ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON TEACHER RETENTION IN MARYLAND PUBLIC CHARTER AND CONTRACT SCHOOLS

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Teacher turnover imposes a significant negative impact on the education system as a whole, much to the detriment of student achievement. The Learning Policy Institute (2021) suggests this problem was exacerbated in all school settings by the global Covid-19 pandemic in which growing disparities between children and uncertainty about the future of public education has made the teacher's role "more untenable than ever before". Charter and contract schools face heightened challenges in regard to this phenomenon in retaining teachers, producing a high need for leadership practices that positively curb attrition.

School leadership has the potential to implement change in response to environmental changes and work conditions, thus it is a critical catalyst for retention change. An extensive review of related research revealed that leadership practices can have a significant impact on populations that Ingersoll (2004) popularized as "movers, leavers, and stayers", though little research existed specific to Maryland's public charter

and contract schools. The purpose of this study was to determine the leadership practices that Maryland public school teachers and leaders believe positively impact retention of teachers in the state. A survey was completed by 151 educators in which participants ranked the leadership practices they believed had the most positive impact on teacher retention at their schools. Categorical and ordinal responses were analyzed and a t-test was applied to determine significance of the differences between teacher and leader responses. Two focus groups were held to better understand the context of the survey findings. Sessions were transcribed and coded via open/emergent, axial, and selective coding. Two leadership practices were ranked in the top three by the vast majority of almost every generalized group and specialized subgroup: *"Nurturing a Positive School Culture" and "Cultivating Trusting Relationships"*. No other practices came close to this level of selection by participants. While teachers and leaders agreed on the two foundational practices that increase retention, there was variance in the contextual answers given by each group regarding *why* that practice was necessary and *how* to implement it well. The literature, the teachers, and the leaders all pointed to charter and contract schools being "different"- *different workloads, different visions, different challenges*. Yet, this study finds that, despite differences in policy and demographics, public charter and contract schools share an essential commonality with traditional public schools; they retain teachers by cultivating trusting relationships and nurturing positive school environments.

The Impact of Leadership Practices on Teacher Retention in Maryland Public Charter and Contract Schools

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Foreword by Duane Arbogast, Ed.D.

In the years since the onset of the pandemic, issues concerning teacher retention and recruitment have exacerbated. Teachers face unparalleled changes in curricula, increases in stress and trauma for both staff and students, and politically active parent groups and school boards. Veteran teachers are resigning or retiring in great numbers and it has become increasingly difficult to attract new teachers to the profession. The need to examine these issues is more important than ever. In addition, the need to look at particular sectors in the education field is critical. This paper, examining charter and contract schools, should be held next to research in teacher retention and recruitment in private schools, schools of choice and virtual schools to see how the factors interact. This could provide real insight into how the education system is adapting to a chaotic climate.

Using the lens of leadership practices is critical because the school leadership is the buffer between the environmental changes and the conditions under which teachers work and is perhaps the variable that has the most opportunity to impact change. This paper provides guidance to school administrators and policy makers to help turn the tide of teacher dissatisfaction and divorcement from the profession.

For Charlotte,
my world changing girl.

Acknowledgements

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I also extend a *very* special thank you to my family and friends. Charlotte ignited the fire for this work and each of you kept it burning in your own ways: Mom and Dad's bike trips and Chris and Brooke's cousin adventures that got noisy boys out of the house, Ian's nudges to push through setbacks, Georgann and Ellie's pep talks, Sam's jokes and impressions when I needed a break, Jack's encouraging notes slipped under the door, and Finn's bear hugs to remind me who it was all for. Your unconditional support made this work possible.

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Section 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem

Teacher turnover imposes a significant negative impact on the education system as a whole, but charter and contract schools face heightened challenges in regard to this phenomenon in staffing. The most recent Teacher Follow-Up Survey (2012-13) provides evidence that public charter and contract school teachers move within and leave the profession at higher rates than teachers in traditional public schools, though these rates of moving and leaving almost mirror the rates of moving and leaving by teachers working in schools with more than 50% of students approved for free or reduced-price meals, as is highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1. Rate of Stayers, Leavers, and Movers in Traditional Public, Public Charter, and Schools with ≥ 50% of Children Approved for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (*adapted from 2012-13 Teacher Follow-Up Survey*).

	Stayers	**Leavers**	**Movers**
Traditional Public Schools	84.4%	8.0%	7.7%
Public Charter Schools	81.5%	**10.2%**	**8.2%**
Schools with ≥ 50% of Children Approved for Free and Reduced-Price Meals	81.7%	**10.1%**	**8.2%**
Schools with 0-49% of Children Approved for Free and Reduced-Price Meals	86.6%	6.3%	7.1%

The Learning Policy Institute (2021) suggests this problem has been exacerbated in all school settings by the global Covid-19 pandemic in which growing disparities between children and uncertainty about the future of public education has made the teacher's role "more untenable than ever before".

Maryland's public charter school law is significantly different than in most other states. The law was enacted in 2003 and, while it does not cap the growth of charter schools in the state, it does have notably more stringent requirements than most other

states allowing charters. These requirements include only allowing district authorizers (which means teachers must be certified district employees), providing less autonomy than chartered national counterparts, and promising less funding than that granted to Maryland's traditional public schools. These differences are a matter of contention for charter operators, but lauded by public school advocates and teacher unions. The charter law was given a score of 61 out of 240 (or 26%) by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2023) due largely to offering fewer regulatory exemptions for public charters than in other states. This lack of exemptions added significant complexity to the problem because, unlike most charters in the United States, Maryland charter school teachers are employed by the local school system and required to pay dues to the union. This salary and unionized protection had the potential to make the justification for teacher turnover in Maryland's charters inconsistent with other states.

Maryland's charter law is so unique that more research is needed to determine what impacts teacher turnover in these schools within the state. The problem of practice this research attempts to address is the inability of Maryland public charters to retain teachers, and whether this struggle is unique to the state's charters.

Definition of Terms

Turnover

*Turnove*r, the umbrella term used to explain "the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs" (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 500) or the "change in teachers from one year to the next in a particular school setting" (Sorensen & Ladd, 2018, p.1). It is a universal problem in modern American education. Despite its nonspecificity, the term is utilized in most of the literature associated with the concept. This is due to schools being impacted similarly whether leavers exit the profession altogether or simply move to a new building (Ingersoll, 2001). Macdonald defines turnover as "the annual rate of teachers leaving their particular school position" and "the lateral movement of teachers within schooling

systems" (1999). Miller and Chait (2008) echo this sentiment, suggesting those who move might either take higher paying non-education sector jobs or simply move to another similar position within the educational system. Turnover has been a consistent problem in modern education and has even been described as a “revolving door” in the teaching profession by Ingersol (2003). The term *turnover* will be used in the context of this dissertation to mean a teacher who has left the school, regardless of the reasoning for leaving.

Attrition

According to Miller and Chait (2008), *attrition* includes “teachers leaving the classroom to take up other professional responsibilities, inside or outside of education, or to spend more time with their families”. Egu, Wuju & Chionye (2011) and UNESCO (2006) expanded this definition to include both permanent leaving due to retirement or change of professional field, or temporary leaving due to maternity or other family obligations. Billingsley (1993), in a study specific to the attrition and retention of special educators, used the term “exit attrition” to describe educators who left the profession entirely. Boe, Bobbitt, and Cook (1997) consider exit attrition to be the most troubling form of attrition “because it represents a reduction in the teaching force, requiring a compensating inflow of replacement teachers” (p. 377). The term *attrition* will be used interchangeably with *turnover* in the context of this dissertation to mean a teacher who has left the school, regardless of the reason for leaving.

Retention

Lochmiller, Sugimoto, and Muller (2016), in their partnership study with Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia examining attrition in Kentucky public schools, defined *retention* as teachers who remain “in the same school from year to year” or “stayers”. Billingsley (1993) considered *retention* in three categories specific to special educators: (1) special educators who stayed in the same teaching assignment and the

same school, (2) special educators who transferred to another teaching special education position within the same school or district, and (3) special educators who transferred to a general education role in their own school or district. This dissertation will use the term *retention* to include those teachers who have stayed in the same school regardless of role changes within that school.

Movers, Leavers, and *Stayers*

Much of the recent literature on teacher retention follows the lead of Ingersoll (2001) in dividing teachers into three groups: leavers, movers and stayers. *Movers* are educators who transfer to other schools but remain a part of the educational system as a whole. Boe et. al. (2008) refers to this as "teacher migration". *Leavers* are educators who exit teaching whether by retirement, adoption of a new profession, or other voluntary career terminating event (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). *Stayers* are educators who remain in the same school. The terms *movers, leavers,* and *stayers* will be used in the context of this dissertation to mean those who move to a new job within the educational field *(movers)*, those who leave the teaching profession altogether *(leavers)*, and those who stay in their school *(stayers)*.

Churn

Movers and *leavers* together make up the *churn*, or the degree to which there is turnover movement within the profession (Atteberry, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2017; Ingersoll et. al., 2018). While this term will not be widely used by the researcher in the context of this dissertation, it does appear in several relevant quotes from experts, and as such necessitates inclusion.

Charter School

A public charter school is a school that receives some government funding but operates independently or semi-independently of the state and/or county school system in which it is located. Students are most typically enrolled into a public charter school

after applying to and being selected in a public lottery which is open to all students in the charter's county. While private charters do exist, the term "Charter School" or "Charter" will be used in the context of this dissertation to mean a public school that operates with some independence from its county school system and pulls its student population from the whole county that it is a part of. Additionally, this researcher's usage of the plural term *charters* will imply both the collection of public charter schools and public contract schools within a given location.

Contract School

A public contract school is a school that operates under a contract with a local education agency and receives funding from that agency. Students are most typically enrolled in a public contract school after applying to and being selected in a public lottery which is open to students from specific cities, towns, or areas. Public contract schools are very similar to public charter schools except in this detail. The literature often refers to public contracts as "charters" or as members of the "charter system". In the context of this dissertation, the term *contract* will refer to a public school that operates with some independence from its county school system and pulls its student population from specific cities.

Scope of the Problem

Scope of the Problem in American Education

There is no question that teachers are important to student success. The Educational Research Service (ERS; 2002) suggests that there is a "direct connection between quality teachers and high student achievement" and that this evidence is "so compelling that schools should be putting more effort into making sure they find and keep the highest quality teachers". Sanders and Horn (1998), Hanushek and Rivkin (2004), and Goldhaber (2002) suggest this influence is even deeper than a mere connection, stating that the teacher is the most important factor in the academic growth

of students. It is clear that teachers play an exceptionally important role in student achievement, so retaining them in the profession is imperative.

Increasing Student Enrollment. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), fall 2019 U.S. public school enrollment was "expected to be slightly higher than the 50.7 million students enrolled in fall 2018" which made it "the highest enrollment ever reported for public schools." The NCES Report on the Condition of Education 2019 shows a growth in the number of students in public charter schools from 2.8 million in 2015 to 3.0 million in 2016, constituting an increase of 150 new public charter schools. The consistent increase in students in both sectors suggests that the need for teachers is also increasing steadily across the board. Evidence suggests that existing educators must be retained, and new educators hired in order to keep up with this growth. Unfortunately, this is not the case in American education.

Increasing Teacher Turnover. One-sixth of the teacher workforce left American schools annually between 1995-2005, according to Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson (2005). Thomas and Hammond (2019) assert that, while the United States has an average annual attrition rate of 8%, ranging from 5.1% in 1992 to 8.4% in 2008, "there is considerable variation in attrition rates by region of the country, subject area, and school characteristics." Loeb, et al. (2005) investigated specific school characteristics that serve as predictors of higher rates of moving and leaving. Many of these demographic characteristics were consistent with populations found in higher needs schools including specific ethnicities, races, poverty levels, and languages spoken. This rate of leaving is further heightened in specific grade levels and teaching areas. The U.S. Labor Bureau estimated that 270,000 educators would leave their schools on average each year between 2016 and 2026, and 198,600 of those were projected to be kindergarten through eighth grade teachers and special educators (Torpey, 2020). The

2020 global pandemic appears to have increased these numbers. The RAND Corporation's 2021 State of the U.S. Teacher Survey showed one in four teachers were considering leaving their job by the end of that school year. This was a significant jump from the typical pre-pandemic yearly average of 16%. Pre *and* post pandemic, teacher turnover exists at alarming rates.

Impact on Student Learning. Student learning is impacted by teacher turnover. The disruption in learning doesn't end with the student who receives a rookie teacher, either. Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) found that turnover negatively impacted the quality of instruction in the year following the loss of a teacher both in the class the teacher left, but also in classes in which teachers remained. Often teachers are moved from one grade level to another within a school to balance experience on grade level teams when a vacancy arises. Spillane (2017) found this to be one of the most predictive ways to permanently dissolve ties between school staff members. This could be, in part, due to propinquity, or the physical closeness of staff members. Researchers found significant statistical relationships between this physical closeness and the teachers' regular communication of information with one another (Spillane, 2010 and Spillane, Hopkins, and Sweet, 2015), particularly amongst those teaching the same grade level (Moolenaar et al. 2014; Spillane et al. 2010, 2015; Spillane, Kim, and Frank 2012). A teacher's grade level change puts even experienced teachers into a position in which they must adapt to the demands of the new curriculum and age level that they are assigned to teach. Consequently, it also places more students into classrooms with a teacher who lacks experience at that grade level, a sentiment echoed by evidence that teachers switching grades adversely impacts instructional quality in the subsequent year after the switch (Ost, 2014).

Increasing Teacher Burnout. Richards, Hemphill, & Templin (2018) found that working conditions in modern schools correlate to teacher burnout. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2015) concurred, labeling workplace conditions responsible for 70% of burnout variance. In a study focused on burnout in teachers, Richards et al. (2018) suggested that teachers rating "high burnout" on the Maslach Burnout Inventory perceived high levels of workplace stress and depersonalization. Researchers found that many teachers feel isolated in their teaching assignments (Newberry & Allsop, 2017), largely due to the overwhelming demands of the job. Newberry & Allslop (2017) and Richards et al. (2017) both suggested that teachers routinely go into the field because of a positive experience as a student but were surprised by the demands of the job once hired. Zamarro, Camp, Fuschman, and McGee of the Brookings Institute (2021) found additional burnout factors specific to the 2020 global pandemic including a thirteen-percentage point higher probability of leaving for teachers who had to change instructional mode at least once during the year and a ten percentage point higher probability of considering leaving for teachers who perceived a 50% chance or higher chance of contracting Covid-19 on the job. Burnout puts teachers at risk for leaving as it is characterized by unsustainable, prolonged stress and exhaustion. Some research points to burnout occuring in higher rates among high needs schools, charter schools, and schools with an extreme focus on high-stakes testing (Sass, et. al., 2012). Many workplace reform attempts are focused on tangible factors that can be manipulated. These include salary, class size, and job security. Bryk & Schneider (2002) and Byrk et al. (2010) suggest that many factors of teacher burnout are, instead, impacted by the social context of schools and outcomes for children. Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012, p. 2) argue that "the high turnover rates of teachers in schools with substantial populations of low-income and minority students are driven largely by teachers fleeing the dysfunctional and unsupportive work environments

in the schools to which low-income and minority students are most likely to be assigned."

Scope of the Problem in the Charter System

Charter schools are public schools that are run by organizations outside of traditional public education management. The elevated freedom and public funding come with an expectation that state standards will be met. If these standards are not upheld, the charter's contract will be revoked (Finn, Manno, and Vanourek, 2000). Exponential growth in student populations in the United States has increased demand for charters and traditional schools alike yet, "Charter schools across the country experience teacher attrition rates as much as twice the teacher attrition rates of traditional public schools" (Stuit & Smith, 2012). However, as Gross and DeArmond, 2010 assert, "The scale and nature of the turnover problem in charter schools is far less understood than it is in traditional public schools". What we do know is that charters- an exceptionally diverse collection of schools- often epitomize characteristics that are widely accepted national predictors of turnover: *teacher age, unionization and salary, extra responsibilities, and student populations.*

Teacher Age and Turnover

One of the most reliable national predictors of departure from one's job is teacher's age, "with a u-shaped distribution in which younger and older teachers are more likely to leave" (Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (2011–12) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (2012–13) showed that retirement made up 18% of the national turnover rate of 16% of all teachers. The 2021 global pandemic has also nudged older teachers toward considering retirement. Zamarro, Camp, Fuschman,

and McGee of the Brookings Institute (2021) found that 34% of teachers 55 and older considered leaving or retiring because of COVID-19, as compared to 23% of all respondents who reported the same. While we might expect the oldest teachers to leave the profession for retirement opportunities pre or post pandemic, it is alarming that the newest teachers are leaving in such high numbers as well. The high rates suggest a "sink or swim" experience for the youngest educators that discourages many to the point of exiting the profession before reaching their full potential. High needs schools often focus on recruiting promising young teachers, but often fail to follow through with retention support (Ingersoll & May, 2011; TNTP, 2012). This means low income and minority students in high needs schools are routinely taught by the least experienced and effective teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007; Hanushek et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). Like high needs schools, charters statistically employ younger staff members than traditional publics, as evidenced by Miron and Applegate's research (2007) examining more than six thousand teacher/staff surveys from six different states. The study found that charter school teachers are, on average, significantly younger than teachers at traditional public schools, noting that "37 percent were under 30 years of age; 45.5 percent were in their 30s or 40s; and 17.5 percent were 50 or older. This is a notable contrast to the teaching force in traditional public schools, where only some 11 percent of the teaching force is younger than 30" (Miron and Applegate, 2007). Ten years later, the 2017-2018 National Teacher and Principal Survey found that the average age of teachers in traditional public schools was 43 years, while the average age of teachers in public charter schools was 39 (Taie and Goldring, 2020). The same survey found that the average traditional public school teacher had 14 years of teaching experience, while the average charter school teacher had only 10. What does this mean for charters? A higher rate of young, inexperienced staff members suggests a higher risk of attrition than at traditional public schools.

Unionization, Salaries, and Turnover

Charters operate independently, which often means utilizing innovative deviations from the programming of traditional public schools in an effort to offset opportunity and achievement gaps seen in the populations of students they disproportionately serve. This typically means that charter teachers work outside of traditional public school unions, with different salaries and benefits as well. A nationwide survey conducted by The National Alliance for Public Schools (2011) found only 604 charter schools (12.3%) had collective bargaining agreements with their teachers' unions. Guarino (2003) echoes this, highlighting the tendency of charters to operate outside of existing bargaining rights. Unionization rights vary by state. Some states link charters to existing collective bargaining agreements within the regular public school system while seven states bar unionization of charters altogether (Freeman & Han, 2012). Carruthers (2012) explains "charters are typically free to deviate from step-lane pay scales that pay mainstream teachers according to strict functions of experience, education, and other credentials." While this freedom seems to allow charters the opportunity to pay competitively, data suggests in practice most do not. The U.S. Department of Education's Schools and Staffing Survey (2013) show charter school teachers' average salaries were nearly $10,000 less than traditional public school teachers' average salaries. The lack of unionized work and lower pay is a predictor of turnover. This deficit places charters at higher risk for teacher turnover.

Extra Responsibilities and Turnover

Tye and O'Brien (2009) suggested extra responsibilities and duties were another cause of attrition in charter schools. The 114 participants in their study cited extra responsibilities of charter teachers that included increased paperwork, salary considerations, and accountability, particularly with regards to high stakes testing. The

Covid-19 pandemic increased these responsibilities in new ways. Mann (2020) found that 77% of all charter and traditional public school teachers reported working more than they did before the pandemic. Hamilton et al. (2020) detail the immense list of new tasks assigned to teachers during this time: sanitizing classrooms, navigating online learning systems, adopting new pedagogies for online instruction, and innovating ways to engage with learners and families in this new modality. Interestingly, Kraft, Simon, and Lyon (2021) found that "Charter school teachers were less likely than teachers in traditional public schools to express their own discomfort with technological tools for remote learning" (p.24). This may be in part due to another finding by the researchers: veteran teachers, rarely found in large numbers in charters, were much more likely to report discomfort with technology. Charter teachers are more likely to teach populations of higher need. It is reasonable to assume these teachers have become comfortable innovating with available technologies in order to bring learning opportunities to disadvantaged young people, a new approach that Winthrop and Vegas (2020) champion as a positive opportunity that has come out of the pandemic.

Student Populations and Turnover

High-poverty schools experience higher turnover rates (15.2 %) than low-poverty schools (10.5 %) (Ingersoll, 2001). Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) found that high-minority schools experienced higher turnover than those serving lower proportions of minority students. This means that the most historically underserved populations are experiencing the most inconsistency in staffing. Gannon and Mattingly (2012) found that poor, diverse, large cities are almost three times as likely to have a critically high percentage of beginning teachers, as compared to districts of average poverty and diversity (see Table 2). The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2023) cites ten districts as having the highest total enrollment in charter schools within their geographic

locations and each is a diverse, large city with high levels of poverty. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), for example, has 282 charters- the highest concentration of charters of any district in the country (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2023). The California Charter Schools Association (2015) reports 86% minority enrollment (*71% Latino, 12% African American, and 3% Asian*), 78% low-income students (as determined by qualification for free and reduced lunch), and 22% English language learners.

Table 2. Mean Percent of Beginning Teachers, Poverty, and Race, by Urbanicity *(Adapted from Gannon and Mattingly, 2012).*

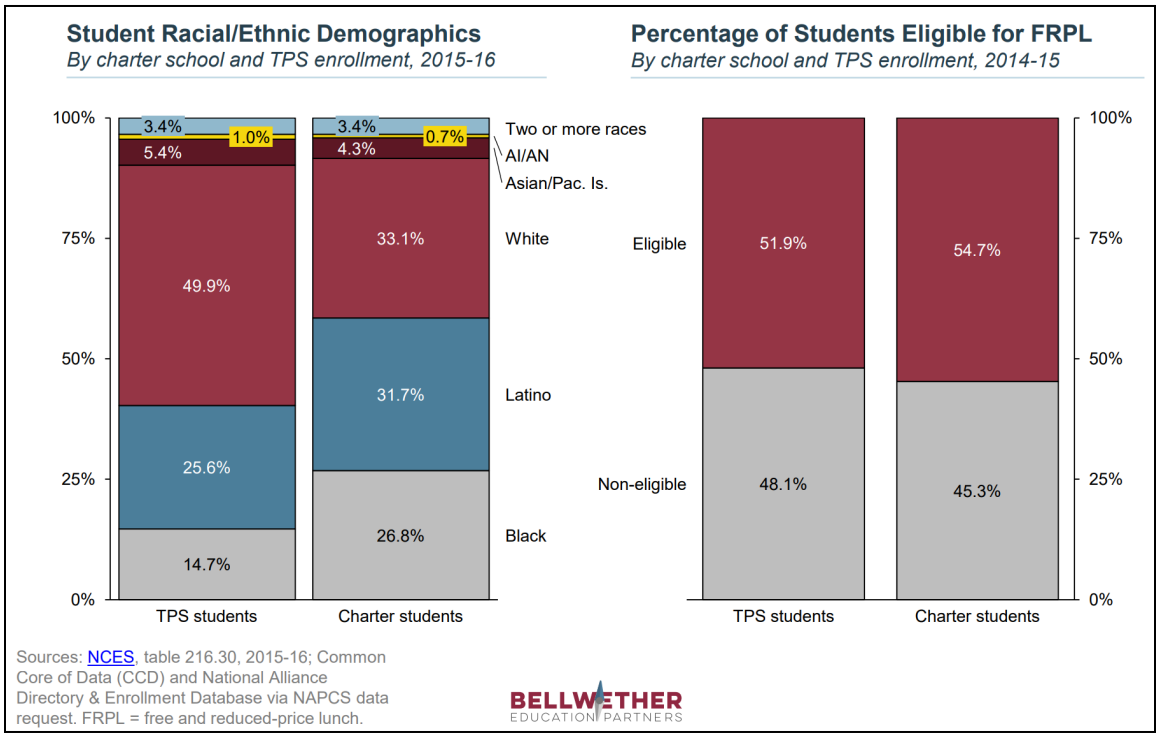
	Full Sample	Large Cities	Mid Size Small Cities	Suburbs	Fringe Distant Towns	Remote Towns	Rural
% of Beginning Teachers	9.3	11.0	8.9	8.9	8.7	9.8	9.7
% of Students in Poverty	16.8	21.9	19.6	11.7	18.2	22.1	17.9
Sum % of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian Students	26.4	61.2	43.9	28.3	26.0	31.3	19.2
Sample Size	6,569	151	537	1,811	789	497	2,784

Note from Gannon and Mattingly (2012): Large city is a territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of 250,000 or more, mid sized small city: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of less than 250,000, suburb: Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area, fringe-distant town: Territory inside an urban cluster that is located less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area, remote town: Territory inside an urban cluster that is located more than 35 miles from an urbanized area, rural: Territory outside of an urban cluster or urbanized areas.

Nationally, charters serve a higher proportion of students of color and low-income students than traditional public schools. “Despite serving only 6 percent of students nationally, charter schools disproportionately serve more black, Latino and low-income students than traditional public schools. The most recent data show that

charters serve 12 percent more black students, 6 percent more Hispanic students and 3 percent more low-income students than traditional public schools (Lewis, 2019).”

Figure 1. Traditional Public School v. Charter School Demographics



Gross and DeArmond (2010), in a study that tracked 956 new charter school teachers and 19,695 new public school teachers from 1998-2006 and mirrored research by Ingersoll, found that “charter school teachers are, on average, far more likely to leave their schools than traditional public school teachers. Charter teachers have 40 percent greater odds of moving schools than traditional public school teachers, and 52 percent greater odds of exiting the system altogether”. Interestingly, Rosenberg and Anderson (2021), in a study of six public school districts, found that teacher turnover actually declined from an average of 17.3% leavers between 2016 and 2019 to 12.6% leavers in 2020. Most notably, the biggest declines in turnover in 2020 happened among early career teachers in high poverty schools, two groups that typically report the highest rates

of turnover. Economic reasons may have also been a factor in this anomaly. Rosenberg and Anderson (2021) explain that unemployment rates in the general population in the summer of 2020 were significantly higher than the spring of 2020 and, historically, when unemployment rates rise teachers are less likely to resign.

Crisis affects low-income populations and the schools that serve them disproportionately (Simon & Evans, 2014) and the Covid-19 pandemic was no exception. Some students had their own devices, reliable internet service, and adults in the home to support their distance learning. Teachers could, thus, focus on the tasks of adapting content and structures to digital space and learning new technology. In other communities, students did not have devices, internet service, or home support. Teachers struggled to fundraise and write grants for devices, distribute and set up devices and hotspots for families, and innovate ways to get content to learners with limited or no access to the technology. Educators for Excellence (2020) found that barely half (51%) of the teachers in high-poverty schools reported that the majority of their students could access distance learning daily, in stark comparison to the 84% of teachers who reported students having daily access in affluent schools.

Scope of the Problem in Maryland Public Schools

The most recent retention data available on Maryland State Department of Education's P12 Dashboard were collected in school years 2010 to 2018. Table 3, adapted from MSDE's P12 Dashboard, shows the percent of teacher attrition in Maryland between the 2010 and 2016 school years was consistently lower than the national average of 8%. These averages, however, follow an increasing trend line as shown in Figure 2. When the data are disaggregated by teacher experience, a familiar pattern emerges. The u-shaped distribution in which the oldest and youngest teachers leave American schools in the highest numbers (Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson, 2005) can be

seen in Maryland's attrition data as well. Figure 3 illustrates this phenomenon. Between school years 2010 and 2017, without fail, the highest rates of attrition were found in teachers with 0-5 years experience, the next highest rates of attrition were found in teachers with 6-15 years experience, the third highest attrition rates were found in teachers with more than 26 years experience, and the lowest attrition rates were found among teachers with 16-25 years experience.

Table 3. MD Teacher Attrition SY 10-17 *(Adapted from MSDE P12 Dashboard)*

School Year	Total Teachers	Total Attrition	Percent Attrition	0-5 years experience	6-15 years experience	16-25 years experience	26+ years experience
2010-2011	59,330	3,541	5.6%	1,544	972	341	684
2011-2012	58,351	4,486	7.1%	1,892	1,174	422	998
2012-2013	58,544	4,204	6.7%	1,681	1,414	438	671
2013-2014	59,315	4,161	6.6%	1,600	1,394	443	724
2014-2015	59,891	4,433	6.9%	1,705	1,455	502	771
2015-2016	60,053	4,536	7.0%	1,815	1,405	556	760
2016-2017	60,306	4,291	6.6%	1,797	1,363	464	667
2017-2018	60,740	4,388	6.7%	2,016	1,213	509	650

Figure 2. Percent Attrition of Maryland Public School Educators SY 10-17

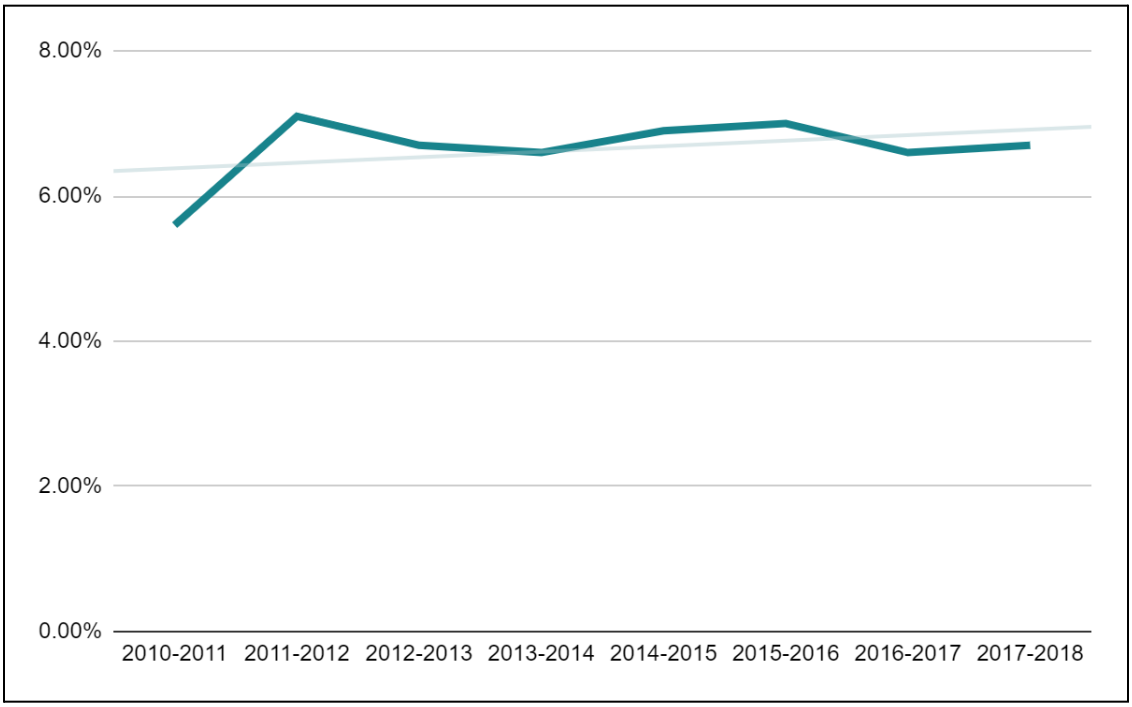
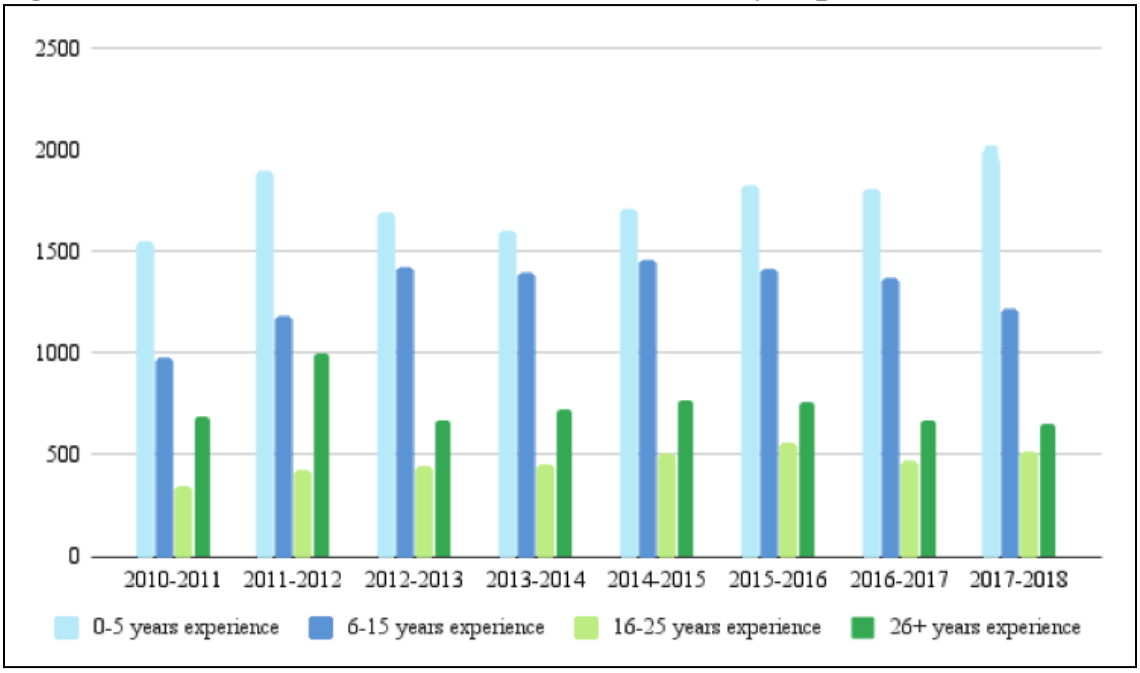


Figure 3. Teacher Attrition in MD Public Schools by Experience SY 10-17



While the group with the third highest rate of attrition (represented in dark green in Figure 3) should not be ignored, it is reasonable to assume many of these teachers are finding a natural end to their career through retirement. Similar to national findings, the u-shaped distribution in Maryland's attrition data thus suggests a need for new teacher support in the 0-5 and 6-15 years experience ranges.

New Teacher Support

The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.07.01.04 requires that "each local school system shall establish and maintain a comprehensive induction program for all new teachers" which should include "ongoing support from a mentor, including regularly scheduled meetings during non-instructional time." The 2015 TELL Maryland Survey, which included responses from 30,000 educators across the state suggests that this isn't the case in practice. In fact, 25% of educators polled said that they were not assigned a mentor as a new teacher and 50% said that they did not have protected time to meet with their mentor within the paid work week. Nearly 8,000 educators responded that they were not provided with an orientation for new teachers (TELL Maryland Survey, 2015). As a part of the induction program, the regulation also requires school systems to provide "ongoing professional development designed to address new teacher needs and concerns. "Twenty-seven percent of TELL Maryland Survey respondents shared that they did not have access to seminars for new teachers and 33% did not have access to professional learning communities for educators new to the profession.

Perhaps the most striking juxtaposition of regulation and reality in Maryland education can be found in COMAR 13A.07.01.05. This regulation encourages local school systems to reduce the teaching schedule and responsibilities for first year teachers. On the surface this appears to be a sound idea, however in practice a reduction of schedule or responsibilities is usually impractical. Eighty-five percent of the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey respondents reported that they were not given a reduced workload as a new

teacher. Reducing new teacher responsibilities can be a Catch-22. While it might help the new teacher, the brunt of the extra lift is carried by other educators on their team. This means reduced planning time, increased responsibilities, and more complex scheduling for teaching staff in the 2+ experience range.

