

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: AN ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPAL ATTRITION  
IN A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Douglas W. Anthony, Doctor of Education, 2016

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Principal attrition is a national problem particularly in large urban school districts. Research confirms that schools that serve high proportions of children living in poverty have the most difficulty attracting and retaining competent school leaders. Principals who are at the helm of high poverty schools have a higher turnover rate than the national average of three to four years and higher rates of teacher attrition. This leadership turnover has a fiscal impact on districts and negatively affects student achievement. Research identifies a myriad of reasons why administrators leave the role of principal: some leave the position for retirement; some exit based on difficulty of the role and lack of support; and some simply leave for other opportunities within and outside of the profession altogether. As expectations for both teacher and learner performance drive the national education agenda, understanding how to keep effective principals in their jobs is critical.

This study examined the factors that principals in a large urban district identified as potentially affecting their decisions to stay in the position. The study utilized a multi-dimensional, web-based questionnaire to examine principals' perceptions regarding contributing factors that impact tenure. Results indicated that:

- having a quality teaching staff and establishing a positive work-life balance were important stay factors for principals;
- having an effective supervisor and collegial support from other principals, were helpful supports; and
- having adequate resources, time for long-term planning, and teacher support and resources were critical working conditions.

Taken together, these indicators were the most frequently cited factors that would keep principals in their positions. The results were used to create a framework that may serve as a potential guide for addressing principal retention.

AN ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPAL ATTRITION IN A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL  
DISTRICT

By

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## **DEDICATION**

To my wife Nikki, you are the love of my life and forever my soul mate. I love you!

To the two best children a father could ask for, Alexander and Lauren, anything is possible with God in your life.... just look at what Daddy accomplished!

To my Dad, Betty, and Ellen, all of you have always been my biggest cheerleaders and made me feel like there was nothing I couldn't do. Thanks for always being there for me.

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## Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Adequate Yearly Progress	A measure by which schools and districts are held accountable for student academic progress, as outlined by the federal legislation, No Child Left Behind.
Attrition	A term used to describe voluntary and involuntary terminations, deaths and employee retirements that result in a reduction to the employer's physical workforce.
Common Core	National learning standards that indicate what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level.
Churn	Heightened principal turnover
Cross Tabulation	A two-way frequency table representing data based upon two identified groups of principals either leaving the principal profession within one to three years or those expressing that they would remain in the profession four or more years.
Demographics	Characteristics of a population that include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, poverty level, academic performance level etc.
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)	Federal legislation that is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act. It provides federal funding for school districts that adhere to administering annual basic skills tests.
Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)	A group of states partnered together to develop a set of common assessments for students.
Questionnaire	A research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. This term will be used interchangeably with the word survey.
Retention	The act of keeping and engaging talented and high performing employees in the district.
Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)	An objective assessment of a student's reading comprehension level.

## **Section I. Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

Principal attrition is a national problem particularly in large urban school districts. Students who live in neighborhoods under extreme circumstances of poverty, crime, and other social ills often attend schools that have the most difficulty attracting and retaining a highly effective principal (Beteille, Kalagrides, & Loeb, 2012). The average tenure of a principal is three to four years and even shorter in low performing, high poverty schools (Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010). More specifically, the turnover rate for principals can be as high as 30% annually, particularly in academically underachieving schools that serve large populations of minority and poor students (Beteille et al., 2012). “Poorly performing schools and those with high concentration of poor students not only experience much higher principal turnover rates than other schools, but they are also unable to attract experienced new principals when vacancies arise” (Beteille et al., 2012, p. 905).

In 2011, Mid Atlantic School District X principals in the lowest performing schools had an average of one year of experience while the average tenure of principals in the highest performing schools held an average of 11.8 years of experience (MASD X, 2011). What’s more, two principals in the lowest performing schools were new to their schools and to the position. In 2013 about 47% of the principals in Mid Atlantic School District X had less than five years of experience in their roles as principal (MASD X, 2013).

## **Consequences of Principal Attrition**

A statewide study in Texas that examined the relationship between principal characteristics and student achievement found that there were patterns associated with high teacher turnover and low student outcomes when compared against principal tenure (Fuller, Baker, & Young, 2007). Retention of effective teachers has been found to be largely the result of having an effective principal (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). A second study conducted by Fuller in 2012 reiterated the negative impact of principal turnover. A quote from a child in one of the schools directly affected by this issue illuminates the impact of this national problem. “No one knows who I am,” exclaimed a senior in a high-poverty, predominantly minority and low performing high school in the Austin area. She explained, “I have been at this school four years and had four principals and six algebra I teachers” (Fuller 2012, p. 1). Data from this same study indicated that the first school to be closed by the state for low performance was a high school that had been led by 13 principals in the 11 years preceding closure. The school also had a teacher turnover rate of 25% for almost every one of the 11 years, and more than 30% for seven of those years.

Another comparable statewide study conducted in Missouri assessed leadership stability by examining principal characteristics, principal career pathways, and school level factors (Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010). This study found that given any starting point, about half of the principals are no longer principals in the state after five years, and about three-fourths of them have moved to another school at least once (Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010). The researchers also identified the Fuller et al. (2007) study as a potential comparison study given the similarities in some of the findings.

From a local perspective, at a November 2014 Board of Education meeting, a Mid Atlantic School District X parent stated that he wanted to withdraw his daughter from one of the more challenging middle schools because she had four principals from her time entering as a sixth grader to her current year as an eighth grader (Parent, BOE MASD X, 2014).

A district's inability to retain effective principals creates a variance in student achievement that resonates throughout all aspects of the district. In addition to affecting teacher retention and student achievement, it also creates a financial burden to the district, particularly in the areas of recruitment and training. As reflected in Browne-Ferrigno and Muth's (2010) research, "...the actions of principals and teachers—those individuals who lead schools and meet daily with children—most directly affect school success, and research on high-performing schools shows a direct link between student achievement and effective principal leadership" (p. 19). A 2014 report on principal turnover issued by the School Leaders Network (2014) noted that increasing principal retention rates to that of affluent schools could save the U.S. school districts \$163 million annually.

According to a report issued by the Wallace Foundation (2012), students in high poverty schools have the most to lose when there are high principal turnover rates in schools. Securing and retaining a highly effective principal in the schools that serve high poverty communities is the only way to address this national issue. Another study, from the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, examined the relationship between a principal's experience and student outcomes to find a positive correlation (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). Taken together, the findings of Branch

et al. (2013) and Clark et al. (2009) demonstrate that leadership does, in fact, have an impact on student achievement (Branch et al., 2013; Clark et al., 2009).

High principal attrition also negatively impacts school culture. Partlow and Ridenour (2008) contend that school reform efforts designed to increase student achievement can be hampered and ineffectively implemented by inexperienced leaders. Partlow and Ridenour note that meaningful reform can take five to seven years and must take place at the school level through a gradual change in culture. Obviously, principal attrition impacts this process. Bateille et al. (2012) profess, "...turnover may undermine reform efforts and reduce employee buy in, fracture professional networks developed among employees and leadership, create unclear goals and expectations, and make for a less stable and desirable working environment" (p. 916). Moreover, if the principal position is one that is in a continual state of flux, there is a high probability that the teaching staff in the building will dwindle; subsequently, the investment of training new staff will be perpetuated by ongoing costs (Bateille et al., 2012).

In summary, ineffectively addressing principal attrition comes at a cost to a district and a significant portion of that loss could be eliminated through recruiting and retaining highly effective principals (Gifford, 2010).

**Scope of the problem.** Principal departure is a concern on both a national and state level. Nationally, the magnitude of the concern is evident in numerous reports and national discourse. For example, in October 2014 a report, "Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover" was released by the School Leaders Network (School Leaders Network, 2014). Also in October 2014, The Wallace Foundation published an article titled, "Beyond Buses, Boilers and Books: Instructional Support Takes Center Stage for

Principal Supervisors” (Syed, 2014). Later in November 2014, Quality Measures: Partnership Effectiveness Continuum, an instructional examination process tool designed to help principal training providers support principal development was released by the Wallace Foundation (King, 2014). November 2014 also marked the occasion of the Education Trust National Conference, at which a strand dedicated exclusively to school leadership was established as the focal point and drove the agenda for all dialogue at the conference (Education Trust Conference, 2014). A session titled, *A League of Their Own: Ensuring Strong Principals for High Need Schools* emphasized the importance of retaining effective principals in the most challenging schools.

According to a 2012 Rand Report, “Over one-fifth of new principals leave within two years and those placed in schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress targets are more likely to leave” (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012, p. xii). A 2014 National Center for Education Statistics report that examined national principal attrition and mobility reported that of the 10,270 public school principals who had left their positions during the 2012-2013 school year, over half had less than five years of experience. Specifically, 3,880 had less than three years of experience and 2,650 had three to five years of experience (Goldring & Taie, 2014).

The aforementioned data validates the importance of effective and sustained leadership by documenting the financial cost of principal turnover, identifying tools for those that support principal development, and showcasing effective strategies on principal retention and development from practitioners.

**Scope of the problem in Mid Atlantic School District X.** Mid Atlantic School District X, which has a large proportion of high poverty schools, experienced a 49.5%

principal turnover rate between 2009 and 2012, with 2011 being the highest at 21%. As noted earlier, in 2011, there was a gap of about 11 years between the experience of principals in the lowest performing schools and those in the highest performing schools. The lowest performing schools were defined using the statewide assessments. In four of the most challenging schools in 2011, there was a complete change in the principal leading the school, and two of the principals were new to the role of principal altogether. At the beginning of the 2014 school year, each of those schools was being led by a new principal. To further illustrate this point, Mid Atlantic School District X examined the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) scores of the 25 lowest performing elementary schools during the 2013-2014 school year. Only six of the current principals were at their respective schools prior to the 2009-2010 school year. Therefore, the remaining 19 or 75% of the schools had principals that served in the position for four years or less.

During 2011–2013, student performance data indicate that Mid Atlantic School District X students taking the statewide assessment reflects subpar performance when compared against state performance data in reading and math, and has decreased at grades 3 and 5 since 2011. Additionally, student performance when disaggregated by ethnicity indicates that no subgroup met the standard or Adequate Yearly Progress (MASD X Transition Report, 2014).

Principal mobility during this time frame was fluctuating. As mentioned, the turnover rate in Mid Atlantic School District X in 2011 was 21% and only slightly lower in the subsequent years. The most challenging schools in Mid Atlantic School District X also had the highest frequency in principal turnover.



Mid Atlantic School District X performance data reflect in part how the instability in the principal position at several of the schools can have an impact on the instability, fluctuation, and variance in the overall district scores. Refer to Table 1.

Table 1

*Mid Atlantic School District X Performance on State Assessment*

Grade Level	MASD X			State			
	Year	2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013
Grade 3 Reading		79.1	78.6	75.7	85.1	85.0	82.6
Grade 3 Math		78.0	80.0	76.3	86.3	87.8	82.2
Grade 5 Reading		83.9	84.1	81.5	90.2	89.9	88.4
Grade 5 Math		72.6	75.5	68.1	82.3	85.3	80.9
Grade 8 Reading		70.8	69.6	71.4	82.7	80.8	81.0
Grade 8 Math		43.7	50.4	51.8	66.1	69.3	67.0
HSA English		70.5	73.7	72.9	81.7	83.1	83.0
HSA 3 Algebra		67.8	67.7	67.7	83.6	83.9	84.2
HSA 3 Biology		63.8	65.7	65.5	81.3	81.7	82.6

**Reasons Principals Leave the Position**

Research indicates that principals leave their positions for several reasons. The complexities of the school setting such as student demographics, teacher proficiency, staff experience, community support, parent engagement, and historical academic success of the school have all been identified as key drivers in a principal’s decision to leave a school. Naturally, retirement and opportunities for advancement also contribute to the attrition in the principal ranks. Moreover, principal attrition can also be the result of a

poor performing principal being asked to leave the position. All of these reasons taken together speak to the complexity of the role of principal and the impact an effective principal can have on a school, thus adding another layer to this issue of attrition.

Table 2 indicates selected research that has examined the reasons why principals leave their positions. In all the studies identified here, none of the reasons identified included performance. The table provides an overview of some of the key drivers of principal attrition in several of the studies available in the literature. As noted in the table, most data that were used to examine principal attrition and retention were extracted from large state data sets that contained personnel records. Among the eight studies noted in the table, the primary factors associated with principal attrition were mostly related to school demographics. These were defined as the characteristics of the student population, (i.e., high poverty) geography, (i.e., rural, urban, suburban), experience of the teaching staff, and achievement data associated with the school. Principals preferred schools with less challenging populations and fewer at-risk students and more optimal working conditions. While each of the studies approached the analysis of their respective data differently, the similarities in what they identified as drivers for departure were apparent.

Examples of some of the research include Beteille, Kalogrides and Loeb (2012), who documented that principals in the most challenging schools tend to have the shortest tenure and are subsequently replaced by less experienced, less effective principals. Another study that examined longitudinal data from Illinois and North Carolina showed that principals in majority-minority schools are more likely to transfer or leave the profession altogether (Gates et al., 2006). Loeb et al. (2010) also found that many

principals prefer to work in schools with fewer at-risk students and favorable working conditions, i.e., safe, well-resourced, etc. Loeb's study also found that schools with the largest proportion of poor students were more likely to have a first year principal than those schools that enrolled the fewest number of poor students. Papa (2007) conducted a study that looked at the impact of salary, school characteristics, and principal traits as factors on principal retention. Papa used a large data set to run a multivariate analysis on principal retention. Findings of this study suggest that principals are more likely to leave schools offering lower salaries and with a higher percentage of certain students, including nonwhite students and those with Limited English Proficiency, and with higher percentages of uncertified teachers. Research conducted by Papa (2007) aligns with the Loeb et al. study in suggesting that schools with higher proportions of at-risk students and less qualified teachers are highly disadvantaged with respect to attracting and retaining effective principals. Similarly, Fuller et al. (2007) explored the relationships between school principals' characteristics, the school-level measures of teacher quality and turnover, and school-level student achievement on the state-mandated Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. The researchers found that teacher quality and teacher turnover could be associated with principal characteristics. More specifically, those principals had a direct impact on student achievement through their ability to hire and retain effective teachers. Gifford (2010) conducted a survey that involved 67 principals in 11 school districts across the state of Rhode Island. The researcher examined the major reasons contributing to the principal vacancies. The survey asked principals to identify their three greatest concerns about being a principal. The two top concerns were identified as funding and central administration. Tied for third, the greatest concerns

Table 2

*Diverse Principal Attrition*

Researcher(s)	YOS	No. of Participants	Drivers for Departure
Beteille et al.	2012	n = 360+ Schools	School Demographics
DeAngelis & White	2010	n = 7,075 Principals	Personal Preferences School Demographics
Baker et al.	2010	n = 2,700 Principals	Salary School Demographics
Loeb et al.	2010	n = 326 Principals	School Demographics
Partlow & Ridenour	2008	n = 120 Schools	School Type (Urban, Rural)
Fuller et al.	2007	n = 675 Schools and Principals	Principal Characteristics School Demographics
Papa Jr., F.	2007	n = Large State Data Set	School Demographics Principal Characteristics Salary
Gates et al.	2006	n = Large State	School Demographics

Note. N = Number of Participants  
YOS = Year of Study

expressed were mandates and impact on culture. Principals espoused "... [I] felt that central administration was lacking in areas of general support and funding for programming" (Gifford, 2010, p. 67). Wade et al. (2007), contend that principal preparation programs are insufficient in preparing principals for the diverse needs of special education students and the teachers that teach them.

