a small percentage of the teaching force, whereas students of color comprise a much larger percentage. Villegas and Clewell (1998) reported that this imbalance could have negative repercussions for students of color. That is, minority students could be deprived of potential role models (Greenfield et al.,, 1996; Stewart et al., 1989), or mediators with the cultural under-

standings that can unite schools and communities (Irvine, 1988). Therefore, concentrated efforts need to be initiated by colleges of education and urban school districts to not only recruit culturally diverse teachers, but to also use the profile as identified by Haberman (2006, 1998, 1995) to select and recruit individuals who can be successful with children in poverty. Utilizing selection instruments, such as Haber-man’s (2006, 1998) Star Teacher Selection Inter-view hold the potential to assist teacher preparation programs as well as urban school districts in identifying and selecting those individuals with the needed qualities and ideology. Currently, GPA’s, and PRAXIS test scores are the criteria used by most universities and colleges of education to admit potential candidates to teacher education programs. Student teaching grades and personal references, along with the aforementioned criteria are used by most school districts for the selection process; however, they do not predict a candidate’s effectiveness for urban school teaching (Haberman, 2003, 1996; Stoddart, 1993). Clearly, this issue that is worth examining.

In addressing the second research question, Make Contributions to Society/Community, Working with Diverse Populations, Teacher Efficacy, and Well Suited for Urban Teaching were cited by 100% of the sample as influential indicators and

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics, percent cited, and mean ratings for influential\_indicators

Indicators	No Influence (0)	Minor Influence (1)	Moderate Influence (2)	Major Influence (3)	Percent of Sample Citing Indicator an Influential Factor	Mean Ratings for Degree of Influence
<b>Familial Indicators</b>						
Family Background Easily Combined with Parenthood	96.9%	3.1%	0%	0%	3.1%	1 (N=1) 2 (N=1)
	96.9%	0%	3.1%	0%	3.1%	
<b>Societal Factors</b>						
Status/Respected Profession	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=32)
Make Contributions to Society/Community	0%	43.8%	31.3%	25%	100%	1.8 (N=32)
Working with Diverse Populations	0%	31.3%	21.9%	43.8%	100%	2.1 (N=32)
Need for Teachers for Children in Poverty	34.4%	34.4%	15.6%	12.5%	62.5%	1 (N=20)
<b>Situational Indicators</b>						
Relocation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
Financial Needs	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
No Other Employment Opportunities	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
Age	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=100)
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>						
Salary	96.9%	3.1%	0%	0%	3.1%	0 (N=1)
Benefits and Incentives	84.3%	12.5%	3.1%	0%	15.6%	0.2 (N=5)
Job Security	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
<b>Individual Indicators</b>						
School Calendar	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
Opportunities for Professional Growth	84.3%	15.6%	0%	0%	15.6%	0.2 (N=5)
Subject Matter/Grade level Interest	65.6%	34.4%	0%	0%	34.4%	0.3 N=11
Making a Difference for Students in Poverty	12.5%	75%	9.4%	3.1%	87.5%	1 (N=28)
Teacher Efficacy	0%	0%	21.9%	78.1%	100%	2.6(N=32)
Opportunities for Advancement	71.9%	15.6%	12.5%	0%	28.1%	0.4 (N=9)
Working Conditions (Physical Plant)	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
Leadership Within School	56.3%	37.5%	3.1%	0%	40.6%	0.4 (N=13)
Collegiality of Faculty	43.8%	50%	6.3%	0%	56.3%	1.7 (N=18)
Teacher Autonomy	71.9%	25%	3.1%	0%	28.1%	2.5 (N=9)
Well Suited for Urban Teaching	0%	0%	21.9%	78.1%	100%	2.6 (N=32)
<b>Psychosocial-Emotional Indicators</b>						
Fear of Failure /Other Professions	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
No Other Options	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0 (N=0)
Other:						