New Teacher Preparation

Maryland has been an "import" state, recruiting more than 50% of its teaching population from other states (Teach Maryland, 2023) as its own colleges and universities have produced well below the teacher demand for more than two decades (MSDE, 2017). See Figure 4 for specific rates of in versus out of state hires between 2005 and 2015. As shown in Figure 5, the majority of these recruits have been new hires, ranging from 51% of total hires in 2015 to 63.4% in 2011, then roughly even with experienced hires in 2015 (MSDE, 2017).

Figure 4. Maryland Hiring Trends (In vs Out of State) 2005-2015
Source: Maryland State Department of Education, P-12 Longitudinal Data System Dashboards & Maryland Teacher Staffing Reports (2017)

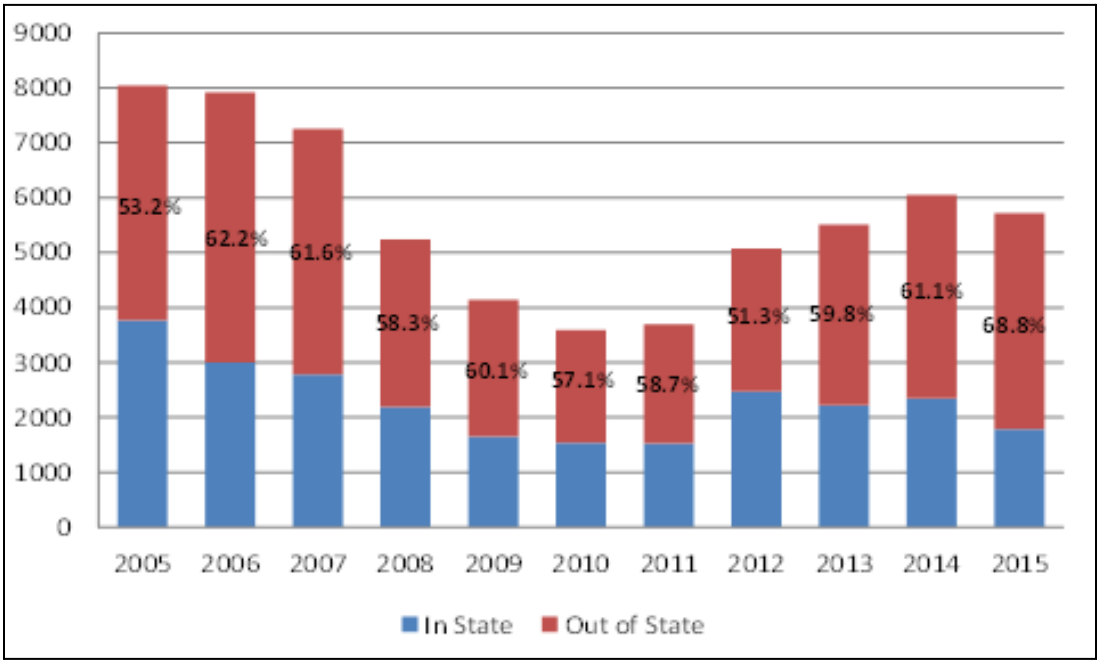
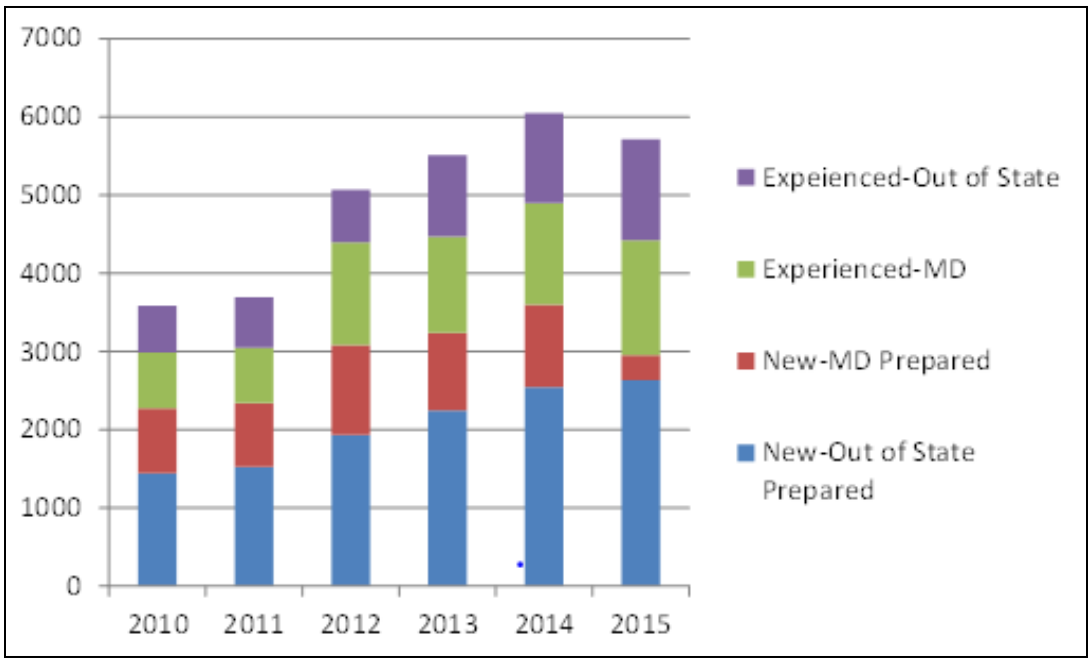
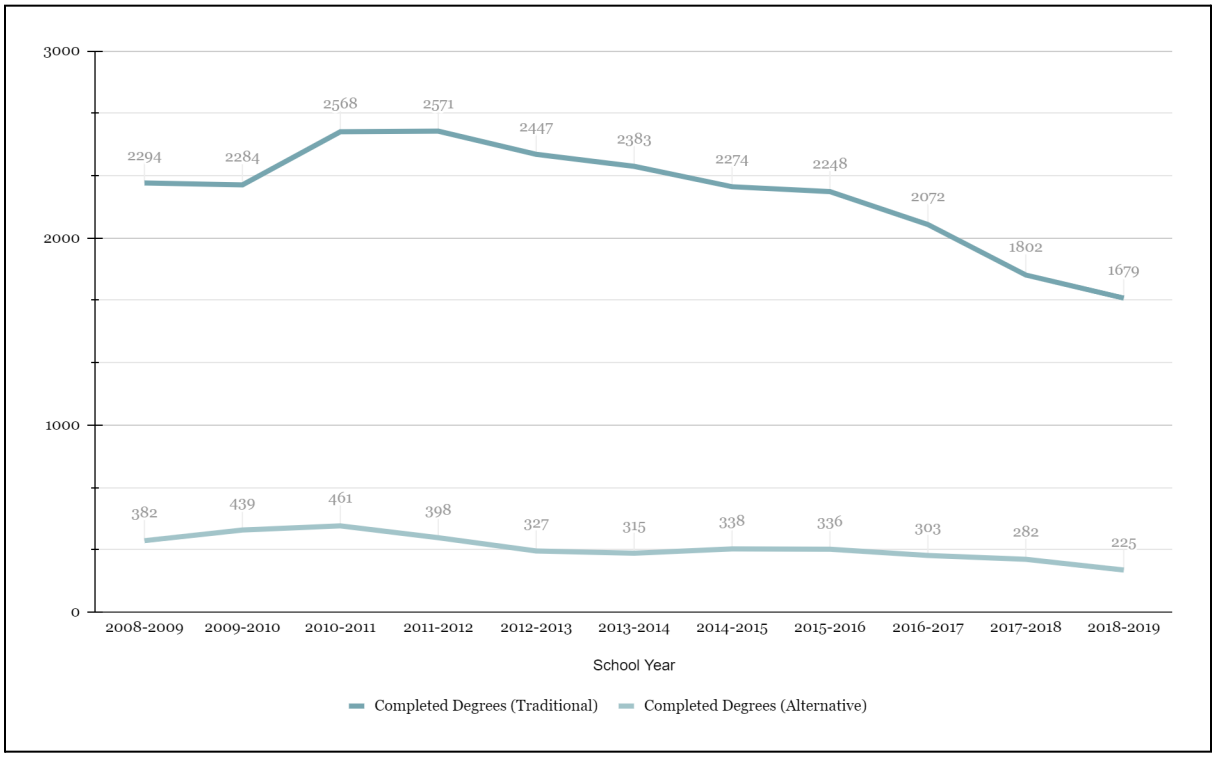


Figure 5. Makeup of Maryland Public School Hires, 2010-2015
Source: Maryland State Department of Education, P-12 Longitudinal Data System Dashboards & Maryland Teacher Staffing Reports (2017)



Enrollments in Maryland's teacher preparation programs have also fallen, perhaps in response to the stark contrast between regulation and reality discussed previously. According to the US Department of Education Title II Reports, teacher education degree completion in Maryland fell 29% between the 2008 and 2018 school years. Figure 6 illustrates the declining trend lines in both traditional and alternative paths which make up the total completed degree programs during this time. The decline in enrollment and completion of teacher preparation programs in the state mean Maryland will continue to struggle to staff schools with home-grown highly qualified teachers.

Figure 6. Maryland Teacher Degree Completion SY 08-18
(Adapted from US Department of Education Title II Reports)



Scope of the Problem in Maryland Contracts & Charters

Senate Bill 75 established the Maryland Public Charter School Program in July of 2003, citing its purpose as providing innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students within existing county public school systems. The law identifies 24 local boards of education (*all of Maryland's 23 counties plus Baltimore City*) as the primary chartering authorities in the state. Maryland has a limited number of charters with fewer regulatory exemptions and a more centralized process for granting and renewing charters than many other states. It has a strong focus on accountability and quality, with charter schools being subject to rigorous academic and financial reporting requirements. In contrast, many states operate like California in which charter schools have a broader level of autonomy compared to traditional public schools and are subject to less regulation and oversight. This has led to

rapid growth in charters in these states, with California serving over half a million children in 1,300 schools across the state.

Maryland has only 55 charter and contract schools. Most risk factors associated with charters nationally apply to Maryland charters and contracts including the youth of the staff, heightened demands of the job and a higher population of traditionally underserved students than regular publics in the same school system. A notable difference between Maryland's charters and contracts and many others in the nation is how teachers are compensated. According to Maryland charter law, educators are public school system employees, meaning that they enjoy the same salary, benefits, and collective bargaining rights as their regular public teacher counterparts. It also required that teaching staff must hold appropriate Maryland certification and are considered public school employees with all rights thereof.

The Abell Report (2015) found that charter operators would like to have more autonomy before opening charters in Maryland, particularly requesting less restrictions on certification requirements and the teachers they are allowed to hire and fire. Some researchers argue that these restrictions increase the potential for charters to succeed. Maryland's charters have had better standardized testing results than other states with more lax controls including Michigan, where, despite $1 billion being funneled into charters, most of the schools don't perform better than public schools and there is little transparency about how that money is spent (Dixon, 2017.)

Maryland's charters serve a significantly higher number of Black/ African American students than their traditional public school counterparts in both the state and country. Table 4 (below) presents information about the race/ethnicity and eligibility for the Free and Reduced Lunch program for Maryland's public charter school students as reported by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2023). The table shows that Maryland's public charters, like charter schools across the US, serve a higher rate of

high needs children (as identified by eligibility for the Free and Reduced Lunch program) than their traditional public school counterparts.

Table 4. Enrollments in U.S. & Maryland's Public Charter Schools by Ethnicity/Race and Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility SY 2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016)

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other Race/ Ethnicity	Free & Reduced Lunch Eligible
Charter schools in Maryland	14.0%	77.0%	6.0%	1.0%	2.0%	54.1%
Public schools in Maryland	40.9%	34.9%	13.6%	6.1%	4.5%	46%
Charter schools in the U.S.	34.9%	27.1%	30.0%	4.1%	3.8%	59.6%
Public schools in the U.S.	50.3%	15.6%	24.8%	4.8%	4.4%	52.1%

A distinct gap exists in the available data regarding Maryland public charters and contract schools. Researchers at the Maryland State Department of Education report that there are no data points specific to teacher retention in the state's charter and contract schools (Carol Beck, Director, Office of School Innovation, MSDE, 2019) . The actual rates of retention in Maryland public charter and contract schools are unknown. Without this information, it is impossible to create a baseline when comparing specific practices that increase retention. The consequences of not understanding and addressing this problem are immense for these unique schools.

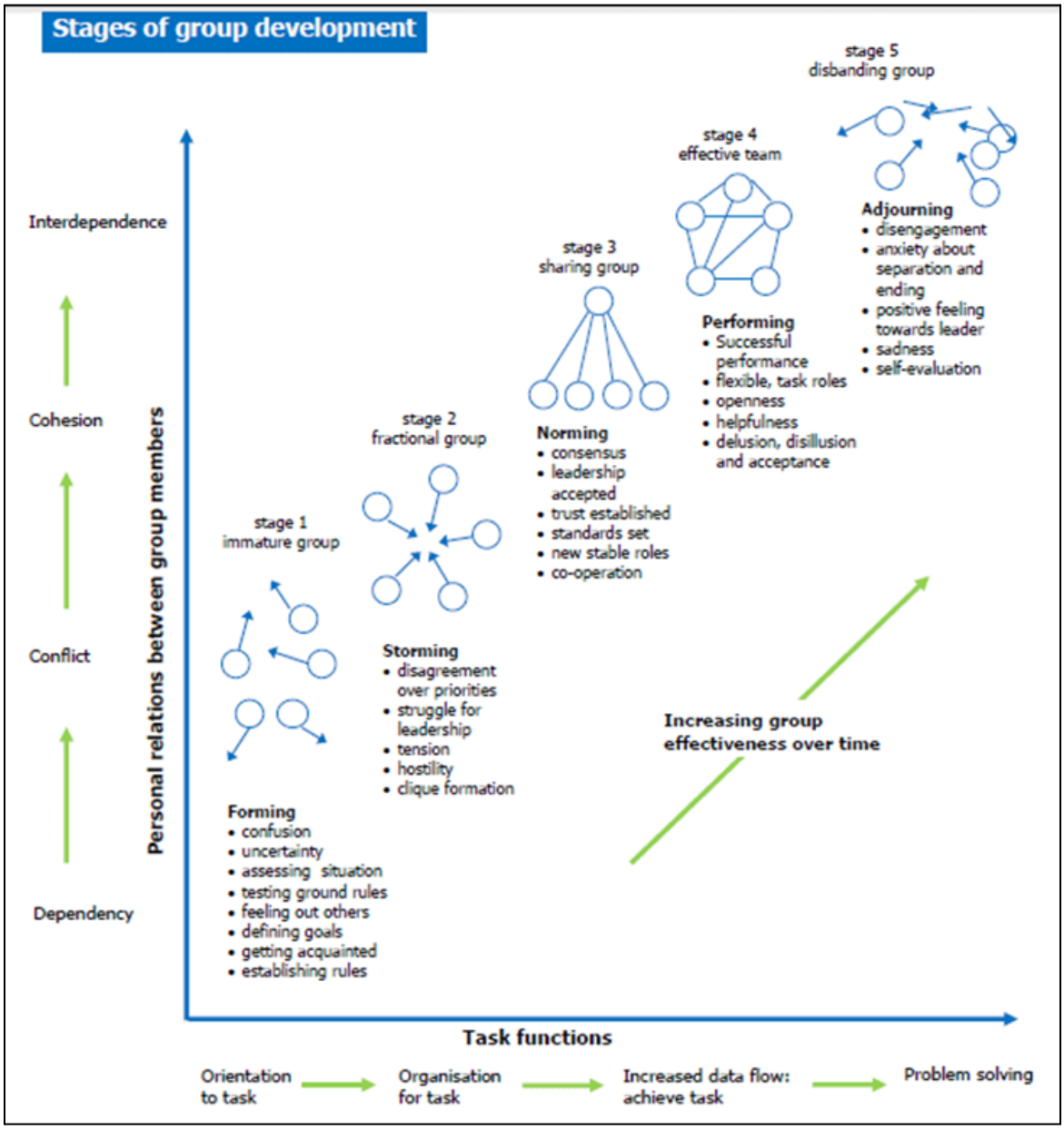
Consequences of Not Addressing the Problem

Turnover has the potential to impact charter and contract schools in Maryland in four key ways; school culture, collective knowledge, staying staff, and financial costs.

Impact on School Culture

School culture is a collective set of beliefs, values, and assumptions shared by a school staff. It takes time, nurturing, and purposeful communication to develop. It may seem easy to overlook culture as a vague, immeasurable term but research has found a correlation between organizational culture and performance in many fields (Prajogo, D.I. and McDermott, C.M., 2011; Lee, S.K.J. and Yu, K., 2004). One way researchers attempt to describe the depth of culture on teams like those found within a school is through Tuckman's Model of Team Development (Figure 7). In this model, teams build from dependency to interdependence and from an orientation around a specific task to the more robust job of orientation around problem solving, both of which increase their effectiveness over time. Teams grow through "forming", a confusing stage in which members have to establish rules and define their goals, to "storming", in which members face conflict as they disagree and struggle for leadership. When this tension has been overcome, the team progresses to the "norming" stage in which trust is established and cooperative roles are stable. It is not until the team has moved beyond this stage and into "performing" that they reach optimal efficacy, successfully completing undertakings collaboratively and flexibly. In a perfect world, all grade level teams of teachers would operate at a "performing" level for optimal productivity. School culture is an immensely complex, multidimensional construct. It is difficult to understand the nuances of impact that retention has on a school's culture from an outsider's perspective, thus a contextual illustration has been offered in the following pages which shares first hand experience of the impact of retention on school culture within a public charter school.

Figure 7. Tuckman's Model of Team Development. (Figure provided by Cullen, Margaret & Calitz, André. (2015).)



Positionality and the School Culture at Charlotte Academy. It is important to note that the researcher's positionality is informed by more than fifteen years of proximity to the school reform movement and employment as a founding educator within one Maryland charter school and one Maryland contract school, in addition to serving as a teacher in one Massachusetts charter school. Consider "Charlotte

Academy", or CA, a pseudonym for a diversely populated school currently operating within the public charter and contract system of Maryland. The researcher's experience working at CA for many years informed the creation of this study. First hand experience of the researcher included working on teaching teams in primary, intermediate, and middle school grade levels, contributing to hiring and onboarding support as a hiring team member and leader, participating as a non-administrative leadership team member, as well as supporting teachers in improving practice as an instructional guide. These diverse experiences offered the researcher a window into both teacher and leader perspectives within the charter school. This firsthand experience at Charlotte Academy informed the nuanced contextual examples which, in the following pages, serve to illustrate what specific findings in the literature might look like in actual practice.

The high number of yearly changes in teaching staff at Charlotte Academy make it necessary to re-establish culture with a new team each fall, instead of deepening an existing culture with returning team members . This is especially concerning in charter settings because grade level teams are responsible for developing, resourcing, and improving curriculum in a highly collaborative fashion. Grade level team collaborative planning meetings serve as a microcosm of the school itself, demonstrating clearly why adding depth to culture can increase performance. Grade level teams who have spent at least two years together without members leaving show exceptionally higher rates of productivity and self-efficacy than those who have had at least one member of their team replaced in the last year. Administrators and instructional support leaders rate these highly productive groups as "norming" and "performing" on Tuckman's Model of Team Development, while teams who have new members have begun the process of "forming" and "storming" all over again. Team members on lower performing teams repeatedly cite losing a member of their team as a reason that they are not more cohesive in

collaborative planning. One CA middle school teacher, on a team in its third year of working together without turnover shared that "it took two years to figure everyone's pet peeves out, and the things that were really important to them. Now we can act, knowing what those are. We also already have a pattern of who takes on which tasks naturally." This "performing" team considers each member a friend that they care personally and professionally about. Research by The Gallup Organization (1999) reported that employees who had formed strong friendships at work were 37% more likely to report that someone at work encourages their development, 27% more likely to report that the mission of their company makes them feel their job is important, and 21% more likely to report that they have the opportunity to do what they do best at work each day. In other words, a school culture that encourages having a good friend at work makes you more likely to feel good about being at work, and less likely to want to leave. When turnover is high, and team members are routinely replaced, it is difficult to form these close bonds.

Impact on Collective Knowledge

Collective knowledge refers to the skills and understandings of the whole staff that are shared collaboratively to some positive end. Traditional public schools in the county system Charlotte Academy operates within all run the same programs, meaning that a teacher transferring from one traditional public school to another will already be familiar with the curriculum, materials, and intervention systems that are used county wide. The collective knowledge of these schools- the common language, the protocols, the experience with resources- is preserved despite hiring a teacher who has moved from one school to another. This was not the case at CA. Charlotte Academy hosts a wealth of unique programs and initiatives, each of which require specific training. Individuals are either trained in-house or sent to conferences, workshops, and professional development sessions elsewhere to gain the knowledge needed to run those programs effectively.

When teachers stay at the school, that knowledge stays as well. Trained individuals become mentors in that expertise area and support other staff members in building their understanding of it. Experts can add to their knowledge, and thus the school's collective knowledge, by attending supplemental training. The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at Charlotte Academy includes many individuals who have been trained extensively at a summer institute. Each trained participant attended a different session at the summer institute so as to increase the collective knowledge at the school by sharing the resources and strategies gleaned individually. Each was expected to serve as the expert in that particular focus area of the AVID program. However, several AVID trained teachers have left the school. This means that the expertise in a particular AVID focus area left the school as well. Charlotte Academy hosts multiple programs, and each has lost experts to attrition. This erosion of information assets is especially problematic in CA's contract setting because each of those programs will have to recruit, retrain, and support a new person despite already completing that training with at least one leaver. Gross (2011) posed the example of another charter school that served a highly impoverished and marginalized student population and experienced nearly 50% turnover each year.

> School administrators watched as nearly all of the investment in professional learning each year walked out the door, leaving the school with few teachers able to carry the knowledge forward to the next round of teachers. This meant that almost no one was available to provide institutional memory in the school, and few had the experience to take on leadership roles (p.16). (Gross, 2011)

The loss of collective knowledge, or "institutional memory", in a school can be devastating to the forward momentum of programs and put a tremendous burden on staying staff.

Impact on Existing Staff

Traditional public schools have a relatively simple hiring process. The county screens applicants and points them toward a particular school, then the principal interviews the individual and recommends them for hire by the county human resources department. Charlotte Academy has a very different method for hiring, based on a philosophy of shared leadership. The school's hiring team is made up of staff volunteers who accept and review screened applicants from the county. Hiring team members then schedule the candidate to teach a model lesson and participate in a panel interview with them. Administrators and potential grade level team members join the hiring team evaluators in observing the lesson and debriefing with the candidate during the panel interview. Once the candidate has left, the team and administrators discuss their notes and make decisions together about whether or not to recommend the individual for a position. While this method is exceptional at increasing teacher efficacy and growing teacher leaders within the team, high rates of turnover can cause the process to over-tax the already busy staff. High attrition rates mean many extra hours of reviewing resumes, corresponding with candidates, scheduling observations, and participating in interviews for the hiring team. It also means increased burden on existing classroom teachers to repeatedly lend their classes to candidates teaching model lessons and participate in panel interviews for potential new team members. It is also worth noting that this hiring practice was abandoned when Charlotte Academy adopted a virtual learning model due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was openly acknowledged by leadership that this model, while effective, relied too much on a group of staff members who were needed in many other areas of support.

Impact on Existing Training and Support Staff

The burden attrition placed on staying staff further multiplies when support and training are considered. At least one instructional guide spends between 1-5 hours

weekly with each new teacher to coach them in specific content areas at Charlotte Academy. Many new teachers require support from multiple instructional guides including Reading, Math, Project Based Learning, Primary Years Program, AVID, STEM and Enrichment. When there is a small influx of new teachers, support can be divided easily over the team of eight instructional guides. When attrition increases and the new staff numbers grow, this team struggles to provide the same exceptional guidance. Additionally, there is a tremendous emotional tax placed on the support team when there is turnover of a newly hired staff member. One new teacher was immediately identified by the Charlotte Academy support team as struggling. Support team members increased their time in the classroom, modeling lessons and planning with the teacher for upwards of 15-20 hours weekly for approximately four months. The teacher resigned shortly after and a long-term sub was hired. Nearly 80 hours of one-on-one time and countless other hours spent preparing for their work with this teacher were wasted. As illustrated with Charlotte Academy, the attrition of teachers taxes the existing staff in a myriad of ways, increasing the likelihood that they, too, will consider leaving.

Impact on Finances

The cost of staff turnover is staggering. Research from The Learning Policy Institute (2017) finds "urban districts can, on average, spend more than $20,000 on each new hire, including school and district expenses related to separation, recruitment, hiring, and training." On the micro level, this cost can be clearly seen in Charlotte Academy's investment in advertising and recruiting for positions as well as the cost of paying volunteers to run a hiring team to develop hiring tools, review resumes, screen and interview candidates year after year. Charlotte Academy's costs do not stop there. The school utilizes multiple instructional guides to develop and present onboarding activities and introductory professional development. It also provides ongoing mentorships and coaching necessary for new teachers. These costs are an enormous

investment for schools like CA which are already operating on less than ideal budgets. When an investment of this magnitude is made for a population of educators that only remain in the school for one to two years, the investment doesn't pay its full dividend. The school is left with no budget *and* no expertise.

Causal System Analysis

On the surface, this problem of practice lends itself most obviously to examining causes of attrition, diving into the multifaceted question, "Why do teachers *leave*?" The fishbone diagram in Figure 8. outlines seven causes of moving and leaving in the county system in which Charlotte Academy operates, including multiple causes specific to charter and contract schools (demarcated in green) as well as drivers outside of the scope of this research study (demarcated in red).

Figure 8. Fishbone: Causes of Moving and Leaving

▲ Lack of understanding of charter/contract differences ▲ Lack of training for programs specific to charter/contract	● Unclear advertisement of demands of the job ● Interview process doesn't match best-fit candidates to teams and roles they will be successful in ● Assignment preference not given to candidates	● Exit interviews are not used OR don not yield info that is accurate, timely, and unbiased ● Definition of "leaver", "mover", and mover" is unclear in retention/ attrition data	● No Maternity leave and/or social support for decision to be home with the baby, then return ● No network for relocation (ex. Transfer instead of leaving profession or network) ● Lack of respect of the profession
Lack of Pre-Service Teacher Preparation	**Ineffective Hiring Practices**	**Ineffective Teacher Retention Practices**	**Negative Impact on Home & Personal Life**

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE: What causes teachers to *move* or *leave* a school?

Ineffective or Absent Opportunities for Growth	**High Demands of the Job + Low Job Satisfaction**	**Ineffective Leadership Practices**
● Pay and benefits do not match equivalently degreed careers ● No tuition reimbursement for furthered education, conferences, & trainings ● No/Ineffective ladder of vertical movement (besides Teacher > administrator) ● Lack of high quality PD & Opportunities to grow teacher capacity (up ladder, lateral flexibility, differentiated PD, COP, tuition reimbursement) ● Ineffective district & school based supports in place ● No support for expectation of taking on one's own growth w/IGs, etc.: COP, shared leadership in PD	▪ Emotional Toll of working w/high needs populations (and/or this toll is not acknowledged and acted upon/supported) ▪ Other duties as assigned" unfairly distributed/ balanced: clubs, tutoring, writing grants ▪ Teaching Assignment is not a good fit for areas of expertise, experience, skill, or interest OR Teacher is experienced. ▪ Poor Workplace Conditions & Safety: threats of violence not managed appropriately, buildings in disrepair, PPE & Covid-19 precautions not in place ▪▲ High number of extra responsibilities & duties: writing curriculum, classes taught outside of expertise, multiple preps, increased paperwork at Charter settings distributed unfairly ▪ Ineffective ew T support (left to "sink or swim) ▪ Lack of trusting relationships with colleagues ▪ Collaborative planning done poorly; imbalance of workload on teams	▪ Lack of personalized acknowledgement ●▲No ability to hire/fire: Job instability (tenure vs. "at will" contracts) ▪ Lessened ability to determine teacher roles and duties (district dictates) ▪ ▲ Inability to select programming: Specialized programming, site based PD and supports ●▲ Lack of autonomy & higher accountability to contract/charter (or closure) ●▲ Self-manage finances; mismanaged= Problematic ●▲ Lack of differential pay ▪ Lack of effective & timely feedback ▪ Mentoring & Onboarding/ Induction ineffective & poorly-matched to need ▪ Laco of high quality School Based Supports (IGs, Specialists, etc.) ▪ Lack of collaborative practice ▪ Lack of support for trusting relationships with and between colleagues ▪ Lack of hared leadership and/or teacher voice ▪ Lack of support for "whole teacher" (social/emotional) ▪ Provide ineffective, differentiated Professional Development

▲ *specific to charters/contracts*
● *Out of the researcher's sphere of influence*

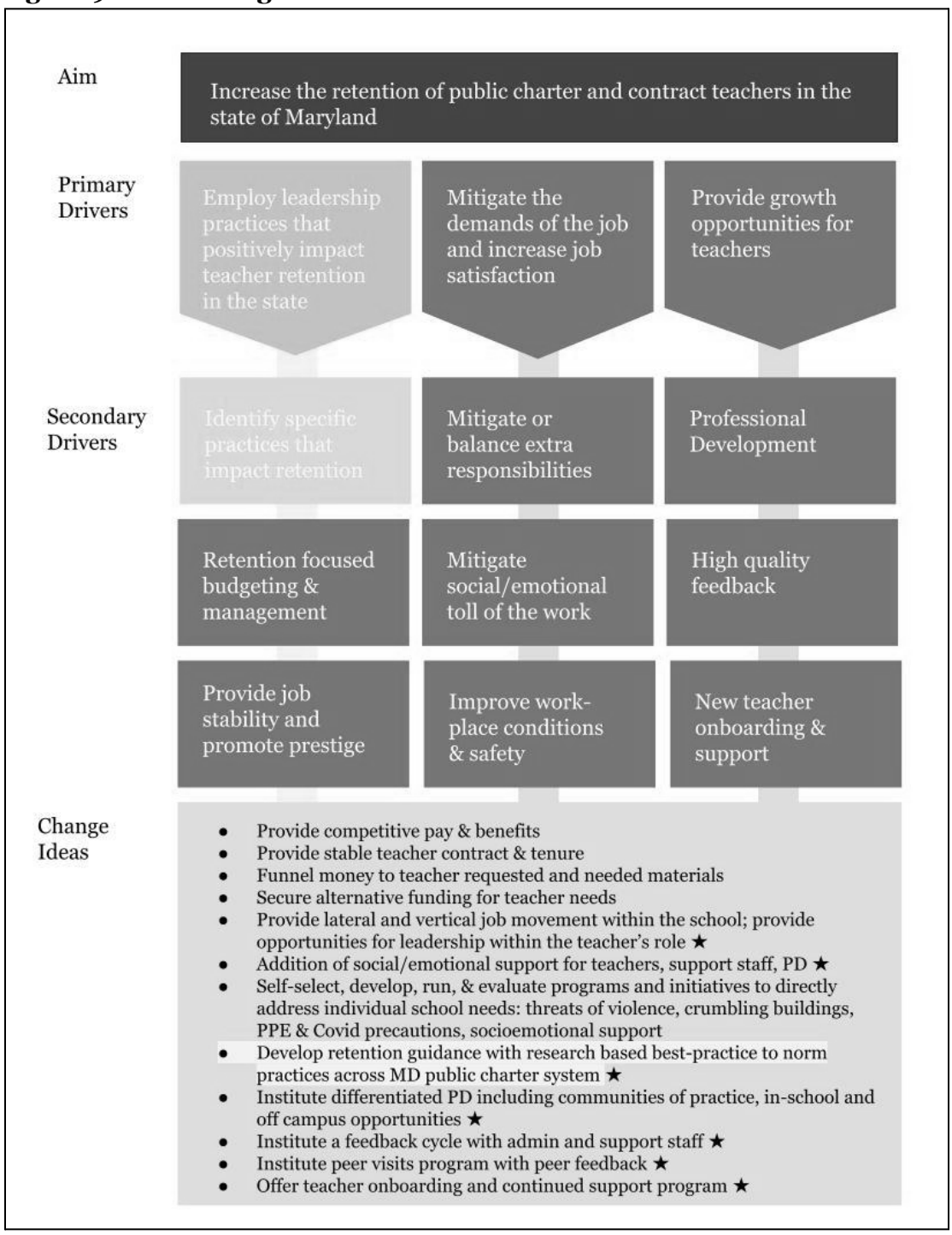
Three primary causes were identified based on both the ability of the researcher to affect change in the area and the abundance of literature pointing to its importance: *Opportunities for Growth, Demands of the Job & Job Satisfaction, and Leadership Practices*. It would be exceptionally complicated to locate and procure permissions from all movers and leavers in a sample in order to understand which of these three causes impacted their decision to leave.

Instead, this study examined the problem from a more accessible approach: engaging with those who did *not* move or leave. It sought to find an answer to the question, "Why do teachers *stay*?". This lens focused the work on establishing a foundation for an improvement cycle based on promising practices and structures already existing in the system rather than a deficit model in which new pathways to change might be less practical. The following change ideas were guided by this asset-based focus.

Driver Diagram

The driver diagram shown in Figure 9 illustrates the process through which the change idea was selected. The aim of this study was to inform leaders and policy makers of their responsibility in increasing the retention of charter and contract teachers in Maryland public charter and contract schools. The three primary drivers toward this aim included mitigating the demands of the job and increasing job satisfaction, providing opportunities for growth, and employing leadership practices that directly impact teacher retention.

Figure 9. Driver Diagram



Primary Driver #1: Opportunities for Growth

Sufficient opportunities for growth are a primary driver for retaining contract and charter teachers from year to year. These opportunities include a wide spectrum of professional and compensational potential. Weiss (1999), Smith & Ingersoll (2004), Brown & Wynn (2007), and Johnson & Birkland (2003) posit that professional possibilities including a clear ladder of vertical movement, lateral flexibility, effective and differentiated professional development to grow teacher capacity and tuition reimbursement for higher education opportunities increased the likelihood of teachers staying. Charlotte Academy had some success with retaining strong educators in the short term by offering opportunities for lateral flexibility via instructional guide positions. Leadership created support staff roles including “Math Specialist”, “Project Based Learning Instructional Guide”, “Tutor Supervisor”, “English Language Learner Support”, and “Interventionist” for at least six classroom teachers who would have otherwise left the school to pursue alternate employment between 2017 and 2021. Unfortunately, more than nine other exceptional teachers left the school to pursue roles outside of the classroom when positions like these were not available at CA. Likewise, the school has found mixed success with in-house and external professional development. Charlotte Academy provides in-house professional development for two hours each week as a part of their contractual obligations. These professional development sessions are most typically used for teacher training and skill building. Staff members who have taught for more than five years often voice concern that the professional development sessions are heavily skewed toward new teachers and rarely support the continuing needs for growth of experienced educators. This sentiment is held unanimously in the ranks of the instructional guides who are typically preparing and providing the vast majority of the professional development themselves. Charlotte Academy has attempted to circumvent this problem by providing some support for external continued education.