With the onslaught of teacher evaluation reform efforts, the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessments, and the increasing emphasis on student achievement as a significant measure of a principal's evaluation, retaining an effective principal that can navigate these initiatives and, more importantly, thrive in this highly accountable environment is critical. The complexity of the charge to school principals, coupled with the requirements under No Child Left Behind, exacerbates the dilemma.

**Characteristics, structures, and working conditions.** The drivers for departure that were captured in the literature review can largely be categorized in three ways: Principal Characteristics, Structures, and Working Conditions. Principal Characteristics can be described or defined as those identifiers that are unique to the principal. For example, a principal's gender, ethnicity, college degree, teaching experience, or lack thereof are all characteristics specific to the individual principal. Based on the literature, structures can be described or defined as those supports put in place to help a principal carry out his or her responsibilities. An example of such a support is whether a principal has a mentor, or if he meets regularly with his supervisor to discuss data or instruction. Structures can come in many forms; hence, understanding what structures have proven to be most helpful for principals can be advantageous. Working conditions are both the observable factors and personal preferences of a principal. For example, the age of the school itself and the experience of the teaching staff are observable factors that impact a principal's leadership experience. A highly transient student body or economically disadvantaged student body may lend itself to a principal's preference in the school type he or she would choose to lead. The characteristics of the principal, the structures in place

to support a principal, and the working conditions afforded the principal are all important factors and influencers in a principal's decision to stay in the position. Taken together, these characteristics, structures, and working conditions are the impetus for the development of a Retention Conceptual Framework presented in Section II in this document and provide a context for examining the phenomena of principal attrition.

**Natural attrition – retirement.** Among other reasons for principal attrition is retirement. A national study of principal attrition and mobility (Goldring & Taie, 2014) reports that of the individuals that left the principalship in 2012-2013, 38% of public school principals and 30% of private school principals left due to retirement. DeAngelis and White (2010) reported that among those principals that serve to the end of their tenures in a district, many go on to serve in roles that support the school district or state in other capacities.

**Departure for other employment opportunities.** There is little to no existing data or literature that provides clinical insight as to what career paths principals who leave the principalship take if they do not take a principal position in another school. One national study of public school principals who left their positions found that 54% moved to another public school in the same school district (Goldring & Taie, 2014). In a study of principal turnover in the state of Illinois, the researchers echoed the sentiment that nationally there is not much data in the field on where principals go after they leave the principalship (DeAngelis & White, 2011). Also acknowledged in this same study was the fact that younger principals often left the principalship altogether for positions in education that were not in the public sector. In 2011, Mid Atlantic School District X reorganized and created 12 principal supervisor positions of which ten were filled by

sitting principals who expressed a desire for a career opportunity outside of the principal position. Additionally, fourteen principals left their principal roles to assume central office roles in human resources and staff development (MASD X, 2014). This mass exodus suggests that opportunities for career alternatives other than the principalship play a part in principal attrition.

**An increasingly complex role.** The role of the principal has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 created a different context for defining the responsibilities of a principal in much the same way as it did for teachers. The Race to the Top competition that spun from NCLB continues to inform and highlight the national conversation on leadership. Both suggest that having an effective principal is critical to student success.

The Wallace Foundation identifies five pivotal practices essential for instructional leadership:

1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards;
2. Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail;
3. Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision;
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost; and
5. Managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement.

Each of these practices is complex and requires a principal to have a tremendous skill set in a variety of areas (The Wallace Foundation, 2012).

The Mid Atlantic School District X created Leadership Standards and indicators that reinforce the expectations and responsibilities of a principal and are used in the annual evaluation of leadership personnel. Figure 1 highlights the standards that were created to show alignment of a principal's responsibility in the Mid Atlantic School District X.

### **The Impact of an Effective Principal**

An effective principal has an impact on many things in a schoolhouse. Student achievement is of the highest priority and a principal's ability to grow and develop his or her educators is critical. It is also apparent that teacher tenure has a direct correlation with the principal leading the school (Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2013). Teachers are more likely to stay in the school where there is an effective principal (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011). Teachers often cite leadership as the number one factor in remaining or leaving a school. A teacher's professional practice can also be improved with an effective principal (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Principals that provide feedback and have meaningful instructional conversations with their teachers are more likely to help improve a teacher's instructional capacity.

A working definition that has been used by the MASD X Principal Evaluation work group suggests that a highly effective leader is one that has a laser-like focus on student achievement, and has the ability to assess, evaluate and cultivate teachers to be high performing (MASD X, 2011). Moreover, the focus on instructional management



requires the principal to analyze data, provide strategic professional development, evaluate teaching and learning effectively, and communicate the direction, vision, goals

- Standard I.** The MASD X principal sets high expectations for achievement based upon individualized tailoring of instruction, rigorous data analysis, and evaluation of the effective instructional practices.
- Standard II.** The MASD X principal sets standards for ensuring school-wide instructional and achievement goals are met based upon implementation of effective pedagogical practices, data analysis and monitoring of research-based instructional practices.
- Standard III.** The MASD X principal monitors effective instructional practices through observation and evaluation.
- Standard IV.** The MASD X principal builds a shared vision, fosters shared goals, and communicates high performance expectations.
- Standard V.** The MASD X principal demonstrates a commitment to excellence, equity, and innovation.
- Standard VI.** The MASD X principal demonstrates human resource and managerial leadership.
- Standard VII.** The MASD X principal demonstrates strong external leadership, family and community engagement.
- Standard VIII.** The MASD X principal demonstrates knowledge of the use of technology and data.

*Figure 1.* Representation of Mid Atlantic School District X Leadership Standards. Data obtained from Mid Atlantic School District X 2011 Principal Evaluation Report.

and mission of the school. The Mid Atlantic School District X working definition also espouses the need for a highly effective leader to be one that shares in the decision-making and is strategic (MASD X, 2011). Shared decision making requires a principal to understand the importance of collaboration, and developing strong teams and professional learning communities. Having enough flexibility in thought to access the

strengths of staff members and problem-solve effectively in a variety of contexts is paramount.

Both the Mid Atlantic School District X Leader Standards and the working internal definition identify that a highly effective leader is able to discern, balance, and facilitate the managerial aspects of the work with the visionary aspects of the position (MASD X, 2011). Additionally, highly effective leaders must facilitate budget, facilities, personnel, political, community, and other matters with efficiency and integrity (MASD X, 2011). With these responsibilities and others, the expectations placed on principals illuminate the impact they have on a school. Understanding the data on principal tenure and turnover rates, then, will be important in addressing the impact on the schoolhouse.

**Principal tenure data.** There are many reasons for principal turnover and the subsequent turnover rate. One consistent theme in all of the research is the desire for many principals to lead less challenging schools, those schools with fewer high poverty, high minority student populations (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012). As the researchers unpacked this theme, they uncovered another theme that suggested the working conditions were more difficult in the more challenging schools (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012). Everything from inferior facilities and inadequate instructional resources to less qualified staff and salary differentials create additional challenges on top of an already challenging position (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012). Principal tenure trends illuminate the principal turnover rate and the instability in leadership. For instance, the average tenure rate in the United States is three to four years (Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010). In the most challenging high poverty, economically disadvantaged, and low performing schools the tenure is even shorter (Seashore-Louis, et

al., 2010). For example, in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, principals in the lowest performing schools had an average of 2.5 years of experience at the school, while the average tenure of principals in the highest performing schools was 5.1 years (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010).

In Mid Atlantic School District X, (2011) principals in the lowest performing schools had an average of 1 year of experience at the school while the average tenure of principals in the highest performing schools had an average of 11.8 years of experience. Two of the principals in the lowest performing schools were new to the school and the position altogether. Currently, about 47% of the principals in MASD X have less than five years of experience in their roles as principals (MASD X, 2013). Table 3 identifies the types of schools in Mid Atlantic School District X and the years of experience of the principal at the school, from first year principals to five years in the building, and from five years of experience and up.

The average turnover rates for principals range from about 15% to 30% but are even higher in the most challenging schools (Hull, 2012). The overall principal turnover rate in Mid Atlantic School District X in 2011 was 21%. The turnover rate in the five most challenging schools, as defined by the State Department of Education Division of School Improvement factors, in Mid Atlantic School District X in 2011 was 40%.

According to the Beteille et al. study, the annual principal turnover rate in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (2003-2009) was 22%, not unlike many other large urban districts such as Milwaukee Public Schools at 20% (2000-2008), San Francisco Unified School District at 26% (2003-2009), and New York City at 24% (1999-2008). In Miami-Dade, the turnover rate rose to 28% in the most challenging schools and decreased to 18% in the

lowest poverty, less challenged schools (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012). In 2011, the Wallace Foundation extended the Wallace Principal Pipeline Initiative Grant to six large urban school districts. Taken together, the average turnover rate for principals in the six districts was 14%. Both tenure and turnover rates influence principal retention. Equally important is that in most instances when a challenging school loses an effective principal, that principal is usually replaced by a less experienced and less effective principal (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012).

### **Attempts to Solve Problem of Principal Attrition**

A survey of the literature and local and state policy indicates that, nationally, there have been a variety of approaches to address principal attrition, but somewhat indirectly. Both the State Department of Education and the Mid Atlantic School District X system have also attempted to address this issue through various means.

**National attempts to decrease attrition.** There has been expansive dialogue on the national level about leadership and principal development. In many districts, the resolution has been to create a Turnaround Model or Turnaround Principal experience for the most challenging schools (Hull, 2012). While “Turnaround” efforts may address the issue of preparing a principal to lead a more challenging school, they do not resolve the attrition of principals in these schools, specifically the retention issue. Another common national approach to address this issue is to build stronger principal pipelines and in doing so, have a stronger candidate pool (Browne-Ferrigno, & Muth, 2010).

The Wallace Foundation, foremost experts in principal development, has leveraged research over the last ten years to address attrition by suggesting that stronger principal pipelines can remedy this problem (The Wallace Foundation, 2012).

Table 3

*Mid Atlantic School District X Principal Tenure Rates 2011*

School Type	No. of Principals 0 to 5 Years Experience	No. of Principals 5 or More Years Experience	Total No. of Principals
Charter	6	2	8
K - 8	4	7	11
Education Center	0	1	1
Elementary	54	69	123
Middle	15	9	24
High	13	15	28
Special Education	2	5	7
Total	94	108	202

According to the Wallace Foundation, there are four key components essential to building a sustainable pipeline: (1) Development of leader standards; (2) Pre-service preparation; (3) Selective hiring; and (4) On-the-job support. This notion that better preparation programs will, in effect, build better principals is important and useful. However, principal pipelines largely address how new principals are prepared and not necessarily how they are retained. While some principal training programs and some targeted professional development experiences can have an impact on the effectiveness of a principal, they don't equate directly to principal attrition indicators (Hull, 2012). The research largely addresses this issue indirectly, but no direct strategies on the issue to keep effective principals in place have been widely shared, promoted, or researched. If

districts do not change the practice of placing new principals in the most challenging schools, then preparation programs alone will not resolve the attrition issue.

**Statewide initiatives and complementary policies.** Statewide attempts to address the issue of principal attrition have largely been centered on support and regulations. The Mid Atlantic School District X's State Department of Education has established a Breakthrough Center and Leadership Office geared at the most challenging schools, i.e., Turnaround Schools. This office is charged with supporting all schools with school improvement efforts in teaching and learning, but with a particular emphasis on Title I schools and the lowest performing schools in the state. The goals are to provide technical support and intervention strategies to successfully assist the schools in "turning around" their current data trends. Additionally, the State Department of Education has enacted a policy around a stronger Principal Induction program that affords a level of ongoing support of principals in their early years of service to stem the tide of attrition. This policy is part of the State Code of Annotated Regulations and requires local school systems to articulate and create a robust induction program for novice administrators. The principal induction policy requires that the local superintendent certify its effectiveness and verify that all of the elements of the principal induction program were in place by September 2014 (COMAR, 2013). In reviewing this regulation, an emphasis on novice principals is apparent. However, an explicit strategic approach to address attrition is not apparent at the state level. While a staffing report on the attrition rates of teachers is available and reported by the district to the state, no such data for principal attrition is available, nor is it required reporting to the state.