are aligned with the ideology, proclivities and dispositions grounded within star teacher's ideology. Star teachers experience an overall comfort with urban school teaching and the challenges unique to this environment. They anticipate and are not disenchanted with ". . . the horrendous home, poverty, and environmental conditions . . ." that typify the lives of their students (Haberman, 1995). In fact, star teachers actually thrive in this setting, and don't perceive the hardships and handicapping conditions typical of high-poverty schools as obstacles to their teaching success (Bickel et al., 2002; Dill and Stafford-Johnson, 2003). They also tend to have a high degree of moral commitment in assisting their students to meet academic and personal success (Haberman, 2005, 1995; Dill and Stafford-Johnson, 2003). Haberman (2006, 1995) defined moral commitment as the ideology of teachers in regards to teaching children in poverty. For example, star teachers believe that it is a matter of life and death for students to meet success in high-poverty schools. Therefore, they are committed to teaching them well, since the students may not have other life options. Stars also have a sense of competence that is parallel to their orientation toward poverty. This orientation allows them to face the challenges of the urban classroom. That is, teachers who see poverty as a structural issue (low wages, lack of jobs, or inadequate schools) rather than an individualistic issue (laziness, lack of self-discipline, hedonism, and poor financial planning) persist in high poverty schools. Their perceptions and proactivity in establishing discipline standards, providing individual interactions, and knowing their students well, in addition to research-based best practices, allow them and their students to be successful (Haberman, 2005, 1995). Furthermore, not only do stars have confidence in their own teaching abilities, they know that their teaching abilities and overall success with this population can make a significant contribution in changing students' lives (Banks, 2001).

When reviewing these top influential factors as a whole, it is evident they are grounded within a teacher's self-understanding that can't be separated from their behaviors (Haberman, 2006, 1998, 1995). Stars view themselves as winners when it comes to working with students in poverty, and are willing to undertake the considerable demands and challenges of many urban districts because they derive much satisfaction in interacting with this population (Haberman, 2006, 1995; Dill and Stafford-Johnson, 2003). Nieto (2003) and Darder (1998) support this reasoning by stating that the indicators which influence effective teachers to remain, even in the most challenging of settings, has more to do with heart than any other condition.

Urban districts may need to review their current practices in regards to teacher recruitment. While signing bonuses, benefits and incentives may be the key practices currently used in attracting and recruiting teachers for high poverty schools, the majority of the subjects in-

involved in this investigation did not cite them as influential factors in their decision to remain. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine if their influence extends beyond the initial attraction and recruitment period (Claycomb, 2000). Claycomb (2000) also asserts that serious and continuous investments need to be made, which include remedying those impediments that impact a teacher's decision to leave.

Professional dispositions are now recognized by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as essential elements of teacher development (2006). High-poverty urban school districts would benefit if they foster those dispositions and characteristics of stars teachers, since they have been identified as those most likely to remain and preserve in this environment. This can be achieved by providing professional development opportunities that are extensively rooted in the continual growth of teachers, such as personal reflection or participating in action research (Briars and Resnick, 2000).

Without question urban, high-poverty schools need a star teacher in every classroom. Providing data that document why those teachers who are effective with diverse student populations remain, even in the most challenging settings, extends the line of research inquiry about what colleges of education as well as urban high-poverty school districts can do to address teacher attrition and retention. Until more concentrated efforts are made, students will be the most vulnerable, and will suffer the effects of the "revolving door," all too common to urban high-poverty schools.

While this study has illuminated important aspects of urban education, many questions remain. We consider, (a) the recruitment and retention of effective male teachers and (b) the long-term versus immediate efficacy of popular recruitment practices to constitute two of the most pressing issues facing those concerned with urban education. Tantamount to the issue of recruitment and retention of male teachers is that of identifying gender-specific characteristics of star teachers. Enhanced research efforts to this end could be applied through extensions of the present study and those cited within it. Findings from such studies could inform gender-specific recruitment and retention practices, which could also be studied in situ as opportunity allows.

Additionally, more generalized recruitment and retention practices need greater attention from researchers particularly with regard to star teachers. Once star teachers are identified, it becomes imperative that they receive the necessary support that allows them to stay and change lives. Studies that focus on what star teachers consider to be effective retention support are needed. It is equally important that these data are collected from participants representing all levels of teaching experience, as we speculate that changes in the support needed will be tied to experience, as have been suggested in other areas of teaching.

Our suggestions for future lines of research only constitute a fraction of what we need to know to improve our urban schools, but the findings developed from them will add considerably to the body of knowledge. Arguably, effective urban teachers are the most important element in the march toward improvement. As such, it is clear that continued research regarding star teachers is critically important in continuing to amass evidence that informs our understandings of who are effective urban teachers and how best to support them.

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