The culture of the school encourages staff to enroll in higher education through positive affirmations and celebrations of graduate milestones in public and private spaces. While the school does not offer financial support above the county's $1,500.00 yearly reimbursement allowance, teacher leaders are encouraged to build partnerships with higher education institutions that might be beneficial to the staff. One such partnership included a grant for thirteen teachers from CA and another local charter school to complete a Masters in English Language Learning and Admin I certificate on the CA campus with visiting professors from a local university. Most of the thirteen teachers who enrolled graduated from the program in 2021. Despite experiencing this unique opportunity for development, 5 of the 8 Charlotte Academy teachers who participated in the program left the school by 2022.

Grants are difficult to come by and most typically a one-time allotment of funds, so partnerships with universities aren't always plausible for schools. Additional professional opportunities that are more accessible on a regular basis include support for individuals pursuing their own learning. Communities of practice, cohorts, tuition reimbursement for further education and conferences, shared leadership in professional development and decision making, and independent studies all encourage stayers. The culture of Charlotte Academy was such that staff felt support for their independent learning ventures, even if they weren't reimbursed for costs that growth might entail. This could be seen in the wealth of book studies, conferences, and communities of practice CA teachers engaged in on their own accord. Staff members were able to request funding for specific professional development events from the principal and approval was entirely at the principal's discretion. There was no set system for which staff members would be approved for funding, nor how much funding for which a staff member could be approved. This meant that professional development funding approvals were not always perceived as equitable among the staff. The PBL Works

Conference is a typical professional development opportunity from which teachers at CA could benefit. This annual conference costs $1300 to attend and requires at least $1200 more in accommodations and travel costs to access. A teacher with a bachelor's and Standard Professional Certificate in Maryland makes an annual salary of $66,846 (MSDE 2020), so a teacher funding their own professional development can expect to spend at least an entire paycheck (or 1/26th of their salary) for the conference opportunity. Perks like conference funding are important to teachers because compensation is markedly low compared to other similarly degreed professions.

Compensation also increases the likelihood that teachers will stay. "Even if teachers may be more motivated by altruism than some other workers, teaching must compete with other occupations for talented college and university graduates. Teachers are more likely to quit when they work in districts with lower wages and when their salaries are low relative to alternative wage opportunities, especially in high-demand fields like math and science" (Darling-Hammond et al. 2016, 18). Allegretto and Mishel of The Economic Policy Institute, in a paper published in 2018, found teachers' weekly pay is an average of 18.7% lower than other similarly educated professionals and there are no states where teacher pay is equal to or better than that of other college graduates. Increasing the pay and benefits of teachers to match equivalently degreed careers could have a positive impact on teacher retention. Toch (2022), in an article for the New York Times, reported nationwide examples of districts filling large numbers of vacancies and/or retaining active teaching staff with signing bonuses. Some District of Columbia Public Schools teachers receive $20,000 annual bonuses which are granted to specific schools with high needs populations; these bonuses have helped curb attrition to rates equivalent to the city's wealthier schools (Toch, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic has brought an influx of money in federal aid to schools. Maryland alone was granted a total of $868.7 million via the CRRSA (passed December 2020) and the American Rescue

Plan (passed March 2021). Nationally, public schools spent about $14.2 billion in fiscal year 2021 (US Department of Education, 2021), some of which was used to increase the supply of teachers and/or increase financial incentives like tuition reimbursement, raises, and bonuses. How do schools like Charlotte Academy make progress in this area when they do not have the ability to alter Board of Education determined salary scales? The influence of leaders extends beyond the schoolhouse walls. In recent years, CA has begun to establish a social media presence. Administrators curate a Twitter and Instagram account that celebrates successes at the school and networks with local community partners. While advocacy for adequate teacher compensation hasn't been a topic on these feeds yet, fruitful community partnerships that have funded large and small projects within the school are evidence that this social media presence is a powerful voice for positive change. One place this voice has been put to use is in an attempt to improve teachers' job satisfaction.

Primary Driver #2: Demands of the Job and Job Satisfaction

Balancing demands of the job and job satisfaction collectively make up the second primary driver for teacher retention. Charter and contract teachers face a notably higher emotional toll due to working with high needs populations (B.Gross & DeArmond, 2010). Acknowledging this toll and providing organizational support for teachers will decrease instances of leaving. Organizational supports acknowledging and mitigating the extra responsibilities and duties of charter and contract teachers might also increase stayers. Tye & O'Brien (2002), Newberry & Allsop (2018), and Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2015) suggest extra responsibilities like writing curriculum, teaching classes outside of one's expertise, juggling multiple "preps", increased paperwork, and "other duties as assigned" (clubs, tutoring, lunch duty, writing grants, etc.) are challenging to manage and over-tax educators to the extent that they might consider leaving. Charters that are able to distribute these tasks in an equitable fashion will avoid this negative

consequence. Designation as an International Baccalaureate (IB) school, Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) school, and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) school all Charlotte Academy teachers to bear the brunt of extra workload in order to keep programming up to standard. Many staff members struggle with the desire to maintain a work life balance, but also to be exceptional at their craft. When being exceptional at your job requires significantly more than forty hours a week one is paid for, it wears away at job satisfaction.

The increased stresses of a charter workload are felt most intensely by new teachers. Smith & Ingersol (2004), Shepherd (2009), and Hultell et. al. (2013) assert new teachers are often left to “sink or swim". This phenomenon can be mitigated by providing strategic new teacher support. One such support touted by a wealth of researchers is facilitating and encouraging trusting relationships among colleagues (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Richards, Hemphill, & Templin, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2015, Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015 ; Richards et al., 2018 Lambersky, 2016; Tickle et al., 2011; O’Brennan et al., 2017). Trusting relationships between new teachers and their teammates and mentors can increase the instance of those new teachers staying. This is due, in part, to the shared lift afforded by a team which works well with one another, but also to an increase in job satisfaction. New hires at Charlotte Academy, regardless of whether they are an experienced teacher or fresh college graduate, are included in a support program called the “Transformation Team”. Second year CA teachers are given the option to continue working with this team or step away as they feel comfortable. The majority of Transformation Team members report that they feel a sense of comradery and support in this team that makes them feel more confident in their teaching roles. Most new teachers who have participated in this program stay at CA for at least three years.

Weiss (1999) and Newberry & Allsop (2017) posit collaborative planning that is done well and with a balance of workload on highly functional teams can increase teacher job satisfaction and, in turn, retention. Collaborative planning can be structured in a myriad of ways, spanning a wide spectrum of efficiency. The most efficient collaborative planning teams at Charlotte Academy have been able to build a comprehensive K-8 curriculum with thoughtful transdisciplinary links and strategic mapping of the student experience. Each of the members of these curriculum teams felt valuable to the outcome, the task was focused and clearly laid out, and there was sufficient time allotted to complete the task well. Teachers at CA routinely call collaborative planning like this "energizing" and "exciting" because they can see the value in their collective work and how this task will help them in the classroom. Many teachers who have stayed at Charlotte Academy for more than three years cite this kind of empowering collaborative work as a reason they stay with a particular team despite other hardships that might arise.

Alignment of the teaching assignment with the teachers' expertise, experience, skill, and/or interest has an exceptionally positive effect on stayers (Miron & Applegate, 2007; Kunter & Holtzberger, 2014). Educators who are able to work within their expertise and interests report higher levels of satisfaction and lower levels of burnout, increasing their likelihood of remaining in the position through another school year. Leadership at Charlotte Academy surveys teaching staff at the end of each school year to gauge whether staff members wish to stay in their current role. They also try to keep a pulse on who is capable and who is struggling in their assignment. The leadership team makes adjustments to the staff in-house as they see fit, sometimes even making radical shifts between grade levels to match teacher expertise, skill, and interest. At least nine CA teachers decided to stay at the school after considering leaving because of this flexibility offered by the leadership team. It is also important to note that this flexibility

has been used at least three times to encourage teachers who were *not* successful in the classroom to resign, often by assigning the teacher to an unwanted grade level or subject area. While technically classified as "turnover", these three leavers were viewed as positive for the public contract school.

Nationally, public charter and contract school teachers face a higher burden of poor workplace conditions and safety than regular publics (B.Gross & DeArmond, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Richards, Hemphill, & Templin, 2018). These conditions include emotional and physical stress from threats of violence, buildings in disrepair, and beginning in 2020, concerns about the availability of proper personal protective equipment to mitigate Covid-19 exposure. Expect More Arizona (2020) found that teachers were concerned about being exposed to Covid-19 at work and Brenan (2020) stressed that this fear was held by teachers more so than by other professions. In fact, Flannery (2020) asserted that concerns for safety have prompted teachers to consider leaving the profession. These considerations were based on direct health risks as well as potential social and economic ripple effects of exposure to Covid-19. Mann (2020) reported that 59% of teachers felt insecure about their district's health and safety precautions when they were asked to return to in-person schooling during the global pandemic. Further, Mann (2020) found that 66% of teachers believed their annual leave benefits would not cover absences related to Covid-19 illness. Teachers at Charlotte Academy were especially concerned that the Department of Education, acting upon direction from the Center for Disease Control, changed structures for responding to Covid-19 infected community students and staff so rapidly. At one point, teachers were told to use their own sick leave to quarantine for ten days each time they were exposed, whether that exposure happened on campus or on the teacher's own time. Several female teachers on staff with young children expressed concern that they would be disproportionately hard hit by standards like these. This sentiment is not unique to CA.

Women make up 76% of all teachers and 89% of all elementary teachers in the United States (Taie & Goldring, 2020). Women are two-thirds more likely than their male counterparts to take on uncompensated roles like caregiving for family members (NAC, 2009). As caregivers, they have an increased risk of exposure which also increases the chance that they will need to take time off. Additionally, contact with the school community increases the chance that these caregivers expose their own families to Covid-19. Calarco et al. (2020) and Zamarro et al. (2020) report a differential impact on women than men due to the pandemic. Zamarro (2020) found that 64% of college educated working mothers had reduced their hours in contrast to 52% of women without children and 36% of fathers. Mothers were also significantly more likely to report psychological distress including increased anxiety, stress, and frustration with their children when dealing with "intensive work pressures" (p.1, Calarco, 2020).

Bassok et al. (2020) points out the inequity of expecting teachers to respond to increasing demands like isolation, steep learning curves for pedagogy and technology, and health concerns without compensation and stresses that this practice puts educators at increased risk for burnout. Lowery and Burts (2007) studied teachers with similar risks for burnout in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. The researchers reported teachers instructing in "survival circumstances" and struggling to cope with their own losses and depression (p.72). Carlson et al. (2010) and Kuriansky (2013) agree that teachers teaching amid and post disasters often carry the weight of supporting students' socioemotional and academic needs on top of their own personal traumas. Bryk (2010) echoes this sentiment suggesting that supporting students and families in this way can exacerbate an already overwhelming role for educators. Demands of the job are unique to each school and cannot be accommodated without consideration of the larger contexts in the community. Leaders have the responsibility of understanding these demands fully in order to provide effective support. Charters can increase instances of stayers by

strategically identifying workplace needs, securing funding for materials and supports, and designing protocols for equitably distributing information, support, and resources.

Primary Driver #3: Leadership Practices

While each primary driver might have led to a change idea which would realize this aim, the third primary driver, "leadership practices", held the most potential for change in the time constraints of this study. This is largely due to leadership practices encompassing aspects of both opportunities for growth and demands of the job/job satisfaction. Secondary drivers for leadership practices include job stability for the staff, financial management, selection of offerings, and identifying a collection of practices that directly impact retention. The secondary drivers in a realistic sphere of influence included "identifying practices" as providing job stability and financial management would require principal and/or operator CEO status. Public charter and contract leaders often have more freedom to do things differently than other schools in their districts, so their retention practices are widely varied. Each school has its own eclectic collection of practices in place based on the school's culture, goals, collective knowledge, and leadership. It is reasonable to hypothesize these practices contribute to the retention and attrition of staff members, yet there is no guidance across public charters and contracts to share what does and does not work. Grissom and Bartanen (2019) highlight that "principals are uniquely positioned to pursue differential retention strategies" as they are the "chief human capital managers of their schools (p.515)." Leithwood et al. (2008) assert as one of their "Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership" that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching when it comes to influence on students. The researchers claim that "[l]eadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen.(Leithwood at al., 2008)" Thus the change idea with the most potential to influence the secondary driver is the development of a

guidance tool for leaders across sites. Such a guidance tool could provide a collection of locally vetted retention best-practices for leaders to engage in on their own campuses.

Leadership practices have an acute impact on both of the previously discussed drivers. These practices have the ability to provide opportunities for growth through a myriad of formal and informal leadership moves. They may also improve job satisfaction, and thus retention, via implementing strategic plans for balancing demands of the job and establishing a workplace culture. Leithwood et. al. (2008) claimed "[a]lmost all successful leaders draw upon the same repertoire of basic leadership practices", an assertion that suggested a comprehensive list of high impact practices specific to school leadership could be extracted from relevant literature.

> Much has been written about the high degree of sensitivity successful leaders bring to the contexts in which they work. Some would go so far as to claim that 'context is everything'. However, based on our review of the evidence, this reflects a superficial view of what successful leaders do. Without doubt, successful leaders are sensitive to context, but this does not mean they use qualitatively different practices in every different context. It means, rather, that they apply contextually sensitive combinations of the basic leadership practices (Leithwood, 2008, p.31)

After an extensive review of the literature, the primary researcher for this study open-coded notes, then organized notes by axial codes in order to identify ten major themes in leadership practices that have the potential to increase the rate of stayers, including those included below in Table 5. Axial code development happened organically as the researcher noticed overlapping themes in open coded content. For example, the initial open codes "professional development", "coaching", and "ongoing education" were combined under an umbrella axial code, "building teacher capacity". Once all initial codes were consolidated in this way, ten axial codes remained. These would serve as the ten leadership practices on which this research is based. Each leadership practice has

been aligned to current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), a tool with which most school leaders in Maryland should already be familiar.

Table 5. Leadership Practices Derived from the Literature

Leadership Practice	Derived from	Link to Professional Standards for Educational Leaders
Fostering a Shared Vision	The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011; Ingersoll, Daughtery, and Sirinides, 2017; Strange, Richard, and Cantano, 2008; Jones, Stall, and Yorbrough, 2013; Fullan, 2010; Vegas, 2020; Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone, 2007; Ensley et al. , 2006; Hallinger & Heck , 2010; Qadach, Schechter & Da'as,2020	Standard 1. a-g Standard 4. a Standard 7. a, c
Nurturing a Positive School Environment	Fullan, 2008; Mendel, 2012; Tennessee Department of Education's Acceleration Model, 2013; The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011; Strange, Richard, and Catano, 2008; Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015; Schein, 2010; Prokopchuk, 2016; Fullan, 2010; Harold and Fedor, 2008; Johnson and Birkland, 2003; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004; Brown and Wynn, 2007; Weiss, 1999; Shepherd, 2009; Levenson and McLaughlin, 2020	Standard 2. d, f Standard 3. e, g, h Standard 4. a Standard 5. a, b, d, f Standard 6. f, h Standard 7. a Standard 8. a
Building Relational Trust	Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2014; Zak, 2017; Dinham , 2004; Bryk and Schnieder, 2003; Northfield, 2013; Fullan, 2008; Fullan, 1999; Rosen, First, and Blackburn, 2007; Chiu and Staples, 2013; Hargreaves, 2007; Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk et al.,2010; Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky,2009; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy,2001	Standard 2. a, b, d-f Standard 3. g, h Standard 7. e Standard 8. a
Having and Holding Teachers to High Standards	O'Donnell and White, 2005; The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011; Ingersoll, Daughtery, and Sirinides, 2017; The New Teacher Project, n.d.; The National Center for Teacher Quality; Will, 2020	Standard 4. a Standard 7. a, c, d
Giving High Quality Feedback and Acknowledgement	Lambersky, 2016; OBrennan, Pas & Bradshaw, 2017; Van Maela & Van Houtte, 2015; Harris et al., 2014; Benita et al., 2018; Lambersk, 2016; Reich and colleagues, 2020; The Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL), 2015; Strange, Richard, and Catano, 2008; Blase' and Blase', 2002; The New Teacher Project (TNTP), 2012	Standard 6.e
Building Teacher Capacity	Childress, 2014; Danielson, 2022; Marzano, n.d.; The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), n.d.; The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), n.d.; Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL) 2015	Standard 6. c, f, g, h Standard 7. f Standard 10. f
Employment of Shared or	The Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL), 2015; Harris, Edmonton, and	Standard 1. b, f Standard 7. a, h

Distributed Leadership	Combs, 2014; Ingersoll, Daughtery, and Sirinides, 2017; Mendel, 2012; The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011; The New Teacher Project (TNTP), 2012; Panteli and Tucker, 2009; Levenson and McLaughlin, 2020; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008; Torres,2016; Robinson et al, 2008; Urick, 2015; Boyce & Bowers, 2018	Standard 10. j
Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL), 2015; Health Foundation, 2011; Mendel, 2012; Tennessee Department of Education, 2013; Berwick, 2008; Bryk, Gomez & Grunow, 2010; Bryk, 2009; The New Teacher Project (TNTP), 2012	Standard 1. e Standard 3. e, d Standard 6. d, f, i Standard 7. h Standard 8. h, i, j Standard 10. a-j
Making Data-based Decisions	Spillane et al.,2002; New, 2016; Strange, Richard, and Catano, 2008; Loewus, 2021; Marion and Gonzales,2014	Standard 1. b, d Standard 4. g Standard 10. g
Strategically Manage People, Data, Resources, and Processes	Sharp and Walter, 2012; Strange, Richard, and Catano, 2008; Tennessee Department of Education, 2013; Mendel, 2012; George, 2015; Papay et al., 2017	Standard 2. f Standard 4. e, a, b Standard 5. c Standard 6. a, b Standard 8. c-g Standard 9. a-l

Positionality and Leadership Practices. Each of the ten leadership practices serve a unique purpose and are instrumental to increasing teacher retention. The discussion which follows includes literature review findings about these practices which are contextualized by the researcher's own experience on a non-traditional school staff (detailed in *Positionality and the School Culture at Charlotte Academy).* Examples from Charlotte Academy illustrate some of the nuances of each leadership practice within a charter setting.

Leadership Practice #1: Fostering a Shared Vision. The leadership practice, "fostering a shared vision" aligns with PSEL Standards 1.a-g, 4.a, 7.a, and 7.c. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2011) outlines the need for leaders to create a vision. Ingersoll, Daughtery, and Sirinides (2017) and Strange, Richard, and Cantano (2008) take this notion one step further by asserting that development of a *shared* vision is a vital step in highly effective leadership. A shared vision, according to Jones, Stall, and Yarbrough (2013), originates with the teachers and staff, but is

facilitated by a leader who is both an instructional and curriculum guide. This facilitation should result in a collegial space in which staff have the opportunity to examine their own thinking in study groups, school visits, and data collection (Jones, Stall, and Yarbrough, 2013). Fullan (2010) stresses that a vision should be a "one page plan" (p.25) that is clear and concise enough for the staff to fully understand and easily follow. Qadach, Schechter & Da'as (2020) measured shared vision by assessing the extent to which participants felt their colleagues were invested in established school objectives. They found instructional leadership was positively correlated with shared vision and negatively related to teachers' consideration of leaving:

> Similarly, confirming the negative correlations between shared vision and a teacher's intent to leave highlights the important fact that when employees are included in the shared conversations regarding a school's future agenda, their levels of commitment are heightened… possibly decreasing a teacher's intent to leave the school. *(*Qadach, Schechter & Da'as, 2020. p.628)

Fostering a shared vision is vital to teacher retention because it establishes priorities and parameters that are agreed upon by all stakeholders and thus focuses the efforts of those stakeholders in a common direction.

Leadership Practice #2: Nurturing a Positive School Culture. The leadership practice, "nurturing a positive school culture" aligns with PSEL Standards 2.d, 2.f, 3.e, 3.g, 3.h, 4.a , 5.a, 5.b, 5.d, 5.f, 6.f, 6.h, 7.a, and 8.a. Fullan (2008) asserts that leaders have the power to directly affect their school culture in a positive or negative way. Grissom and Bartanen (2019) echo this in their work on *strategic retention*:

> Numerous mechanisms may link more effective leadership to lower turnover, but explanations in most studies center on effective leaders' positive impacts on

> school climate… which in turn improves teachers' satisfaction and commitment to the school and makes it less likely that they leave (p. 517).

Culture building is a difficult practice to pinpoint protocols for because a strong school culture requires synergy between many working parts that are not always clearly defined in the literature. Mendel (2012) and the Tennessee Department of Education's Acceleration Model (2013) suggest that leaders must work to create a climate that is hospitable to teaching and learning. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2011) urges leaders to strengthen school culture and Strange, Richard, and Catano (2008) recommend creating a positive school, student, and adult culture, but what, precisely, do these researchers mean by culture and how can leaders nurture a positive one?

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) describe culture as "the social glue that holds people together" (p. 6) and "patterns of behavior that distinguish us from them" (p. 6), noting that these behaviors might even seem strange to new employees. Schein (2010) breaks culture down into three organizational levels: *artifacts, espoused values, and assumptions*. Leaders can nurture school culture at each of these levels. Artifacts, including posters, trophies, handbooks, and other visible reminders, can be displayed to clarify the expectations, vision, and mission of the school. Espoused values can be articulated and underscored in collaborative work or professional development with staff, as well as in strategic planning in leadership teams. Strategies for handling assumptions are somewhat less tangible. Prokopchuk (2016) suggests that new staff members bring their own past experiences and assumptions about how a school should be run which shape how they react, teach, and problem solve. Thus, leaders must be able to identify these components of culture and act accordingly. It is especially important for leaders to nurture a positive school culture in times of organizational change. There has, perhaps, been no greater institutional change in education than the switch to virtual

learning during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. Fullan (2010, p.18) recommends leaders employ the following advice for building culture during change, adapted from Harold and Fedor's key points (2008). Leaders should:

- thoughtful enter into the setting,
- listen to and learn from experienced staff,
- engage in fact finding and collaborative problem solving,
- address concerns straightforwardly,
- be enthusiastic and sincere about circumstances of the change,
- obtain buy-in for the change idea, *and*
- develop a credible plan for change.

The newest teachers are especially vulnerable to feeling disconnected from a school, so the literature provides additional strategies for culture building to offset retention specifically in new staff. Johnson and Birkland (2003), Smith and Ingersoll (2004) and Brown and Wynn (2007) all strongly supported development of the newest teachers in a growth focused culture, which matches Weiss (1999) and Shepherd's (2009) evidence for onboarding and differentiated development. Like Charlotte Academy, many schools build culture for their newest members via cohorts, mentorship cycles, and onboarding in an effort to increase stayers. Each of these methods help new teachers adjust to their new role within the school smoothly and encourage them to envision themselves in the school community long term.

The Covid-19 pandemic shifted how staff members communicated with one another, and thus impacted traditional avenues of relationship building. Levenson and McLaughlin (2020) recommend purposefully architecting the spontaneous interactions that organically happen when coworkers are physically located in the same place. These interactions build connections, common language, and trust among colleagues.

Leadership Practice #3: Building Relational Trust. The leadership practice, "building relational trust" aligns with PSEL Standards 2.a, 2.b, 2.d-f, 3.g, 3.h, 7.e, and 8.a. Bryk and Schneider (2002) regard trust as the connective tissue that holds schools together. It "is the answer to establishing the kind of climate and school culture in which teachers have the capacity to form relationships with students that result in personalized engaged learning" (Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2014, p. 63). Zak (2017) emphasizes the power of trust in the workforce, reporting that "Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report: 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout" (p.3).

Much like nurturing a positive school culture, building relational trust leans more toward an artform than a protocol. Dinham (2004) suggests against leaders approaching staff as "strong and decisive", but rather recognizing that "effective leadership is intensely interpersonal, involving working with individuals and teams to 'transform' teaching and learning (p. 340)". Bryk & Schneider (2002) proposed four criteria of relational trust, including:

- respect (are my positive contributions to children recognized?),
- competence (do I perceive this person as effective at their role?),
- personal regard (do I feel cared about, and is there more than the formally required level of care?),
- and integrity (is there alignment between what people say, believe, and do?).

Torres (2016) illustrate this with an example of principal-teacher trust:

> [T]eachers may expect strong instructional support from a principal as part of his role obligation. A principal may validate these expectations (and therefore earn trust) with regular visits to classrooms followed by helpful feedback. He

> may promise support but neglect to follow-up or provide it in a manner perceived as ineffective by the teacher, which would diminish trust. The critical factor is what teachers expect of this principal and how they perceive his subsequent actions according to that understanding. (Torres, 2016, pp. 69-70)

Bryk and Schnieder (2003) encourage leaders to learn about their teachers beyond the schoolhouse, extolling the power of seizing relationship building moments in hallways and break times. Northfield (2013) agrees that "making the effort to purposefully engage colleagues in supportive fashion" will build relational trust that benefits the teacher, leader, and school (p.418). Fullan (2008) echoes this sentiment, urging leaders to connect to their peers with purpose. A study by Tschannen-Moran and Greis (2015) suggests that trust is paramount in order to effectively lead. The researchers further assert that principals must regularly interact with their staff in an honest, open, and benevolent manner, even when they are not afforded the same in return. Gross (2011) suggested that charter schools, in particular, are more reliant on mutual trust because of having fewer formal structures than traditional public schools. Gross (2011) and Tschannen-Moran (2004) agree that principal trust is critical when this lack of formal structures leads to the necessity of resolving a difference in opinion.

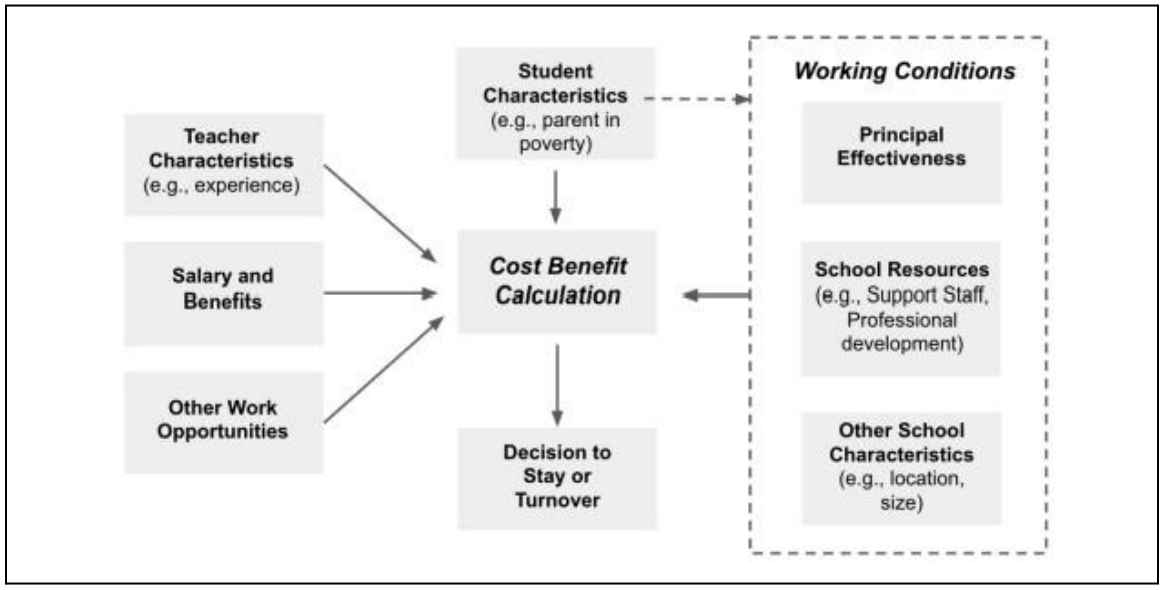
> [T]rust between teachers and administrators is important and valued in all schools. When this trust is lost, any school can become contentious. The informality of charter schools makes them particularly vulnerable to internal disagreements because there are few established rules or principles to fall back on to resolve a dispute once it develops. Without precedent or formal agreements to serve as guides, it is easy for disputes to escalate. (Gross, 2011, p.15)

It is important to note that Maryland does not have the same disparity in formal structures between charters and traditional publics because of the high level of

accountability found in the state's charter law (refer to *Scope of the Problem in Maryland Contracts & Charters* for more on accountability of Maryland charter schools).

Trust is also built through teachers' respect for the capability of their leader to manage the school effectively. The cost benefit calculation informing a teacher's decision to stay or leave either the school or the profession includes the effectiveness of the principal as a key factor as shown in Grissom's 2011 Teacher Retention Framework (Figure 10). Harris, Edmonson, and Combs (2014) believe relational trust is built through respect, recognition and risk and that "leaders must be willing to reflect on their own character and whether they are respected" by the staff (p. 62). Teachers take note when they observe their leader following through on promises, achieving the action steps they set out to, and holding staff and themselves accountable to high standards. Fullan (1999) reiterates that improvement to student outcomes is only possible "if organizational members develop trust and compassion for each other" (p. 37).

Figure 10. Grissom's 2011 Teacher Retention Framework



Note: This figure was created for an article for the Teachers College Record by Becker, J. & Grob, L. (2021). The School Principal and Teacher Retention. Richmond, VA:

Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium. Original framework came from "Can Good Principals Keep Teachers in Disadvantaged Schools? Linking Principal Effectiveness to Teacher Satisfaction and Turnover in Hard-to-Staff Environments" by Grissom, J. A. (2011).

School communities found that virtual trust building was exceptionally difficult during the switch to virtual instruction in 2020. Researchers suggest trust building is challenging in virtual teaming because of limited visibility among team members, a lack of face-to-face interactions which inhibits perception of non-verbal cues necessary for relational trust (Rosen, First, and Blackburn, 2007), and fewer informal opportunities to build rapport and break down barriers naturally (Chiu and Staples (2013). When trust is established, whether in-person or virtually, colleagues trust one another and value each other personally and professionally. In this space, they can challenge one another and discuss data in ways that improve their practice (Hargreaves, 2007). Bryk and Schneider describe this exchange as relational trust, a mutual understanding and respect between colleagues whose "presence (or absence) has important consequences for the functioning of the school" (p. 22). As Becker and Grob (2021) assert in their policy brief on the role of leadership in teacher retention, "[f]or trust to grow, there needs to be continuous validation of role expectations; the work of maintaining relational trust cannot be sporadic."

Leadership Practice #4: Having and Holding Teachers to High Standards. The leadership practice, "having and holding teachers to high standards" aligns with PSEL Standards 4.1, 7.a, 7.c, and 7.d. O'Donnell and White (2005) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (2011) highlight the importance of setting high expectations that are clearly articulated to staff. Teachers can focus their work energy on defined parameters within specific goals when leaders are clear about the expectations they have for instruction and professional growth. That growth can be impressive when

these expectations are high enough to be challenging, but realistic enough to be attainable.

A clearly articulated, high expectation means nothing if a leader is unable to hold teachers to them. Ingersoll, Daughtery, and Sirinides (2017) stress the leader's paramount role in holding teachers to high standards. O'Donnell and White (2005) consider managing the accountability of teaching and learning to be one of the most important elements of a school leader's role because, without it, there is no evidence that learning is taking place. The New Teacher Project's research into the "Irreplaceables", those teachers whose caliber makes them nearly impossible to replace due to outstanding skill, found that outstanding teachers were more likely to stay when principals held staff to high standards. In a guidance for school leaders, TNTP recommended that principals "start the school year with great expectations" and "hold the line on good teaching", noting that "the best teachers want clarity" and "schools that refuse to tolerate poor teaching keep more of their top teachers" (TNTP, n.d). In 2019, one grade level team at Charlotte Academy included four new teachers. Three were new to the school and one, by all accounts an Irreplaceable, who had been moved from another grade level in the hopes that she could anchor the fledgling team in excellent practice. Two of the three new teachers needed a tremendous amount of support which fell to the Irreplaceable teacher and instructional guides. As the school year progressed, the two struggling teachers were given increasing support, often at the expense of other new teachers in the building. Discussions among the distributed leadership team consistently included new ways the team could correct inaccurate instruction that had occurred, establish a functional structure, or grow the struggling teachers in basic management or delivery. The Irreplaceable teacher considered leaving out of frustration that the two teachers received such disproportionate support and faced no consequences when their workload of ungraded coursework, unplanned lessons, and struggling students were routinely given

to other staff members to troubleshoot. She shared, “Why should I work twice as hard to do my job *and* their jobs if we end up getting the same paycheck at the end of the day?” The TNTP guidance for principals (n.d) explicitly cautions against allowing this to happen, stating “however difficult it may be, do not allow unsuccessful teachers to linger”. Grissom and Bantanen (2019) argue that *strategic retention* - or the retention of high performers like the irreplaceables paired with non-retention of low performers- is favorable to retention policies that attempt to curb all turnover. Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff (2017), Ronfeldt et al. (2013), and Staiger & Rockoff (2010) echo this sentiment. Contract nonrenewal, “counseling out”, or making the job less comfortable (e.g., by assigning them to an undesirable grade level, duty, or subject area) are non-renewal measures that leaders might employ with ineffective teachers (Drake et al., 2016). Quality of teachers can be assessed with one of many multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems which have risen in popularity in the United States (Steinberg & Donaldson, 2016) and include school leader observations guided by complex rubrics (Grissom & Youngs, 2016). Leaders must have an honest view of their teaching staff’s abilities and be prepared to hold them accountable for high quality instruction. Traditionally, this meant routine formal and informal observations and evaluations for teachers. The global pandemic complicated this matter. Teachers worried that evaluations, particularly those involving high stakes student testing scores, would be unfair due to the radical disruptions being faced by themselves and their students. Shannon Holston, director for teacher policy at the National Center for Teacher Quality, remarked that “a number of states understand that this is not a normal year and have tried to adjust requirements for evaluations while still really focusing on the observation and feedback component” (Will, 2020). Whether leaders encourage this accountability through classroom or virtual space visits, it is important that they give high quality feedback on the instruction they observe.

Leadership Practice #5: Giving High Quality Feedback and Acknowledgement. The leadership practice, "giving high quality feedback and acknowledgement" aligns with PSEL Standard 6.e. One of the most powerful opportunities for growth a leader can offer up to their staff is also one of the least expensive. Lambersky (2016), OBrennan, Pas & Bradshaw (2017), and Van Maela & Van Houtte (2015) agree effective feedback from leadership gives opportunities for connection and growth that help retain teachers. Feedback in the form of acknowledgement gives teachers a reminder of their leader's expectations through the lens of a reassuring compliment. Compliments "recogniz[ing] others' contributions to the success of the school" (Harris et al., 2014) are particularly impactful when they are given to an individual instead of a group. Benita et al. (2018), Lambersk (2016), and O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw (2017) agree personalized acknowledgement is a powerful, effective, and inexpensive way to increase retention of teachers by way of improving job satisfaction. Reich and colleagues (2020) found that experienced teachers felt ineffective during the pandemic because they were unable to rely on their pedagogical expertise in the virtual environment. Charlotte Academy's experienced teachers reported similar frustrations, many saying they felt like first year teachers again. Pre-pandemic, CA teachers were used to a steady stream of administrators and instructional guides visiting their classrooms and leaving quick notes about what they saw. One teacher remarked that he kept informal pieces of feedback from these visits on a "celebration board" near his desk to remind him of what he was doing well and what he needed to focus energy on improving. The same teacher expressed missing these tremendously during virtual learning, saying that he felt isolated and uncertain about whether he was meeting instructional expectations due, in part, to the absence of these small tokens of reassurance. Informal feedback like these notes is one method of providing

communication about instruction, but there are also more formal structures for giving feedback which can build teacher capacity.

The Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL) include explicit language about feedback quality. Standard six asserts that effective leaders "deliver actionable feedback about instruction and other professional practice through valid, research-anchored systems of supervision and evaluation to support the development of teachers' and staff members' knowledge, skills, and practice (Standard 6, Professional Standards of Educational Leadership, 2015, p.14)." According to Strange, Richard, and Catano (2008), quality feedback about instruction must come directly from observing teachers in action. This includes formal and informal opportunities to observe teachers planning for, managing, and instructing their classes. This wealth of observation allows leaders to engage in evidence-based critical dialogue with teachers and actively support teaching teams' collaboration efforts (Blase' and Blase', 2002). Observation of teachers also allows a leader regular insight into individual development needs so they can differentiate professional development and build teacher capacity more effectively.

The New Teacher Project identified eight strategies that helped boost retention of the "Irreplaceables", teachers with incomparable skill (Figure 11). Irreplaceables who experienced at least two of these strategies were found to have remained at their schools up to six years longer than Irreplaceables who did not. Three of the strategies fall under the category of feedback and development: "(1) provided me with regular, positive feedback, (2) helped me identify areas of development, and (3) gave me critical feedback about my performance informally" and two fall under recognition, "(4) Recognized my accomplishments publicly, (5) Informed me that I am high-performing" (p.16, TNTP, 2012). While the strategies seem simple, cost effective, and immediately accessible, one-third to half of the Irreplaceables surveyed by TNTP experienced fewer than two of these retention strategies and a quarter experienced none at all. These leavers left a

particularly hard gap to fill. The New Teacher Project (2012) argues that "when an Irreplaceable leaves a low-performing school, it can take 11 hires to find one teacher of comparable quality"(p.4). When an Irreplaceable leaves, many others must step in to build teacher capacity in order to see the same levels of student engagement and success.

Figure 11. Low Cost Retention Strategies for Irreplaceables *(p.16, TNTP, 2012)*

Leadership Practice #6: Building Teacher Capacity. The leadership practice, "building teacher capacity" aligns with PSEL Standards 6.c, 6.f-h, and 7.f. Inasmuch as teachers are the keystone for student achievement, principals and assistant principals are equally as important to teacher success. The process of building teacher capacity begins with a firm understanding of the teacher's existing capacity. This is informally assessed in classroom visits and walkthroughs, but more formally assessed with performance systems. Childress (2014) explains that "states have taken varied approaches to developing and implementing teacher performance systems, two of the most popular models are those by Charlotte Danielson and Robert Marzano. These models include student achievement data, classroom observations, student surveys,

lesson plan reviews, teacher self-assessments, student artifacts, and teacher portfolios. (p.8).” Implementing these performance assessments can be a challenge due to insufficient training in how to use them. Principals sometimes find rubrics unclear or too narrowly defined for observations and, often, the school year allows too little time to complete these observations. Whether through formal avenues like the Danielson or Marzano performance systems, or via in-house developed observational tools, a leader is able to develop a professional development plan once they have a clear picture of each staff member’s unique needs.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) provide guidance including a recommendation that schools “provide personalized professional development for all teachers to support collaboration and best practices” for educators at every stage of their career. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration developed Professional Standards of Educational Leadership (PSEL, 2015) which define building professional capacity of school personnel in terms of what effective leaders do, including developing, retaining, and forming educators into an educationally effective faculty. The standards include the expectation that leaders provide effective induction and mentoring of new teachers, develop teachers’ professional knowledge, and “motivate teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice (Standard 6, Professional Standards of Educational Leadership, 2015, p.14).”

Leadership at Charlotte Academy uses a team of instructional guides, specialists, and department chairs to build the capacity of teachers within the school. This shared leadership team meets weekly to discuss evidence of teacher capacity and develop plans for improvement. Most typically the shared leadership team employs coaching and modeling with individual teachers and professional development workshops for the whole staff to build capacity.

Leadership Practice #7: Employment of Shared or Distributed Leadership. The leadership practice, "employment of shared or distributed leadership" aligns with PSEL Standards 1.b, 1.f, 7.a, 7.h, and 10.j. The Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL) encourages shared leadership, pointing out that effective leaders "develop the capacity, opportunities, and support for teacher leadership and leadership from other members of the school community (Standard 6, Professional Standards of Educational Leadership, 2015, p.14)." Shared or distributed leadership is not defined by any specific structure, rather, it refers to practice that aims to represent all stakeholders in problem solving. It is not possible for a leader to be an expert in everything that makes a school function exceptionally, but it is certainly possible to employ a team of specialists who hold that ability collectively. Bryk (2010), in their list of five essential supports for school improvement, suggest that leaders can drive change through recruiting leaders to serve in capacities they are unable to:

> In carrying out their daily activities, school leaders advance instrumental objectives while also trying to enlist teachers in the change effort. In the process, principals cultivate a growing cadre of leaders (teachers, parents, and community members) who can help expand the reach of this work and share overall responsibility for improvement (p. 25).

Harris, Edmonton, and Combs (2014) define distributed leadership as formal leaders creating "time, space, and opportunity for colleagues to meet, plan and reflect (p.42)". This collaborative dialogue across a group of teacher leaders and formal leaders increases the potential for new ideas to come to the table and for strategic planning to incorporate best practice for all individuals impacted by the decisions being made. Ingersoll, Daughtery, and Sirinides (2017) suggest shared leadership can include an active school improvement plan team made up of a variety of staff members, although

shared leadership teams can serve as a taskforce for a specific decision that needs to be made or cabinet that routinely advises a formal leader on issues that arise. This practice has the benefit of giving leaders ideas, strategy, and feedback that is more extensive than their own thinking alone to base decision making on.

Mendel (2012) adds that cultivating leadership in others can have many benefits for staff as well. This includes personally investing teachers in the school, building a collegial community, and extending trust which increases the likelihood of their staying. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2011) suggests that building leadership teams to share or distribute leadership roles among teachers and other school staff can even bolster student achievement by giving collaborative decision making power to knowledgeable specialists. The New Teacher Project suggested strategies to boost retention of "Irreplaceables" or teachers with incomparable skill (Figure 10), noting that Irreplaceables who experienced at least 2/8 of the strategies remained at their schools up to six years longer than those who did not. Two of the suggested strategies fall under the category of shared leadership: "(6) identified opportunities or paths for teacher leader roles, and (7) put me in charge of something important" (p. 16, TNTP, 2012).

The global pandemic complicated existing shared leadership systems within schools. At Charlotte Academy, genuine collaborations among the Academic Team (administrators, instructional guides, specialists, and content chairpersons who made many collaborative decisions) reduced dramatically during virtual learning, hybrid instruction, and the start of the return to in-person learning. Administrators were faced with an ever-changing landscape of guidance on Covid case tracing, reporting, and compliance that stalled their ability to focus on forward thinking with this team. While the abrupt shift to virtual collaboration was not successful for CA's Academic Team, research suggests that distributed leadership can be highly effective, even in virtual settings. Panteli and Tucker (2009), in a study of virtual teams in a Fortune 500

company, found that the most successful teams operated with fluid power shifts depending on who had the most relevant expertise or knowledge at a given point in the project. The study suggests that leaders who distribute leadership among capable members of their teams and actively monitor the project are most successful in virtual spaces. Levenson and McLaughlin (2020) agree, arguing that leaders can expand their capacity to respond to the onslaught of decisions that need to be made when an organization is in crisis mode. They argue that this shared leadership also prepares critical players to be ready for the next stage of their careers.

The practice of distributing leadership is not without risk. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) caution that giving up control of decisions in a shared leadership situation can be exceptionally risky because accountability for the outcome ultimately lands on the leader. The risk, however, is worth taking when it allows for a cycle of continuous improvement to gain momentum in the school.

Leadership Practice #8: Commitment to Continuous Improvement. The leadership practice, "commitment to continuous improvement" aligns with PSEL Standards 1.e, 3.e, 3.d, 6.d, 6.f, 6.i, 7.h, 8.h-j, and 10.a-j. Standard six of the Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL) asserts that effective leaders "foster continuous improvement of individual and collective instructional capacity", yet, the phrase 'continuous improvement' is relatively new to the education world (Standard 6, Professional Standards of Educational Leadership, 2015, p.14). The language of continuous improvement derives from improvement science which is "a body of knowledge that describes how to improve safely and consistently" (Health Foundation, 2011, p.6). The Health Foundation stresses that continuous improvement is not the same as research or audit because it does not seek to find what is possible or actual. Rather, it "describes how to reduce the gap between what is actual and what is possible" (Health Foundation, 2011, p.6). Mendel (2012) explains continuous improvement as including

growing efficiency and depth in instruction and the Tennessee Education Acceleration Model (TEAM), Tennessee Department of Education (2013) extends this definition to include curriculum, relationships, and processes.

For leaders, this means seeking "to discern what works for addressing a particular problem, for whom, and under what set of specific conditions (Berwick, 2008; Bryk, Gomez & Grunow, 2010)." Bryk (2009) suggests this necessitates centering inquiry on "problems of practice that have genuine consequences for people's lives" (p. 598). It is important to note that "continuous" is a qualifier in this leadership practice. While an isolated change might make an important one-time impact on a school community, *continuous* change is ongoing. It is a cycle of observation and data collection, analysis, implementation that steadily increases the performance of staff, programs, and processes endlessly.

A commitment to continuous change can be as complicated as a change cycle or as simple as a conversation. The New Teacher Project (2012), in their study of Irreplaceable teachers, found that "more than 75 percent said they would have stayed at their school if their main issue for leaving were addressed." Unfortunately, Charlotte Academy lost at least five Irreplaceables between 2017-2022. All five pursued alternate careers in education. While disruptions due to Covid-19 may have also impacted these teachers' decisions to leave, the data associated with their evaluations, student scores, and tangible contributions to the school community imply that it would have been worth the extra effort to attempt to retain them.

Leadership Practice #9: Making Data-based Decisions. The leadership practice, "making data-based decisions" aligns with PSEL Standards 1.b, 1.d, 4.g, and 10.g. Continuous improvement, when done well, is fueled by data-based decision making. While Spillane et al. (2002) asserts that many schools have no organizational routines in place to regularly examine data, the Center for Data Innovation suggests huge

benefits for leaders who use this practice. Data-based decision making at the classroom level empowers teachers to focus on the unique needs of their student population. According to the Center for Data Innovation, “a common misperception is that increasing the collection and use of data in the classroom would increase the much-loathed annual standardized testing, when in reality, data-driven education would reduce reliance on such ineffective methods of student and teacher assessment (New, 2016).”

On a management level, data-based decision making allows leaders to use insight from disaggregated data to examine the relationship between achievement of specific student populations, teacher performance, curriculum, and allocated resources. Data should inform the decision of foci, interventions, and assessment of the school improvement plan (Strange, Richard, and Catano, 2008). This kind of decision making is especially critical as leaders determine next steps in retaining teachers. Loewus (2021) points out that teachers and administrators often see things differently and examples of this can be seen in the EdWeek Research Center survey of 700 teachers and 300 leaders. The survey found that “35 percent of school leaders said supportive administrators are one of the biggest factors in getting teachers to stay, but just 11 percent of teachers felt the same (Loewus, 2021).” Likewise, the EdWeek Research Center juxtaposed the 27 percent of administrators who felt reducing administrative burdens like paperwork, meetings, and hall duty might convince teachers to stay while an astounding 43 percent of teachers believed this to be true (Loewus, 2021). Data-based knowledge of what staff, students, and the educational community needs can help leaders make strategic decisions about managing those people, data, resources, and processes. Identifying these discrepancies in perception can mean the difference between a teacher staying or leaving. School leaders who consistently evaluate their own understanding increase teacher retention (Marion and Gonzales,2014).

Leadership Practice #10: Strategically Manage People, Data, Resources, and Processes. The leadership practice, "strategically manage people, data, resources, and processes" aligns with PSEL Standards 2.f, 4.a, 4.b, 4.e, 5.c, 6.a, 6.b, 8.c-g, and 9.a-l. While most textbooks on school administration tout the principal as a curriculum leader, in practice, they are expected to be much more. Sharp and Walter (2012) suggest that, while instructional leadership is indeed important, a principal will undoubtedly be replaced if the school is not clean or safe, the finances are not well managed, or clear avenues of student discipline do not exist. Allocating educational resources (Strange, Richard, and Catano, 2008) and managing resources (Tennessee Education Acceleration Model (TEAM), Tennessee Department of Education, 2013) are leadership practices that cannot be ignored. Teachers' perceptions of leadership efficiency are tinted by the ongoing strategic management of people, data and processes (Mendel, 2012) that they observe.

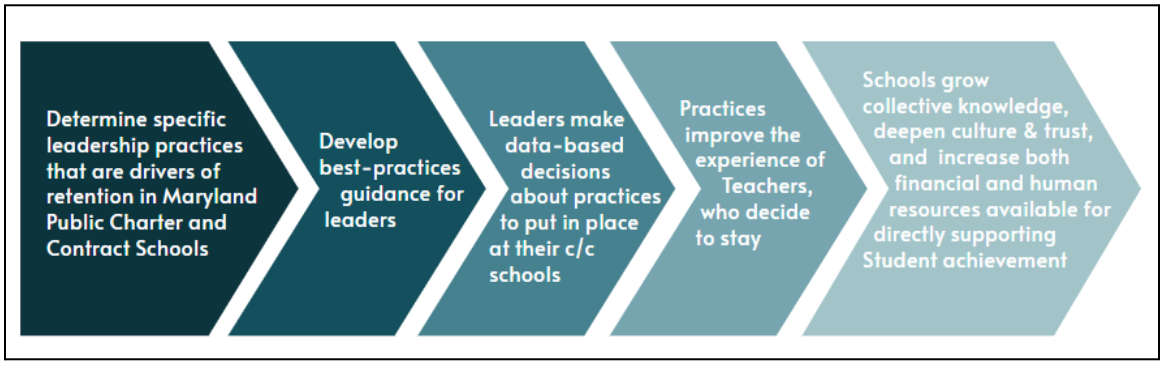
George (2015) emphasized that employees' need to feel supported by their manager was greater than their need to feel supported by the organization as a whole. This is reiterated in Papay et al. (2017) which asserts that teachers were more likely to be stayers if they feel supported by the principal. Likewise, teachers are more likely to stay where they feel that resources are appropriate. George (2015) posited that "managers can influence the working environment by ensuring that professional groups have access to sufficient resources" (p. 163).

Theory of Action

The following Theory of Action (depicted visually in Figure 12) guided this study: If this study can determine specific leadership practices that are drivers of retention in Maryland public charter and contract schools, the researcher can develop best-practices guidance for leaders that are informed by those successes. When leaders put these

research-proven practices into place at their own schools, teacher job satisfaction will increase and they will decide to stay in the classroom. This increase in stayers will allow schools to grow collective knowledge, deepen school culture and trust, and increase both financial and human resources available for directly supporting student achievement.

Figure 12. Theory of Action



Section 2: Study Design

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to (1) determine the leadership practices that Maryland public school teachers and leaders believe positively impact retention of teachers in the public school district defined in Section 1, and (2) identify positive retention practices that may be unique to Maryland public charters and contract settings OR to the teacher and student populations that are characteristic of national charters and publics so this information can inform the practice of Maryland public charter and contract school leaders.

Research Questions

To accomplish this end, the research was guided by three questions.

1. Are there leadership practices that are perceived as most impactful to teacher retention in a large suburban school district:
    - *by public charter teachers,*
    - *by public charter-equivalent teachers,*
    - *by traditional public school teachers,*
    - *by public charter leaders,*
    - *by public charter-equivalent leaders, or*
    - *by traditional public school leaders?*
2. *Is there a significant difference in subgroups' perceptions of the impact of leadership practices on teacher retention in a large suburban school district:*
    - *between all teachers and all leaders,*
    - *between public charter / public charter-equivalent teachers and traditional public school teachers, or*

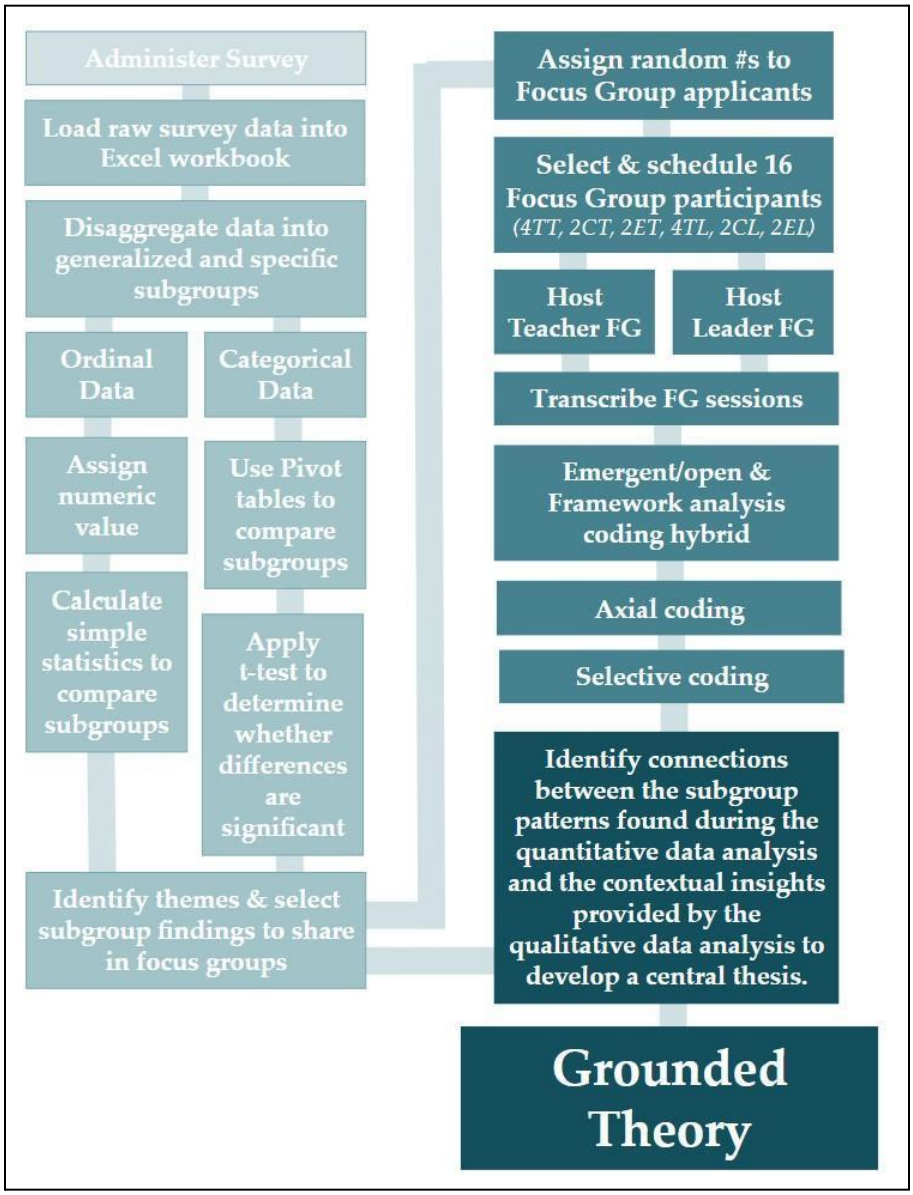
- *between public charter / public charter-**equivalent** leaders and traditional public school leaders?*

3. *How do teachers and leaders describe their own experiences with positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?*

Research Design

A grounded theory, mixed methods design was utilized. Data was collected in two phases. Initial quantitative results informed secondary qualitative data (Creswell, 2009) which, when analyzed, revealed themes that become the building blocks for constructing theory. "Humans' perceptions, conceptual, and pattern-recognizing abilities have developed through evolutionary processes, and though fallible, they are still capable of constructing truthful knowledge, knowledge that maps the real world well enough to take action and solve problems" (Smith, 2006. P. 473). Figure 13 (below) illustrates how the study intended to arrive at a grounded theory.

Figure 13. Research Design



Data Collection

No existing data sets were identified to adequately answer the research questions, so new data needed to be generated. The researcher:

- Invited teachers (*educators hired by the school system who are assigned to classroom instructional roles*) and leaders (*principals, assistant principals, chief education officers, chief executive officers, and other*

school administration staff) through an open invite to 970 teachers and leaders in one region of a large Maryland school district to participate in a digital survey regarding the leadership practices they believe positively impact retention of teachers in their settings.

- Invited 8 teachers and 8 leaders to participate in virtual focus groups regarding the unique context that informs their experiences with leadership practices positively impacting retention of teachers in their setting.

Variables. A single region of a large public school district served as the study's sample in order to control the size and scope of the research project and alleviate confounding variables. Public school systems across Maryland have varying hiring, support, and retention practices in place. Definitions of movers, leavers, and stayers also vary across these systems, so data was not easily comparable across school districts. While these variables could have been mitigated by a larger statewide project, such an undertaking was outside of the sphere of this study. The focus on a single public school system allowed for investigation of the research questions while controlling for teacher salary, unionization rights, programming, and systemic leadership practices.

Sample. A non-representative sample of 970 teachers and 30 school leaders, or all teachers and leaders in one public school district in Maryland was invited to participate in the study via taking a survey. Completed surveys were categorized into six groups and coded as:

- public charter and contract teachers (CT),
- public charter and contract leaders (CL),
- public charter-equivalent traditional school teachers (ET),
- public charter -equivalent traditional school leaders (EL),

- non-charter-equivalent traditional public teachers (TT), *or*
- non-charter-equivalent traditional public leaders (TL).

Charter and contract teachers and leaders were participants who identified themselves as working in a public charter or contract school, and *traditional public teachers and leaders* were those who identified as working in a traditional public school that is *not* charter-equivalent (see charter-equivalent criteria below). The district from which the sample of teachers and leaders were surveyed only has four charter and contract schools. This would not have provided an adequate response rate. However, some of the district's 121 traditional public schools exhibited retention related characteristics that aligned with national research on public charter and contract schools. These characteristics included schools with high rates of younger or less experienced staff, heightened workloads, and service of traditionally underserved populations. Given that the number of charter and contract schools in the district was so small, these traditional public schools which exhibited charter-equivalent characteristics were analyzed to extrapolate practices that may support improvement in charter and contract settings. *Charter- equivalent traditional public teachers and leaders* were participants who identified as working for a traditional public school that exhibits characteristics that aligned with national charter retention research. More specifically, participants who were categorized into the charter-equivalent code matched **all** of the following criteria. "Charter-equivalent" participants must have:

- identified as a traditional public teacher or leader
- selected at least one underserved population response: *Title I, > 50% receive FARMS, and/or >50% Minority, and*
- selected *>50% teachers with 5 or fewer years experience*.

Eight teachers and eight school leaders were also invited to participate in virtual focus groups. All participants who opted to complete the survey were presented with

information about the focus group portion of the study as well as the opportunity to apply to join a focus group at the conclusion of their survey experience. Not all applicants were invited to participate in a focus group. Focus group applicants were asked to voluntarily share their contact information, role, and school setting demographics including whether the school is a public charter/contract, traditional public school that meets the criteria for "charter-equivalent", or a traditional public school that does *not* meet the criteria for "charter-equivalent". All focus group applicants were assigned a random number by a number generator when they submitted an application. Applicants were separated into two groups: (1) charter, contract, and charter-equivalent schools, and (2) traditional public (non-charter-equivalent) schools. Participants were listed in ascending numerical order within these groupings. The first eight teachers (four TT and four CT/ET) and eight leaders (four TL and four CL/EL) were assigned to the focus group participant invitation list. When a focus group invitee declined the invitation or withdrew from the focus group, the next applicant code on this list was invited to fill their space in an effort to keep groups composed of at least five participants. The focus groups were intentionally limited to eight participants each in order to encourage maximum engagement by participants, particularly because they were hosted virtually. Both the timeframe and personnel for this study were limited, so two focus groups (one teacher group and one leader group) was the maximum number possible to host. Each individual who participated in a focus group was offered a $25 Amazon gift card as an incentive.

Instruments. This study utilized two key instruments: a survey and a semi-structured focus group. In the initial phase of data collection, the researcher invited a non-representative sample of 970 Maryland teachers and 30 Maryland leaders to take a survey via the Qualtrics platform. Permission was requested from the district's Board of Education to email the district staff via a point person of their choosing in a

district-wide email inviting participation and sharing the survey link. The researcher shared drafts of emails and met to collaborate with the regional assistant superintendent before initial emails and follow up emails were sent to the teachers and leaders in the region. The initial email and each follow-up email included a reminder to complete the survey and a solicitation for focus group volunteers. Focus group volunteer solicitation included the participant's right to opt out of the responsibility at any time, participants' right to apply to join a focus group regardless of whether they completed a survey, and a reminder of the incentive for participants who complete a focus group session. Individuals who were selected were notified of their acceptance via an email which included the time, date, focus group consent form, and link for the virtual focus group they were assigned to as well as the researcher's contact information should they have questions. The survey accepted responses for thirty days after the initial email invitations were sent. After this time, the link was no longer live. Focus group assignments were made and focus group participant invitations sent two weeks after the close of the survey to allow time for initial analysis.

Survey Development. The Qualtrics survey used in this study was a new instrument created by the researcher for the purpose of collecting data that might help answer specific research questions. Survey questions were developed by the researcher, reviewed by research advisors and a quantitative research specialist, then piloted with twelve colleagues and friends whose roles in education are similar to those found in the study sample in order to do an initial test for face validity.

Survey questions were developed after an extensive review of the relevant literature to determine a bank of effective leadership practices. The researcher open coded existing literature on leadership practices to identify ten themes of as having the most significant impact on retention of public school teachers on a national level: vision, expectations, school culture, leadership opportunities, use of leadership teams,

accountability, professional development, feedback, data-based decision making, and managing people, data, and processes. Table 6 details the existing research that informed each survey question, including the ten leadership themes. These ten themes were selected to be included in the survey in order to (1) collect data specific to Maryland's public contract, charter, and traditional public school teachers, (2) compare responses of Maryland traditional public teachers with those of Maryland public charter and contract teachers, (3) examine patterns in responses from participants with student and teacher populations that align with those characteristic of public charters and contracts, and (4) connect contextual factors to highly ranked leadership practices.

Participants were invited to rank these ten leadership practices against one another rather than rate them individually on a Likert scale. This was done intentionally to provide a clearer distinction between respondents' selections. For example, a Likert response might rate each leadership practice as "effective", rendering the response useless in determining practices that are more or less impactful than the rest. Ranking, however, forced the respondent to select practices in order of their degree of impact. This allowed the researcher to clearly distinguish between leadership practices the respondent believes to be most and least impactful.

Table 6. Literature Basis for Survey Questions

Survey Section	Literature Basis
Teacher and Student Population Demographics	**Charters employ younger & less experienced teachers** ● Miron and Applegate (2007) ● 2017-2018 National Teacher and Principal Survey ● Taie and Goldring, 2020 **Charters serve higher need & traditionally underserved student populations at a higher rate** ● Ingersoll, 2001 ● Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) ● Lewis, 2019 ● Gross and DeArmond (2010) ● Winthrop and Vegas (2020)
Leadership Practices Rankings	**Cultivating trusting relationships** ● Bryk and Schneider (2003)

	• Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2014 • Zak (2017) • Northfield (2013) • Fullan (1999 and 2008) **Giving high quality feedback & acknowledgement** • Lambersky (2016) • O'Brennan, Pas & Bradshaw (2017) • Van Maela & Van Houtte (2015) • Harris et al., 2014 • Benita et al. (2018) **Fostering** a **shared vision** • **Shaping a vision** (Mendel, 2012.) • **Fostering a shared vision** (Ingersoll, Daughtery, & Sirinides, 2017.) • **Create a vision** (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011 p.1-4) • **Create a shared vision** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008.) **Having & holding teachers to high expectations** • **Clear expectations** (O'Donnell & White, 2005.) • **Set high expectations** (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011 p.1-4) • **Holding teachers to high standards** (Ingersoll, Daughtery, & Sirinides, 2017.) • **Accountability of teaching and learning** (O'Donnell & White, 2005.) **Nurturing positive school culture** • **Creating a climate hospitable to education** (Mendel, 2012.) • **Culture for teaching and learning** (Tennessee Education Acceleration Model (TEAM), Tennessee Department of Education, 2013a) • **Strengthen school culture** (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011 p.1-4) • **Create positive school, student, and adult cultures** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008.) **Share or distribute leadership roles** • **Build leadership teams to share or distribute leadership roles among teachers and other school staff to bolster student achievement** (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011 p.1-4) • **Supporting an active school improvement plan team** (Ingersoll, Daughtery, & Sirinides, 2017.) • **Cultivating leadership in others** (Mendel, 2012.) **Build teacher capacity** • **Professional learning and growth** (Tennessee Education Acceleration Model (TEAM), Tennessee Department of Education, 2013a) • **Develop and support teachers and school staff** (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2011 p.1-4) • **Nurture adult learners** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008.) • **Build teacher capacity** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008.) **Give High Quality Feedback** • **Observing instruction** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008.) • **Quality feedback about instruction** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008.)

	• **Critical dialogue with teachers and Teacher support and collaboration** (Blase' and Blase' 2002) **Data Based decision making** • **Make data based decisions to address school improvement plan** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008. **Strategically manage people, data, resources, & processes** • **Managing people, data, and processes** (Mendel, 2012.) • **Resource management** (Tennessee Education Acceleration Model (TEAM), Tennessee Department of Education, 2013a) • **Allocating educational resources** (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008.) **Commitment to continuous Improvement** • **Improving instruction** (Mendel, 2012.) • **Continuous improvement** (Tennessee Education Acceleration Model (TEAM), Tennessee Department of Education, 2013a)

The original survey included leadership practice rankings and basic demographics (*participant's role, setting, experience*) that would support disaggregation of responses during analysis. Reviewers suggested expanding the demographics collected (title I status, experience of principal) and including questions that contextualized the ranking responses (*Covid-19 impact, workload, trust in leader, work-life balance, job fulfillment*). They also proposed further research into relational trust as a leadership practice to be included. The survey was revised to include these elements, then tested for face validity by inviting twelve of the researcher's colleagues and friends to pilot the revised survey. This pilot group was specifically chosen because they are in roles and settings that are similar to the study's sample, but do not work within the same school district as the members of the sample. Pilot participants were invited to take the survey and share feedback on each question, specifically in terms of the adequacy of wording. Eleven of the twelve pilot participants completed the survey and nine agreed to join a feedback discussion in small groups of four and five held virtually via Google Meet. Almost all participants felt uncertainty about the exact demographics of their schools and suggested school population demographics be simplified to "something like more than 50% instead of 'between 10-30%' because they won't have that data in front of

them." This uncertainty was also voiced as the group discussed a question about the age of teachers at the school. The pilot group strongly suggested that this demographic could be effectively sussed out with language about teacher experience instead of age. Table 7 details the final iteration of the survey which incorporates each of these revisions. Based on these initial face validation test steps, the survey appears effective in terms of its stated aims. At the start of the study, a second face validity exercise was conducted in which ten colleagues were asked to take the survey in full. The researcher used this sample set of responses to determine if the questions were interpreted appropriately and make any adjustments that might be necessary to accurately and effectively collect the intended data sets. This iteration of the survey gathered the intended data and was well received by the face validity testers, so it was adopted as the official instrument for the study and research proceeded.

Table 7. Survey Design

	Survey Questions	**Alignment to Research Questions (RQ)** **RQ1.** Are there leadership practices that are perceived as most impactful to teacher retention…? **RQ2**.How do teachers and leaders experience the impact of positive retention leadership practices…?
1	Consent to Participate	n/a
2	School Setting A. Charter/contract/traditional public B. Title I C. > 50% receive FARMS D. >50% Minority E. >50% teachers with 5 or fewer years experience F. Principal has <3 years experience	◦ Provides demographics for disaggregating responses and identifying patterns in leadership practices ranked highest by each demographic group (A)**RQ1** ◦ Provides demographics for determining "charter-equivalent " traditional public school group used to extrapolate practices that may positively impact charters and contracts (B,C, D, E) **RQ1** ◦ Provides contextual data to build a model of participant experience (F) **RQ2**
3	A. Rank Leadership Practices • **Building teacher capacity**	◦ Provides insight into participants' beliefs about leadership practices

	Leaders increase the individual and collective ability of the school's staff through meaningful and differentiated professional development, providing support for new or struggling teachers, and building a learning focused professional community. • **Fostering a shared vision** Leaders allow for teachers and other staff to have a voice in the creation of a shared vision. They clearly articulate this vision and regularly align all workings of the school toward it. • **Employing shared or distributed leadership** Leaders empower teacher-leaders to take leadership roles in their areas of expertise and rely on these teacher leaders to help make decisions, improve programming, or provide support for staff. • **Commitment to continued improvement** Leaders are consistently and actively engaged in an effort to improve the student, staff, and community experience at the school. • **Strategically managing data, resources, processes, and people** Leaders plan, schedule, and allocate resources fairly and effectively. • **Nurturing a positive school culture** Leaders put caring for staff and students, sensitivity to the customs of the school community, and developing compassionate relationships first. • **Making data based decisions** Leaders efficiently collect and use a variety of high-quality, relevant data to make decisions about staffing, programming, and development. • **Cultivating trusting relationships:** Leaders operate with exceptional integrity, confidentiality, and honesty. • **Giving high quality feedback and acknowledgement** Leaders regularly observe teachers in order to provide well evidenced, timely, helpful, and relevant feedback. Leaders regularly acknowledge the improvements and extra efforts of staff. • **Having and holding teachers to high expectations** Leaders clearly communicate the expectations they have for staff. They consistently follow through when expectations are not met. B. Consider the leadership practices you ranked 1-3. What made you choose these as MOST important to retaining teachers at your school?	that retain teachers (A) **RQ1** ◦ Contextualizes ranking selections by providing insight into why participants selected the three most important leadership practices to them (B) **RQ2**

4	A. How did the Covid-19 pandemic impact your workload? *(increase significantly, increase somewhat, decrease somewhat, decrease significantly)* B. I trust my staff/leader to fulfill their duties professionally and ethically. *(strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)* C. I feel supported by my leadership/staff. *(strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)* D. I have a healthy work-life balance. *(strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)* E. I feel fulfilled by my job. *(strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)*	◦ Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices (B,C,D,E) **RQ2**
5	A. What is your role? B. How many years have you worked in the field of education? C. How many years have you worked in your current role? D. What is your highest level of education?	◦ Provides demographics for disaggregating responses and identifying patterns in leadership practices ranked highest by each demographic group (A, B, C, D) **RQ1**
6	A. Share any thoughts you have on how leadership practices impact teacher retention. B. Are you willing to participate in an online focus group to discuss teacher retention further?	◦ Allows for relevant responses that do not immediately fit into the survey line of questioning which may provide insight into context, problem finding, or connections in collected data (A) **RQ2**. ◦ Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices (B) **RQ2**

Survey Function. Participant demographics were collected via multiple choice selections including the participant's level of education, school setting, role, years in education, and years in their current role. It did not collect any data which might identify individual participants (e.g. name, school name, or contact information). School demographics included the experience of the staff as a whole, Title I status, rate of Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) assistance, the percentage of minority students enrolled, and how long the principal has been in leadership at the school. Participant and school demographics captured data that could be disaggregated to find patterns in responses

that address the two research questions. Table 10 in Plan for Analysis illustrates these disaggregated data sets.