**Local attempts.** The MASD X Board Policy 0119, *Theory of Action* addresses principal empowerment (2008). Giving principals the opportunity to make decisions and a significant level of autonomy is the intent of the policy. This policy was put in place to give students that were making consistent regular and optimal gains on the state assessments some flexibility. At the same time, this policy was put in place to ensure that a differentiated approach to support was given to those schools and principals who were not meeting the adequate yearly progress necessary on state assessments. The schools were reorganized this way for a few years as a result of this policy. However, leveraging autonomy as a means for principal retention has yet to be examined as a potential strategy. In terms of resources, there are at least two major initiatives that have recently been implemented within MASD X to address leadership development. In 2011, MASD X was the recipient of a large philanthropic grant that was designed to help support principal and leadership development. There are several activities in the grant that are consistent with what the research says about principal development. There is a mentoring program that supports both novice principals and aspiring principals alike. There is a curriculum for selected assistant principals primed for principalship that was developed by the MASD X with the National Institute of School Leadership. There are partnerships with local universities that promote other activities and certification requirements for aspiring administrators. Through the yearly renewal process conducted by the grantor, MASD X is continuing to successfully effectuate change through implementation of this grant. However, the grant itself does not provide for all of the possible solutions to this issue of attrition and retention for more seasoned administrators. A second initiative was the Race to the Top (RttT) award received by MASD X, which required the district to

address the issue of leadership development. There were several programs inside of the RttT initiatives to support leadership development. Specific leadership activities inside of the RttT grant were the New Leaders program, the School Leaders Network, and the university degree and certification programs. Each one of the programs focused on differentiated professional development. While the RttT initiative supported leadership development, it did not explicitly address principal attrition or retention. One might argue that capacity building supports retention. However, the projects were not developed specifically to address retaining our most effective principals. This may have been a lost opportunity. Thus, despite the advantages of having a large private grant and the RttT resources, MASD X does not have an informed strategy or initiative designed to retain effective principals.

### **Purpose of This Study**

This study sought to address the issue of retention of effective principals in MASD X, a district comprised of high poverty, low performing schools, and large student and teacher ethnic populations. The following research questions will formulate the basis of this investigation:

1. Are there common characteristics of the principals that choose to stay in their schools?
2. Are there particular structures in place that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?
3. Are there particular working conditions that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?



A multi-dimensional web-based questionnaire was developed to examine principal perceptions in relation to contributing factors that impact their tenures. The questionnaire consisted of 56 ranking, multiple choice, or likert scale type questions. Importantly, the researcher leveraged the ranking questions in a slightly more precise manner than the others to identify additional data in relation to principal attrition.

The researcher analyzed the results to identify factors that contributed to principal attrition within MASD X. More specifically, the researcher analyzed those responses and compared them to several of the existing research studies reflected in the reference section. Lastly, the researcher leveraged the evidence collected on those identified characteristics, structures, and conditions that influenced a principal's decision to stay, to construct a framework for principal retention. The framework was submitted to the leadership of MASD X for consideration in its principal preparation and retention efforts.

## Section II. Investigation

This study examined the perceptions of principals regarding principal attrition. The working hypothesis was taken from a review of the literature to date on this topic. Researchers on this topic have indicated that there were several factors that influenced a principal's decision to stay or leave the position. However, the complexity of the job responsibilities of an urban school principal in today's era of Common Core implementation, the new student assessments, and the new teacher and principal evaluation systems is a completely different context than that when most of the research on this topic was conducted. Therefore, a different analysis of the principal characteristics, structures, and working conditions was done to identify possible solutions to this issue.

**Research questions and definitions.** This quantitative study examined the phenomena of principal attrition. The following research questions were addressed:

1. Are there common characteristics of the principals that choose to stay in their schools?
2. Are there particular structures in place that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?
3. Are there particular working conditions that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?

Principal characteristics were defined as those features of an individual's characteristics that are measurable. For example, characteristics of one principal might be: Bachelor of Arts Degree in Science, taught for eight years, is male, and worked in Title 1 schools his entire career. Structures were defined as the school system's way of

organizing its support to school principals. For example, structures might be defined for one principal as: (1) The Principal received mentoring for the first three years of her tenure; (2) The principal's immediate supervisor visited her once a week for the first year; and (3) The principal attending monthly professional development training sessions presented by central office. Working conditions were defined as the actual work-life experience for the principal. For example, working conditions for a principal might be defined as: (1) The principal works in a 48-year-old building with facility issues; (2) Seventy-five percent of the teaching staff is brand new; and (3) The crime rate of the school neighborhood is 50% above the state average.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The researcher examined evidence from the literature pertaining to the characteristics, structures, and conditions that influence principal attrition and titled this model, the *Attrition Conceptual Framework* (see Figure 2). This framework provides the foundation for the development of a Retention Framework since it reflects the factors that have consistently been identified in the research as influencing a principal's decision to stay in or leave the position. In the framework, the first column identifies the characteristics of principals, i.e., degree attained, years of experience, etc. The arrows in the framework serve as an indicator for the stages or steps in considering retention strategies. The first category is structures. Structures category speaks to items like mentoring, professional development and supervisory support. The second category in the framework, working conditions, speaks to identifiers like the composition of the student body, teaching staff experience, community involvement, etc. If the structures and conditions that are in place are positive factors for a principal, then the likelihood of

a principal staying in the position is higher. If the converse is true and the structures and conditions are negative factors for a principal, then it is less likely a principal will remain in the position. The framework served as a starting point for framing and developing the survey questions.

## **Methods**

The following section discusses the methods that were used to address the research questions.

**Design.** This study used a quantitative process to examine the perceptions of school principals in Mid Atlantic School District X regarding the influence of certain factors on principals' decisions to stay in the position at their current schools. Through the use of this approach, the researcher had the opportunity to identify and attempt to isolate specific variables and look at the frequency and relationships among variables. The purpose of a correlational method is to "investigate the extent to which variations in one factor correspond with variations in one or more other factors based on correlation coefficients" (Isaac & Michael, 1990, p.49).

The study employed a web-based survey using Qualtrics software. Qualtrics software was used to distribute the questionnaire and analyze the responses. Additionally, strategies outlined in Czaja and Blair's, *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedure* (2005) were used to address question and response formats and plans for handling missing or inaccurate data. For example, the survey included ranking questions with an answer choice of "other" to capture any potential answers not identified in the survey.

**Developing the survey.** The questionnaire was constructed using several questions that were modified and adapted from the 2008 & 2011, RAND Principal Surveys and the Consortium on Chicago Research, 2003 Principal Survey. The

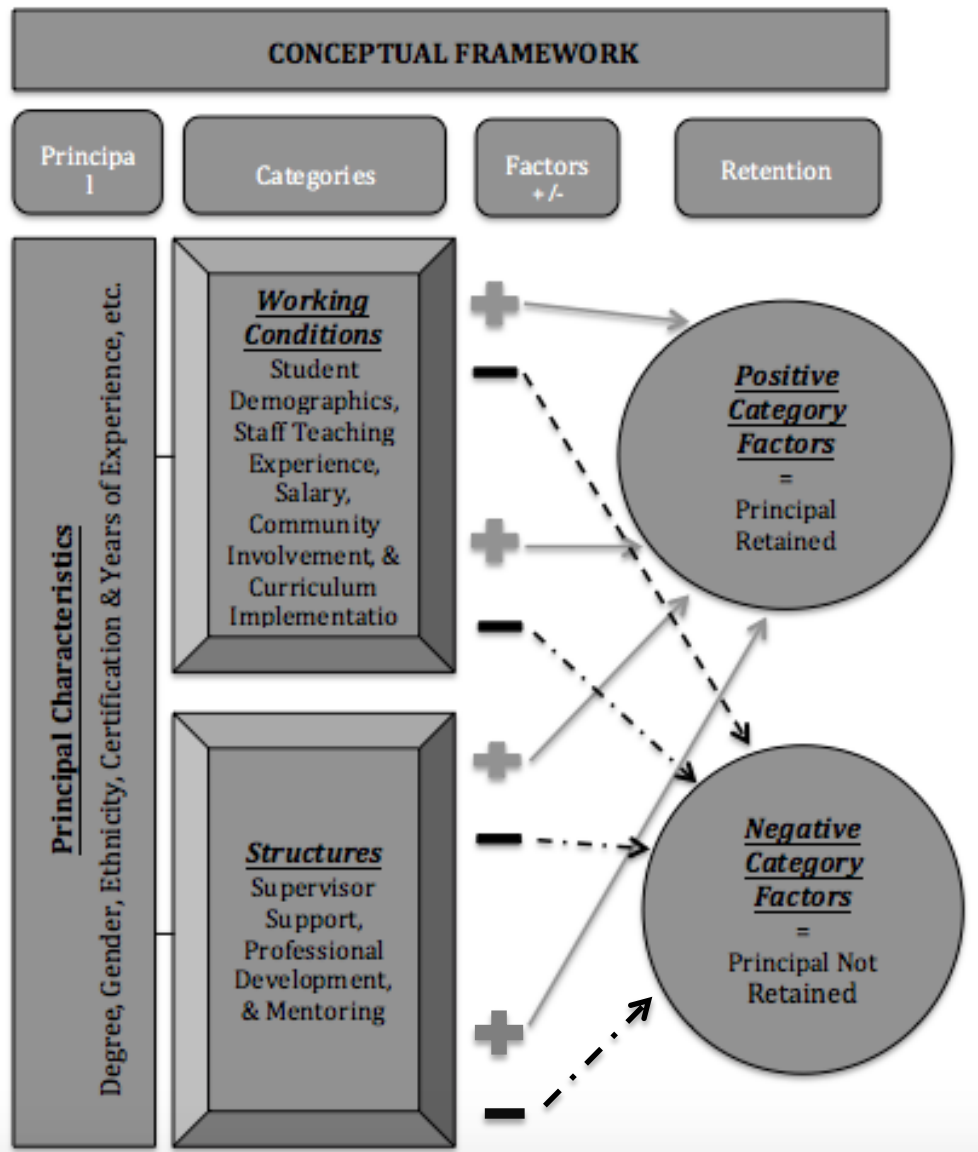


Figure 2. Attrition Conceptual Framework

RAND Principal Survey questions were not proprietary and were available for public use as was the Consortium on Chicago Research survey. Specific questions related to working conditions were taken from these two surveys. (See Appendix A for the survey).

The instrument included questions related to community relations, work conditions, financial rewards, relationship with supervisors, school characteristics, career opportunities, and others (Eckman, 2004). While this survey and others like it served as a basis for getting started, the researcher adapted and modified questions to create a new survey that specifically addressed questions around principal attrition.

Questions were categorized according to elements outlined in the Attrition Conceptual Framework and were categorized in three ways: principal characteristics, structures, and working conditions. The first category, principal characteristics, consisted of questions regarding the background and demographics of the principals in the sample. The second category, structures, identified the types of supports and assistance principals reported as available to them. The third category, working conditions, addressed a variety of conditions including school type, student demographics, compensation, school community involvement, evaluations and state assessments. This category had the most questions as it has a broad range of defining elements. The survey presented items in different formats, ranking, Likert scale, and self-identifier items. Moreover, the researcher applied each of the following *Questionnaire Development Steps* (Czaja & Blair, 2005) to develop the survey:

1. List the research questions.
2. Under each research question, list the survey question topics.
3. List all required ancillary information, background variables, etc.
4. Do a Web and literature search for questions from other surveys.
5. Assess the variable list against the general plans for data analysis.
6. Draft the survey introduction or cover letter.

7. Draft new questions.
8. Propose a question order.
9. Revise “found” questions if necessary.
10. Try out the draft instrument on a colleague.
11. Begin revisions.
12. Periodically “test” revisions on colleagues.

To design a survey instrument that is both valid and has reliability takes time and testing. To assess the merits of the survey questions, the researcher discussed them with a focus group of former principals who now have different roles in the organization. In an effort to understand how the questions could be interpreted and to test the directions, the focus group convened a few times. In addition, the questions were reviewed with the focus group to see if the questions provided a particular ease of use for the end-users, and if the order and flow of the survey made sense. The researcher looked for patterns in responses any particular questions that were commonly misunderstood, and that the survey was logical. The ranking questions proved to be a technical challenge for a few principals, so the format for all of the ranking questions in the final version of the questionnaire was changed. The final questionnaire is in Appendix A.

**Participants.** MASD X is one of the nation’s 25 largest school districts with 207 schools, over 124,000 students, and over 18,000 employees. The school district serves a diverse student population with students that come from over 100 countries and speak over 125 different languages. Over 60% of the district’s students are on Free and Reduced Meals. Participants consisted of all principals in MASD X during the 2014-2015 school year. There were 206 principals in the district who were available to participate in

this research study at the time of the survey distribution. At the time during the 2014-2015 school year, 5% of the principals were new, 76% were African American/Black, 21% Caucasian/White, and less than 1% each for American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander and Multiple Ethnicity or Other. In terms of gender, 74% were female and 26% were male. The principal was the unit of analysis. The overall diversity in the sample afforded more generalizability of the findings and results.

**Procedures.** The study was conducted during August 2015. This month was chosen because the researcher would have opportunities to engage principals in a collective setting during their leadership retreat. Additionally, this time of year is ideal as principals have more availability and time, given their staffs have not returned and classes have not started. Principals in the district were receiving surveys from other students in doctoral programs during the same time period, so coordination and guidance from the district's Research and Evaluation Department was paramount. The researcher worked with the university, the district's executive leadership staff, and the Research and Evaluation Department to make sure the surveys that were disseminated received the proper attention and that respondent fatigue and overload was addressed strategically.

The request to participate in the survey was sent to each of the 206 principals' school system email accounts from a third party email account not associated with the researcher. This was done to maintain a safeguard against bias and participant obligation, given that the researcher is an executive in the school district and works closely with principals, and that participants might feel inclined to answer the survey or even answer in a way that they think will help the researcher. The email stated the purpose of the study and the potential benefit to the district. See Appendix B for the Letter of Consent that was



sent out via email. The email contained a link to the online questionnaire. An informed consent form was provided as the first page of the survey. Participants had to indicate their agreement and consent to participate in the survey by clicking the “I Agree” link on the consent form page in order to continue. Those choosing not to participate were taken to the end of the survey.

Three reminder emails were sent to all 206 principals since the survey was anonymous. The first reminder notice was sent three days after the initial email invitation was sent. A second reminder email was sent seven days after the first reminder email was sent, and then a third email was sent ten days after the first original email was sent.

**Data analysis.** Qualtrics has an extensive and robust reporting mechanism that is easily transferable to the latest statistical packages. Preliminary analyses began using the statistical packages that were embedded in Qualtrics. These preliminary reports provided a descriptive overview of the responses and afforded the researcher the opportunity to identify any anomalies, omissions, incomplete submissions, or duplications for the researcher. The researcher approached analysis by completing the following steps.