Instruments: Focus Groups. Krueger (1994, p.30) suggests that surveys "typically yield a sizable amount of data, and focused interviews can provide insights about the meaning and interpretation of the results." Themes found in the survey data informed the patterns discussed in the focus groups. This qualitative layer of data was included in the study because it is necessary to understand the "complex and detailed" contexts of the issue (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007. p.40). More specifically, the focus groups provided context for the patterns and anomalies found in the quantitative data.

Eight teachers and eight school leaders were invited to participate in one of two virtual focus groups (see Table 8 for specific groupings). Krueger & Casey (2000) recommend that each focus group schedule and confirm a minimum of eight participants and conduct sessions with a minimum of five actual participants. This study invited the minimum number of participants to each focus group in order to make the virtual discussion function efficiently.

Participants accessed the semi-structured focus groups virtually. Semi-structured focus groups were hosted virtually for several reasons. First, the global Covid-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to meeting in person. The primary physical location for most participants was in school buildings across a large county in Maryland. Many schools were reluctant to invite an outside researcher onto their campus due to potential viral spread. Most public schools have used some form of distance learning since the spread of Covid-19 in 2020. This meant the resources and know-how existed for teachers and leaders to be able to access the virtual structures. In addition to complimenting the Covid-19 response, semi-structured focus groups were held in a virtual format because of the scale of the study. The virtual option allowed for the maximum number of participants to weigh in on semi-structured focus groups to offer

context so multiple perspectives could be shared. Finally, the virtual structure for semi-structured focus groups allowed the researcher to easily record and transcribe sessions for the most accurate documentation of the study's qualitative content.

Table 8. Focus Group Participant Assignment

Focus Group #	Participants Population	Assigned Participants	# Participants
1	Teachers	4 TT 2 CT 2 ET	8
2	Leaders	4 TL 2 CL 2 EL	8
		TOTAL	16

Once participants were selected for the focus group, they were sent an email that included:

- the time and date for the session,
- a link to the virtual focus group,
- the length of the focus group ,
- a link to the focus group consent form, *and*
- a request to confirm their intent to participate.

Individuals who confirmed their participation were also emailed a reminder with the same information a day before the focus group was scheduled. When participants withdrew from the focus group, the next applicant on the list was contacted to take their place.

Five participants in total confirmed availability. Two focus groups were held, one with 3 teachers and one with2 leaders (see Table 26 for details). Each group followed the same scripted protocol with a single facilitator (see Table 9 for the full scripted protocol).

The facilitator welcomed participants and shared the purpose of the study as well as details about the confidentiality of the discussion, the facilitator and assistant's roles, and the agreements they are expected to uphold while engaging with one another. The facilitator then posed questions and probes to elicit deeper responses. The groups were small, so an assistant was not needed to monitor the chat or seek clarification from participants. The facilitator made efforts to hear all perspectives without attempting to define a majority opinion as there should be no attempt at coming to a consensus in a group like this (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). The facilitator posed the following questions for each subgroup:

- The survey showed that almost all subgroups ranked "Cultivating Trusting Relationships"and "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" in the top three leadership practices necessary for retaining teachers in their school. Why do you think this pattern emerged across so many subgroups?
- Can you share examples or non-examples of this in your own experience?
- What makes a leader exceptional at this particular practice in your opinion?

These questions, when paired with probing questions to extend participants' thinking and an invitation for final thoughts, provided qualitative evidence of the experiences and context that inform the patterns found in the quantitative survey data. At the close of the focus group, the facilitator expressed gratitude for the participants' time and willingness to participate, extended an invitation to share any additional thoughts via email, and gave a reminder that the incentive would be emailed to them within twenty-four hours of their session.

Table 9. Focus Group Protocol and Script.

Perceived Impact of Leadership Practices on Teacher Retention **Focus Group Protocol & Script**
Date: __/__/__ Time: ____:____ Digital Meeting Link: _____ Number of Participants: ____TT ____CT ____ET ____TL ____CL ____EL

Introduction *(5 minutes)*	
Welcome	Welcome. My name is Heather Carnaghan and I will be your focus group facilitator. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me in this virtual space today. Our conversation will last for about one hour, after which I will email everyone a $25 Amazon gift card as a thanks for your participation.
Purpose	While turnover of teachers is certainly a problem, the intended outcome of my research is *retention*. Today, I would like to learn about your experiences with leadership practices that you believe have made teachers want to stay in your school setting. The insight you share will help me better understand the impact of specific leadership practices so I can share those patterns with school leaders in Maryland and hopefully help them increase retention of teachers in the state.
Role of Facilitator	I will be leading the conversation today and, with your permission, recording the session so I can take notes later. I will ask some questions about the things you/your leaders have done at your school that seem to have helped retain teachers. You do not need to answer every question, and you are welcome to either respond directly to me or to a comment made by another participant. If you would like to share in another way, you may also use the chat feature to add your thinking to the conversation. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers and it is ok if the group disagrees. I may occasionally invite people to share if I notice that we are hearing from some folks less than others. This is to make sure that I hear all of the perspectives in the group.
Agreements	There are several agreements that we will make as we begin our discussion together: 1. Speak one at a time and share the airspace. This will help me hear each person's perspective. 2. Share your opinions candidly. It is ok if participants disagree. We do not need to come to a consensus. 3. You do not need to answer every question, but I would like to hear from everyone at some point in the discussion or chat.
Confidentiality	Everything we discuss today will be kept in confidence. While I may quote or paraphrase what you share, I will use a pseudonym like "Participant 1" in place of your name in reports or presentations about this research. I also will not share any identifying information like the name of your school.
Permission to Record	I would like to record this session so I can make notes about the themes and details you share. The recording will be safely stored in my research files and I will not use it for any other purpose. Please type "yes" in the chat if I have your permission to record. Thank you, let's begin!
Discussion *(50 minutes)*	
Icebreaker	Let's start with a quick introduction so we can get to know the people we are chatting with today. Please share your name, role, and one word to describe how you feel .
Questions **Survey results will inform the subgroups and patterns that are discussed. Each Focus Group will discuss these questions for 3-8 subgroups.*	• The survey showed that almost all subgroups ranked "Cultivating Trusting Relationships"and "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" in the top three leadership practices necessary for retaining teachers in their school. Why do you think this pattern emerged across so many subgroups? • Can you share examples or non-examples of this in your own experience? • What makes a leader exceptional at this particular practice in your

	opinion?
Probes	• Why do you think that? • Can you explain what you mean by…? • Can you elaborate on that? • I think what I hear you saying is… Is that accurate? • I haven't heard from a few participants yet. Is there anyone who hasn't shared and would like to add something?
Final Thoughts	• What other thoughts do you have in regards to leadership practice impacting teacher retention?
Closing *(5 minutes)*	
Thank you	Thank you for your time and willingness to share these thoughts with me. I hope they will inform leaders in Maryland of practices that will help increase retention of teachers. Please be on the lookout for your Amazon gift card. They should arrive in the next 24 hours. Feel free to email me at [email] if you have any additional thoughts or questions. Thanks!

Estimated Return and Participation. Finchum, 2008 asserts that "response rates approximating 60% for most research should be the goal of researchers", however Qualtrics, a leader in educational survey technology reports their average response rate is between 20-40% (Qualtrics, 2022). Approximately 970 teachers and 30 school leaders from the region (three high schools, three middle schools, and twelve elementary schools) were invited to complete the survey for this study just before the winter break. This was an exceptionally busy time for educators and this kind of survey was difficult to predict a rate of return for. While the lowest end of Qualtrics' recommendation was 20% (which translates to an estimated 194 teacher responses and 7 administrator responses to the survey), the researcher estimated that a thorough analysis could be done on this non-representative sample with a minimum of one hundred teacher responses and 5 leader responses. The survey yielded 251 responses, 151 of which were able to be used for the analysis due to completion of all necessary questions. The minimum number of teacher and leader responses needed for a thorough analysis was reached with a return rate of 151/970 or 15.6%.

Hypotheses

Based on the themes found in the review of the literature, the researcher hypothesized the following themes would emerge in the data:

1) Charter and contract school teachers, teachers with 6-17 years of experience, and teachers in schools with high rates of traditionally underserved student populations and less experienced teacher populations would report higher levels of dissatisfaction.
2) The biggest disparity between teacher and leader rankings of leadership practices would exist between charter teachers and leaders.
3) Teachers would select leadership practices that involve trust. feedback/acknowledgement and culture because these practices support a mentally healthy work space.
4) Leaders would select continuous improvement, data based decision making, and vision because of the ability of these practices to guide change.

Analysis

Survey responses were organized into a Google Sheets workbook. This allowed the researcher to disaggregate data into generalized subgroup sets (e.g., leadership practices ranked 1-3 by leaders) as well as into specific subgroup sets (e.g., leadership practices ranked 1-3 by public charter/contract leaders). Table 10 (below) details the generalized and specific subgroups by which the data was disaggregated.

Table 10. Disaggregated Data Sets by Research Question

Research Question	**Disaggregated Data Sets to be Studied**	
	Generalized Subgroup	***Specific Subgroup***
Are there leadership practices that are perceived as most impactful to teacher retention by teachers and leaders in a large suburban school district?	(1) What leadership practices are most commonly ranked 1-3 by teachers?	(1a) in all traditional publics *(including charter-equivalent)*? (1b)in traditional publics *(excluding charter-equivalent)*? (1c) in public charters & contracts? (1d) in charter-equivalent traditional publics?

	(2) What leadership practices are most commonly ranked 1-3 by leaders?	(1a) in all traditional publics *(including charter*-equivalent*)*? (1b)in traditional publics *(excluding charter-equivalent)*? (1c) in public charters & contracts? (1d) in charter-equivalent traditional publics?
	(3) Are the leadership practices most commonly ranked 1-3 by teachers and leaders different?	(1a) in all traditional publics *(including charter-equivalent)*? (1b)in traditional publics *(excluding charter-equivalent)*? (1c) in public charters & contracts? (1d) in charter-equivalent traditional publics?
How do teachers and leaders experience the impact of positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?	(1)What made teachers choose this leadership practice in their top 3?	(1a) teacher capacity (1b) shared vision (1c) shared leadership (1d) continued improvement (1e) strategic management (1f) school culture (1g) data based decisions (1h) trusting relationships (1i) feedback & acknowledgement (1j) high expectations
	(2)What made leaders choose this leadership practice in their top 3?	(2a) teacher capacity (2b) shared vision (2c) shared leadership (2d) continued improvement (2e) strategic management (2f) school culture (2g) data based decisions (2h) trusting relationships (2i) feedback & acknowledgement (2j) high expectations
	(3) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **participants' years of experience**?	(3a) What did teachers with _____ experience rank as their top 3? 1. 0-5 years 2. 6-11 years 3. 12-17 years 4. 18-23 years 5. 24+ years (3b) What did leaders with ____ experience rank as their top 3? 1. 0-5 years 2. 6-11 years 3. 12-17 years 4. 18-23 years 5. 24+ years
	(4) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **participants' level of education**?	(4a) What did teachers with _____ as their highest level of attained education rank as their top 3? 1. Bachelors 2. Masters 3. Masters + additional certifications 4.Terminal (4b) What did leaders with _____ as their

		highest level of attained education rank as their top 3? 1. Bachelors 2. Masters 3. Masters + additional certifications 4.Terminal
	(5) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **trust in staff/leader?**	(5a) strongly agree (5b) strongly disagree
	(6) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **support from staff/leader?**	(6a) strongly agree (6b) strongly disagree
	(7) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **a healthy life balance?**	(7a) strongly agree (7b) strongly disagree
	(8) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **feelings of fulfillment?**	(8a) strongly agree (8b) strongly disagree
	(9) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **Covid-19 impacts to workload?**	(9a) increased significantly (9b) decreased significantly

Once data was disaggregated into generalized and specific subgroups, numeric values were assigned to ordinal data sets (e.g., “strongly agree”=1, “agree”=2, “disagree”=3, “strongly disagree”=4). Simple statistics were calculated for each set. This allowed for comparisons to be made between the sets’ mean, number of responses, and standard deviations. Categorical data sets (e.g. respondents who ranked “fostering a shared vision” as a top three leadership practice) were analyzed within Google Sheets using Pivot tables, which allowed the researcher to break the data into demographics that could be compared against one another (e.g., teachers vs. leaders who answered this way).

The results were organized by primary (e.g., RQ1), secondary (e.g., RQ1.1), and tertiary research questions (e.g., RQ1.1.1a). This structure allowed the complex primary question to be broken down into distinct components that shed light on themes in responses from generalized and specific subgroups.

Research Question 1. As shown in Table 11, this question was broken into secondary and tertiary research questions in order to uncover themes in responses among groups of teachers and leaders (e.g., generalized groups) and Traditional Publics, Public Charters & Contracts, and Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics (e.g., specific subgroups).

Table 11. Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Questions for RQ1.

Primary Research Questions	Secondary Research Questions: *Generalized Subgroup*	Tertiary Research Questions: *Specific Subgroup*
RQ 1 Are there leadership practices that are perceived as most impactful to teacher retention by teachers and leaders in a large suburban school district?	**RQ 1.1** What leadership practices are most commonly ranked 1-3 by teachers?	**RQ 1.1.1a** in ALL Traditional Publics (**including Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* **RQ 1.1. 1b** in Traditional Publics *(*excluding Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* **RQ 1.1. 1c** in Public Charters & Contracts **RQ 1.1. 1d** in Charter-equivalent Publics
	RQ 1.2 What leadership practices are most commonly ranked 1-3 by leaders?	**RQ 1.2.2a** in ALL Traditional Publics (**including Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* **RQ 1.2.2b** in Traditional Publics *(*excluding Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* **RQ 1.2.2c** in Public Charters & Contracts **RQ 1.2.2d** in Charter-equivalent Publics
	RQ 1.3 Are the leadership practices most commonly ranked 1-3 by teachers and leaders different?	**RQ 1.3.3a** in ALL Traditional Publics (**including Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* **RQ 1.3.3b** in Traditional Publics *(*excluding Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* **RQ 1.3.3c** in Public Charters & Contracts **RQ 1.3.3d** in Charter-equivalent Publics

Survey data was downloaded from Qualtrics into a Google Sheets Spreadsheet, then organized into data sets. Each primary, secondary, and tertiary research question was allocated a unique tab within the Sheet which consisted of relevant data. Pivot tables and basic statistical analysis were used to calculate the occurrence of each leadership practice being ranked 1, 2, or 3 by the subgroups.

An unpaired, double tailed t-test was applied to each of the ten leadership strategies in order to compare the responses from teachers (CT, ET, and TT) against those of leaders (CL, EL, and TL) and determine whether there was a significant

difference between subgroup responses. The critical value (p) was calculated and interpreted by the researcher, with p values < 0.05 determined to be significant. P-values were also calculated to determine whether there was significant difference between the responses of public charter (CT and CL) and traditional public schools (*including* charter-equivalent traditional public schools: ET, EL, TT, and TL) (shown in Table 15). Similarly, P-values were also calculated to determine whether there was significant difference between the responses of Charter and Charter -Equivalent groups (CT, CL, ET, and EL) and and traditional public schools (*excluding* charter equivalent schools: TT and TL) (shown in Table 16).

Research Question 2. Similar to the first, this research question was broken into secondary and tertiary research questions in order to uncover patterns in responses by generalized groups (e.g., teachers and leaders) and specific subgroups (e.g., specific leadership strategies, years experience, highest achieved education). These primary, secondary, and tertiary questions are outlined in Table 12 below).

Table 12. Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Questions for RQ2.

Primary Research Questions	Secondary Research Questions: *Generalized Subgroup*	Tertiary Research Questions: *Specific Subgroup*
RQ 2 How do teachers and leaders experience the impact of positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?	**RQ 2.1** What made teachers choose this leadership practice in their top 3?	**RQ 2.1.1a** Teacher Capacity **RQ 2.1.1b** Shared Vision **RQ 2.1.1c** Shared Leadership **RQ 2.1.1d** Continued Improvement **RQ 2.1.1e** Strategic Management **RQ 2.1.1f** School Culture **RQ 2.1.1g** Data Based Decisions **RQ 2.1.1h** Trusting Relationships **RQ 2.1.1i** Feedback & Acknowledgement **RQ 2.1.1j** High Expectations
	RQ 2.2 What made leaders choose this leadership practice in their top 3?	**RQ 2.2.2a** Teacher Capacity **RQ 2.2.2b** Shared Vision **RQ 2.2.2c** Shared Leadership **RQ 2.2.2d** Continuous Improvement **RQ 2.2.2e** Strategic Management **RQ 2.2.2f** School Culture **RQ 2.2.2g** Data Based Decisions **RQ 2.2.2h** Trusting Relationships **RQ 2.2.2i** Feedback & Acknowledgement

		RQ 2.2.2j High Expectations
	RQ 2.3 Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **participants' years of experience**?	**RQ 2.3.3a What did TEACHERS with ____ experience rank as their top 3?** 1. 0-5 years 2. 6-11 years 3. 12-17 years 4. 18-23 years 5. 24+ years **RQ 2.3.3b What did LEADERS with ___ experience rank as their top 3?** 1. 0-5 years 2. 6-11 years 3. 12-17 years 4. 18-23 years 5. 24+ years
	RQ 2.4 Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **participants' level of education**?	**RQ 2.4.4a What did TEACHERS with ____ as their highest level of attained education rank as their top 3?** 1. Bachelors 2. Masters 3. Masters + additional certifications 4.Terminal **RQ 2.4.4b What did LEADERS with ____ as their highest level of attained education rank as their top 3?** 1. Bachelors 2. Masters 3. Masters + additional certifications 4.Terminal
	RQ 2.5 Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **trust in staff/leader?**	**RQ 2.5.5a Strongly Agree + Agree** **RQ 2.5.5a ONLY Strongly Agree** **RQ 2.5.5b Strongly Disagree + Disagree** **RQ 2.5.5b ONLY Strongly Disagree**
	RQ 2.6 Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **support from staff/leader?**	**RQ 2.6.6a Strongly Agree + Agree** **RQ 2.6.6a ONLY Strongly Agree** **RQ 2.6.6b Strongly Disagree + Disagree** **RQ 2.6.6b ONLY Strongly Disagree**
	RQ 2.7 Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **a healthy life balance?**	**RQ 2.7.7a Strongly Agree + Agree** **RQ 2.7.7a ONLY Strongly Agree** **RQ 2.7.7b Strongly Disagree + Disagree** **RQ 2.7.7b ONLY Strongly Disagree**
	RQ 2.8 Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **feelings of fulfillment?**	**RQ 2.8.8a Strongly Agree + Agree** **RQ 2.8.8a ONLY Strongly Agree** **RQ 2.8.8b Strongly Disagree + Disagree** **RQ 2.8.8b ONLY Strongly Disagree**
	RQ 2.9 Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **Covid-19 impacts to workload?**	**RQ 2.9.9a Increased Significantly + Increased** **RQ 2.9.9a ONLY Increased Significantly** **RQ 2.9.9b Decreased Significantly + Decreased** **RQ 2.9.9b ONLY Decreased Significantly**

Research Question 2.1 and 2.2: Justification for Rankings. Analysis of Research Questions 2.1 and 2.2 involved downloading these open ended text responses from Qualtrics and organizing them into a table by the leadership strategy they justify. The researcher completed a process of comprehensive initial open coding (for details on the coding process, see "Plan for Analysis" which can be found in "Section 2: Study Design") Participant responses were color coded with relevant axial codes and counted.

Research Question 2.3: Years of Experience in the Field. The number of years of experience participants had in the field was gathered in a multiple choice format. Analysis of Research Question 2.2 involved downloading survey data from Qualtrics into a Google Sheets Spreadsheet, then organizing it into data sets. Each tertiary research question was allocated a unique tab within the Sheet which consisted of relevant data. Pivot tables and basic statistical analysis were used to calculate the occurrence of each leadership practice being ranked 1, 2, or 3 by the subgroups.

Research Question 2.4: Highest Level of Education Attained. Analysis of this research question followed the pattern of RQ2.3. Data was downloaded from Qualtrics into a Spreadsheet and organized into data sets. Pivot tables and basic statistical analysis were used to calculate the occurrence of each leadership practice being ranked 1, 2, or 3 by the subgroups.

Research Question 2.5- 2.9: Likert Scale Questions. Like RQ2.3 and 2.4, RQ2.5 - RQ2.9 were processed by downloading data from Qualtrics into a Google Sheet Spreadsheet and organizing data into sets. The occurrence of each leadership practice being selected in the top three of participants' responses was calculated in percentages for each of the specialized groups (trust, support, work/life balance, fulfillment, and workload changes due to Covid-19).

Research Question 3. Once themes were revealed through the subgroup data, semi-structured focus groups were held to provide more context for themes in responses.

Each group was told that the survey data revealed two leadership strategies that were ranked 1-3 in importance for retaining teachers by almost every subgroup across teachers and leaders: *Cultivating Trusting Relationships* and *Nurturing a Positive School Culture*. The groups were asked to respond to the same questions: (1) "Why do you think these particular leadership practices were selected across so many subgroups as important for keeping teachers in the classroom?", (2) "Can you share examples or non-examples of this in your own experience?", and (3) "What makes a leader exceptional at this particular practice in your opinion?" Focus group sessions were transcribed verbatim and then coded using a combination of grounded theory, emergent coding and framework analysis coding. This process included an initial open coding of the transcript in which the researcher looks for expected codes (e.g., compassionate language) but remains open to adding new codes as interesting elements appear in the data. Braun and Clark (2006) define codes as pithy labels for what is interesting in the data and themes as recurring patterns connected to a central concept. Both were important to the process of developing a grounded theory. Once the researcher completed a comprehensive initial open coding of each of the focus group transcripts, the initial codes were analyzed for themes, or axial codes that they could be categorized into (e.g., relationships). The researcher used selective coding to connect the axial codes via a central thesis. This created a new theory grounded in the data. It is important to note that each level of coding was iterative and required many cycles to be comprehensive.

Human Subject Review and Confidentiality

Human subjects volunteered to contribute data to this study and their consent to participate was acknowledged via a Participant Consent Form (Appendix A). In addition to participation being voluntary, subjects were notified that they may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. They were also free to decline to answer any particular question they did not wish to answer for any reason.

Every effort was made to maintain a high level of confidentiality. Google Sheets spreadsheets of data, recordings, transcripts, thematic matrices, and data analysis tables were securely stored on the principal investigator's password protected computer within a password protected Google Drive. Hard copies of data remained in the student investigator's home office in a locked file cabinet. All data will be destroyed *(i.e., shredded or erased)* when their use is no longer needed but not before a minimum of ten years after data collection. Confidentiality will continue at the maximum level possible in the event that an article of report is written about this research project.

There were no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study. Survey answers were automatically populated into a Google Sheets spreadsheet by Qualtrics. The Qualtrics survey did not collect identifying information such as a subject's name, email address, or IP address therefore responses will remain anonymous. The principal investigator took steps to guarantee anonymity by assigning pseudonyms to each participant. No names, school affiliations, or identifying information were included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and all participants' responses to the survey remained confidential.

There were no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, subjects' responses may contribute to foundational research into leadership practices that have an impact on teacher retention in Maryland public charter and contract schools which may improve future practice in the state.

Section 3: Results and Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing each of the key research findings in relation to the research questions and aim statement, discussing the value and contributions thereof, and laying out the grounded theory developed by the principal researcher through the research process. It will also review the limitations of the study and propose avenues of future research that can further contribute to this unique line of inquiry.

Results

The study gathered 151 surveys from a single region of a Maryland public school district. Specific demographics of the 151 respondents is shown in Table 13. Of the 151 responses, 133 respondents declared themselves as either a teacher or a leader. The remaining 18 chose not to designate their role and were not included in analysis requiring teacher/leader designation.

Table 13. Demographics of Survey Respondents

Subgroup	# of Responses
Public Charter Teachers (CT)	9
Public Charter-Equivalent Teachers (ET)	13
Traditional Public School Teachers *including* Public Charter-Equivalent Teachers (TT+ET)	104
Traditional Public School Teachers *excluding* Public Charter-Equivalent Teachers (TT)	91
Public Charter Leaders (CL)	1
Public Charter-Equivalent Leaders (EL)	2
Traditional Public School Leaders *including* Public Charter-Equivalent Leaders (TL + EL)	12
Traditional Public School Leaders *excluding* Public Charter-Equivalent Leaders (TL)	10
Total Teacher Responses	113
Total Leader Responses	13
Total Responses	151

Research Question 1

The first research question sought to discover the leadership practices that teachers and leaders perceived as most impactful to teacher retention. There were 133 respondents who completed the leadership practices ranking task, including 13 leaders and 113 teachers. Table 14 shows the percentage of occurrence, with percentages ≥ 50% highlighted in dark gray (generalized groups) or teal (specific subgroups). "Cultivating Trusting Relationships" was selected in the top three more than 50% of the time for every group and subgroup. The second most universally selected strategy was "Nurturing a Positive School Culture". This leadership strategy was ranked in the top three ≥ 50% of the time by all specific subgroups except "Public Charter and Contract Leaders"[1] and all generalized groups except "All Leaders". Also notable are "Building Teacher Capacity" and "Fostering a Shared Vision", ranking in the top three ≥ 50% of the time by three subgroups each.

Table 14. Percentage of Leadership Strategies Rated Among the Top 3 by Participant Subgroups.

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Subgroups (*Total Respondents in Group are shown in parenthesis.*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
All Traditional Public Leaders (including Charter-Equivalent) (*12*)	**58%**	25%	**58%**	17%	**50%**	33%	0%	17%	17%	25%
All Traditional Public Teachers (including Charter-Equivalent) (*104*)	**81%**	28%	19%	16%	**90%**	37%	5%	11%	13%	19%
All Traditional Public Leaders (excluding Charter-Equivalent) (*10*)	**60%**	20%	**50%**	20%	**50%**	40%	0%	20%	20%	30%

[1] Note: The "Public Charter and Contract Leader" subgroup only had one respondent.

All Traditional Public Teachers (excluding Charter-Equivalent) *(91)*	**84%**	27%	20%	15%	**90%**	39%	5%	10%	13%	18%
All Public Charter/Contract Leaders *(1)*	**100 %**	**100 %**	0%	0%	0%	**100 %**	0%	0%	0%	0%
All Public Charter/Contract Teachers *(9)*	**67%**	**67%**	44%	11%	**67%**	22%	0%	11%	0%	0%
All Charter-Equivalent Leaders *(2)*	**50%**	**50%**	**100 %**	0%	**50%**	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
All Charter-Equivalent Teachers *(13)*	**62%**	31%	15%	23%	**92%**	23%	0%	15%	8%	31%
MEAN (All Teachers) *(113)*	**54%**	31%	40%	13%	**60%**	26%	1%	11%	9%	16%
MEAN (All Leaders) *(13)*	**67%**	49%	**52%**	9%	43%	18%	0%	9%	9%	14%
MEAN (All Participants) *(133)*	**70%**	43%	38%	13%	**61%**	37%	1%	10%	9%	15%

P-values (shown in Table 15) from comparisons between teacher (CT, ET, and TT) and leader (CL, EL, and TL) responses ranged from 0.117-0.272. A p-value of .05 or lower is generally considered statistically significant, thus no significant difference was found between the responses by teacher and leader groups in any of the leadership strategy categories.

Table 15. P-Values: Teacher vs. Leader Rankings of Leadership Practices

P-Values *(Significance of the difference between teacher and leader responses for each leadership strategy)*	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
P Value	.163	.117	.272	.157	.148	.185	.182	.175	.235	.191
Significant Difference? (P < .05)	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no

Values from comparisons between public charter (CT and CL) and traditional public schools (*including* charter-equivalent traditional public schools: ET, EL, TT, and

TL) ranged from 0.117-0.235, thus no significant difference was found between the responses in these groups (Tabel 16).

Table 16. P-Values: Public Charter/Contract vs. Traditional Public *(including Charter Equivalent)* Rankings of Leadership Practices

P-Values *(Significance of the difference between public charter/contract and traditional pubic participant responses for each leadership strategy)*	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
P Value	.119	.134	.226	.183	.144	.218	.174	.240	.155	.171
Significant Difference? (P < .05)	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no

Values from comparisons between charter and charter-equivalent groups (CT, CL, ET, and EL) and traditional public schools (*excluding* charter-equivalent schools: TT and TL) ranged from 0.112-0.291, thus no significant difference was found between the responses in these groups either (See table 17).

Table 17. P-Values: Public Charter/Contract/Charter Equivalent Traditional Public vs. Traditional Public *(excluding Charter Equivalent)* Rankings of Leadership Practices

P-Values *(Significance of the difference between public charter/contract and traditional pubic participant responses for each leadership strategy)*	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
P Value	.142	.156	.189	.128	.112	.135	.291	.108	.264	.188

Significant Difference? (P < .05)	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to uncover how teachers and leaders experienced the impact of positive leadership practices by providing context for the first question's quantitative data.

Research Question 2.1 and 2.2: Justification for Rankings. Participants were invited via an open ended response text box to share reasoning behind their selected leadership strategy rankings. More than 60% of respondents shared several sentences justifying their top three selections, approximately 20% of responses had short phrases in their submission, and approximately 20% of open ended responses were left blank. Comprehensive initial coding revealed six themes, or axial codes: *Emotional Well Being, Productivity, Chain Reactions, Motivation, Purpose, and Impact*. See Table 18 (below) for detailed descriptions of these axial codes and paraphrased sample participant responses that fell into each category.

Table 18. Description of Coded Themes in RQ2.1 and 2.2

Color	Axial Codes	Axial Code Description	Examples of Participants' Responses
	Emotional Well Being (EWB)	*Responses coded yellow have to do with the mental health of the teachers including how they feel about their roles and environment.*	• *Feeling supported, cared for* • *Feeling happy, comfortable* • *Feeling important, respected, valued* • *Feeling welcome, part of the team* • *Feeling equitably treated*
	Productivity (PR)	*Responses coded green have to do with efficiency and clarity, particularly in regard to the ability to make progress.*	• *Ensures a strong staff or project* • *Sustains the organization* • *Adds efficiency to work* • *"Everyone on the same page"* • *Clear guidelines, streamlined* • *Clear lines of communication* • *Makes better learning environment* • *Aligns w/ School Improvement Plan*
	Chain Reactions (CR)	*Responses coded orange have to do with starting forward momentum,*	• *Without ___, ___ couldn't happen* • *Forward momentum* • *Leads to improvement of ____*

		including the small ways that a particular strategy can push change.	
	Motivation (M)	*Responses coded blue have to do with the desire to be a part of the school, team, or process.*	• *Want to come to work each day* • *Want to be a part of the team* • *Desire to give more of self & talents* • *Buy-in to programs or changes*
	Purpose (PU)	*Responses coded purple have to do with alignment between the teacher's values, focus, and identity to the many ways they are invited to be involved at the school.*	• *Meaningful involvement* • *Focus, Goals* • *Identity* • *Values*
	Impact (IM)	*Responses coded in pink have to do with teachers being treated as professionals, both in terms of voice in the school/field and decision making for children in their care.*	• *Having a voice* • *Deep involvement* • *Critical partner in educating students* • *Elevating the school, profession, etc.*

Figures 14 and 15 show the leadership strategies which garnered the most attention in participants' open ended responses. "Emotional Well-being" was the most prolific axial code for both teachers (51% of whose responses included themes of "Emotional Well-being") and leaders (53% of whose responses included themes of "Emotional Well-being"). Responses falling into the "Emotional Well-being axial code" were most often justifying selection of the leadership practices, "Cultivating Trusting Relationships" (35% of all teacher and leader "Emotional Well-being coded responses) or "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" (35% of all teacher and leader "Emotional Well Being" coded responses). One teacher's survey included the remark, ""There is nothing more important than culture and relationships, and anything can be accomplished if those two things are solid." This sentiment was echoed by another teacher who shared, " People will not follow you if they feel they can't trust you, but they will follow you anywhere if they feel they can."

"Feedback and Acknowledgement" was also justified with themes of "Emotional Well-being". Teachers contributed, "without acknowledgement it is hard to feel

appreciated or valued" and "a little acknowledgement goes a LONG way and my principal subscribes to making sure we know she notices our efforts."

Two other axial codes stood out for the teachers generalized group: *Motivation and Productivity*. Most notably, 44% of teachers shared themes of motivation as a reason for selecting "Cultivating a Trusting Relationship" and 41% of teachers included themes of motivation to justify selection of "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" . One teacher's response, mirrored by 40 others, expressed that "People will want to stay in the school if they are trusted, welcomed, and feel good about being in the school." Similarly, 27% of all teachers who discussed themes of productivity did so to justify the leadership practice "Nurturing a Positive School Culture". Open-ended responses related to this category included six sentiments similar to these: "happy teachers are effective teachers" and "school culture impacts teacher and student performance."