Step 1: The frequencies of responses for each survey item were examined. These can be found in Table 4.

Step 2: Because the researcher was interested in examining the group of principals who indicated they intended to leave the position, the researcher combined the responses to the questions: "This is my last year as a principal," and "I plan on remaining a principal for 1-3 more years" into one category (A) referred to as “leavers” and another category (B) that included all respondents who indicated that they would remain in their position for four or more years, referred to as “stayers. A third category (C) was

comprised of those respondents who had indicated that they were unsure regarding whether they would leave or stay in their position.

Step 3: Cross tabulations were run for each survey item by Category A, Category B and Category C. The researcher then examined the percentages of individuals within each response choice by item. For example, 17% of the overall sample indicated that they had a doctorate degree. Among that 17%, the proportion of leavers (Category A) was 44%, in other words little less than half of all those reporting doctorates were in the leaver category. In order to determine if this difference was significant, the researcher applied a decision rule that if there was an 8% or greater difference between the proportion of leavers within a specific response choice and the percentage in the overall sample, a t-test was conducted. Initial data analysis showed that large differences were needed to produce a statistically significant t-test result. Generally the difference was much larger than 10% therefore the researcher chose an 8% benchmark to be somewhat conservative.

Step 4: In the next step, whenever the 8% difference was evident, a two sample t-test was used to compare the percentage of leavers responding to specific item choice (e.g., “agree”, “disagree”, etc.) to the percentage of leavers who chose any other response to the same item. To use the example above of doctorate degrees, a t-test was conducted to test whether there was a significant difference between the 44% responding that they had a doctorate and those leavers who responded that they had another type of degree. For purposes of this study, p-values of less than 0.10 were considered notable and are discussed in the findings.

Step 5: If the results of a t-test was not statistically significant, the researcher repeated steps 3 and 4 by examining Category B (stayers) response choices. Category C respondents were not specifically considered in the analyses.) The researcher wanted to make sure no statistically significant differences were ignored.

**Human subjects review.** All appropriate steps in receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board and the district were taken before conducting the research. A review and analysis of the databases did not cause any harm or risk to any principal in the district. Great care was taken to ensure the identities of all participants were held with the utmost confidentiality. Participation in the survey was completely anonymous and voluntary. Participants did not experience any greater risk than they would typically encounter in their daily work-life. The researcher also made sure his role in the district, for purposes of this study, was understood and was willing, if necessary, to employ a third party to disseminate the surveys. The researcher was extremely clear in explaining the purpose of the study, gaining consent, and sharing the security measures to ensure confidentiality. The researcher also went to great lengths to report honestly and within the appropriate guidelines as to not disclose evidence that would either harm participants or identify them specifically.

**Limitations.** There were a few limitations to this study. One limitation was that principals who were in danger of being removed for poor performance would not be part of the study. Fortunately, there were none identified during the dissemination period.

Another limitation is that the researcher conducted this study with current sitting principals and not those who had already left the position. The perspective of these principals may change over time; thus, not leveraging those who have left the position

was a perspective that would be lost on this study. Another limitation was the fact the survey is only being conducted in the district and thus district context may be limiting. While the researcher would argue that the study results generated can be generalized, it may also be seen as unique and bounded. Another limitation would be the reliance on survey information particularly around the key variables on principal mobility. In a more longitudinal study, the researcher could observe actual principal behavior, such as whether a principal actually leaves or stays. Another limitation would be the position the researcher holds in the system. As mentioned earlier, the positional authority of the researcher may influence responses from the participants.

While the researcher believes that principals will be candid and forthright in their commentary and surveys, they could be reluctant to share information about the district that may be seen or perceived as less than flattering. Conversely, some respondents may feel obligated to steer their responses in a way they think will help the research hypothesis prove true in an effort to help the researcher as a colleague.

### **Section III. Results**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of principals regarding principal attrition. A quantitative analysis was conducted to identify the factors that contribute to principal attrition in order to construct a framework and develop a systemic approach to retain effective principals in MASD X. This chapter will present the findings of the research to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there common characteristics of the principals that choose to stay in their schools?
2. Are there particular structures in place that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?
3. Are there particular working conditions that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?

This study will also discuss the implications the results and findings will have on principal retention in MASD X.

#### **Methods for Sharing Results**

A 56-item questionnaire was sent to 206 principals in the district. Of that number, 148 principals fully completed and submitted the survey, 44 viewed the survey but did not submit it for unknown reasons, 13 did not respond, and one declined to participate for unknown reasons. Of special note, a small number of questions were not answered by all respondents, so there is variance in the number of responses. The overall response rate for the questionnaire was 72%. This relatively high response rate can be attributed to the researcher's role in the district and the strategic timing in which the questionnaire was disseminated. The survey was released during the summer—before school opened for

teachers and students and during the time of a professional learning experience for all MASD X principals—which afforded the researcher opportunities to interact and encourage participation. Table 4 provides the frequencies for the full sample by item.

**Summary frequencies.** A summary of the frequency results for each section of the questionnaire follows here. The frequencies for the characteristics questions indicated that 70% (n=105) of the survey respondents have been at their respective schools seven years or less with 34% (n=51) serving at their schools for three years or less. All of the respondents hold at least a master's degree, while 17% (n=25) of the respondents hold a doctorate degree, and 7% (n=10) of the respondents hold other types of degrees. Moreover, 97% (n=144) of the respondents were former teachers, 76% (n=113) of the respondents were female, and 73% (n=107) of the 148 respondents were African American.

The frequencies for the structures questions indicated that 79% (n=114) of the principals felt that central office priorities are consistent with the school priorities. Moreover, 65% (n=94) of the respondents indicated that central office policies and procedures helped them address the important needs at their schools. There was large agreement, 82% (n=120), around the favorable view of the principal supervisor's ability to support the principal effectively. However, 27 % (n=39) of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that central office did not interfere with decisions at the schoolhouse. Moreover, 28% (n=40) neither agreed nor disagreed with the same statement.

The frequencies for the conditions questions indicated that 73% (n=103) of the respondents felt district policies were clear and consistent. In addition, 86% (n=122) of

the respondents felt the curriculum being used in their schools was aligned to state standards and assessments. However, when determining whether removing poor teachers was a task easily done, 78% (n=110) indicated it was not. Additionally, 80% (n=112) of respondents indicated that day-to-day issues prevent them from having time to long-term plan.

The future plans survey item (Question #14), asked respondents to identify when they planned on leaving their current position. Table 4 shows the frequencies from this survey item. The frequencies show that 3% (n=4) of respondents stated this was their last year, 38% (n=54) plan on remaining a principal 1-3 years, 25% (n=36) plan on remaining a principal 4-6 years, 13% (n=19) plan on remaining a principal indefinitely and 20% (n=29) said they were unsure about their future professional plans. As noted in Section 2, responses were collapsed into three categories. In the total sample, 40.85% of respondents were in Category A, "leavers", 38.73% were in Category B "stayers", and 20.42% were in Category C "unsure.

Table 4

*Frequencies by Questionnaire Items 2 - 5*

	Response Choices	n	%			
Q2 How long have you been a principal at your current school?	0-3	51	34			
	4-7	54	36			
	8-10	17	11			
	>10	26	18			
		148 = Total				
Q3 How long have you been a principal for PGCPs?	0-3	41	28			
	4-7	53	36			
	8-10	18	12			
	>10	36	24			
		148 = Total				
Q4 What is the highest degree attained?	Bachelor's	0	0			
	Master's	113	76			
	Doctorate	25	17			
	Other	10	7			
		148 = Total				
Q5 In what fields do you hold your degrees?	Degree	BA	MA	Ed.D.	Other	Total
	Education	78	131	27	9	245
	Business	6	3	0	1	10
	Engineering	1	0	0	0	1
	Science	11	3	0	0	14
	Mathematics	4	1	0	1	6
	Other	41	12	0	2	55



Table 4 (Continued)

Items 6 - 9

	Response Choices	n	%
Q6 Were you a teacher before you went into administration?	Yes	144	97
	No	4	3
		148 = Total	
If yes to Q6 Q7 How long did you teach before you went into administration?	0-3	4	3
	4-7	53	37
	8-10	38	26
	>10	49	34
		144 = Total	
Q8 What is your gender?	Male	35	
	Female	113	
		148 = Total	
Q9 What best describes your ethnicity?	Am. Indian	0	
	Asian/Pac. Isl.	1	
	Black/African	107	
	Hispanic	3	
	White/Cauc.	32	
	Multiple	3	
	Ethnicity - Other		
	146 = Total		

Table 4 (Continued)

*Item10*

	Response Choices	n	%
Q10 Rank the top three previous experiences that you believe best prepared you for your role as principal	Classroom Teacher	47	44
	Assistant Principal	30	28
	External Program	11	10
	Admin. Prep Program	6	6
	Mentor	4	4
	University Program	4	4
	Other	4	4
	Total	106	

Note. Total number of questions on questionnaire: Number of questions related to principal characteristics = 56:9  
n = Number of responses    % = Percent of responses

Table 4 (Continued)

*Item 11*

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your school?	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Central office priorities are consistent with school's priorities (1)	32	22	82	57	18	12	12	8	1	1	2.09
Often I find it easy to agree with central office policies and procedures (2)	13	9	86	60	27	19	18	12	0	0	2.35
The policies and procedures of the central office help address important needs at my school (3)	13	9	81	56	33	23	17	12	0	0	2.38
The central office does not interfere with our ability to make important decisions at this school (4)	13	9	52	36	40	28	32	22	7	5	2.78
The central office respects the decisions of the principal (5)	20	14	57	40	45	31	20	14	2	1	2.49

Table 4 (Continued)

*Item 11*

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your school?	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The central office is committed to high quality in the implementation of its policies, programs and procedures (6)	30	21	82	57	25	17	7	5	0	0	2.06
The central office clearly communicates its' priorities (7)	35	24	76	53	24	17	7	5	2	1	2.06
The central office supports school level innovation (8)	16	11	72	50	36	25	18	12	3	2	2.45
The central office builds community confidence in your school (9)	10	7	48	34	59	42	22	15	3	2	2.72
The central office is a support to this school's improvement efforts (10)	22	15	70	49	40	28	11	8	1	1	2.30

Table 4 (Continued)

*Item 11*

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your school?	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The central office creates mandates while also providing adequate support (11)	16	11	50	34	42	29	34	23	3	2	2.71
The central office helps you and the school get the resources you need (12)	14	10	60	41	41	2	29	20	1	1	2.61
Your supervisor supports your professional growth (13)	56	39	60	41	18	12	8	5	3	2	1.91
Your supervisor has the knowledge, beliefs, and the skills to effectively manage and support you (14)	60	41	60	41	18	12	4	3	3	2	1.83
Your supervisor monitors and holds you accountable (15)	72	50	61	42	7	5	4	3	0	0	1.60
Your supervisor shares your views of effective school leadership (16)	56	39	62	43	19	13	6	4	2	1	1.87

Table 4 (Continued)

*Item 11*

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your school?	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
Response Choices	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Your supervisor is responsive to your needs (17)	64	44	52	36	19	13	6	4	4	3	1.86
Your supervisor assists you with human resource issues (18)	50	34	57	39	22	15	12	8	4	3	2.06
Your supervisor helps you set school-wide priorities (19)	44	30	72	50	16	11	10	7	3	2	2.01

Table 4 (Continued)

Items 12, 14 & 15

Q12 Please rank the top three supports you have as a principal.	My Immediate Supervisor	Other Principals	Central Office Assigned Mentors	Central Office Provided Professional Development Experiences	Other Professional Development Experiences	Central Office Personnel	Other
	n = 43 % = 40	n = 49 % = 48	n = 3 % = 3	n = 6 % = 6	n = 1 % = <1	n = 1 % = <1	n = 2 % = 1
Q13 See next table							
Q14 Which of the following best reflects your future professional plans?	I plan on remaining a principal indefinitely	I plan on remaining a principal for 1-3 more years	I plan on remaining a principal for 4-6 more years	This is my last years as a principal	I'm unsure		
	n = 19 % = 13	n = 54 % = 38	n = 36 % = 25	n = 4 % = 3	n = 29 % = 29		
Q15 Please rank the top three factors that are most likely to influence your decision to remain a principal in PGCPs.	Salary or Compensation	Teaching Staff	Condition of School Facilities	Supervisor Support	Mentor	School Community	
	n = 42 % = 35	n = 21 % = 48	n = 2 % = 2	n = 6 % = 5	n = 0 % = 0	n = 3 % = 3	

Table 4 (Continued)  
*Item13*

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Influenced Decision to Stay			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	No		Yes	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The central office provides high-quality Professional development for teachers (1)	21	15	79	56	20	14	19	13	2	1	57	57	43	43
There is sufficient funding to meet our school's needs (2)	7	5	19	13	22	15	71	50	23	16	51	51	49	49
I have the necessary resources to lead effectively (3)	8	6	31	22	23	16	67	47	13	9	42	42	57	57
Other members of the leadership team in my school have sufficient opportunities (4)	11	8	81	57	23	16	23	16	3	2	49	50	48	49
District policy priorities are clear and consistent (5)	28	20	75	54	21	15	12	9	3	2	42	44	53	56
Excessive student absenteeism is not a problem (6)	22	16	49	35	20	14	34	24	15	11	77	81	18	19
Day to day issues require so little of my time and plenty of time for long-term planning (7)	4	3	8	6	16	11	56	40	56	40	49	50	48	49
Many of the districts policies and programs are appropriate (8)	13	9	75	54	26	19	22	16	4	3	52	53	45	46



Table 4 (Continued)

*Item13*

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Influenced Decision to Stay			
											No		Yes	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The curriculum in my school is aligned to state or... (9)	46	33	76	54	10	7	6	4	2	1	60	61	38	39
I have autonomy to make critical operations decisions (10)	22	16	63	45	28	20	21	15	6	4	40	40	58	59
Teachers have sufficient resources to individualize instruction for all of their students (11)	10	7	40	28	27	19	48	34	16	11	52	53	46	47
Our operational needs are being adequately met (12)	8	6	44	32	21	15	42	30	24	17	53	55	43	45
Parents are engaged or responsible about their children (13)	15	11	54	39	31	22	36	26	3	2	60	62	36	38
My success or failure as a principal is due primarily to factors within my control (14)	20	14	44	32	34	24	34	24	7	5	42	44	54	56
Faculty apathy and resistance to change is not a problem (15)	16	12	40	29	33	24	41	30	8	6	60	62	36	38
Teacher turnover is not a challenge (16)	22	16	46	33	24	17	37	27	10	7	60	63	35	73

Table 4 (Continued)

*Item 13*

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Influenced Decision to Stay			
											No		Yes	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Recruiting and hiring the right teachers is not difficult (17)	11	8	24	17	23	16	55	39	27	19	48	50	47	50
Removing poor teachers is not difficult (18)	5	4	15	11	9	6	56	40	54	39	48	50	48	50
My school's union rep. enhances my leadership (19)	4	3	18	13	52	37	41	29	25	18	75	78	21	22
State or federal mandates (Sp.Ed., Title I, etc.) (20)	9	7	35	28	69	55	9	7	4	3	64	74	22	26
There are a few "problem" students (apathetic, hostile, etc.) (21)	18	13	60	43	26	19	27	19	8	6	68	70	29	30
There are few social problems in the school's community (22)	12	9	49	35	21	15	40	29	17	12	69	70	29	29
There are no racial or ethnic tensions in the school's community (23)	15	11	59	42	32	23	30	21	4	3	70	73	26	27
There are no stereotypes about the school's community (24)	9	6	3	22	21	15	55	39	24	17	68	70	29	30

## Research Question Results

In the following sections, the researcher addresses the results responding to each of the research questions using the two groups—Category A (leavers), and Category B (stayers) and provides the results of the ranking questions associated with each research question.