Figure 12 Number of Coded Responses Justifying Rankings: TEACHERS

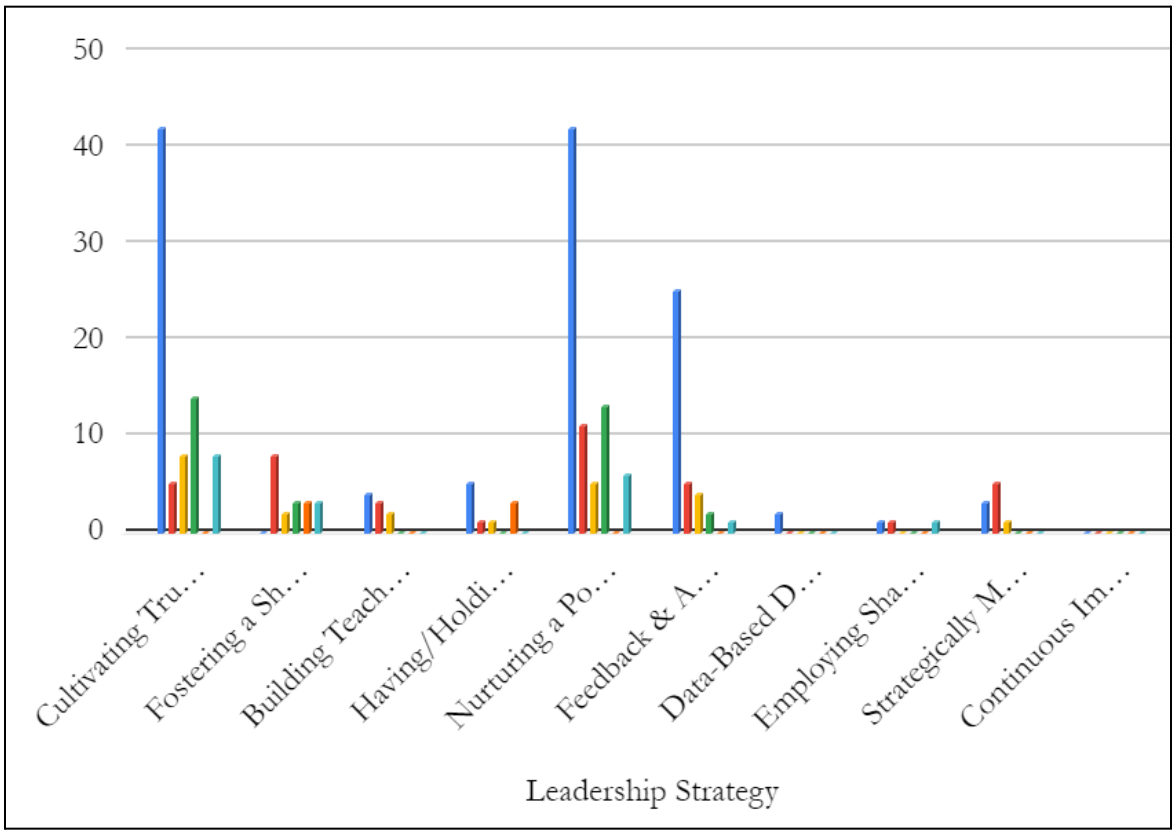
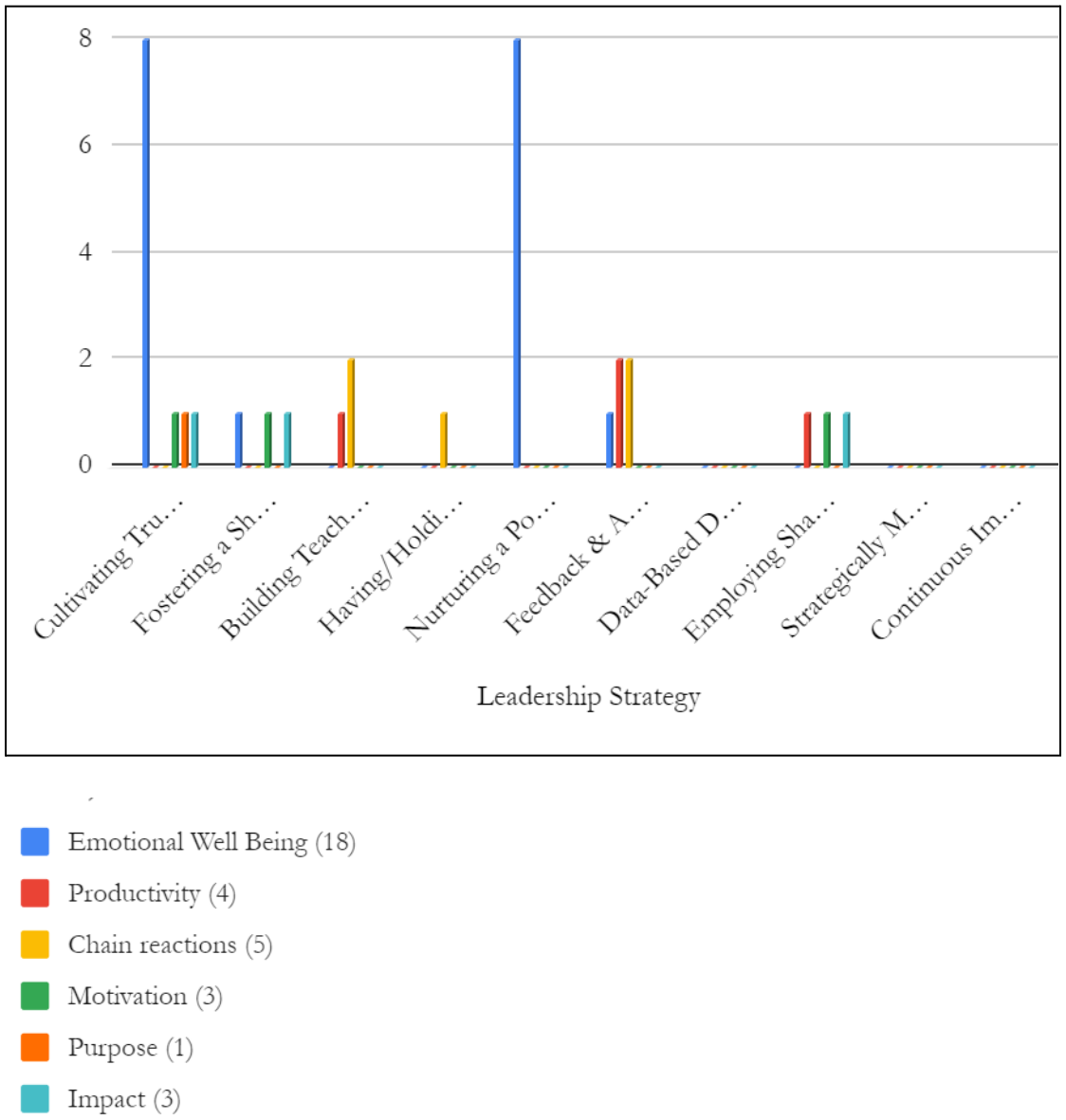


Figure 13. Number of Coded Responses Justifying Rankings: LEADERS



Research Question 2.3: Years of Experience in the Field. Participants were invited to share contextual data about the number of years of experience they had in the field. Table 19 shows the percentage of occurrence, with percentages ≥ 50% highlighted in teal (specific subgroups). "Cultivating Trusting Relationships" and "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" each ranked in the top three ≥ 50% of the time by

all but two subgroups (Leaders with 18-23 years experience and Leaders with 24+ years experience).

Table 19. Percentage of Top 3 Ranked Responses Across Leadership Strategies Among Specific Subgroups: *Years Experience in the Field*

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Context Subgroups: Years of Experience in the Field (*Total Respondents in Group*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
Teachers with 0-5 years experience (*18*)	**72%**	17%	**17%**	11%	**78%**	61%	11%	0%	22%	6%
Leaders with 0-5 years experience (*0*)	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**
Teachers + Leaders with 0-5 years experience (18)	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**
Teachers with 6-11 years experience (*25*)	**76%**	28%	**20%**	16%	**76%**	36%	4%	16%	12%	28%
Leaders with 6-11 years experience *(4)*	**75%**	50%	25%	0%	**50%**	75	0%	25%	**0%**	**0%**
Teachers + Leaders with 6-11 years experience (29)	**76%**	31%	21%	14%	**72%**	41%	3%	17%	**10%**	**24%**
Teachers with 12-17 years experience *(25)*	**76%**	**40%**	12%	16%	84%	**16%**	4%	16%	16%	20%
Leaders with 12-17 years experience *(3)*	**100%**	**33%**	33%	0%	**67%**	0%	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Teachers + Leaders with 12-17 years experience (28)	**79%**	**39%**	14%	14%	**82%**	14%	**4%**	**14%**	**14%**	**18%**
Teachers with 18-23 years experience *(24)*	**63%**	**25%**	**17%**	17%	**96%**	38%	4%	0%	0%	17%
Leaders with 18-23 years experience *(3)*	**33%**	0%	67%	0%	**33%**	0%	**0%**	33%	67%	67%
Teachers + Leaders with 18-23 years experience (27)	**59%**	22%	22%	15%	**89%**	33%	**4%**	4%	7%	22%
Teachers with 24+ years experience *(21)*	**76%**	29%	24%	14%	**90%**	19%	0%	19%	14%	5%

Leaders with 24+ years experience *(3)*	**3%**	33%	**67%**	33%	33%	50%	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Teachers + Leaders with 24+ years experience (24)	**71%**	29%	**29%**	17%	83%	25%	**0%**	**17%**	**13%**	**4%**

Research Question 2.4: Highest Level of Education Attained.

Participants were invited to share contextual data about the highest level of education they had achieved. Table 20 shows the percentage of occurrence of each leadership practice being ranked 1, 2, or 3 by the subgroups, with percentages ≥ 50% highlighted in teal (specific subgroups). "Cultivating Trusting Relationships" ranked in the top three ≥ 50% of the time by all subgroups and "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" was ranked in the top three ≥ 50% of the time by all but two subgroups (Leaders with a BA and Leaders with a MA + Additional Degrees/ Certifications).

Table 20. Percentage of Top 3 Ranked Responses Across Leadership Strategies Among Specific Subgroups: *Highest Level of Education Achieved*

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Context Subgroups: Highest Level Of Education Achieved (*Total Respondents in Group*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
Teachers with a BA Degree (*22*)	**59%**	**32%**	**23%**	**14%**	**73%**	**45%**	**5%**	**9%**	**9%**	**14%**
Leaders with a BA Degree (*1)*	**100%**	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Teachers + Leaders with a BA Degree (*23*)	**61%**	**35%**	**22%**	**13%**	**70%**	**43%**	**9%**	**9%**	**9%**	**13%**
Teachers with a MA Degree (*53*)	**79%**	**28%**	**13%**	**13%**	**91%**	**36%**	**6%**	**13%**	**13%**	**13%**
Leaders with a MA Degree (*5*)	**60%**	**40%**	**60%**	**0%**	**60%**	**75%**	**0%**	**20%**	**20%**	**20%**
Teachers + Leaders with a MA Degree (*58*)	**78%**	**29%**	**17%**	**12%**	**88%**	**34%**	**5%**	**14%**	**14%**	**14%**
Teachers with MA + Additional Degrees/ Cert. *(36)*	**72%**	**8%**	**22%**	**19%**	**83%**	**19%**	**3%**	**8%**	**14%**	**19%**
Leaders with MA + Additional	**57%**	**14%**	**43%**	**14%**	**43%**	**43%**	**0%**	**14%**	**14%**	**14%**

Degrees/Cert (*7*)										
Teachers + Leaders with MA + Additional Deg/ Certif. *(43)*	**70%**	**23%**	**26%**	**19%**	**77%**	**23%**	**2%**	**9%**	**14%**	**19%**
Teachers with a Terminal Degree *(2)*	**50%**	**50%**	**0%**	**0%**	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**50%**
Leaders with a Terminal Degree *(0)*	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**
Teachers + Leaders with a Terminal Degree (2)	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**

Research Question 2.5- 2.9: Likert Scale Questions. Participants were invited to share contextual data indicating whether they trusted their leadership/staff, felt supported by their leadership/staff, had a healthy work/life balance, felt fulfilled by their job, and had experienced changes in workload due to Covid-19. Tables 21-25 show the percentage of occurrence of each leadership practice being selected in the top three of participants' responses within each specialized subgroup, with percentages ≥ 50% highlighted in teal. "Cultivating Trusting Relationships" and "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" both ranked in the top three ≥ 50% of the time by all subgroups for RQ2.5 - RQ2.9.

Table 21. Percentage of Top 3 Ranked Responses Across Leadership Strategies Among Specific Subgroups: *Trust in Leadership/Staff (RQ2.5)*

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Context Subgroups: Trust in Leadership/Staff (*Total Respondents in Group*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
Teachers and Leaders who "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that they can **trust** their Leadership/Staff (117)	**73%**	**29%**	**21%**	**15%**	**79%**	**33%**	**4%**	**9%**	**15%**	**16%**
Teachers and Leaders who	**77%**	**34%**	**17%**	**11%**	**86%**	**30%**	**3%**	**9%**	**8%**	**14%**

"Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" that they can **trust** their Leadership/Staff (64)										

Table 22. Percentage of Top 3 Ranked Responses Across Leadership Strategies Among Specific Subgroups: *Support of Leadership/Staff (RQ 2.6)*

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Context Subgroups: Support of Leadership/Staff (*Total Respondents in Group*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
Teachers and Leaders who "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that they have the **support** of their Leadership/Staff (114)	**74%**	**25%**	**21%**	**15%**	**82%**	**33%**	**44%**	**11%**	**15%**	**15%**
Teachers and Leaders who "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" that they have the **support** of their Leadership/Staff (14)	**72%**	**29%**	**7%**	**21%**	**100%**	**21%**	**0%**	**29%**	**7%**	**14%**

Table 23. Percentage of Top 3 Ranked Responses Across Leadership Strategies Among Specific Subgroups: *Healthy Work/Life Balance (RQ2.7)*

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Context Subgroups: Healthy Work/Life Balance (*Total Respondents in Group*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
Teachers and Leaders who "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that they have a **healthy work/life balance.** (63)	**78 %**	**33 %**	**19 %**	**14 %**	**78 %**	**35 %**	**3%**	**13 %**	**16 %**	**11%**
Teachers and Leaders who "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" that they have a **healthy work/life balance.**(69)	**68 %**	**26 %**	**20 %**	**16 %**	**84 %**	**30 %**	**4%**	**10 %**	**12 %**	**20 %**

Table 24. Percentage of Top 3 Ranked Responses Across Leadership Strategies Among Specific Subgroups: *Feeling of Fulfillment (RQ2.8)*

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Context Subgroups: Feelings of Fulfillment (*Total Respondents in Group*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
Teachers and Leaders who "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that they experience a feeling of **fulfillment** in their job**.** (97)	**73%**	**33%**	**19%**	**15%**	**77%**	**40%**	**4%**	**4%**	**6%**	**13%**
14%Teachers and Leaders who "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" that they experience a feeling of **fulfillment** in their job**.** (34)	**67%**	**18%**	**21%**	**15%**	**94%**	**12%**	**3%**	**24%**	**15%**	**21%**

Table 25. Percentage of Top 3 Ranked Responses Across Leadership Strategies Among Specific Subgroups: *Covid-19 Impact on Workload (RQ2.9)*

Percent of Top 3 Rankings by Teacher & Leader Context Subgroups: Covid-19 Impact on Workload (*Total Respondents in Group*)	Cultivating Trusting Relationships	Fostering a Shared Vision	Building Teacher Capacity	Having/ Holding to High Expectations	Nurturing Positive School Culture	Feedback & Acknowledgement	Data-Based Decisions	Employing Shared Leadership	Strategically managed People, Data, Resources, & Processes	Continuous Improvement
Teachers and Leaders whose workload "Increased Significantly" or "Increased Somewhat". (125)	**70%**	**29%**	**20%**	**16%**	**78%**	**33%**	**4%**	**11%**	**14%**	**17%**
Teachers and Leaders whose workload "Decreased Significantly" or "Decreased Somewhat". (1)	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**100%**	**0%**	**0%**	**0%**	**100%**	**0%**

"Cultivating Trusting Relationships" and "Nurturing a Positive School Culture" made up the vast majority of justifications for teacher and leader selections across all qualitative and quantitative data collected in Research Question 2. While other strategies

were sporadically cited as important by specific subgroups, these two front runners outranked the remaining eight leadership strategies in every category of analysis for RQ2.

Research Question 3

The third research question sought to uncover how teachers and leaders described their own experiences with positive retention leadership practices. Five total participants engaged in virtual focus group sessions (*see Table 26 for Participant Demographics*). These groups engaged in conversations about their personal experiences related to the leadership practices most often ranked 1-3 by teachers and leaders in the survey.

The first session was attended by three teachers including Participant A, a male high school classroom teacher from a charter-equivalent traditional public school, Participant B, a female elementary school classroom teacher from a public charter school, and Participant C, a female middle school classroom teacher from a traditional public school. Each had a unique reason for wanting to participate in the discussion. Participant A was serving under a new principal this year and has been highly impressed by the improvement in leadership as compared to his last principal. He expressed an eagerness for contributing ideas to improve his school and was optimistic that the new principal's style of leadership would allow for this collaboration. Participant B has been a lead teacher for many years at her charter school and has seen a great deal of teacher turnover. She hoped that her participation in the research would help inform better practices so the students she cares so deeply about do not lose additional high quality teachers in the future. Participant C shared that she has always been highly interested in educational policy and has served both with the teachers' union and in local government to advocate for teacher rights. She believed that teachers were often "stepped on" because they were so passionate about their students that they forgot to advocate for

themselves. Participant C attended the session in order to voice the teacher's perspective in a space where she felt it does not yet routinely exist.

The second session included two leaders. Participant D was a female dean of students from a public charter school and Participant E was a female reading specialist from a traditional public school, though she shared that she had four years of teaching experience in a charter school in her career. Participant D stressed that she was passionate about what charter schools *could* be as her reason for attending the session. She felt that turnover of teachers was a cycle that was especially difficult to break in a charter and she hoped that her input in this research would help find potential solutions. Participant E explained that she was in a leadership role, but not a traditional principal or assistant principal one. Instead, she was a part of several of her principal's leadership teams, contributing as a specialist in reading. Participant E joined the session because she felt that these opportunities for shared leadership, often filled by teacher-leaders, were truly powerful and should be a part of any discussion about leadership practices that impact teacher retention.

Table 26. Focus Group Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	M/F	Category	Specific Role	Years in Role	Notes
Participant A	M	ET	HS Classroom teacher	8	Serving under a new principal this year
Participant B	F	CT	ES Classroom teacher & Lead teacher	12	
Participant C	F	TT	MS Classroom teacher	20+	Served with teachers union in past
Participant D	F	CL	Dean of Students	2	Passionate about "what charters *could* be"
Participant E	F	TL	Reading Specialist	10	Had charter teaching experience in past

The teachers focus group began with an animated discussion about mistrust and what happens when a leader fails to nurture a positive school culture. Participant C shared highlights from several union negotiations she had been a part of and the frustration she had felt when leaders at the district level didn't respond in a way that she saw as respectful to teachers. Participant A added that the "sense that teachers are less than" that begins in those kinds of high level meetings often trickles down to school leaders who adopt that same mentality as they lead their own staff. He shared examples of times he felt dismissed and overlooked for potential career advancement opportunities because his old principal subscribed to this top-down leadership approach. Participant B suggested that "the small things" often mean the most to teachers in the areas of trust and culture. She explained that she had worked under principals who demanded lesson plans be turned in, attendance be taken at all meetings, and teachers participate in online PD in a room where they could be monitored. The same leaders she was referring to often "played favorites" and were inconsistent about how feedback was given. To Participant B, these demonstrated that the leaders did not trust the teaching staff to do their job and that being on the administrators' "good side" was more important than doing your job well. This group was very concerned about voicing examples of mistrust and negative culture building at various leadership levels. They needed multiple prompts from the facilitator to generate ideas and share experiences illustrating what invites trust and positive culture. The session closed with all three participants voicing their gratitude for being able to share their thinking in a space that might affect some change.

The leaders' focus group was especially small with only two participants and the facilitator. This allowed for a natural conversational flow to the discussion. Like the teachers' discussion, the leaders began by sharing what hadn't worked in their past experiences. Participant D shared that she worked in charters for many years as a teacher and is a self-proclaimed "newbie administrator" in her second year of leading.

She acknowledged that this experience likely flavors how she looks at the leadership practices that her administrative team puts in place. Participant D also shared that she believes charter schools have the ability to be "different" in a highly positive way, but sometimes leadership choices get in the way of this as it is easier to follow the regular county curriculum than create something innovative. Participant E shared that she understood that dilemma from her past charter teaching experience, but felt that the current principal at her school was doing a phenomenal job of gathering staff voices and making collaboration purposeful via leadership teams. Participant D was excited to bring this structure back to her own school and much of the second half of the conversation centered on ways to bring the voice of the whole staff into decision making fairly and efficiently. The leaders' session closed with Participants D and E planning to talk more with one another outside of the focus group. They were excited to infuse one another's' ideas about improving trust and culture into their respective settings.

The focus group sessions were transcribed, cleaned of unnecessary content (e.g., introductions, directions from the facilitator, and goodbyes), and then coded to uncover themes that would give insight to the third research question.

Research Question 3.1: Teachers. Comprehensive initial open coding revealed five themes or axial codes: *Support, Respect as Professionals, Acknowledgement for Hard Work, Transparency & Voice, and Follow Through*. These color codes are aligned with those used in the analysis of open-ended survey responses because the themes found were so similar. For example, the yellow focus group code "Respect as Professionals & Support" aligned with the yellow survey response code "Emotional Well Being" because both encompassed feelings of being supported, respected, capable, and well. See Table 27 (below) for detailed descriptions of the axial codes used in the focus group analysis as well as paraphrased sample participant responses that fell into each category.

Table 27. Description of Coded Themes in RQ 3.1: Teachers

Color	Axial Codes	Axial Code Description	Examples of Participants' Responses
	Respect as Professionals & Support (RPS)	*Responses coded yellow have to do with the mental health of teachers. These responses fell into two sub categories: Support and Respect as a Professional.*	***Respect as Professionals*** ● *Knowing they will be treated with respect* ● *Trusted to do the job for which they were hired and educated* ● *Respecting the entire staff equitably* ● *Treating them as professionals* ***Support*** ● *Feeling that leaders are "on our side"* ● *Leaders are fighting for them and not against them* ● *Teacher authority is not undermined* ● *Start from place of trusting teachers in order to gain teachers' trust* ● *"Having our backs" when issues arise with parents/ classroom*
	Follow Through (FT)	*Responses coded orange have to do with keeping promises and following through.*	● *No "backstabbing"* ● *Having a "backbone" and pushing for things that are needed* ● *Promises that weren't kept, including loss of pay increases during recession* ● *Listening to staff concerns and then doing something about them*
	Acknowledgement (AK)	*Responses coded blue have to do with the acknowledgement of hard work that has been done.*	● *Acknowledging that teachers are trying and are working very hard* ● *Acknowledging that the culture of education has changed and teachers are doing the best they can as they figure it out* ● *Making adjustments privately, not in front of children or parents*
	Voice & Transparency (VT)	*Responses coded in pink have to do with voice and transparency.*	● *Making problem solving a collaborative effort among teachers and leaders* ● *Input from teachers and union* ● *Including all stakeholders, including the teachers* ● *Praise for the listening walk strategy of a new leader (hopeful that this means voice is important to them)* ● *Non-specificity of surveys; while they provide data points, they don't help build trust or culture because they are anonymous* ● *Recognition of how hard it is for a leader to do an "open door policy" well*

			• *Necessity of communicating with all levels of educators and leaders to maintain trust in system*

Participants in the Teachers Focus Group repeatedly expressed the "critical need to understand why nobody wants to be a teacher anymore, stressing that "to lose sight of the importance of public education and the impact it has on our society is a serious mistake" (Participant C). Participant A explained that "leadership has a funny way of …coloring everything" because attitudes and behaviors that contribute to trusting relationships and positive school cultures "trickle down" from the highest educational leadership positions to school based leadership positions, through staff, and eventually to students. Participant B shared the experience of her very first day as a teacher in the county. A county leader visited her school, which had been performing poorly in past years, and told the staff that they needed to "step up your game". She remarked " I literally hadn't even been there and you're telling me I'm doing a bad job. That was my first day and my first impression."

This concept was woven through themes of professionalism, support, and acknowledgement of hard work. It was especially important to Participants A, B, and C that leaders treated them "as professionals". The idea of leaders "starting from a place of trust"(Participant B) in order to gain teacher trust came up in a variety of ways. It included trusting teachers to do the jobs that they were hired to do and "having our backs" or holding the teacher's account of events as truthful or best practice when issues arose in the classroom or with a parent (Participant A). Multiple examples were shared of how teachers experienced having their authority undermined by public reprimanding or "siding" with a student/parent over the teacher (Participant C). Participant C recognized that mistakes were indeed sometimes made, but cautioned that "adjustments should be made privately" to avoid the undermining of authority that they rely on to

manage large classrooms of children. Participants B and C also felt that it was important to acknowledge that the profession of educating children is a difficult one and has radically changed in a very short period of time. Participant B hoped leaders recognized "we are doing the best we can" to pivot in directions that better serve students and the field in this new educational space.

A second recurring theme in the Teacher Focus Group was that of voice and transparency. This included fears grounded in the response of system leaders to the recession in the early 2000s (long term freezing of pay, layoffs) and more recent feelings that "stakeholders" did not include teachers. Participant C had a strong desire to make educational change and growth collaboratively, emphasizing that "we have to be able to talk about what's not working… not acknowledging that there are problems, isn't gonna get us anywhere." Participant B and C discussed the nonspecificity of one common form of soliciting stakeholders' input: surveys. "While they provide data points, they don't help build trust or culture because they are anonymous…we need these discussions to be face to face (Participant C)." Participant A acknowledged that it is very difficult for leaders to balance an open door policy because of the sheer numbers of individuals on a staff, but he did feel it was important to put measures in place to gather teachers' ideas, concerns, and opinions. The same participant shared his approval of a current leader in this area: "I feel like I'm being heard and there's a chance my ideas will come to fruition." All three participants agreed that they were hopeful the newest superintendent would bring transparency and voice to the system because he has launched his tenure in the county with a listening tour.

Participant B further emphasized the message that is sent when that which has been shared with a leader is-or isn't acted on. On a systemwide scale, all three participants felt this meant keeping promises about step pay. On a school building scale, however, Participant A felt this meant that "leadership doesn't just hear us, but does

something about it." This could mean acting on the idea a teacher proposed, but it could also mean sharing why this idea cannot be acted upon. This kind of transparency, Participant A felt, "builds the culture that 'Yes, I'm here. I'm listening to you, and I take you seriously, and I respect your opinions'."

Research Question 3.2: Leaders. Like the Teacher Focus Group, the coding process for Research Question 3.2: Leaders involved comprehensive initial open coding to reveal six themes or axial codes that aligned with the color codes used in the analysis of open-ended survey responses. Specific code categories named for the leaders focus group included: *Safety, Confidence in Validity of Feedback/Curricula, Transparency & Voice, Follow Through & Productivity*. See Table 28 (below) for detailed descriptions of these axial codes and paraphrased sample participant responses that fell into each category.

Table 28. Description of Coded Themes in RQ 3.2: Leaders

Color	Axial Codes	Axial Code Description	Examples of Participants' Responses
	Safety (SA)	*Responses coded yellow have to do with physical and socio-emotional safety.*	• *Physical Safety including perceived safety from gun violence in schools that pervades the media* • *Socio-emotional safety including feeling that the leader will not put them in an uncomfortable professional place or give them work they cannot handle.* • *Guarding work life balance and energy*
	Follow Through (F)	*Responses coded orange have to do with keeping promises and following through.*	• *People trust what they see and hear happening around them* • *Difficulty to follow through with so many things on a leaders' plate* • *Turnover of administrators causes problematic resets of culture and trust*
	Confidence in Validity of Feedback & Curricula (CV)	*Responses coded blue have to do with confidence that the feedback given or curricula being used are valid.*	• *Necessity of trusting the leader to give you valid feedback* • *Importance of confidence in the validity of the curricula* • *Relationships not crossing into friendships as this can cause inequitable treatment (or perception thereof)*

			• *Grading with Compassion vs. High Expectations*
	Transparency & Voice (VT)	*Responses coded in pink have to do with voice and transparency, including on grade level teams.*	• *Appreciation of transparency from leadership at county level because this allows them to be transparent at the school level* • *Acknowledgement that there are many levels of decision makers above the school admin that impact the decisions they can make* • *Preference of many kinds of leadership teams to inform decision making with wide variety of perspectives* • *Struggle to build teaching teams that feel cohesive and naturally want to support one another*
	Productivity (PR)	*Responses coded in green have to do with productivity and getting things done in the school or system.*	• *When teachers leave, the training process starts all over*

Participants D and E were not surprised when the facilitator revealed that Cultivating Trusting Relationships and Nurturing a Positive School Culture ranked significantly higher than other leadership practices in almost all subgroups. "People want to be somewhere where they feel like they can trust the people they work with, and that they feel like is a positive place to spend a significant amount of their time within a day or a week, a year" (Participant E). The group focused a large portion of the conversation on safety, both physical and socio-emotional. Participants D and E agreed that gun violence had become an omnipresent threat in American schools in a way that they never would have predicted when they began in the field. For Participant D, this posed a new kind of trust that they had to earn from their staff members. Participant D remarked that assuming responsibility for a staff's physical safety in a potential crisis is "a deeper level of trust that I don't think you had to see in this profession before…that's something that you see in military or first responders where you know that there's a threat. We never needed that level of trust in the past."

The Leaders Focus group also discussed trust in terms of the confidence teachers have in their leader and curricula. Participant D explained that it is difficult to have a working relationship with a teacher who does not trust them “because we need to give feedback, and [the teacher] needs to be willing to accept it. We need to be able to give you praise and they will be willing to accept that too.” She expanded upon this idea with “this may be important to change your instruction. You might not trust that it’s valid”. Similarly, Participant E felt that trust included confidence in the validity of the curricula, sharing that “teachers do not trust the curriculum that we currently have” because the changing science of reading suggests that the current practices in place are outdated.

Participant D shared “sometimes where that trust gets foggy and muddled is when [teachers] aren’t getting the information or the big picture that someone else has”. Both Participant D and Participant E agreed that collaboration was essential to building transparency, though Participant D cautioned that they should “not cross the line into friendship” because it might “make feedback seem insincere” or inequitably motivated. Participant E high levels of collaboration could be achieved via various forms of distributed leadership in which “the right people get to meet at the right time”. Participant D echoed that she believed multiple leadership teams should be utilized for various purposes (instructional, business, etc.). Participant E added that decisions should not be made by “ the person who *used* to be a classroom teacher remembering their time, but rather the *current* classroom teacher's perspective.” Participant E felt that this kind of distributed leadership was “more important now that there has been such a shift [in education]. The way we do school now is not how we were doing school two and a half or three years ago.” These diverse perspectives are both productive and trust building as the teams are “able to collaborate and come up with a plan to address different things that pop up. If the principal is addressing the staff, they know that this isn't just the principal’s perspective. She really considered the perspectives of everybody

in the building" (Participant E). The Leaders Focus Group came to a consensus that a strong leadership team approach includes voices from a variety of people on the staff and many different specialized teams that communicate clearly and quickly between one another. Participant Dthat " there are principals that start the year with the best laid plans, and they want to do this great model, and then they are just overworked, and they don't have the time to do so. But it's so important to try and force that time in there." This kind of approach allows for transparency and voice, another major theme from this discussion.

The leaders echoed the teachers' desire for more transparency. Participant D shared that there are many levels above school leaders in the district's hierarchy of educational leadership. This means that a school leader's decisions are influenced by many other decision makers. Participant D explained that she would like to be more transparent about her role as a public charter school leader with her staff. She explained that her role has many elements that a traditional public school leader might not be "pulled" for, including budgeting, transportation, curricular decisions. She felt that charter schools "do have some distinct differences and require a different approach because they are much more work for teachers and leaders."

A great source of frustration for Participant D was what she referred to as the Catch-22 of retention. "It takes time" to build trust and culture because "people trust what they see and hear and are witness to." Yet, teacher turnover often means that a staff or teaching team does not remain intact long enough to form these bonds. "It's hard building that school culture when you don't have good retention…in full transparency, I've been with my school for 5 years, and I've worked with 12 different administrators" (Participant D). The constant churn of teachers and administrators means that the school is putting most of their support energy into retraining and orienting new staff instead of adding depth and complexity to the connections between stayers.

Summary of Key Findings

This study aimed to inform leaders and policy makers how to increase the retention of charter and contract teachers in Maryland public charter and contract schools. While the small sample size makes it impossible to "prove" or "disprove" the effectiveness of particular leadership practices in retaining teachers statewide, undeniable patterns arose in the survey and focus group data that will be of interest to leaders hoping to reduce turnover.

Finding #1: Top Three Ranked Practices

Research Question #1 questioned whether there were leadership practices that were perceived as most impactful to teacher retention. The answer was surprisingly clear. Two leadership practices were ranked in the top three by the vast majority of almost every generalized group and specialized subgroup: "Nurturing a Positive School Culture"(shown in teal in Table 29) and "Cultivating Trusting Relationships"(shown in yellow in Table 29). No other practices came close to this level of selection by participants. Leadership practices that elicited such overwhelming selection by teachers and leaders across all levels of experience, work-life balance, sense of job fulfillment, and roles deserve a second look by leaders hoping to slow churn. This finding does not support the researcher's initial hypotheses that teachers would gravitate toward leadership practices that involve trust, feedback/acknowledgement, and culture while leaders would select continuous improvement, data based decision making, and vision. Two essential practices were identified by almost all subgroups , but how should leaders implement them in traditional public, charter, and contract schools across the state? Both Nurturing a Positive School Culture and Cultivating Trusting Relationships are complex and nuanced practices with a wealth of strategies to get them right- *or wrong*.

Table 29. Top 3 Ranked Leadership Practices by Subgroups

Subgroup	Top 3 Ranked Leadership Practices

Public Charter Teachers (CT)	Across **CT** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-TIE between Trusting relationships, Positive school culture, & shared vision (6/9 or 67% each) 2- Building teacher capacity (4/9 or 44%) 3-Feedback (2/9 or 22%)
Public Charter-Equivalent Teachers (ET)	Across **ET** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-Positive school culture (12/13 or 92%) 2- Trusting relationships (8/13 or 62%) 3- Two way tie between vision and continuous improvement (4/13 or 31% for each)
Traditional Public School Teachers *including* Public Charter-Equivalent Teachers (TT+ET)	Across **TT+ET** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-Positive school culture(94/104 or 90%) 2-Trusting relationships (84/104 or 81%) 3-Feedback and acknowledgement (38/104 or 37%)
Traditional Public School Teachers *excluding* Public Charter-Equivalent Teachers (TT)	Across **TT** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-Positive school culture (82/91 or 90%) 2-Trusting relationships (76/91 or 84%) 3-Feedback and acknowledgement (35/91 or 38%)
Public charter leaders (CL)	Across **CL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-Trusting relationships (1/1 or 100%) 2-feedback (1/1 or 100%) 3-vision (1/1 or 100%)
Public Charter-Equivalent Leaders (EL)	Across **EL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-build teacher capacity (2/2 or 100%) 2-TIE: Trusting relationships + Shared vision + Positive school culture (½ or 50%) 3-n/a
Traditional Public School Leaders *including* Public Charter-Equivalent Leaders (TL + EL)	Across **TL+ EL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-TIE between Trusting relationships and building capacity (7/12 or 58%) 2-Positive school culture (6/12 or 50%) 3-feedback (4/12 or 33%)
Traditional Public School Leaders *excluding*Public Charter-Equivalent Leaders (TL)	Across **TL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1- Trusting relationships (6/10 or 60%) 2-TIE: build capacity + Positive school culture (5/10 or 50%) 3-feedback (4/10 or 40%)

Finding #2: Differences in Why & How

Research Question #2 examined whether there was a significant difference in subgroups' perceptions of the impact of leadership practices on teacher retention. This answer has an interesting nuance to it. While teachers and leaders agreed on the two foundational practices that increase retention, there was variance in the contextual answers given by each group regarding *why* that practice was necessary and *how* to implement it well. Teachers repeatedly cited emotional well being and motivation as

reasons why trust and culture were the most important leadership practices to them. They felt that leaders could achieve positive culture and trusting relationships by starting from a place of trusting teachers and treating them as professionals. This included many references to open communication between the teachers and leaders, as well as leaders taking action to remedy the concerns that were discussed. Leaders echoed the teacher's focus on emotional well being as a reason for ranking culture and trust in their top three, but these "whys" were often also grounded in productivity. For example, leaders suggested that trust was important because teachers needed to be able to trust that feedback being given to them was valid so the teacher would, in turn, make a change to improve performance. They emphasized that training starts all over every time a teacher leaves, so providing a trusting relationship and positive culture can keep expensive and time consuming training at bay. Leaders also expressed schoolwide and systemic level reasoning for selecting trust and culture. This "birds eye view" included discussions of the new level of trust necessary in light of gun violence in schools and the many moving parts that must be considered for any new change to be implemented. While teachers liked the idea of shared leadership due to these kinds of roles giving them a voice, leaders felt that a single leadership group was not effective. Instead, they felt that a collection of very purposeful leadership teams and a well-oiled system of inter-team communication would be the most effective route to providing the voice and transparency necessary for cultivating trusting relationships and a positive school culture. Sample teacher and leader responses can be found in Table 30 below. Both teacher and leader perspectives are necessary to reach the shared vision of increasing teacher retention in the state.

Table 30.Teacher and Leader Perceptions of the Impact of Leadership Practices on Retention *(Highlights from Open-ended Survey Responses and Focus Group Transcripts)*

	WHY these two leadership practices are impactful to retention	**HOW to implement these leadership practices in order to be impactful to retention**
Sample of Teacher Responses: *Trusting Relationships*	• Feel trusted • Feel safe going to admin with concerns, safe (x2 responses) • Morale, Desire to engage, drive *(x 4 responses)* • Motivated, buy-in, self efficacy *(x4 responses)* • Positive outlook on teaching, eager to return to classroom *(x2 responses)*	• Voice is heard, have a voice (*x3 responses)* • Input in decisions, Respecting their input, views considered (*x3 responses)* • Thought of as critical partners in educating students
Sample of Leader Responses: *Trusting Relationships*	• Being looked out for/supported/safe so they want to be at work *(x3 responses)* • Valued/respected/appreciated *(x4 responses)* • Feeling included so the team works efficiently	• Multiple leadership teams with specific purposes • Making the "why" behind decisions made clear • Open communication channels for discussion and change
Sample of Teacher Responses: *Positive School Culture*	• Feel happy, cared, supported *(x14 responses)* • Feel important, valued, respected *(x11 responses)* • Feel welcome, good, loved, happy, comfortable, part of the learning community, family, team *(x8 responses)* • morale/ desire to engage/drive *(x5 responses)*	• Equitably treated (x2 responses) • Shared identity and purpose *(x3 responses)* • No micromanaging • Work as a team *(x3 responses)* • Voice *(x 2 responses)* • Decision making • meaningful/involved *(x 2 responses)* • Critical partners in educating students
Sample of Leader Responses: *Positive School Culture*	• Included • Valued/respected (x4 responses) • happy/ fulfilled (x2 responses)	• Keeping people safe • Voice through variety of communication methods • Gathering ideas, concerns, and questions from staff

Finding #3: Different Context, Same Needs

The literature, interviews with the teachers and leaders, and the researcher's own experience all pointed to charter and contract schools being "different"- *different*

workloads, different visions, different challenges. Yet, this study finds that, despite those differences, public charter and contract schools share an important commonality with traditional public schools. Data collected via survey and focus groups for Research Question #2 *(Is there a significant difference in subgroups' perceptions of the impact of leadership practices on teacher retention in a large suburban school district?*) and Research Question #3 (*How do teachers and leaders describe their own experiences with positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?*), revealed that both public charters and traditional public charters retain teachers by cultivating trusting relationships and nurturing a positive school environment. This was, perhaps, the most surprising and important finding in this study because it means that traditional public and public charter and contract schools in Maryland can work together to strengthen school leaders' abilities to excel in these important leadership practices.

Conclusion

The conclusion below offers the researcher's speculation on the key findings. Speculation is grounded in the themes gleaned from the researcher's experience in the field (see Positionality and the School Culture at Charlotte Academy for roles and school settings) as well as the extensive literature review and data collected during the course of this study. The limitations of the study are acknowledged and a grounded theory is offered with recommended avenues of future research to extend this unique line of inquiry.

Limitations

The study included the survey responses of 151 Maryland educators from a single county, 5 of whom participated in focus groups as well. The size limitation meant that the sample analyzed by this study was not representative of the populations of teachers or leaders in the county nor state and results cannot be generalized to describe those larger populations. A larger study may be able to make statistically significant

comparisons between subgroups (e.g., teachers v. leaders, charter teachers v. traditional public teachers, etc.) which could offer important insight into whether retention ought to be approached differently in public charters and traditional public schools. Such a study should include a representative sample from all counties in Maryland which operate charter and/or contract schools. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) website lists the following counties as operating charter schools. It is important to note, however, that contract schools like Charlotte Academy are *not* included in MSDE's published list, but should indeed be represented in a larger study of teacher retention.

Table 31. Charter Schools in Operation in Maryland, 2023

Public School District	# of Charters in Operation
Anne Arundel County	2*
Baltimore City	32
Baltimore County	1
Charles County	1*
Frederick County	4*
Prince George's County	9
Saint Mary's County	1

Note: Numbers delineated with an asterisk (*) include charters opening or expanding in Fall, 2023. The MSDE charter schools list denotes these schools with "elementary/middle/high school expansion, Fall, 2023".

The research process *(survey development, survey launch, focus group context gathering, and data analysis via Google Sheets and coding procedures)* was efficient and could be replicated with another population sample, regardless of size. A sample size including all educators in the aforementioned counties would yield findings that are generalizable to the whole state for purposes of high level decision making. In a larger, representative study such as that suggested, subgroups likely would find differences in

leadership rankings between public charter and traditional public school teachers and leaders. It is also highly likely that a significant difference between traditional public schools which *include* versus *exclude* charter-equivalent schools would mirror the differences seen between public charter and the average of all traditional public schools, thus making it exceptionally difficult to separate out whether the resulting differences were due to a school's "charterness" or a school's service of high needs populations. This researcher hypothesizes the latter, though acknowledges that the problem is a complicated one to unravel since the vast majority of charters serve populations of high needs students at higher rates than their traditional public school counterparts. Despite the small, non-representative sample size, this study was able to contribute important findings, insight, and recommendations to the current collection of literature exploring teacher retention. This unique and timely line of inquiry warrants deeper investigation by future researchers.

Grounded Theory

Comprehensive data analysis performed in this study served as grounding for a theory of what might work to improve strategic retention in public charter schools. Practitioners should act on the findings of this study by working in improvement teams made up of a representative sample of teachers and leaders with the goal of increasing strategic retention. These improvement teams should function at systemic and local levels to be most effective. Bryk (2010) states that "[s]chools are only as good as the quality of faculty, the professional development that supports their learning, and the faculty's capacity to work together to improve instruction (p.24)." The researcher further highlights the necessity of developing social resources within systemic and local school staff so teams are able to work together to solve problems. This section proposes specific strategies for improvement teams to implement at both levels which position trust, culture, and teachers themselves as important to the staying process. It is

important to note that the suggested strategies contained in this grounded theory focus on *strategic retention*, or the retention of effective teachers and allowance of natural leaving or counseling out of ineffective teachers. It is especially important to focus both systemic and local improvement team efforts on retention of the "irreplaceables", or those teachers whose skills and contributions to school culture make them nearly impossible to replace.

Implications for systemic leaders. Improvement teams on the systemic level include national policy makers as well as state and county level educational leaders. Improvement teams at this level should be focused on developing, monitoring, and improving state and county wide policies that support school level leaders in establishing trust and culture. Systemic level improvement teams should first strive to deeply understand the current state of trust and culture via discussions, interviews, and/or a "listening tour" to inform decisions about next steps. While surveys can provide important data, they should not be the only communication with educators in the system. Focus group participant B said *"they don't help build trust or culture because they are anonymous…[we] need these discussions face to face."* Teachers themselves are a vital part of the retention process and cannot be overlooked as sources of data about school trust and culture. Teachers crave avenues of communication with the highest levels of their system, a fact that is supported by the optimism with which all three teacher focus group participants discussed their new superintendent's strategy of beginning with a "listening tour". A positive product of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the increase in language surrounding well-being. Now is the time to capitalize on this language and open systemic communication pathways that will be foundational to building trust and culture.

Once systemic improvement teams have determined the current state of culture and trust in specific subgroups of the state and/or county, they should involve a purposive sample of leaders on small collaborative teams tasked with engaging in trust and culture building improvement cycles. Improvement cycles should include transparent self-assessment, designing of plans, implementing changes, and monitoring progress of school leaders in trust and culture building. For example, if survey and listening tour responses point to a gap in leaders' knowledge of how to capitalize on propinquity, improvement teams might design a plan for supporting leaders in developing thoughtful classroom assignment and purposeful post-grade level change collaboration opportunities for staff members. Systemic leaders would then implement and monitor this support plan, engaging in a cycle of reviewing school leaders' progress and adjusting the implementation of support accordingly.

Finally, systemic improvement teams should consider how Maryland's pre-service teachers and leaders are being prepared for the school house. Are these future administrators and teacher leaders given access to high quality curriculum and practicum experiences that set the foundation for recognizing, developing, maintaining, and critically self-assessing relational trust and positive culture? How can Maryland's higher education system better prepare these educators to be culture and trust builders within their schools and what ongoing training needs to occur in order to evolve their skills and understandings throughout their careers? Systemic commitment to improving in these areas will pave the way for local leaders to grow trust and culture more effectively in individual schools.

Implications for local leaders. It is necessary for local leaders to ground all leadership practices in culture and trust. This means infusing these practices into all components of their school leadership roles including (but not limited to) hiring, professional development, communication, performance evaluations, and even

scheduling. Like systemic leaders, local leaders should root their work in the data. They should strive to identify effective teachers through triangulating data collected via high quality formal evaluations, frequent informal observations and feedback cycles, as well as qualitative consideration of each teacher's cultural contributions to the school. Research conducted by TNTP (2012) pointed to "irreplaceables" as teachers who contribute more than just a great lesson. This researcher echoes Grissom and Bantanen (2019) whose strategic retention research argues that these irreplaceables are the teachers to focus retention efforts on and to allow or counsel the weakest teachers to leave on their own accord. Local leaders have a responsibility to counsel out poor teachers so they do not drain resources that should be put into the rest of the teaching staff. All effective teachers should be given development opportunities that are thoughtfully curated to bring staff members together in a variety of ways. Potential development connections that support trust and culture building include differentiated professional development led by in-house experts, mentoring partnerships, professional learning communities, and encouragement of peer visits (or the informal observation of colleagues for feedback and sharing of ideas). Teachers who have been identified as exceptional should also be given voice through school level leadership teams. Bryk (2010) argued that trust is built through leaders and staff members working alongside one another to make change.

> Relational trust can emerge only if participants show their commitment to engage in the hard work of reform and see others doing the same. Principals must take the lead and extend themselves by reaching out to others. (p.27, Bryk, 2010).

Principals have the responsibility to initiate trust by extending it to their teaching staff, even if there are staff members who are unable to reciprocate. This could be done through creating multiple leadership teams assigned to specific purposes. For example, a single school might have an Academic Team, a Building Team, a Teacher Support Team,

and a Technology Team. These teams should be made up of relevant and diversely experienced representatives from the staff. School leaders must develop a clear and efficient method of communication between teams in order to capitalize on this resource. This study revealed that teachers have a strong desire for more voice, so teams like these serve dual purpose. They not only improve culture and trust with a purposeful avenue for teacher voice, but also strengthen decision making through providing administrators with an expert think tank of suggestions. It is important to note that there is a distinct difference between extending the opportunity of shared leadership to an irreplaceable teacher and simply giving your best and brightest a heavier load at work.

One reason shared leadership is such an effective structure is that it allows school leaders to model the trust that they desire from their staff. When "*starting from a place of trust*" (Participant B), leaders are more likely to get the same trust back that they give. An open door policy paired with follow through is a powerful way to build trust for local administrators to employ. "Open door" means, simply, that the leader makes themself available to be communicated with. This could mean through actively responding to calls, texts, and emails, or quite literally inviting in-person conversations via an open door to their office. Inviting teachers to share their concerns and ideas is not enough to grow relational trust. This open door policy must be paired with taking action (or providing clear reasoning about why action will not be taken) on these concerns and ideas in order to be effective. Participant A in the teacher focus group recognized that "it is very hard to balance an open door policy in which you have that same conversation 100 times, but it is important to be open to it." Transparency in this two way communication between leaders and teachers is essential to building trust and culture.

Implications for both systemic and local leaders. Systemic and local leaders should operate with transparency as it is important at all levels of leadership. This means openly discussing the requirements and reasons for decisions being made

whenever appropriate. Transparency was a theme highlighted by participants in a variety of ways, including this open ended survey response:

> One of the reasons my school doesn't have as many teacher vacancies as other schools with similar demographics of students and teachers is because our leadership is transparent and honest with teachers about the why behind decisions and opens communication channels to create opportunities for discussion and change. (Open Ended Teacher Survey Response)

It is important to note that there is a delicate balance leaders must master when operating with transparency. The sharing of information can provide valuable context that strengthens the staff's understanding of the system or school's vision, empowers positive risk taking aligned to that vision, and encourages irreplaceables to stay through building trust and culture. However, the oversharing of information -particularly information that paints other staff members in a negative light or generates anxiety or more questions than answers- can disintegrate trust and the stability of cultural foundations.

Balanced transparency is especially important because systemic and local leaders should exist in a constant state of improvement. As members of improvement teams, these leaders should become familiar with educational research relevant to their roles. They should review research via literature and engage in focus groups and interviews to understand the current climate in education and prevailing issues in their own settings. For example, a systemic leader might read about advancements in methods for protecting schools from gun violence, spread of infectious disease, or bullying. They might engage in discussions with school leaders about their individual school's needs in these areas and develop a plan for implementing and monitoring change. Teachers and leaders in the focus groups pointed out that today's educational context is uniquely

different than even several years ago, thus there are a plethora of avenues available for future research to extend this unique and timely inquiry.

Recommendations for Future Research

Does post-pandemic trust and culture building need to be different?

This study identified trust and culture as leadership practices that teachers and leaders almost unanimously ranked in their top three for impacting teacher retention. The study did not, however, uncover *how* to effectively implement these practices. The enormous collection of pre-pandemic research on trust and culture attest to just how multifaceted implementation of these two leadership practices have always been in the field of education. This complexity heightened when the Covid-19 pandemic required Maryland's public schools to operate virtually. School leaders scrambled to find new ways to build, maintain, and fix trust and culture in unprecedented ways within their school walls when their staff often could not physically be. In many schools, this meant using technology staff members were unfamiliar with, or using existing technologies in novel ways. Most teachers experienced learning management systems (LMS), virtual assignments, and virtual collaboration for the first time in their careers. School leaders, with varying success, attempted to figure out what trust and culture meant in these virtual spaces. Examples of innovations in this space were seen at Charlotte Academy where school leaders and teacher leaders attempted to encourage both collegial and social collaboration through use of avatars and virtual staff lounge spaces, virtual happy hours, virtual professional learning communities, interactive digital tools for professional development, virtual morning staff meetings, and an intricate web of virtual coaching based on observers dropping into virtual lessons to see teaching in action.

While some were relieved to see Zoom meetings and digital professional development tools replaced once again with in-person sessions and paper when Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, others questioned whether some virtual elements might add

efficiency to the post-pandemic classroom. Teachers at Charlotte Academy in 2023 shared that many parent meetings (IEPs, parent-teacher meetings, etc.), conference sessions, continuing education courses, and inter-school colleague meetings still happen virtually now because it is far more efficient than including travel time and location costs necessary for their pre-pandemic physical meeting counterparts.

Meetings aren't the only place virtual learning has permanently changed the modern eduscape. Many teachers were able to build competency and comfort in utilizing online collaborative tools. In schools like Charlotte Academy, this has translated into an increased use of collaborative digital tools like shared documents and virtual tools within the physical classroom. There is not a significant body of research supporting best practice for building trust and culture in these hybrid school communities- that is, communities operating both in physical and virtual spaces. This is especially true of early childhood through high school institutions as almost all existing research in this space is focused on higher education and/or adult experiences in virtual learning. Is the move toward the convenience of virtual tools irrevocably stealing important deep culture building opportunities or are there new ways leaders can encourage culture that embraces the digital scape? Are virtual communications (email, instant messaging, document collaborations, and virtual meetings) capable of producing the same levels of relational trust that we know to be possible with in-person interactions? These questions remain for future researchers to investigate so future leaders may evolve the prevailing ideas of how to best build positive culture and relational trust in post-pandemic public schools. Culture and trust are uniquely multifaceted in a school building and system, and while both public charter/contracts and traditional publics feel they are necessary for retaining teachers, it remains unknown as to whether these practices need to be implemented in different ways in these different kinds of schools.

Is it a question of "charterness" or high needs populations? Are public charters, particularly those under Maryland's unique charter law, "different kinds of schools"? That, too, remains to be answered. Data for public charters and high needs schools seems to be inextricably linked. Do public charter teachers and leaders crave trust and culture rich schools because of their uniquely *charter* experience, or because charters most typically serve *high needs populations*?

Charlotte Academy, introduced in Section 1 as a contextual illustration of the local impact retention has on schools, is a clear example of this conundrum. Charlotte Academy was built directly across the street from a traditional public school, Collinbridge Elementary, that draws children from exactly the same boundaries. The populations of these two schools are quite similar. According to the county's department of education website, Collinbridge Elementary has a minority enrollment of 93% (majority Black and Hispanic) and Charlotte Academy has a minority enrollment of 88% (majority Black). Both of these are significantly higher than Maryland's average minority enrollment of 66%. Collinbridge Elementary (69%) and Charlotte Academy (45%) also have higher than state averages (43%) of children who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. By all accounts, both schools are considered high needs populations. Thoughtfully paired schools like Collinbridge Elementary and Charlotte Academy would make a fascinating study attempting to determine whether teacher and leader perspectives on retention are influenced by "charterness" or service to high needs populations.

Charter schools can be found in 43 out of the 50 states, yet a PDK/Gallup poll in 2014 highlighted that almost 50% of Americans didn't even know that charters are public schools. This study's small but important contribution to the literature includes growing Americans' foundational understanding of what their charters really are and do. It is imperative that all public schools- *regardless of charter or traditional status*- focus

resources on nurturing relational trust and positive cultures if they are to retain educators.

Table of Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

	Survey Questions for Participants (with selection options where applicable)	**Alignment to Research Questions (RQ)** **RQ1.** Are there leadership practices that are perceived as most impactful to teacher retention…? **RQ2**.How do teachers and leaders experience the impact of positive retention leadership practices…?
Q1	**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM** **PROJECT TITLE**: The Impact of Leadership Practices on Teacher Retention in Maryland Public Charter and Contract Schools **PURPOSE**: This is a research project being conducted by Heather Carnaghan, a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park. You have been invited to participate in this research project because you are either a teacher or educational leader in a Maryland Public Charter or Contract School. The purpose of this research project is to determine teacher and leader perceptions of the leadership practices that successfully contribute to teacher retention in Anne Arundel County Public Schools, and to determine patterns which might inform improvement in teacher retention in public charter and contract schools. **PROCEDURES:** The procedures involve completing a survey. It should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey will ask participants to share non-identifying demographics data (school setting, role, years experience, student population, etc.), contextual data (work/life balance, trust, support, workload, etc.), and their beliefs about the leadership practices that have the most positive impact on teacher retention in their setting (ranking leadership practices by most positively impactful). Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any	n/a

	particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason. A non-representative sample of participants will also be invited to participate in a focus group to offer a more in-depth discussion of the survey findings. Participants may choose to decline this invitation at any time. **POTENTIAL RISKS**: There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study. Your survey answers will be automatically populated into an Excel spreadsheet by Qualtrics. The survey will not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. At the end of the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating in a focus group with the researcher to add context to survey results. Contact information collected for focus group participants will not be linked to survey responses. **BENEFITS:** There are no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may contribute to foundational research into leadership practices that have an impact on teacher retention in Maryland public charter and contract schools which may improve future practice in the state. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Excel spreadsheets of data, transcripts, thematic matrices, and data analysis tables will be securely stored within a password protected UMD Box. Any hard copies of data will remain in the student investigator's home office in a locked file cabinet. All data will be destroyed (i.e., shredded or erased) when their use is no longer needed but not before a minimum of ten years after data collection. If a report or article is written about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. A report of the study's findings will be shared with the district, but all raw data will remain accessible only to the principal investigator. **RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:** Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. Decision to participate or not participate in the research will not have a positive or	

	negative impact on your employment or standing at your place of employment. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact the principal investigator, Heather Carnaghan at hecarnaghan@gmail.com or the research supervisors, Dr. Segun Eubanks at seubank2@umd.edu or Dr. David Imig at dimig@umd.edu. **PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:** If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that your rights as a participant in research have not been honored during the course of this project, or you have any questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the principal researcher or or research supervisor, you may contact the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board at irb@umd.edu or 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, Maryland, 20742 or by phone at 301-405-0678 (IRBNet ID: 1938827-1). For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. **STATEMENT OF CONSENT:** Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. ● I AGREE to participate in this study ● I DO NOT AGREE to participate in this study.	
Q2	Please select all that are true of your school setting: ● My school is a public charter school. ● My school is a public contract school. ● My school is a traditional public school. ● My school receives Title I funding. ● More than 50% of the student population receives Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), Community Assistance Programs, or other assistance/grants for free meals at school. ● More than 50% of the classroom teachers at my school have 5 or fewer years of teaching experience. ● The principal has been at the school for 3 or more years.	Provides demographics for disaggregating responses and identifying patterns in leadership practices ranked highest by each demographic group **RQ1** Provides demographics for determining "charter-equivalent " traditional public school group used to extrapolate practices that may positively impact charters and

		contracts **RQ1** Provides contextual data to build a model of participant experience **RQ2**
Q3	Please rank the following leadership practices in order from (1) MOST important to retaining teachers at your school to (10) LEAST important to retaining teachers at your school. Definitions of Leadership Practices: • **Building teacher capacity** Leaders increase the individual and collective ability of the school's staff through meaningful and differentiated professional development, providing support for new or struggling teachers, and building a learning focused professional community. • **Fostering a shared vision** Leaders allow for teachers and other staff to have a voice in the creation of a shared vision. They clearly articulate this vision and regularly align all workings of the school toward it. • **Employing shared or distributed leadership** Leaders empower teacher-leaders to take leadership roles in their areas of expertise and rely on these teacher leaders to help make decisions, improve programming, or provide support for staff. • **Commitment to continued improvement** Leaders are consistently and actively engaged in an effort to improve the student, staff, and community experience at the school. • **Strategically managing data, resources, processes, and people** Leaders plan, schedule, and allocate resources fairly and effectively. • **Nurturing a positive school culture** Leaders put caring for staff and students, sensitivity to the customs of the school community, and developing compassionate relationships first. • **Making data based decisions** Leaders efficiently collect and use a variety of high-quality, relevant data to make decisions about staffing, programming, and development. • **Cultivating trusting relationships:** Leaders operate with exceptional integrity, confidentiality, and honesty. • **Giving high quality feedback and acknowledgement** Leaders regularly observe teachers in order to	Provides insight into participants' beliefs about leadership practices that retain teachers **RQ1**

	provide well evidenced, timely, helpful, and relevant feedback. Leaders regularly acknowledge the improvements and extra efforts of staff. ● **Having and holding teachers to high expectations** Leaders clearly communicate the expectations they have for staff. They consistently follow through when expectations are not met. 1. Cultivating a trusting relationship 2. Fostering a shared vision 3. Building teacher capacity 4. Having and holding teachers to high expectations 5. Nurturing a positive school culture 6. Giving high quality feedback and acknowledgement 7. Making data-based decisions 8. Employing shared or distributive leadership 9. Strategically managing people, data, resources, and processes 10. Committing to continuous improvement **Note**: *The Qualtrics platform allows participants to slide these ten selections up and down to create a rank order that matches their beliefs.*	
Q4	Consider the leadership practices you ranked 1-3. What made you choose these as MOST important to retaining teachers at your school?	Contextualizes ranking selections by providing insight into why participants selected the three most important leadership practices to them **RQ2**
Q5	A. How did the Covid-19 pandemic impact your professional workload? (You may use the text box to briefly explain why you chose this answer.) ● Increased significantly Text Box: _____ ● Increased somewhat Text Box: _____ ● Decreased somewhat Text Box: _____ ● Decreased significantly Text Box: _____	Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices **RQ2**

Q6	I trust my leadership/staff to fulfill their duties professionally and ethically. (You may use the text box to briefly explain why you chose this answer.) ● Strongly agree Text Box: _____ ● Agree Text Box: _____ ● Disagree Text Box: _____ ● Strongly Disagree Text Box: _____	Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices **RQ2**
Q7	I feel supported by my leadership/staff. (You may use the text box to briefly explain why you chose this answer.) ● Strongly agree Text Box: _____ ● Agree Text Box: _____ ● Disagree Text Box: _____ ● Strongly Disagree Text Box: _____	Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices **RQ2**
Q8	I have a healthy work-life balance. (You may use the text box to briefly explain why you chose this answer.) ● Strongly agree Text Box: _____ ● Agree Text Box: _____ ● Disagree Text Box: _____ ● Strongly Disagree Text Box: _____	Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices **RQ2**

Q9	I feel fulfilled by my job. (You may use the text box to briefly explain why you chose this answer.) ● Strongly agree Text Box: _____ ● Agree Text Box: _____ ● Disagree Text Box: _____ ● Strongly Disagree Text Box: _____	Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices **RQ2**
Q10	What is your role? ● Classroom Teacher Grades PK-2 ● Classroom Teacher Grades 3-5 ● Classroom Teacher Grades 6-8 ● Classroom Teacher Grades 8-12 ● Special Educator supporting mainly in classrooms ● Support Staff (Content Specialist, Instructional Coach, Special Educator supporting outside of the classroom, etc.) ● Other Teaching Role Text Box: _____ ● Principal ● Assistant Principal ● Executive Director, CEO, or similar leadership role ● Other Leadership role Text Box: _____	Provides demographics for disaggregating responses and identifying patterns in leadership practices ranked highest by each demographic group **RQ1**
Q11	How many years have you worked in the field of education? ● 0-5 ● 6-11 ● 12-17 ● 18-23 ● 24+	Provides demographics for disaggregating responses and identifying patterns in leadership practices ranked highest by each demographic group **RQ1**
Q12	How many years have you worked in your current role? ● 0-5 ● 6-11 ● 12-17 ● 18-23 ● 24+	Provides demographics for disaggregating responses and identifying patterns in leadership practices ranked highest by each demographic group

		RQ1
Q13	What is your highest level of education? ● Bachelor's Degree ● Masters Degree ● Masters Degree + (For example: Multiple Masters Degrees, Masters + Administrator I/II Certificate, Masters + National Board Certificate, etc.) ● Terminal Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D, etc.)	Provides demographics for disaggregating responses and identifying patterns in leadership practices ranked highest by each demographic group **RQ1**
Q14	Share any thoughts you have on how leadership practices impact teacher retention. Text Box: _____	Allows for relevant responses that do not immediately fit into the survey line of questioning which may provide insight into context, problem finding, or connections in collected data **RQ2**.
Q15	Are you willing to join a Focus Group to discuss teacher retention further? Focus Groups will be held via Zoom and will last approximately 1 hour. Focus Group participants will each receive a $25 digital Amazon gift card. Please visit this Google form to share your contact information if you would like to apply to join one of our Focus Groups: https://forms.gle/pUPdN8BiJEh1Ch6Q8 Note: The Google form will repeat the survey questions on role and school setting and ask you for contact information since contact information collected will *not* be linked to your survey responses. ● Yes, I'd be happy to. ● No thanks.	Contextualizes participants' ranking choices to support a model of the teacher/leader experience related to practices **RQ2**

Appendix B: Email to the County

Dear _____,

My name is Heather Carnaghan and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park. There is no doubt that teacher turnover is a problem. The purpose of my asset-based research is to identify leadership practices that teachers and leaders believe successfully retain teachers in [County] public schools. It is my hope that findings from this research will support leaders by identifying practices that will increase teacher retention rates.

In order to gather the data necessary to extrapolate this information, I plan to invite all [County] teachers and leaders to complete a 10-15 minute survey (see attached) and conduct two one hour long focus groups with 8 participants each to better understand the context for survey responses. Focus groups will be recorded and permission to record audio is required for participation. Recordings will be destroyed once transcripts are completed. No personal information will be collected by the survey and only contact information for the purpose of scheduling and incentive distribution will be collected for the focus groups. No identifying information will be shared or used for any other purposes.

I would be extremely grateful if a [County] point person could send the attached email and three follow-up reminders (also attached) inviting all teachers and leaders to participate in this study. Please contact me at hcarnagh@umd.edu with any questions or concerns you may have. I look forward to sharing these findings with your leaders and making a positive impact on [County's] teacher retention rates together!

Appendix C: Initial Email to Participants

Dear [County] Teachers and Leaders,

My name is Heather Carnaghan and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park. There is no doubt that teacher turnover is a problem. The purpose of my research is to identify leadership practices that teachers and leaders believe successfully retain teachers in [County] public schools. It is my hope that findings from this research will support leaders by identifying practices that will increase teacher retention rates.

You are invited to be a part of a 10-15 minute survey that may positively impact teacher retention in Maryland public charter and contract schools. All survey responses will be anonymous. Participant demographics will be collected via multiple choice selections and will not collect any data which might identify individual participants (e.g. name, school name, or contact information). If you wish to take the survey, it can be accessed at [Link] until [Date].

At the conclusion of the survey, you will be invited to apply to join a one hour long focus group. Sixteen focus group participants (8 in each group) will be randomly selected (via number generator) from the application pool. Only those applicants who are selected to be a part of the focus group will receive an email with the time, date, location, and link for the session. If you do not receive this email, your number was not selected for the focus group. All sixteen individuals who participate in the focus group will receive a $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the focus group discussion. Focus group applicants will be asked to voluntarily share their contact information for the purpose of scheduling the session and distributing the gift cards. This contact information will *not* be linked to survey responses. Participants may opt out of the focus group at any time, even after applying. Focus groups will be recorded and permission to

record audio is required for participation. Recordings will be destroyed once transcripts are completed.

If you have any questions about the study or wish to share more about leadership practices that you believe positively impact teacher retention in [County], please contact me at hcarnagh@umd.edu.

Thank you for participating in this study,

Heather Carnaghan

Appendix D: Follow Up Email to Participants

Dear [County] Teachers and Leaders,

There are only [21, 14, 7] days left to share your insight about the leadership practices that most positively impact retention of teachers in [County]!

If you haven't already, please take a moment to complete the 10-15 minute survey sharing your thinking. All survey responses are anonymous. It can be accessed at [Link] until [Date].

As an additional reminder, at the conclusion of the survey, you will be invited to apply to join a one hour long focus group. Sixteen focus group participants will be randomly selected (via number generator) from the application pool. All sixteen individuals who participate in the focus group will receive a $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the focus group discussion. Focus groups will be recorded and permission to record audio is required for participation. Recordings will be destroyed once transcripts are completed.

If you have any questions about the study or wish to share more about leadership practices that you believe positively impact teacher retention in [County], please contact me at hcarnagh@umd.edu.

Thank you for participating in this study,

Heather Carnaghan

Appendix E: Initial Email to Focus Group Participants

Dear [Focus Group Participant's Name],

Thank you for applying to join a focus group discussing the leadership practices that positively impact teacher retention! You have been selected to participate in the [Teacher/Leader] group on [Date].

The virtual focus group will be approximately one hour long and can be accessed via [Link]. During our discussion, I will share some of the findings from the teacher and leader survey and ask you to share related experience and opinions.

Our group will have eight or fewer participants, so please confirm that you can attend by replying to this email. If you need to withdraw at any time after your confirmation, just let me know and I will invite another applicant. As a reminder, all individuals who participate in the focus group will receive a $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the focus group discussion. Focus groups will be recorded and permission to record audio is required for participation. Recordings will be destroyed once transcripts are completed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at hcarnagh@umd.edu.

Looking forward to meeting with you,

Heather Carnaghan

Appendix F: Reminder Email to Focus Group Participants

Dear [Focus Group Participant's Name],

I am looking forward to hosting you in the focus group discussing the leadership practices that positively impact teacher retention! As a reminder, we will meet tomorrow, [Date], at [Time] via [Link]. The focus group will be approximately one hour long. If you need to withdraw please let me know as soon as you can and I will invite another applicant.

As a reminder, all individuals who participate in the focus group will receive a $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the focus group discussion. Focus groups will be recorded and permission to record audio is required for participation. Recordings will be destroyed once transcripts are completed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at hcarnagh@umd.edu.

Looking forward to meeting with you,

Heather Carnaghan

Appendix G: Summary of Data Analysis

Research Question	Disaggregated Data Sets Studied	
	Generalized Subgroup	***Specific Subgroup***
RQ 1 Are there leadership practices that are perceived as most impactful to teacher retention by teachers and leaders in a large suburban school district? Across **all** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-Cult. Trusting Rel.(111/133 or 83%) 2-Nurture Pos Sch Culture (104/133 or 78%) 3-Feedback & Acknowl. (47/133 or 35%) 4-Foster Shared vision (41/133 or 31%)	**RQ 1.1** (1) What leadership practices are most commonly ranked 1-3 by teachers? Across **all teacher** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-Nurture Pos Sch Culture (99/113 or 88%) 2-Cult Trust rel (89/113 or 79%) 3-Feedback & Acknowl. (40/113 or 35%) 4-Foster Shared vision (34/113 or 30%)	**RQ 1.1. 1a** in ALL Traditional Publics (**including Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* Across **TT+ET** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-pos school relationship (94/104 or 90%) 2-trusting relationships (84/104 or 81%) 3-feedback and acknowledgement (38/104 or 37%) 4-fostering shared vision (29/104 or 28%) **RQ 1.1. 1b** in Traditional Publics *(*excluding Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* Across **TT** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-pos school relationship (82/91 or 90%) 2-trusting relationships (76/91 or 84%) 3-feedback and acknowledgement (35/91 or 38%) 4-fostering shared vision (29/104 or 28%) **RQ 1.1. 1c** in Public Charters & Contracts Across **CT** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-three way tie between trusting relationships, pos school culture, & shared vision (6/9 or 67% each) 2- building teacher capacity (4/9 or 44%) 3-feedback (2/9 or 22%) 4- high expectations (1/9 or 11%) **RQ 1.1. 1d** in Charter-equivalent Publics Across **ET** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-school culture (12/13 or 92%) 2- trusting relationships (8/13 or 62%) 3- Two way tie between vision and continuous improvement (4/13 or 31% for each) 4-feedback (3/13 or 23%)
	RQ 1.2 (2) What	**RQ 1.2.2a** in ALL Traditional Publics (**including Charter-Equivalent Traditional*

	leadership practices are most commonly ranked 1-3 by leaders? Across **all leader** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-Cult trust rel (8/13 or 62%) 2-build teacher capacity (7/13 or 54%) 3-nurture pos sch culture (6/13 or 46%) 4-feedback & acknowl.(5/13 or 38%)	*Publics)* Across **TL+EL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-TIE between trusting rel and building capacity (7/12 or 58%) 2-pos school culture (6/12 or 50%) 3-feedback (4/12 or 33%) 4-TIE vision + improvement (3/12 or 25%) **RQ 1.2.2b** in Traditional Publics *(*excluding Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* Across **TL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1- trust rel (6/10 or 60%) 2-TIE: build capacity + school culture (5/10 or 50%) 3-feedback (4/10 or 40%) 4-continuous improvement (3/10 or 30%) **RQ 1.2.2c** in Public Charters & Contracts Across **CL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-culture of trusting relationship (1/1 or 100%) 2-feedback (1/1 or 100%) 3-vision (1/1 or 100%) 4-distributive leadership (1/1 or 100%) **RQ 1.2.2d** in Charter-equivalent Publics Across **EL** responses, these were ranked 1-3 with the highest frequency: 1-build teacher capacity (2/2 or 100%) 2-TIE: trusting relationships + shared vision + school culture (½ or 50%) 3-n/a 4-n/a
	RQ 1.3 (3) Are the leadership practices most commonly ranked 1-3 by teachers and leaders different? Similarities: Top 3 included Cultivating Trusting Relationships and	**RQ 1.3.3a** in ALL Traditional Publics (**including Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* Similarities: Top 3 included Cultivating Trusting Relationships and Nurturing a positive school culture (RELATIONSHIPS) and feedback (both had vision ranked 4th) Differences: L's ranked building T capacity as #1 (tied with trusting rel) and T's dod not rank this in their top three at all.