### *Research Question 1: Are there common characteristics of the principals who choose to stay in their particular schools?*

In order to address this question, the researcher examined the results of the item numbers 2 to 10. Table 5 presents a summary of the results. Based on the 8% decision rule, the table indicates that responses to 6 items triggered a t-test (Years at current school, years as principal in district, highest degree, years of teaching experience, gender, and top previous experiences). Results of t-tests indicated a marginally significant effect for years of experience as a principal,  $t(140) = -1.95, p = 0.054$ , with less experienced principals more likely to be stayers than more experienced principals. Of the 92 principals with seven or fewer years of experience, 45% were in Category B compared to only 28% of the 50 principals with more than seven years of experience.

There was a significant difference between categories for highest degree earned,  $t(140) = 2.14, p = 0.03$ , with respondents with doctorate degrees less likely to be in Category B, stayers, than those without doctorate degrees. Of the 25 principals with doctorate degrees, 20% were in Category B, compared to 43% of the 117 principals without doctorate degrees. There was also a marginally significant effect for years of teaching experience,  $t(140) = 1.70, p = 0.09$ , with those with more teaching experience less likely to be in the leavers' category, Category A, than those with less teaching

experience. Of the 83 principals with eight or more years of teaching experience, 35% were in Category A, compared to 49% of the 59 principals with less than eight years of teaching experience.

Table 5

*Characteristics Subsample Cross-tabulation Data*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t-test	Degree Of Freedom	T- Statistic	P- Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	-	-	-	-
Years as Principal at Current School										
0-7 Years	40	43	20	39%	42%	19%	-	-	-	-
>7 Years	18	12	9	46%	*31%	23%	yes	140	1.1962	0.2336
Years as Principal at MASD X										
0-7 Years	35	41	16	38%	45%	17%	-	-	-	-
>7 Years	23	14	13	46%	*28%	26%	yes	140	1.9476	0.0535
Highest Degree Attained										
Masters	47	50	20	40%	43%	17%	-	-	-	-
Doctorate	11	5	9	44%	20%	36%	yes	140	2.1372	0.0343
Years as Teacher Before Becoming Administrator										
0-7 Years	29	21	9	*49%	36%	15%	yes	140	-1.7034	0.0907
> 7 Years	29	34	20	35%	41%	24%	-	-	-	-
Gender										
Male	12	16	6	35%	*47%	18%	yes	140	-1.1400	0.2562
Female	46	39	23	43%	36%	21%	-	-	-	-

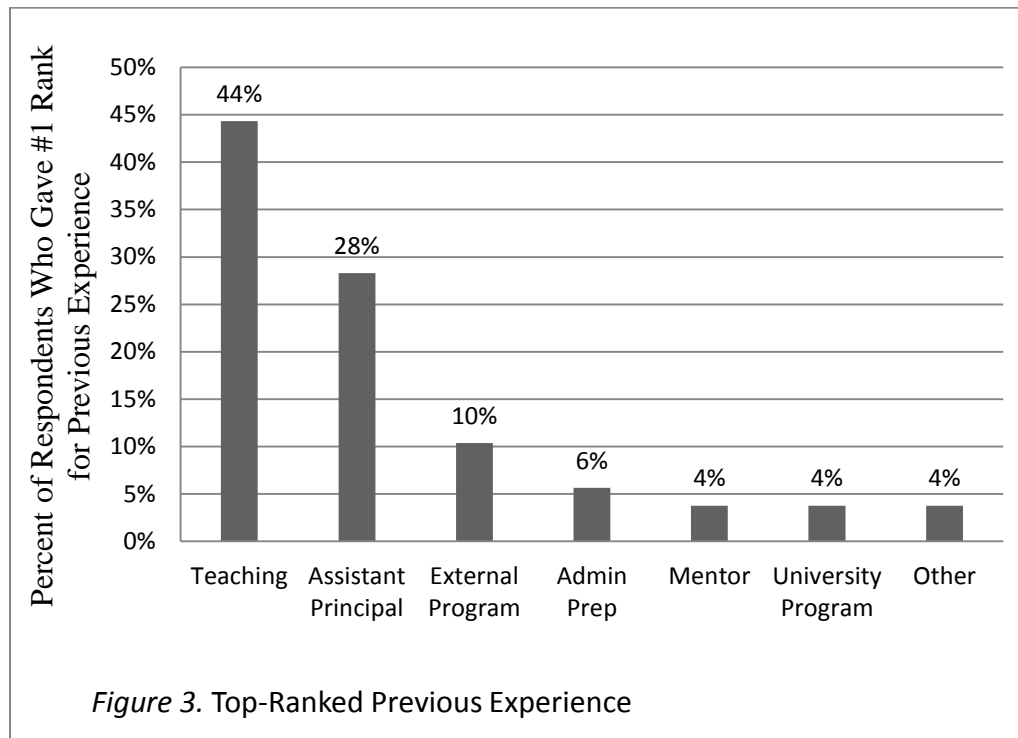
Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 5 (Continued)

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t-test	Degree Of Freedom	T- Statistic	P- Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	-	-	-	-
Ethnicity										
Black/African American	43	38	21	42%	37%	21%	-	-	-	-
White/Caucasian	12	14	5	39%	45%	16%	-	-	-	-
All Other Ethnicities	3	3	2	38%	38%	25%	-	-	-	-
Top Three Previous Experiences										
Classroom Teacher	29	30	15	39%	41%	20%	-	-	-	-
Assistant Principal	35	32	14	43%	40%	17%	-	-	-	-
Admin. Prep. Program	25	27	9	41%	44%	15%	-	-	-	-
External Program	11	10	4	44%	40%	16%	-	-	-	-
University Program	5	8	6	*26%	42%	32%	yes	99	1.4064	0.1627
Mentor	13	11	7	42%	35%	23%	-	-	-	-
Other	5	5	2	42%	42%	17%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Question 10 in the survey asked individuals to identify the top 3 previous experiences that best prepared them for the role of principal. Based on all responses, the previous work experience that was ranked most often was teaching (44%, n = 47), followed by assistant principal (28%, n =30), and an external program experience (10%, n =11). An example of an “external program” is the state-run principal preparation program. (See Figure 3).



Eighty-eight percent of principals in MASD X district chose teaching, their assistant principal experience, or their preparation program as their top-ranked previous experience. This evidence suggests that these experiences are important pre-cursors to assuming the role of principal.

According to the data in this study, the characteristics that were associated with the intent to leave (or stay) were years in the position, highest degree attained, and years of teaching experience. Principals with fewer than seven years of experience in the position were more likely to be in Category B. Principals' degree attainment was also a significant factor in the decision to remain as a principal. Those principals with a doctorate degree were less likely to be in Category B. However, while this finding suggests that as principals attain doctorate degrees, they may want to move positions, it is not clear if this is because of greater expectations for advancement both internally and externally or because they may have more options for other positions. Moreover, those principals with a shorter teaching history were significantly more likely to be in Category A. That finding is consistent with the responses to the question asking individuals to identify the top previous experiences that best prepared them for the role of principal. The most frequent response was teaching experience, which may suggest that being a teacher gives principals' crucial skills and knowledge to help teachers with their practice.

***Research Question #2: Are there particular structures in place that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?***

The questions associated with structures in the questionnaire were largely about central office or the principal supervisor role (See items 11 and 12, Appendix A). These questions asked respondents to strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of 19 statements. For the analysis, "strongly agree" and "agree" have been combined and the other 3 response options have been combined as "Not Agree". Table 6 presents the results of the t-tests. When examining the questionnaire responses related to central office support and structures provided to



principals, the following items had the highest percentage of respondents who agreed with the statements: Central office priorities are consistent with this school's priorities (79%, n=114); the central office is committed to high quality in the implementation of its policies, programs, and procedures (78%, n=112); and the central office clearly communicates its priorities (77%, n=111). However, the following items regarding central office supports had the lowest percentage of respondents who agreed with the statements: the central office builds community confidence in your school (41%, n=58); the central office does not interfere with our ability to make important decisions at this school (45%, n=65); and the central office creates mandates while also providing adequate support (46%, n=66).

Moreover, the results of the survey indicate that there are particular structures that principals identified that may influence their decisions to stay at their schools (See Table 6. For instance there were significantly more stayers (Category B) agreeing that "*central office does not interfere with our ability to make important decisions at this school*",  $t(138) = -3.07, p < 0.01$ . Of the 62 principals who agreed that central office does not interfere, 52% are part of Category B, compared to only 27% of the 78 principals who did not agree with the statement.

In addition, there was a marginally significant effect for the statement that, "*central office builds community confidence in your school*",  $t(136) = -1.75, p = 0.08$ , with those respondents who agreed with that statement more likely to be part of Category B than other respondents. Of the 55 principals who agreed that central office builds community confidence in their school, 47% are part of Category B, compared to only 33% of the 83 principals who did not agree with that statement.

Similar to the questions regarding experiences and background, a ranking question was included that asked individuals to identify their top three supports they had as principals. Respondents overwhelmingly identified that other principals and supervisors provided the most support followed by central office professional development. Combined results of the top 3 choices are shown in Figure 4.

There were three potential findings that suggest certain structures are more important than others for the principals in MASD X. The data suggest that having a supportive network of other principals and a supportive, knowledgeable supervisor that supports a principal's daily work are important. However, those principals that agreed that their supervisors held them accountable were also more likely to be in in the leavers category (Category A).

Table 6

*Structures Subsample Cross-tabulation Data Items 1 - 3*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
1. Central office priorities are consistent with this school's priorities										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	45	43	22	41%	39%	20%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	13	11	7	42%	35%	23%	-	-	-	-
2. Often I find it easy to agree with central office policies and procedures										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	35	43	17	37%	45%	18%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	22	11	12	49%	24%	27%	-	-	-	-
3. The policies and procedures of the central office help address important needs at my school										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	34	40	16	38%	44%	18%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	23	14	13	46%	28%	26%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 6 (Continued)

*Items 4 - 6*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
4. The central office does not interfere with our ability to make important decisions at this school										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	21	32	9	34%	*52%	yes	138	-	-3.0701	0.0026
<i>Not Agree</i>	37	21	20	47%	27%	26%	-	-	-	-
5. The central office respects the decisions of the principal										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	28	34	12	38%	46%	16%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	30	20	16	45%	30%	24%	-	-	-	-
6. The central office is committed to high quality in the implementation of its policies, programs and procedures										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	43	45	20	40%	42%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	15	9	8	47%	28%	25%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 6 (Continued)

*Items 7 - 9*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
7. The central office clearly communicates its priorities										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	44	41	22	41%	38%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	14	13	6	42%	39%	18%	-	-	-	-
8. The central office support school level innovation										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	33	36	15	39%	43%	18%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	25	18	14	44%	32%	25%	-	-	-	-
9. The central office builds community confidence in your school										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	21	26	8	38%	*47%	15%	yes	136	-1.7501	0.0824
<i>Not Agree</i>	36	37	15	41%	42%	17%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 6 (Continued)

*Items 10 - 12*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
10. The central office is a support to this school's improvement efforts										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	36	37	15	41%	42%	17%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	22	17	13	42%	33%	25%	-	-	-	-
11. The central office creates mandates while also providing adequate support										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	24	29	10	38%	46%	16%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	34	25	19	44%	32%	24%	-	-	-	-
12. The central office helps you and the school get the resources you need										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	27	32	12	38%	45%	17%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	31	22	17	44%	31%	24%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 6 (Continued)

Items 13 - 15

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
13. Your supervisor supports your professional growth										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	45	46	21	40%	41%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	13	8	8	45%	28%	28%	-	-	-	-
14. Your supervisor has the knowledge, beliefs, and skills to effectively manage and support you										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	48	44	24	41%	38%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	10	10	5	40%	40%	20%	-	-	-	-
15. Your supervisor monitors and holds you accountable										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	57	46	26	44%	36%	20%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	1	7	3	9%	64%	27%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 6 (Continued)

*Items 16 - 18*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
16. Your supervisor your views of effective school leadership										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	47	44	24	41%	38%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	11	10	5	42%	38%	19%	-	-	-	-
17. Your supervisor is responsive to your needs										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	48	43	22	42%	38%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	10	11	7	36%	39%	25%	-	-	-	-
18. Your supervisor assists you with human resource issues										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	45	41	19	43%	39%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	13	13	10	36%	36%	28%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

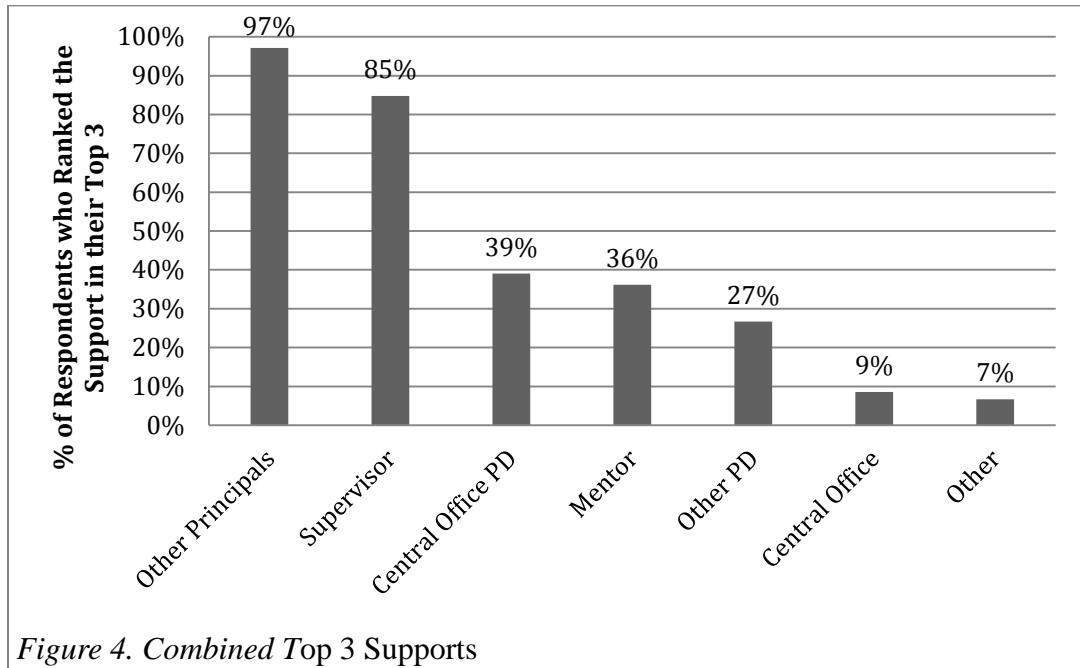


Table 6 (Continued)

*Items 19 - 20*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
19. Your supervisor helps you set school-wide priorities										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	46	45	21	41%	40%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	12	9	8	41%	31%	28%	-	-	-	-
20. Your supervisor is responsive to your needs										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	48	43	22	42%	38%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	10	11	7	36%	39%	25%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.



Central office support and structures seem to be important factors in principal decisions to leave or stay.

In summary, structures and supports that should be considered for MASD X principals are:

1. Central office support for principal decision-making and assistance building community support for the school.
2. Support, monitoring, and accountability by the principal supervisor; and
3. Collegial support from other principals

***Research Question #3: Are there particular working conditions that influence principals' decisions to stay at their schools?***

To answer this question, the researcher examined the response frequencies to item 13 in the survey. Similar to the structure questions previously addressed, this

question asked respondents to strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with 24 statements. For the analysis, “strongly agree” and “agree” have been combined and the other 3 response options have been combined as “Not Agree”. The following item received the most “Agree” responses: The curriculum in my school is aligned to state or district standards and assessments (87% Agree, n=122) while the following items were the most frequent “Disagree” responses: Day to day issues require so little of my time and attention that there is plenty of time left to focus on long-term planning (80% Disagree, n=112); and Removing poor teachers is not difficult (79% Disagree, n=110). Moreover, the results of the survey indicate that there are particular working conditions that principals identified that influence their decision-making to stay at their schools (See Table 7).

Table 7

*Conditions Subsample Cross-tabulation Data Items 1-3*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	-	-	-	-
1. The central office provides high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	40	42	17	40%	42%	17%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	18	12	11	44%	29%	27%	-	-	-	-
2. There is sufficient funding to meet our school's needs										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	9	13	4	35%	*50%	15%	yes	139	-1.3584	0.1765
<i>Not Agree</i>	49	41	25	43%	36%	22%	-	-	-	-
3. I have the necessary resources to lead this school effectively										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	8	21	9	*21%	55%	24%	Yes	139	3.0167	0.0030
<i>Not Agree</i>	50	33	20	49%	32%	19%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 7 (Continued)

*Items 4 - 6*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
4. Other members of the leadership team in my school have sufficient opportunities and/or supports to help the school improve its instruction										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	34	38	19	37%	42%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	24	15	10	49%	31%	20%	-	-	-	-
5. District policy and procedures are consistent and clear										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	44	38	20	43%	37%	20%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	13	15	8	36%	42%	22%	-	-	-	-
6. Excessive student absenteeism or tardiness is not a problem										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	25	32	14	35%	45%	20%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	33	20	15	49%	29%	22%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 7 (Continued)

*Items 7 - 9*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
7. Day to day issues require so little of my time and attention that there is plenty of time left to focus on long-term planning										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	1	9	2	8%	75%	17%	yes	137	2.4416	0.0159
<i>Not Agree</i>	56	44	27	44%	35%	21%	-	-	-	-
8. Many of the district's policies and programs are appropriate for my school										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	38	32	17	44%	37%	20%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	20	21	11	38%	40%	20%	-	-	-	-
9. The curriculum in my school is aligned to state or district standards and assessments										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	52	44	25	43%	36%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	5	9	4	28%	50%	22%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 7 (Continued)

*Item 10 - 12*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
10. I have autonomy to make critical operations decisions in areas such as personnel, budget, and programs										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	34	33	17	40%	39%	20%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	24	20	11	44%	36%	20%	-	-	-	-
11. Teachers have sufficient resources, such as time and supports, to individualize instruction for all of their students										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	17	23	9	35%	*47%	18%	yes	136	-1.6925	0.1055
<i>Not Agree</i>	41	30	20	45%	33%	22%	-	-	-	-
12. Our operational needs in areas such as facilities and transportation are being adequately met										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	17	24	10	33%	*47%	20%	yes	136	-1.8932	0.0605
<i>Not Agree</i>	41	27	19	47%	31%	22%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 7 (Continued)

*Items 13 - 15*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
13. Parents are engaged or responsible about their children										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	23	30	15	34%	44%	22%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	33	23	14	47%	33%	20%	-	-	-	-
14. My success or failure as a principal is due primarily to factors within my control										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	23	30	10	37%	*48%	16%	yes	136	-2.0559	0.0417
<i>Not Agree</i>	34	23	18	45%	31%	24%	-	-	-	-
15. Faculty apathy and resistance to change is not a problem										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	25	20	10	45%	36%	18%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	32	32	18	39%	39%	22%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.



Table 7 (Continued)

*Items 16 - 18*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
16. Teacher turnover is not a challenge										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	27	26	14	40%	39%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	30	27	14	42%	38%	20%	-	-	-	-
17. Recruiting and hiring the right teachers is not difficult										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	15	14	5	44%	41%	15%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	43	39	23	41%	37%	22%	-	-	-	-
18. Removing poor teachers is not difficult										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	10	6	3	*53%	32%	16%	yes	136	-1.0766	0.2836
<i>Not Agree</i>	47	47	25	39%	39%	21	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 7 (Continued)

*Items 19 - 21*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
19. My school's union representative enhances my leadership										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	9	11	2	42%	*50%	9%	yes	137	-1.2475	0.2144
<i>Not Agree</i>	49	42	26	42%	36%	22%	-	-	-	-
20. State or federal Mandates (Special education, Title I, etc.)										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	19	19	6	43%	43%	14%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	35	29	18	43%	35%	22%	-	-	-	-
21. There are few "problem" students (apathetic, hostile, etc.)										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	32	33	13	41%	42%	17%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	26	20	15	43%	33%	25%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

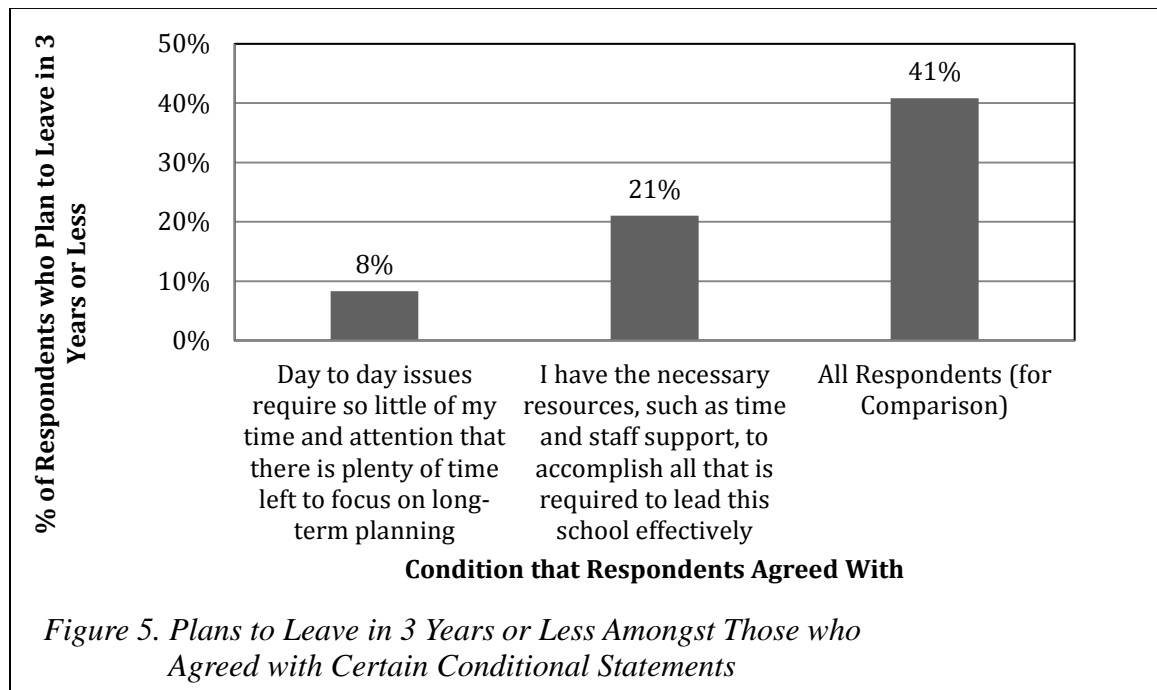
Table 7 (Continued)

*Items 22 - 24*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
22. There are few social problems in the school's community (poverty, gangs, drugs, etc.)										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	25	24	12	41%	39%	20%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	33	28	17	42%	36%	22%				
23. There are no racial or tension in the school's community										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	26	31	17	35%	42%	23%	-	-	-	-
<i>Not Agree</i>	32	22	12	48%	33%	18%	-	-	-	-
24. There are no negative stereotypes about the school's community										
<i>Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement</i>	13	16	11	*33%	40%	28%	yes	138	1.3556	0.1774
<i>Not Agree</i>	45	37	18	45%	37%	18%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

There were significantly fewer leavers (Category A) agreeing that they had resources to lead the school effectively,  $t(139) = 3.02, p < 0.01$ . Of the 38 principals who agree that they have the necessary resources to lead the school effectively, 21% are part of Category A, compared to 49% of the 103 principals who did not agree that they have the necessary resources. Additionally, fewer leavers agreed that one has plenty of time to focus on long-term planning because day-to-day issues require so little time,  $t(137) = 2.44, p = 0.02$ . Of the 12 principals who agree that they have plenty of time to focus on long-term planning because day-to-day issues require so little time, only 8% are part of Category A, compared to 44% of the 127 principals who did not agree that they have time to focus on long-term planning. (See Figure 5).



There were also significantly fewer leavers agreeing that an individual's success or failure as a principal is due primarily to factors within their control,  $t(136) = -2.06, p = 0.04$ . Of the 63 principals who agreed that their success is primarily within their control,

48% are part of Category B, compared to only 31% of the 75 principals who did not agree with that statement.

Finally, there was a marginally significant finding indicating that fewer leavers agreed that an individual's operational needs in areas such as facilities and transportation are being adequately met,  $t(136) = -1.89, p = 0.06$ . Of the 51 principals who agreed that their operational needs are being met, 47% are part of Category B, compared to only 31% of the 87 principals who did not agree with that statement. As an additional item regarding working conditions, respondents were asked if their agreement or disagreement to each of the items influenced their decision to stay. The results are in Table 8.

Table 8

*Conditions Subsample Cross-tabulation Influence Decision To Stay Items 1 - 3*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	-	-	-	-
1. The central office provides high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	24	11	8	*56%	26%	19%	yes	98	-1.7184	0.0889
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	22	25	10	39%	44%	18%	-	-	-	-
2. There is sufficient funding to meet our school's needs										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	25	14	10	*51%	29%	20%	yes	98	-0.9822	0.3284
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	21	23	7	41%	45%	14%	-	-	-	-
3. I have the necessary resources to lead this school effectively										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	25	21	11	44%	37%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	20	16	6	48%	38%	14%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 8 (Continued)

*Items 4 - 6*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
4. Other members of the leadership team in my school have sufficient opportunities and/or supports to help the school improve its instruction										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	21	19	8	44%	40%	17%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	25	17	7	51%	35%	14%	-	-	-	-
5. District policy and procedures are consistent and clear										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	23	20	10	43%	38%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	22	16	4	52%	38%	10%	-	-	-	-
6. Excessive student absenteeism or tardiness is not a problem										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	10	4	4	*56%	22%	22%	yes	93	-0.8675	0.3879
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	34	31	12	44%	40%	16%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 8 (Continued)

<i>Items 7 - 9</i>										
	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
7. Day to day issues require so little of my time and attention that there is plenty of time left to focus on long-term planning										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	22	16	10	46%	33%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	23	20	6	47%	41%	12%	-	-	-	-
8. Many of the district's policies and programs are appropriate for my school										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	22	13	10	*49%	29%	22%	yes	95	-0.2663	0.7906
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	24	22	6	46%	42%	12%	-	-	-	-
9. The curriculum in my school is aligned to state or district standards and assessments										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	20	10	8	*53%	26%	21%	yes	96	-0.8931	0.3740
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	26	26	8	43%	43%	13%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.