	Nurturing a positive school culture (RELATIONSHIPS) Close- T's ranked feedback/acknowl 3rd, L's as 4th. Differences: T's ranked fostering shared vision 4th (very close behind their #3) L's ranked building T capacity as #2	**RQ 1.3.3b** in Traditional Publics *(*excluding Charter-Equivalent Traditional Publics)* Similarities: Top 3 included Cultivating Trusting Relationships and Nurturing a positive school culture (RELATIONSHIPS) and feedback Differences: L's ranked building T capacity as #2 (tied with school culture) and T's did not rank this in their top three at all. T's ranked vision 4th, while Ls ranked improvement 4th. **RQ 1.3.3c** in Public Charters & Contracts Similarities: Top 3 included Cultivating Trusting Relationships, feedback, and vision Differences: T's ranked building T capacity #2 and L's did not rank this in top 3 T's ranked building school culture #!, Ls didn't rank this in top 3 4th rankings: Ts: high expectations, Ls: distributive leadership **RQ 1.3.3d** in Charter-equivalent Publics Similarities: Top 3 included Cultivating Trusting Relationships, school culture, and vision Differences: T's #3 was tied with continuous improvement (which didn't rank in L's top 3) Ls ranked building teacher capacity #1 while this did not rank in the top 3 for Ts
RQ 2 How do teachers and leaders experience the impact of positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district? Responses across all leadership practices fell into	**RQ 2.1** (1)What made teachers choose this leadership practice in their top 3?	**RQ 2.1.1a Teacher Capacity** Emotional Wellbeing (4) ● Feeling supportedx2 ● Feeling they have opportunities to improve practice ● Affects day to day locus of control as a teacher Productivity (3) ● Sustain organization ● Ensures a strong staff ● Differentiated professional development and support of struggling teachers

five themes: ___ Emotional Wellbeing ___ Chain Reactions ___ Productivity ___ Motivation ___ Impact		___ Chain Reactions (2) • important to support new or struggling teachers and build them up • Protect organization from turnover ___ Motivation (0) ___ Purpose (0) ___ Impact (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "building capacity is important to sustain an organization and protect it from turnover drop-off" **RQ 2.1.1b Shared Vision** ___ Productivity (8) • Everyone is on the same page/ consistency x2 • Tools and PD can be matched to the population • Know what is expected of you/ perform better when understand vision x 2 • Align to school improvement plan and inform decisions • Difficult to figure out that is expected of them • Clear guidelines leave little room for error ___ Motivation (3) • If the school doesn't work as a team and everyone is in it for themselves, schools will not thrive. • Sense of "buy in" to what you are trying to accomplish as a leader • Without vision each teacher is doing their own thing and no one is working as a team and you feel very alone ___ Purpose (3)) • Leadership has the same values as the teachers/believe in the vision of leadership x 2 • Establish school identity and purpose ___ Impact (3) • Impact

		• Voice is heard/compromises made x 2 • Freedom in LP __ Chain Reactions (2) • Nothing else matters if vision isn't in place • Moves the school forward __ Emotional Wellbeing (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "Having clear guidelines leaves little room for error" • "Perform better when I understand and believe in the vision of the leadership" **RQ 2.1.1c Shared Leadership** __ Emotional Wellbeing (1) • Making sure teachers/staff are used to the best of their ability __ Purpose (0) __ Productivity (1) • Distributive leadership means more differentiated professional development and support for struggling teachers can occur __ Chain Reactions (0) __ Motivation (0) __ Impact (1) • voice **Quotable & Notable from this section:** none **RQ 2.1.1d Continued Improvement** __ Emotional Wellbeing (0) __ Chain Reactions (0) __ Purpose (0) __ Productivity (0) __ Motivation (0) __ Impact (0) **RQ 2.1.1e Strategic Management** __ Emotional Wellbeing (3) • Confidence in admin • Put teachers first • Equitable workloads x2 __ Purpose (0)

		___ Productivity (5) ● Management in times of crisis ● More time to focus on student learning ● regularly evaluates the usefulness, effectiveness, and need of the support/data/resources in our school, and succeeds to allocate these things appropriately ● Time managed well ● Teachers used to best of their ability ___ Chain Reactions (1) ● It leads our data, processes and resources to be streamlined with less room for interpretation. ___ Motivation (0) ___ Impact (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** ● "strategically managing people, data, resources and processes leaves us more time to focus on student centered learning. **RQ 2.1.1f School Culture** ___ Emotional Wellbeing (42) ● Feel happy/cared/supported for x14 ● Feel important/valued/respected x11 ● Understanding teachers are human & have other responsibilities outside of school ● Job satisfaction ● Mental health ● Feel trusted ● Feel welcome/a part of the team/family x8 ● Feel safe going to admin with concerns/ safe x2 ● Positive outlook on profession ● Equitably treated x2 ___ Purpose (0) ● Community and administration share same focus cultural focus x2 ● Shared identity and purpose ___ Productivity (11)

		• School culture impacts teacher & student performance • Easier to continue with the selfless pace required to do the job of teaching well/ability to do job x 2 • Time managed well • Productive • Happy teachers are effective teachers • Self efficacy • Better learning environment for children • Aligns to SIP & drives decision making • When each individual is doing their own thing, lack productivity • Able to give best effort __ Chain Reactions (5) • Without a positive school culture, the other strategies cannot exist • Anything else that comes along as a challenge for the school can be conquered x2 • Positivity is contagious • Move school forward __ Motivation (13) • morale/ desire to engage/drive x5 • Work as a team x3 • Environment is a place teachers want to work in x3 • Increases buy in • No micromanaging __ Impact (6) • Voice x 2 • Decision making • meaningful/involved x2 • Critical partners in educating students **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "I think school leaders need to spend more time in the classroom with teachers and students." • "A positive working environment is critical in any high stress job." • "People will want to stay in the school if they are trusted, welcomed, feel good about being

		in the school" • "When principles are always negative and putting teachers down it makes the teachers want to leave." • "A positive community is number one on my list, as I have had to leave a school I loved in another district due to poor leadership. I know personally how it can affect your drive and ability to do your job." • "There is nothing more important than culture and relationships, and anything can be accomplished if those two things are solid." • " Liking, appreciating and respecting your colleagues can make all the difference between wanting to stay at a school or leaving a school." • "Nurturing a positive school culture must be the foundation that everything else is built upon." **RQ 2.1.1g Data Based Decisions** Emotional Wellbeing (2) • Decisions made objectively based on data (not personal) x2 Chain Reactions (0) Purpose (0) Productivity (0) Motivation (0) Impact (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "These most impact my satisfaction as a teacher in the building by being able to trust the decisions made for the school as a whole." • "We need to know decisions are not being made subjectively, but based on data." **RQ 2.1.1h Trusting Relationships** Emotional Wellbeing (42) • Feel cared for/safe/supported (not micromanaged) x9

		• Feel important/valued/appreciated/respected x16 • Teachers are people/human (compassion/understanding/needs) x6 • Mental health • Feel welcome/good/loved/ happy/comfortable/part of the learning community/family x8 • Feel trusted • Treated equally Motivation (14) • Morale/Desire to engage/ drive x 4 • Work as a team/relationships with coworkers x2 • motivated/buy-in/self efficacy x4 • Positive outlook on teaching/eager to return to classroom x2 • Confidence in school and administration • Focus on the "why" and foster that "team" attitude Impact (8) • Feel like they have impact • Voice is heard/have a voice x3 • Input in decisions/Respecting their input/views considered x3 • Thought of as critical partners in educating students Chain Reactions (8) • Without trust, the other leadership strategies can't happen • Positivity is contagious • "Practice what they preach" leads teachers to do the same • People will follow a leader anywhere if they have trust • Everyone is on the same page • Trust builds relationships • Forward momentum/move our school forward x2 Productivity (5) • Trust in teachers to be professionals is…most productive

		• Everyone is working for the same thing • Any challenge for the school can be conquered together x2 • Affects ability to do your job **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "you don't quit jobs you quit bosses" • " People will not follow you if they feel they can't trust you but they will follow you anywhere if they feel they can. " • "These center on the person and not the data" • "People want to work with people they trust" • "There is nothing more important than culture and relationships, and anything can be accomplished if those two things are solid." • "A school without a positive culture and trusting relationships is bound to fail." **RQ 2.1.1i Feedback & Acknowledgement** Emotional Wellbeing (25) • "Gotcha" waiting if you misstepped (feeling that feedback will be constructive and not destructive) x6 • Feel appreciated or valued x5 • feel more comfortable in approaching admin with concerns or issues/ supported x2 • Feel acknowledged/recognized for hard work x12 Purpose (0) Productivity (5) • A leader needs to know what they want and what they're working with • High quality feedback on lessons to improve x2 • decisions are not being made subjectively, but based on data. • recognize when teachers are overwhelmed and need support

		___ Chain Reactions (4) ● High quality feedback leads to continuous improvement for all ● encourage us to use positive feedback as a tool with our students in the classroom, and in turn make sure that we as teachers receive positive feedback as well. ● feedback is important for continuing to grow and develop. ● continual feedback to maintain healthy morale ___ Motivation (2) ● Want to stay in the school if they receive good feedback ● a little acknowledgement goes a LONG way ___ Impact (1) ● involved **Quotable & Notable from this section:** ● "Without acknowledgement it is hard to feel appreciated or valued. ● "High quality feedback leads to continuous improvement for all." ● "a little acknowledgement goes a LONG way and my principal subscribes to making sure we know she notices our efforts" ● "When principles are always negative and putting teachers down it makes the teachers want to leave." ● "acknowledgment goes a long way to lead to a positive working environment." **RQ 2.1.1j High Expectations** ___ Emotional Wellbeing (5) ● ALL held to very high standard (equitable) and staff are used to the best of their ability x4 ● Recognize when teachers are overwhelmed ___ Purpose (3) ● Clear, realistic expectations, reasons, and follow through for the standards are necessary x3 ___ Productivity (1)

		• High expectations keep the school effective __ Chain Reactions (1) • Teachers being held to high standards leads to good instruction for students __ Motivation (0) __ Impact (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "Directives surrounding practice and pedagogy are frequent, yet the expectations and reasons are not always clear. " • " same expectations and "rules" for all staff" but "recognize when teachers are overwhelmed"
	RQ 2.2 (2)What made leaders choose this leadership practice in their top 3?	**RQ 2.2.2a Teacher Capacity** __ Emotional Wellbeing (0) __ Purpose (0) __ Productivity (1) • trained by highly qualified leaders (reading teachers/math specialists) to build teacher capacity __ Chain Reactions (2) • If you don't build teacher capacity, then they are frustrated and leave due to the struggle • Benefit the students __ Motivation (0) __ Impact (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "Building the capacity of the teachers you currently have in your employment should be a number one priority. I believe in empowering teachers and encouraging growth not only to support themselves as life long learners but to the benefit of students as well." **RQ 2.2.2b Shared Vision** __ Emotional Wellbeing (1) • Teacher autonomy within the structure of direction, training &

		consistent communication ___ Purpose (0) ___ Chain Reactions (0) ___ Productivity (0) ___ Motivation (1) • Buy in ___ Impact (1) • Teachers have a say in the vision and direction the school is taking **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "Teachers need to understand the culture and vision of the school to ensure that they are working toward a common goal." **RQ 2.2.2c Shared Leadership** ___ Emotional Wellbeing (0) ___ Purpose (0) ___ Productivity (1) • Training by instructional specialists as distributive leadership measure ___ Chain Reactions (0) ___ Motivation (1) • Cultivate instructional leaders from the school they work in ___ Impact (1) • Input in direction of school **Quotable & Notable from this section:** none **RQ 2.2.2d Continuous Improvement** ___ Emotional Wellbeing (0) ___ Chain Reactions (0) ___ Purpose (0) ___ Productivity (0) ___ Motivation (0) ___ Impact (0) **RQ 2.2.2e Strategic Management** ___ Emotional Wellbeing (0) ___ Chain Reactions (0) ___ Purpose (0) ___ Productivity (0) ___ Motivation (0) ___ Impact (0)

		RQ 2.2.2f School Culture Emotional Wellbeing (8) • Included • Valued/respected x4 • happy/ fulfilled x2 • Safe Chain Reactions (0) Purpose (0) Productivity (0) Motivation (0) Impact (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "When people feel good about where they work and the work that they are doing they want to stay." **RQ 2.2.2g Data Based Decisions** Emotional Wellbeing (0) Chain Reactions (0) Purpose (0) Productivity (0) Motivation (0) Impact (0) **RQ 2.2.2h Trusting Relationships** Emotional Wellbeing (8) • Being looked out for/supported/safe x3 • Valued/respected/appreciated x4 • Feeling included Purpose (1) • County policies shouldn't undermine high expectations of leaders Motivation (1) • Why behind decisions made clear Impact (1) • Open communication channels for discussion and change Productivity (0) Chain Reactions (0) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** • "one of the reasons my school doesn't have as many teacher vacancies as other schools with similar demographics of students

		and teachers is because our leadership is transparent and honest with teachers about the why behind decisions and opens communication channels to create opportunities for discussion and change." **RQ 2.2.2i Feedback & Acknowledgement** ___ Emotional Wellbeing (1) ● Constructive vs. destructive ___ Productivity (2) ● Improves teaching skills ● Offer suggestions for improvement ___ Motivation (0) ___ Purpose (0) ___ Impact (0) ___ Chain Reactions (2) ● Teachers need direction, training, and consistent communication in order to make the school community stronger. ● Feedback should offer acknowledgement (which supports other leadership strategies) **Quotable & Notable from this section:** ● "teachers need direction, training, and consistent communication in order to make the school community stronger." **RQ 2.2.2j High Expectations** ___ Emotional Wellbeing (0) ___ Purpose (0) ___ Productivity (0) ___ Motivation (0) ___ Impact (0) ___ Chain Reactions (1) ● providing children with academic skills that will last a lifetime **Quotable & Notable from this section:** ● "While teachers are underpaid I believe in holding them in high regard just like a doctor or a lawyer. "

	RQ 2.3 (3) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **participants' years of experience**? -T consistently ranked school culture in their top 3 across all experience groups. (78% by 0-5s, 76% by 6-11s, 84% by 12-17s, 96% by 18-23s, and 90% by 24+s) -Similarly, T consistently ranked trusting relationships in their top across all experience groups (72% 0-5s, 76% 6-11s, 76% 12-17s, 63% 18-23s, and 76% 24+s) -Teachers: feedback ranked top three in 61% 0-5s, 36% in 6-11s (vs. not by 12+s) -Teachers: vision ranked top three by 28% 6-11s, 40% 12-17s, 25% 18-23s, and 29% 24+s (vs. not by 0-5s) Leaders: very few responses, so not super dependable data BUT: -school culture was ranked in top 3 by 50% of 6-11s, 67%	**RQ 2.3.3a What did TEACHERS with ____ experience rank as their top 3?** 1. 0-5 years 1.school culture (14/18 or 78%) 2.trusting relationship (13/18 or 72%) 3. Feedback (11/18 or 61%) 4. Strategically manage (4/18 or 22%) 2. 6-11 years 1. Tie School culture & Trusting relationship (19/25 or 76%) 2. Feedback (9/25 or 36%) 3. Tie Shared vision & Improvement (7/ 25 or 28%) 4.build capacity (5/25 or 20%) 3. 12-17 years 1. School culture (21/25 or 84%) 2. Trusting relationship (19/25 or 76%) 3.shared vision (10/25 or 40% 4.improvement (5/25 or 20%) 4. 18-23 years 1. School culture (23/24 or 96%) 2. Trusting relationship (15/24 or 63%) 3.Improvement (9/24 or 38%) 4. Shared vision (6/24 or 25%) 5. 24+ years 1. School culture (19/ 21 or 90%) 2. Trusting relationship (16/21 or 76%) 3. Shared vision (6/21 or 29%) 4. Build capacity (5/21 or 24%) **RQ 2.3.3b What did LEADERS with ___ experience rank as their top 3?** 1. 0-5 years No responses in this category 2. 6-11 years 1 Tie between .trusting relationship and feedback (3/4 or 75%) 2. Tie between shared vision & culture (2/4 or 50%) 3. Tie between build capacity & distributive leadership (¼ or 25%) 4. (rest were 0) 3. 12-17 years 1.trusting relationship (3/3 or 100%) 2. Positive culture (⅔ or 67%) 3. Shared vision & teacher capacity (⅓ or 33%)

	of 12-17s, 33% 18-23s, and 33% of 24+s --trusting relationships ranked in top 3 75% of 6-11s, 100% of 12-17s, 33% of 18-23s, and 33% 24+s -shared vision ranked in top 3 by 50% 6-11s, 33% 12-17s, not at all by 18-23s and by 33% of 24+s -categories in leader responses that didn't appear in teacher responses: (1) distributed leadership- by 25% 6-11s, not by 12-17s, 33% 18-23s, and not by 24+s (2) high expectations only seen in 33% of 24+s (3) strategic management ranked in top 3 by 67% of 18-23s but not ranked in top 3 by any other experience group	4. (rest were 0) 4. 18-23 years 1.Tie: build capacity, strategic management, & improvement (⅔ or 67%) 2. Tie between culture, trust, distributive leadership (⅓ or 33%) 3. (rest were 0) 5. 24+ years 1.Tie: Feedback and build capacity (⅔ or 67%) 2. Tie between trusting relationship, shared vision, high expectations, and culture (⅓ or 33%) 3. (rest were 0)
	RQ 2.4 (4) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **participants' level of education**?	**RQ 2.4.4a What did TEACHERS with ____ as their highest level of attained education rank as their top 3?** 1. Bachelors 1.school culture (16/22 or 73% 2.trusting relationship (13/22 or 59%) 3. Feedback (10/22 or 45%) 4.vision (7/22 or 32%)

	-Teachers across all education levels ranked school culture in their top three with the most frequency (73% bachelors, 91% masters, 83% Masters, 100% terminal degree) -teachers across all education levels ranked trusting relationships in their top 3 with high frequency (59% bachelors, 79% masters, 72% masters, and 50% terminal degree) -leaders selected trusting relationships across all education levels (100% bachelors, 60% masters, 57% masters) -distributive leadership appeared in leaders responses (33% masters +, 20% masters) but not in teachers -building capacity showed up in leader responses (100% bachelors, 43% masters)	2. Masters 1.school culture (48/53 or 91%) 2. Trusting relationship (42/53 or 79%) 3. Feedback (19/53 or 36%) 4. vision (15/53 or 28%) 3. Masters + additional certifications 1.school culture (30/36 or 83%) 2.trusting relationship (26/36 or 72%) 3. Vision (9/36 or 25%) 4.capacity (8/36 or 22%) 4.Terminal 1. School culture (2/2 or 100%) 2. TIE: improvement, vision, feedback, trusting relationship (½ or 50%) 3. --- 4. --- **RQ 2.4.4b What did LEADERS with ____ as their highest level of attained education rank as their top 3?** 1. Bachelors **ONE** response: trusting relationships, build capacity, & feedback (100%) 2. Masters 1. Tie between: Culture & trust (⅗ or 60%) 2. Vision (⅖ or 40%) 3. Tie: feedback, distributive leadership, and improvement (⅕ or 20%) 4. (rest 0) 3. Masters + additional certifications 1. Trust (4/7 or 57%) 2. TIE: capacity, culture, feedback (3/7 or 43%) 3. TIE: vision, strategic, improv., expectations, distributive (⅓ or 33%) 4. (rest were 0) 4.Terminal None in this category
	RQ 2.5 (5) Were the top 3	**RQ 2.5.5a TEACHERS: Strongly Agree + Agree**

	leadership rankings differentiated by **trust in staff/leader?** **Rankings of those who AS+A and SD+D were extremely similar for this question.** -Those who did and did not express trust in their staff/leader ranked school culture in top 3 (79% of SA + A, 86% of SD + D) --Those who did and did not express trust in their staff/leader ranked trusting relationships in top 3 (73% of SA + A, 77% of SD + D) -Those who did and did not express trust in their staff/leader ranked vision in top 3 (29% of SA + A, 34% of SD + D) -Those who did and did not express trust in their staff/leader ranked feedback in top 3 (33% of SA + A, 30% of SD + D)	1. School culture (92/117 or 79%) 2. Trust relationships (85/117 or 73%) 3. Feedback (39/117 or 33%) 4. Vision (34/117 or 29%) **RQ 2.5.5a ONLY Strongly Agree** 1. School culture (51/67 or 76%) 2. Trust relationships (47/67 or 70%) 3. Feedback (24/67 or 36%) 4. Vision (15/67 or 23%) **RQ 2.5.5b LEADERS: Strongly Disagree + Disagree** (5b) strongly disagree + disagree 1. Culture (55/64 or 86%) 2. Trust (49/ 64 or 77%) 3. Vision (22/64 or 34%) 4. Feedback (19/64 or 30%) **RQ 2.5.5b ONLY Strongly Disagree** 1. Tie: trusting rel and culture (2/2 or 100%) 2. Tie: vision & distrib leadership (½ or 50%) 3. (all rest 0) 4. (all rest 0)
	RQ 2.6 (6) Were the top 3 leadership	**RQ 2.6.6a Strongly Agree + Agree** 1. Culture (93/114 or 82% 2. Trust (84/114 or 74%)

	rankings differentiated by **support from staff/leader?** **Rankings of those who AS+A and SD+D were similar for this question.** -Those who did and did not express support by their staff/leader ranked school culture in top 3 (82% of SA + A,100% of SD + D) -Those who did and did not express support by their staff/leader ranked trust in top 3 (74% of SA + A, 71% of SD + D) -Those who agreed & strongly agreed that they were supported ranked feedback highly (33%) -Those who disagreed & disagreed strongly that they were supported ranked vision and distributive leadership highly (29%)	3. Feedback (38/114 or 33%) 4. Vision (29/114 or 25%) **RQ 2.6.6a ONLY Strongly Agree** 1. Culture (48/64 or 75%) 2. Trust (43/64 or 67%) 3. Feedback (23/64 or 36%) 4. Vision (17/64 or **RQ 2.6.6b Strongly Disagree + Disagree** 1. Culture (14/14 or 100%) 2.trust (10/14 or 71%) 3. Tie: Vision & distrib leadership (4/14 or 29%) 4. Tie: high expectations & feedback (3/14 or 21%) **RQ 2.6.6b ONLY Strongly Disagree** 1. Tie: Culture and trust (2/2 or 100%) 2. Tie: vision & distrib leadership (½ or 50%) 3. (rest 0) 4. (rest 0)
	RQ 2.7 (7) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **a healthy life**	**RQ 2.7.7a Strongly Agree + Agree** 1. TIE: trust and culture (49/63 or 78%) 2. Feedback (22/63 or 35%) 3. Vision (21/63 or 33%) 4. Build capacity (12/63 or 19%)

	balance? -Those who did and did not express a healthy w/l balance ranked school culture in top 3 (78% of SA + A, 84% of SD + D) -Those who did and did not express a healthy w/l balance ranked trust in top 3 (78% of SA + A, 68% of SD + D) --Those who did and did not express a healthy w/l balance ranked vision in top 3 (33% of SA + A, 26% of SD + D)	**RQ 2.7.7a ONLY Strongly Agree** 1. Trust (14/17 or 82%) 2. Culture (12/17 or 71%) 3. Vision & feedback (7/17 or 41%) 4. Build capacity (5/17 or 29%) **RQ 2.7.7b Strongly Disagree + Disagree** 1. Culture (58/69 or 84%) 2. Trust (47/69 or 68%) 3. Feedback (21/69 or 30%) 4. Vision (18/69 or 26%) **RQ 2.7.7b ONLY Strongly Disagree** 1. School culture (20/24 or 83%) 2. Trust (16/24 or 67%) 3. Tie: feedback/vision (6/24 or 25%) 4. Tie: capacity, expectations, improvement (5/24 or 21%)
	RQ 2.8 (8) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **feelings of fulfillment?** -Those who did and did not express job fulfillment ranked culture in top 3 (77% of SA + A, 94% of SD + D) -Those who did and did not express job fulfillment ranked trust in top 3 (75% of SA + A, 68%% of SD + D)	**RQ 2.8.8a Strongly Agree + Agree** 1. Culture (75/97 or 77%) 2. Trust (73/97 or 75%) 3. Feedback (39/97 or 40%) 4. Vision (32/97 or 33%) **RQ 2.8.8a ONLY Strongly Agree** 1. Trust (27/32 or 84%) 2. Culture (23/32 or 72%) 3. Vision (12/32 or 38%) 4. Improvement (8/32 or 25%) **RQ 2.8.8b Strongly Disagree + Disagree** 1. Culture (32/34 or 94% 2. Trust (23/34 or 68%) 3. Distributive leadership (8/34 or 68%) 4. Tie: capacity & improvement (7/34 or 21%) **RQ 2.8.8b ONLY Strongly Disagree** 1. Culture (5/5 or 100%)

		2. Trust (⅘ or 80%) 3. Tie: vision, distributive, strategic management (⅖ or 40%) 4. (rest were 0)
	RQ 2.9 (9) Were the top 3 leadership rankings differentiated by **Covid-19 impacts to workload?** -Those who did and did not express increased workload due to Covid ranked culture in top 3 (94% of ISig + ISom, 100% of DSig + DSom) -Those who did and did not express increased workload due to Covid ranked trust in top 3 (70% of ISig + ISom, 89% of DSig + DSom) -Those who did and did not express increased workload due to Covid ranked vision in top 3 (29% of ISig + ISom, 33% of DSig + DSom) -Those who did and did not express increased workload due to Covid ranked feedback in top 3 (33% of ISig + ISom, 22% of DSig + DSom)	**RQ 2.9.9a Increased Significantly + Increased** 1. Culture (98/125 or 78%) 2. Trust (88/125 or 70%) 3. Feedback (41/125 or 33%) 4. Vision (36/125 or 29%) **RQ 2.9.9a ONLY Increased Significantly** 1. Culture (73/90 or 81%) 2. Trust (61/90 or 68%) 3. Vision (29/90 or 32%) 4. Feedback (26/90 or 29%) **RQ 2.9.9b Decreased Significantly + Decreased** 1. Culture (9/9 or 100%) 2. Trust (8/9 or 89%) 3. Vision (3/9 or 33%) 4. Feedback (2/9 or 22%) **RQ 2.9.9b ONLY Decreased Significantly** One response: trust, culture, management (100%each)

RQ3 How do teachers and leaders describe their own experiences with positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?	**RQ3.1** How do **teachers** describe their own experiences with positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?	Feel respected as professionals (5) • They know they'll be treated With respect so, and respect is the word that I think we've been missing, and probably public education for a very long time. • Respecting their entire staff • Treating us like professionals goes a long way to solidify the bond and the trust that we have in hand. • **First day story (in quotes)** • We need to be trusted as such so that people understand that we got trained. We were educated to do this job. Let us do it. Feel supported ("have our backs")(11) • Feeling like the superintendent is "on our side" (ex. "Embarrassing pay" comment) • They're not, you know, may not be able to do everything for us, but they're at least fighting for us instead of against us. • Fights for us • Phones have been an issue: students inviting parents to the classroom when they perceive something as negative - undermined authority • Need principals who will have our backs x4 • Start from a place of trust to gain trust of teachers x3 Motivation: acknowledgement of teh work/job (6) • acknowledging that teachers are trying and that they're working hard is so important x3 • Acknowledging that the culture and state of ed is different today and we are doing the best we can • Acknowledging work • Make adjustments privately, not in front of kids x2

		Voice & Transparency/ in the LoopE (21) ● Collaborative effort: how can we make this better together? ● All of this (freezing of pay and layoffs in early 200s) came down without any input from the teachers Union. X2 ● They always talk about all the stakeholders. They don't mean all the stakeholders. ● I'm hopeful that this new superintendent is trying to listen to as many voices as possible before he makes major decisions...he's going on like a listening tour that he's talking to different constituents of the the public education system in the county, seems to have shed beam of light that's given a lot of people hope ● I think a lot of people were even thinking about early retirement. I'm hearing them saying, I'm waiting. I'm gonna wait and see now. ● Inviting member participation ● What he does is he listens. x4 ● **I feel like I'm I'm being heard and there's a chance to you know. Let some of my ideas come to to fruition** ● **Discussed non-specificity of surveys- while they provide data points, they don't help build trust or culture because they are anonymous...need these discussions face to face x4** ● **Recognize it is very hard to balance an open door policy in which you have that same conversation 100 times, but it is important to be open to it** ● **If we want to be able to make things better in education, we have to be able to talk about what's not working, and to constantly try and push those under the rug. And you know,**

		not, you know, not acknowledging that there are problems, isn't gonna get us anywhere. ● no human being can stand working in a constant atmosphere, of pins and needles waiting for you know the other shoe to drop constantly ● I definitely agree that in my title One school it can really come down from the top down as far as communications with others. Keeping promises/ Following through (6) ● There was so much backstabbing x2 ● Having backbone": a push for the things that you're striving for. ● You couldn't speak up about something without coming back to haunt you later. ● We were going into a recession, and they froze. ● They froze jobs, they froze salaries, they excised teachers like crazy to try to save money. A lot of teachers. 10 year teachers lost their positions at their schools, but they were allowed to find positions at other schools. Told jobs were secured but they weren't (recession) Takes ideas/concerns from teachers to leadership meetings (doesn't just "hear" them Quotable & Notable from this section: ● **I see the critical need to understand why nobody wants to be a teacher anymore. So it doesn't matter what else we do. If there's no teachers, none of that's good** ● **to lose sight of the importance of public education and the impact it has on our society is a serious mistake,** ● got so frustrated with things that were making me want to leave that

		I decided to run for office. • **education is about backbone of our country, and we're kind of letting it disintegrate in front of our eyes, and I feel like in Maryland, we're actually in really good shape compared to a lot of Other places, and that's scary** • title one school, and they really struggled. • **Leadership has a funny way of tainting or coloring everything.** • **It trickles down, it trickles down,** • And not, you know, like I, I will never forget the very first day that I walked into a school of faculty widest school wide meeting in Antarctica County. I came here in August the twentieth, 10 and the **superintendent at the time came in, and our school had been 0, based a couple of years before that and our the superintendent came in and basically reamed everyone out.** **And said, You know everything that's been going on. Here is your fault.** **You have to step up your game, and I wrote about it on Facebook.** **So it comes up in my memories every year, and I'm like I still can't believe that, you know.** **That was my first day, and that was my first impression. Like. I literally haven't even been here. And you're telling me I'm doing a bad job** • the people come to where kids wanna come. • That builds the culture that. Yes, I'm here. I'm listening to you, and I take you seriously, and I respect

		your opinions. • Have to give trust to get it
RQ3 How do teachers and leaders describe their own experiences with positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?	**RQ3.1** How do **leaders** describe their own experiences with positive retention leadership practices in a large suburban school district?	Feeling safe (7) • Physical safety: News this morning included a six year old who shot a teacher • emotional/social safety: you're not putting me in a situation that is uncomfortable professionally like you have my best interest in mine, or trust that You're not Give me a ton of work if you know I can't handle it x2 (“ if I felt more supported at my school, I wouldn't have to feel that way or think that way.”) • Guarding energy, work life balance x4 Confidence that the feedback/curricula is valid (10) • Charters do have some distinct differences & require a different approach (much more work for teachers and leaders) x3 • “ If you can't trust your principal, you know, or you don't feel that they trust you. It's gonna be hard to have that working relationship because they need to give you feedback, and you need to be willing to accept it, and they need to be able to give you praise, and you, being willing to like you know, accept that too.” • if they give feedback. That is maybe important to change your instruction. You might not trust that it's valid. • teachers do not trust the curriculum that we currently have (ex. Changing science of reading means many practices in place currently are outdated) • Not crossing the line into friendship to make feedback seem insincere or ill motivated • Need to have data that keep the

		momentum forward in line • Grading with compassion is out of line with high expectations • Circumstances and children's needs have changed radically with the pandemic, strategies and curricula need to reflect that Transparency and represented voice (14) • I appreciate it when there's transparency. Just tell me what's going on? I know there's some things I can't know everything about. But just just tell me where we're at with something so that I can accept it better. X3 • Transparency about where the charter leader is (budgeting, transportation, curricular decisions that traditional public school teachers aren't pulled for) • There are many levels above school leaders, so their decisions are influenced by their bosses • Principals sought out voices from a variety of people on staff • Many kinds of leadership teams and discussions are effective (ex. One with just business leaders-custodian, principal, front desk...another with instructional leaders, etc.) x8 Supportive teaching teams (4) • Supporting teams in building trusting relationships among themselves (ex. Sharing of stories) • some of the things like in the past that I feel like was always like a positive school culture like having a staff holiday together or letting the end of the year get together. And, like those social events that really just like we're gone with Covid, you know • The teachers that I worked with knew it was my first year, and some of them hadn't been teaching that long, either, but we really talked about how to teach. I just

		Don't see that today ● poor first year, Teacher, who doesn't know what she doesn't know Follow through/ getting things done (10) ● people trust what they see and hear ● "Have my back" when things don't work ● Difficult to have so much on plate that it makes follow through impossible sometimes (ex. PBIS example) ● Difference between "nice" and "strict" vs. high expectations and connections x6 ● Turnover of administrators causes problematic resets of culture and trust ● I feel like, you know, there are principles that start the year with the best laid plans right, and they want to do this great model, and then they are just overworked, and they don't have the time to do so. But it's it's so important to try and like force that time in there productivity: getting things done (1) ● When teachers leave we start the training process all over again <u>Quotable & Notable from this section</u>: ● "People want to be somewhere where they feel like they can trust the people they work with, and that they feel like it is a positive place to spend a significant amount of your time within a day or a week, a year" ● You need to be able to trust your leaders to feel safe in a building, ● you need to be able to feel safe and secure in your working environment.

		• sometimes where that that trust gets foggy and like muddled is when they're they're not getting the information or the big picture that somebody else has • something that I do see on some of the teams that I work with is that they just don't have that bond like I kind of had with when I was like a first year teacher with my team, and I think a lot of it's just circumstances today • People trust what they see and hear, and are witness to. And so when they have a positive leader that's taking care of things. • It just takes time. • the safety piece. I think that's a different level, and that's a deeper level of trust that I don't think you had to see in this profession before...you're doing everything in your power to keep me safe, ... that's something that you see in, military, or first responders where you know that there's a threat. But now that we see how often it's happening, I think it's It's hard to build that into something that we probably never needed that level of trust in the past. • we're able to collaborate and come up with a plan to address different things that pop up after getting that input. If the principal is addressing the staff. they know that this isn't just her perspective. She really took in everybody in the building's perspectives." • Important that the right people get to meet at the right time • It's not just the person who used to be a classroom teacher remembering their time. But what is the current classroom? Teacher's perspective. And I think you see that more important now that there has been such a shift.

		You know what I mean in the last couple like the way we do school now is not how we were doing school 2 and a half 3 years ago • Everybody's perspective is heard. • CATCH 22: I think, before my school can even get to that. I think there has to be better retention, because, like Katherine said, it's hard when you train someone and then you have to start all over. ... I really want to move my teachers forward in restorative practices. But when you have to keep retraining people...It's hard building that school culture when you don't have, you know, good retention...in full transparency, like I've been with my school for 5 years, and I've worked with 12 different administrators. • Some of the things like in the past that I feel like was always like a positive school culture like having a staff holiday together or letting the end of the year get together. And, like those social events that really just like were gone with Covid, you know

Color Coding Key
__ Emotional Wellbeing
__ Chain Reactions
__ Purpose
__ Productivity
__ Motivation
__ Impact

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