Table 8 (Continued)

*Items 10 - 12*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	Yes	-	-	-
10. I have autonomy to make critical operations decisions in areas such as personnel, budget, and programs										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	26	22	10	45%	38%	17%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	20	14	6	50%	35%	15%	-	-	-	-
11. Teachers have sufficient resources, such as time and supports, to individualize instruction for all of their students										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	26	11	9	*57%	24%	20%	Yes	96	-1.7991	0.0751
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	20	25	7	38%	48%	13%	-	-	-	-
12. Our operational needs in areas such as facilities and transportation are being adequately met										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	22	12	9	*51%	28%	21%	Yes	94	-0.9385	0.3504
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	22	24	7	42%	45%	13%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 8 (Continued)

*Items 13 - 15*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
13. Parents are engaged or responsible about their children										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	16	13	7	44%	36%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	28	23	9	47%	38%	15%	-	-	-	-
14. My success or failure as a principal is due primarily to factors within my control										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	26	20	8	48%	37%	15%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	19	16	7	45%	38%	17%	-	-	-	-
15. Faculty apathy and resistance to change is not a problem										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	19	9	8	*53%	25%	22%	Yes	94	-1.0528	0.2951
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	25	17	8	42%	45%	13%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 8 (Continued)

*Items 16 - 18*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
16. Teacher turnover is not a challenge										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	22	9	4	*63%	26%	11%	Yes	93	-2.5257	0.0132
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	22	27	11	37%	45%	18%	-	-	-	-
17. Recruiting and hiring the right teachers is not difficult										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	25	14	8	*53%	30%	17%	Yes	93	-1.1204	0.2654
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	20	21	7	42%	44%	15%	-	-	-	-
18. Removing poor teachers is not difficult										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	24	15	9	*50%	31%	19%	Yes	94	-0.6083	0.5444
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	21	21	6	44%	44%	13%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 8 (Continued)

*Items 19 - 21*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
19. My school's union representative enhances my leadership										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	10	7	4	48%	33%	19%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	35	29	11	47%	39%	15%	-	-	-	-
20. State or federal Mandates (Special education, Title I, etc.)										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	10	9	3	45%	41%	14%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	30	25	9	47%	39%	14%				
21. There are few "problem" students (apathetic, hostile, etc.)										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	18	7	4	*62%	24%	14%	Yes	95	-1.9022	0.0602
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	28	29	11	41%	43%	16%	-	-	-	-

Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

Table 8 (Continued)

*Items 22 - 24*

	Category A	Category B	Category C	A%	B%	C%	t- test	Degree of Freedom	T- Statistic	P-Value
Sample N	58	55	29	41%	39%	20%	yes	-	-	-
22. There are few social problems in the school's community (poverty, gangs, drugs, etc.)										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	14	9	6	48%	31%	21%	-	-	-	-
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	32	28	9	46%	41%	13%	-	-	-	-
23. There are no racial or tension in the school's community										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	14	7	5	*54%	27%	19%	Yes	94	-0.8284	0.4095
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	31	29	10	44%	41%	14%	-	-	-	-
24. There are no negative stereotypes about the school's community										
<i>The condition does influence a principal's decision to stay or leave</i>	14	8	7	48%	*28%	24%	Yes	95	1.2658	0.2087
<i>Does Not Influence</i>	32	28	8	47%	41%	12%	-	-	-	-

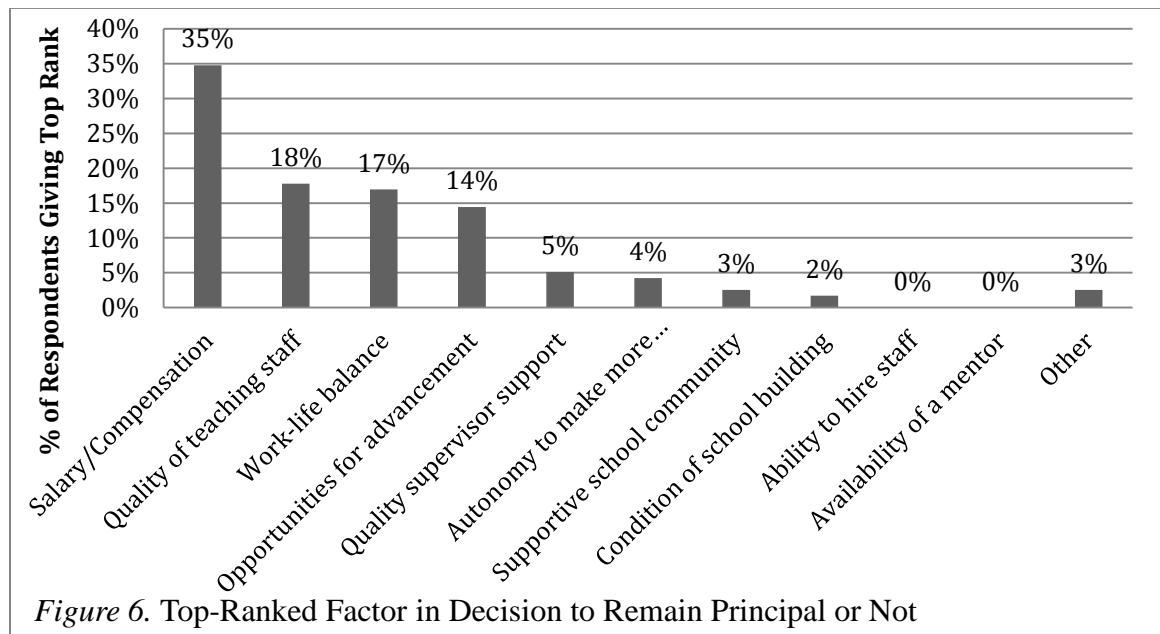
Note. Asterisks denote cases that triggered a t-test. Symbol “-” represents no data.

There was a significant t-test for the item regarding teacher turnover,  $t(93) = -2.52, p = 0.01$ , with leavers more likely to agree that turnover may influence decisions to stay than other respondents. Of the 35 principals who said teacher turnover influences their decisions to stay in their role, 63% are part of Category A, compared to only 37% of the 60 principals who said that teacher turnover does not influence their decisions to stay. There was a marginally significant t-test for the item regarding the influence of difficult students on one's decision to stay,  $t(95) = -1.90, p = 0.06$ . Again, leavers (Category A) were more likely to agree with this statement. Of the 29 principals who said that difficult students influence their decisions to stay in their roles, 62% are part of Category A, compared to 41% of the 68 principals who said that difficult students do not influence their decisions to stay.

There was a marginally significant t-test for the item concerning the influence of teacher resources,  $t(96) = -1.80, p = 0.08$ , with those respondents who said that teacher resources may influence their decisions more likely to be in Category A (leavers) than other respondents. Of the 46 principals who said teacher resources influence their decisions to stay in their roles, 57% are part of Category A, compared to 38% of the 52 principals who said that teacher resources do not influence their decisions to stay. The final marginally significant t-test was the influence of central office professional development for teachers on one's decision to stay,  $t(98) = -1.72, p = 0.09$ . Leavers (Category A) were more likely to agree that this type of professional development may influence their decisions to stay. Of the 43 principals who said central office professional development for teachers influences their decisions to stay in their roles, 56% are part of

Category A, compared to 39% of the 57 principals who said that central office professional development for teachers does not influence their decisions to stay.

A ranking question under the working conditions section of the questionnaire asked principals to rank the top 3 factors that are most likely to influence their decisions to remain a principal in MASD X. Refer to Figure 6 for results. Salary or compensation was chosen as the number one factor (81%), followed by Quality of Teaching Staff (50%), and Work-life Balance (40%).



In summary, a number of working conditions that should be considered for MASD X principals include:

1. Ensuring sufficient resources for schools
2. Assisting principals in finding time for long-term planning
3. Reducing teacher turnover

4. Improving operational and facilities support
5. Providing assistance with difficult students
6. Providing professional development and resources to teachers
7. Providing equitable salary/compensation

## **Conclusion**

Given the complexity and current national landscape on issues regarding school leadership and student achievement, addressing the challenges of principal attrition, particularly in large urban school districts, is critical. The research findings in this study help to illuminate potential factors attributing to this phenomenon in MASD X. The literature confirmed that principal attrition is a problem because it has a negative effect on student achievement, school culture, teacher development, teacher retention, and school reform (Leithwood et al., 2004; Partlow & Ridenour, 2008; Bateille et al., 2012; Spans, 2008). Not to mention the financial cost to a district (School Leaders Network, 2014). This study set out to understand principals' perceptions of the factors that may influence their desires to leave early in their tenures. The literature states that it takes at least five to seven years for any positive reform to take hold in a school; thus, retaining a principal for at least such time is a must (Partlow & Ridenour, 2008). The most important aspect of attrition is the constant "churn" of the principal position, not a fundamental belief that principals should remain in place indefinitely. The problems that cause principal attrition can be addressed as this study has indicated.



**Implications for MASD X.** According the results of this survey, 41% of the 142 principals responding to this survey are considered at risk of leaving their position sometime within the next 3 years. This is an alarming number and MASD X must take steps to address this problem. Based on the survey, those considering leaving their position tend to perceive that they have more central office interference in decision-making and a lack of time and resources for long-term planning. They also perceive that they have insufficient resources both instructional and operational to do their job. They are either facing or find that excessive teacher turnover may influence their decision to stay in their jobs. They also are less likely to agree that they have control over their position.

However, results of the survey indicate that there are some strategies that the district might consider that might help retain some of the current principals. The district must dig deeper into this data to identify and distinguish the type of principals that are most likely to leave. Differentiating the needs of the principals is critical then if principals from certain parts of the county are more inclined to leave than others or if High School principals are more likely to stay because they have more resources at their disposal. Moreover, if the schools with the lowest teacher turnover have the most seasoned principals, the district might look at creating different opportunities for the less experienced principals by moving principals more regularly throughout the county using years of experience as a data point.

Moving forward, as MASD X refines its induction process for new principals, the district might consider several of this study's findings. For instance, most studies indicate

that many principals were former teachers and assistant principals. This study supports the literature which then suggest that the district needs to take a harder look at the training program for teachers and the internal professional development opportunities for assistant principals closely. For instance, if certain universities are producing the types of teachers that eventually become principals, then examining the courses and programs from those universities might be a thoughtful endeavor. Moreover, MASD X should examine all of the preparation programs for teacher leaders and aspiring leaders to ensure those programs are relevant and match the current landscape of education. So a first step for districts might be to ensure principals have a strong teaching background. Principals must have a strong instructional background and be able to lead and develop their teachers. The literature suggests that principals must be strong instructional leaders, and this study reinforces that notion. A definite pre-cursor for MASD X principals is having a strong teaching background. Second, districts must also provide a strong assistant principal experience for principals. If principals were relegated to doing lunch duty, addressing student discipline, or dealing only with the operational and managerial aspects of leadership in their assistant principal experiences, then such experiences limited their perspectives, and did not afford them the breadth necessary to lead as principals. Therefore, a strong assistant principal experience must include a well-rounded and multi-layered experience. If a curriculum or policy has to be put in place to ensure the assistant principal experience is robust, then districts must adopt one. Taken together, developing a succession model or aspiring administrator pipeline that speaks to these things is crucial in establishing a strong foundation.

Principals in MASD X indicated overwhelmingly that their principal colleagues were a very important support. They also indicated that their current supervisors were an important support in their roles as principals. While other studies acknowledged the importance of supervisory support, they did not address the support of the supervisor and the support of other principals in the way that this study did. One step the district should take would be to develop a Professional Learning Community (PLC) specifically for principals to work with other principals. An additional step districts should take is examining the role of the principal supervisor. Principal supervisors take very concrete actions to provide support and to hold principals accountable. Districts should take time to identify and articulate those behaviors so that there is consistency in the support being provided to all principals. Moreover, a district's ability to be explicit about the practices that illuminate these supports will be helpful to district leaders, particularly if they can be replicated.

Salary and compensation in this study—identified as important factors in the principals' decisions to stay in their schools they serve and in their roles—is consistent with national literature that suggests the same (Papa, 2007). A step districts should take is to revisit the current compensation packages for principals. Districts might want to consider tiering salary and compensation packages based on a variety of different factors including but not limited to the size of staff, number of students, and complexity of the facility itself. In doing so, salaries and compensation packages match the context for each school and are not created with a one-size, one-salary fits-all rationale.

Most studies and literature have identified the quality of the teaching staff as an element in principal attrition. This study also found that the same to be true. This study also found that creating space and opportunities for long-term planning was important to principals. Since principals value this condition of long term planning, the district should create the space and time for principals to plan for improvement in a way that is helpful. If principals value the space and time given to them to plan for the success of their respective schools. So, a progressive next step for a district would be to create policies that support placing experienced teachers in the more challenging schools. Additionally, human resources and central office staff must look at the placement and hiring procedures of teachers to see if policies exist that are barriers to equity and promote principal attrition and contribute to teacher turnover. Then, collecting trend data on the turnover rate of the teaching staff at all schools would be an ongoing process and help address this problem. All of these steps taken together support a more aligned approach to addressing the issue of attrition and help delineate important strategies for retention.

### **Retention Framework**

Based on the evidence, the MASD X might also consider adopting a framework developed to address retention, and apply the findings of this study as a potential framework of retention (as presented below in Figure 7).

Data from the study suggest that both a strong teaching background and assistant principal experience serve as key drivers in principal preparation and necessary experiences for most of the current sitting principals in the district. Examining the district's current training programs and succession management strategies against the

prevailing indicators as defined by this research study could help to support aspiring leaders, thereby, impacting principal retention. Therefore, a third characteristic important for principals is the preparation they receive prior to serving in the role. All of these are important prior experiences for the job.

Ultimately, there are three conditions that need to be met, given the data:

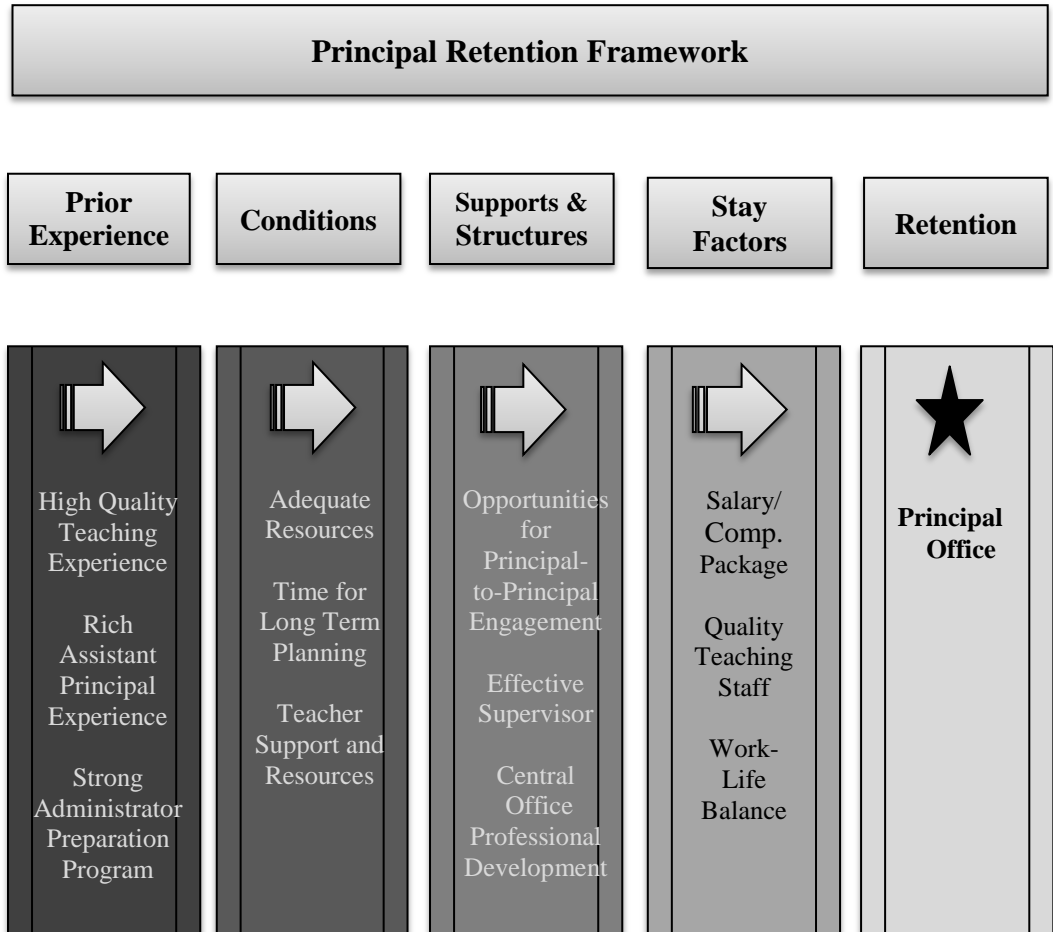
1. Autonomy, adequate resources to do the job correctly;
2. Teacher support, resources-professional development; and
3. Time for long-term planning.

If the right working conditions are put in place, then the right structures (supports) must also be put in place. Having an effective principal supervisor and ongoing opportunities for principals to work and problem-solve with other principals must become part of the fabric of the district's culture. Creating a space for principals to support one another on a regular basis is an essential part of this framework. Moreover, principals must have a positive relationship with their immediate supervisors. Principals identified their immediate supervisors as an important element of support. Continual investment in this unique relationship between principal supervisor and principal is paramount. If positive prior experiences, conditions, and structures are in place then there are "stay factors" that influence a principal's tenure. Salary and compensation, a quality teaching staff, and managing a positive work-life balance are major influences on a principal's decision-making process to stay in the position as principal. The retention framework, at minimum, can serve as a discussion starter as the district examines its

current conditions, structures, and practices that shape the quality and longevity of a principal's tenure.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study set out to examine the factors that principals in a large urban district identified as potentially affecting their decisions to stay in the position. In this final chapter, a review of data collected in a leadership questionnaire determined that as principals attain doctorate degrees, expectations for advancement both internally and externally increase. Findings also suggested that these characteristics are important precursors to assuming the role of principal in the MASD X. What is more, dominant factors related to supports that influence principal attrition include monitoring and being held accountable by a principal supervisor, collegial support from other principals, and a balanced work-life. In relation to working conditions, dominant factors related to working conditions that influence principal attrition are: (1) time for long-term planning; (2) day-to-day issues not consuming their time; (3) teacher turnover; and (4) a competitive salary. In light of these findings, there is still need for additional investigation regarding principal attrition. This researcher poses the following research recommendations to continue this inquiry:



*Figure 7.* Principal Retention Framework

Recommendation #1: Conduct interviews with the principals, along with the survey, with potentially differentiated by years of experience or building level in the role. This approach might yield additional insights and more breadth and complexity to the questions in the survey.

Recommendation #2: Administer the survey with principals who have exited the system already within the last five years. The survey may yield different results given the

limitations of doing this study with sitting principals only. The responses may yield different findings given the time out of the system for those that have left.

Recommendation #3: Administer the survey to assistant principals in the signature principal preparation programs in the district. Anticipating the needs and potential barriers and supports of those coming through the ranks may prove helpful.

Though there is room for additional study, as a result of this dissertation, the following are the significant contributions to the body of knowledge on principal attrition: a malleable framework for principal retention, and identified factors in the categories of characteristics, supports, and working conditions that can be taken into consideration when developing structures and policies to remedy principal attrition.



## **Section IV. Appendices**

## **Appendix A - Questionnaire**

**Project Title:** An Analysis of Principal Attrition in A Large Urban School District

**Purpose of the Study:** The researcher, Douglas W. Anthony, is conducting a research study on principal attrition as partial fulfillment of a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership under the direction of Dr. Margaret McLaughlin and Dr. John Norris. This study will examine the contributing factors affecting principal attrition in a large urban school district.

**Procedures:** You will be asked to complete an electronic survey via Qualtrics. You will be asked a series of questions regarding your preferences and perceptions around the subject matter of principal attrition. A few questions ask you to consider personal choices and factors that influence your decision making when thinking about your future as a principal. You may refuse to answer any question that you do not want to answer or withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty. The survey should take about 20-30 minutes to complete. Every principal in the school district is being asked to complete the survey.

**Potential Risks and Discomforts:** There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this study.

**Potential Benefits:** Since the goal of this study is to identify the characteristics, conditions and structures, that influence a principal's decision to stay in the position in order to build a framework that helps support principal retention. This study will inform those things that might help increase the overall job satisfaction of sitting principals.

**Confidentiality:** Your participation in the study and the data generated from the study will be kept confidential. No names or other identifiers will be collected during the

survey. Only the researcher will have access to the data and no other school employees or supervisors will have access to individual responses. Your data will be maintained via a secure server. All of the data will be kept confidential and destroyed after the researcher has conducted a thorough analysis or 6 months after you complete the survey whichever comes first.

**Right to Withdraw and Questions:** Your participation in this study/survey is voluntary; you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or jeopardy to your employment status in the county. If for any reason you decide that you would like to discontinue your participation, simply stop and close your Internet browser.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints regarding the research or study, please contact the investigator: Douglas W. Anthony at 301-237-1550 or [danthony@umd.edu](mailto:danthony@umd.edu). If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Margaret McLaughlin, Assistant Dean, 301-405-2337, 3119 Benjamin Building, [mjm@umd.edu](mailto:mjm@umd.edu)., or Dr. John Norris, Advisor, 615-585-8379, [jnorris@umd.edu](mailto:jnorris@umd.edu).

**Participant Rights:** *If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office, 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, Maryland, 20742, E-mail: [irb@umd.edu](mailto:irb@umd.edu), Telephone: 301-405-0678***

*This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*

**Q1 I have read, understood, and printed a copy of, the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.**

- Yes, I agree to participate in this research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am completing this survey voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the survey at any time, without any penalty or consequences. (1)
- No (2) If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

**Q2 How long have you been a principal at your current school?**

- 0-3 years (1)
- 4-7 years (2)
- 8-10 years (3)
- 10+ years (4)

**Q3 How long have you been a principal for PGCPS?**

- 0-3 years (1)
- 4-7 years (2)
- 8-10 years (3)
- 10+ years (4)

**Q4 What is the highest degree attained?**

- Bachelor's (1)
- Master's (2)
- Doctorate (3)
- Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q5 In what fields do you hold your degrees?**

	Bachelor's (1)	Master's (2)	Doctorate (3)	Other (4)
Field of Education (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engineering (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mathematics (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q6 Were you a teacher before you went into administration?**

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If you were you a teacher before you went into administration? Yes is selected

**Q7 How long did you teach before you went into administration?**

- 1-3 years (1)
- 4-7 years (2)
- 8-10 years (3)
- 10+ years (4)

**Q8 What is your gender?**

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

**Q9 What best describes your ethnicity?**

- American Indian or Alaskan Native (1)
- Asian/Pacific Islander (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Hispanic America (4)
- White/Caucasian (5)
- Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify) (6) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q10 Rank the TOP THREE previous experiences that you believe best prepared you for your role as principal.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ My classroom teaching experience (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ My assistant principal experience (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ My administrator's preparation program (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ External program, i.e., Aspiring Leaders for Student Success(ALPSS),  
New Leaders, etc. (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ University program, i.e., Certification program (5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Having a mentor/coach, i.e., a former principal to meet with regularly (6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please explain (7)

**Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your school?**

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
Central office priorities are consistent with this school's priorities (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often I find it easy to agree with central office policies and procedures (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The policies and procedures of the central office help address important needs at my school (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office does not interfere with our ability to make important decisions at this school (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office respects the decisions of the principal (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office is committed to high quality in the implementation of its policies, programs and procedures (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office clearly communicates its' priorities (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office supports school level innovation (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office builds community confidence in your school (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
The central office is a support to this school's improvement efforts (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office creates mandates while also providing adequate support (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The central office helps you and the school get the resources you need (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your supervisor supports your professional growth (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your supervisor has the knowledge, beliefs, and the skills to effectively manage and support you (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your supervisor monitors and holds you accountable (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your supervisor shares your views of effective school leadership (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your supervisor is responsive to your needs (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your supervisor assists you with human resource issues (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your supervisor helps you set school-wide priorities (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**Q12 Please rank the TOP THREE supports you have as a principal.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ My Immediate Supervisor (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other Principals (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Central Office Assigned Mentors (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Central Office Provided Professional Development Experiences (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other Professional Development Experiences (5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Central Office personnel (6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) (7)

**Q13 This section asks you to indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about conditions in your school and to also indicate the extent to which the condition influences your decision to stay in the role of principal in PGCPs.**

	Condition					Does the condition influence your decision to stay in the role?	
	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	No (1)	Yes (2)
The central office provides high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is sufficient funding to meet our school's needs. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the necessary resources, such as time and staff support, to accomplish all that is required to lead this school effectively. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Condition					Does the condition influence your decision to stay in the role?	
	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	No (1)	Yes (2)
Other members of the leadership team in my school have sufficient opportunities and/or supports to help the school improve its instruction. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District policy and priorities are consistent and clear. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excessive student absenteeism or tardiness is not a problem. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Day to day issues require so little of my time and attention that there is plenty of time left to focus on long-term planning. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many of the districts policies and programs are appropriate for my school. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The curriculum in my school is aligned to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Condition					Does the condition influence your decision to stay in the role?	
	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	No (1)	Yes (2)
state or district standards and assessments. (9)							
I have autonomy to make critical operations decisions in areas such as personnel, budget and programs. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers have sufficient resources, such as time and supports, to individualize instruction for all of their students. (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our operational needs in areas such as facilities and transportation are being adequately met. (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents are engaged or responsible about their children. (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My success or failure as a principal is due primarily to factors within my control. (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Condition					Does the condition influence your decision to stay in the role?	
	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	No (1)	Yes (2)
Faculty apathy and resistance to change is not a problem. (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher turnover is not a challenge. (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recruiting and hiring the right teachers is not difficult. (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Removing poor teachers is not difficult. (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school's union representative enhances my leadership. (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
State or federal mandates (Special education, Title I, etc.) (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are few "problem" students (apathetic, hostile, etc.) (21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are few social problems in the school's community (poverty, gangs, drugs, etc.). (22)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is no racial or	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Condition					Does the condition influence your decision to stay in the role?	
	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	No (1)	Yes (2)
ethnic tension in the school's community. (23)							
There are no negative stereotypes about the school's community. (24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q14 Which of the following best reflects your future professional plans?**

- I plan on remaining a principal indefinitely (1)
- I plan on remaining a principal for 1-3 more years (2)
- I plan on remaining a principal for 4-6 more years (3)
- This is my last years as a principal. (4)
- I'm unsure. (5)

**Q15 Please rank the TOP THREE factors that are most likely to influence your decision to remain a principal in PGCPS.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Salary or Compensation (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Quality or effectiveness of building teaching staff (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Condition of school building and facilities (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Quality and adequate supervisor support (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Availability of a mentor (5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Supportive school community (6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Opportunities for advancement in the district (7)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Autonomy to make more decisions (8)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to hire staff (9)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work - life balance (10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) (11)

## **Appendix B - Participant Letter of Consent**

## *An Analysis of Principal Attrition in a Large Urban School District*

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in a research study entitled: *An Analysis of Principal Attrition in A Large Urban School District*. I am currently enrolled in the Education Policy and Leadership Doctoral program at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The purpose of the research is to examine the contributing factors affecting principal attrition in a large urban school district.

The survey that follows has been designed to collect information on the principal's perception of contributing factors that impact tenure in order to identify characteristics, conditions and structures that influence their decision to stay in the position.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether, or leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer. There are no known risks to participate beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your data will be maintained via a secured server with the informed consent files being stored separately from the actual data files and codebooks. All of the data will be kept confidential and destroyed after the researcher has conducted a thorough analysis or 6 months after you complete the survey, whichever comes first.

Data will be stored on a private server, kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the principal investigator and a data technician assisting with the analysis of the data.

If you agree to participate in this project, please answer the questions on the survey as best you can. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please complete the survey electronically and indicate completion by pressing the submit button when prompted.

For questions about the research itself or to report any adverse effects during or following participation, contact the researcher, Douglas W. Anthony at 301.237.1550 or via email at [Dougant2@gmail.com](mailto:Dougant2@gmail.com). If you prefer, you may also contact the researcher's advisor, Dr. John Norris, at 615.585.8379.

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

Douglas W. Anthony



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