

“I Love my Job, but I’m not a Martyr”: How Schools’ Professional Cultures
Influence Engagement Among Second-Stage Teachers

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This paper was prepared for the 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA, April 13-17. The research was generously supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation. The views expressed are solely those of the author.

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Introduction

Educational researchers increasingly acknowledge that teachers make a difference in the educational outcomes of youth (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hanushek, 1992; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Johnson, 2006; W. Sanders & Rivers, 1996; W. L. Sanders & Horn, 1998). Empirical evidence shows that skilled teachers are associated with gains in student achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005), better school-related attitudes among children (Brunkhorst, 1992), and lower student drop-out rates (Fetler, 1997). However, teacher attrition (Harris & Adams, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001) and schools’ difficulties attracting teachers (Corcoran, Evans, & Schwab, 2004; Jacob, 2007) can make staffing some schools with qualified teachers challenging. This is particularly true in some urban schools (Ingersoll, 2002; Jacob, 2007; Louis & North Central Regional, 1995).

In addition to attracting and retaining teachers those interested in staffing schools with qualified teachers acknowledge a need to attend to how teachers approach their work. Accordingly, some researchers have turned their attention to improving teacher work engagement, or the enthusiasm and level of investment a teacher brings to his or her work (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Louis & North Central Regional, 1995; MacTavish & Kolb, 2006). Research on work engagement indicates that employees who are highly engaged in their work tend work

harder, stay in their jobs longer, and be more productive and satisfied (Brown & Leigh, 1996; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Huselid & Day, 1991; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Pierro, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2006). Therefore, focusing on improving work engagement among teachers might be a way to improve teacher retention and improve schools at the same time.

Improving teacher work engagement may be particularly important among second-stage teachers, or teachers with 4-10 years of experience. Research suggests that these teachers may be valuable to schools and students in ways that teachers with less experience are not by being more skilled, on average, and by taking on leadership roles. However, research also shows that, at this stage of their career, many teachers re-evaluate whether or not they want to stay in teaching (Huberman, 1993) and attrition rates among those with 4 to 10 years of experience are nearly as high as those with less experience (Arnold & , 1993; Marvel et al., 2007). Keeping these teachers engaged in their work may both encourage their retention and their continued effort for as long as they remain in teaching.

This paper reports on one strand of a collaborative research project conducted by members of the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers focused on examining the experiences of second-stage teachers. This particular strand of the project focused on exploring work engagement among second-stage teachers in urban schools. I found that second-stage teachers reported greater freedom in their decision-making around whether and how to engage in their work at this stage in their career, in comparison to their experiences as novices. Importantly, the

professional cultures of the schools in which these teachers worked influenced their engagement decisions. Some teachers described their schools in ways that depicted professional cultures that encouraged their engagement. Other teachers reported that their schools' professional cultures discouraged their engagement. Still other teachers reported that their schools' professional cultures were more laissez-faire, leaving decisions about whether and how to engage to them. This research underscores the need for school leaders to attend to the engagement of second-stage teachers, and raises questions about how schools might cultivate professional cultures that encourage work engagement among teachers.

Context and Rationale

What is work engagement?

Organizational psychologists have studied work engagement¹ for decades, yet call it "an emerging concept" (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008) due to recent, increased attention from researchers and human resource professionals (Ketter, 2007; Shaffer, 2004). The definition of work engagement has evolved over the years, with recent research defining work engagement as a positive attitude and disposition toward work that is characterized by two core components, vigor (high energy levels and a willingness to invest in one's work) and dedication (a sense of inspiration and pride in one's work) (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Hakanen et al., 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). For the purposes

¹ Through the 1990s the term "work involvement" was used just as frequently, and sometimes interchangeably (Brown, 1996) by researchers. For this review I also draw on some of the work involvement literature.

of this study, I draw on this definition of work engagement, but choose to use the terms “investment” and “enthusiasm” to represent the two core components of vigor and dedication². As a result, I define work engagement as the enthusiasm and investment with which an employee approaches his or her work.

Organizational psychologists’ focus on work engagement over the years has shown it to be related to many positive outcomes for both employees and their workplaces. Brown (1996) cited 87 studies that reported a strong, positive relationship between engagement in one’s job and job satisfaction. In separate studies, higher work engagement has been associated with greater employee effort (Brown, 1996; Pierro et al., 2006) and motivation (Lazarus, 1991), as well as higher performance levels (Harter et al., 2002; May et al., 2004) and higher employee retention (Brown, 1996; Hakanen et al., 2006; Huselid & Day, 1991). Ultimately, this research suggests that increasing employee work engagement will lead to more satisfied workers and better functioning organizations.

The Importance of Teacher Engagement

Although very little research on teacher engagement has focused on American teachers, some school leaders and researchers recognize that schools and students have more to gain from engaged teachers than disengaged teachers

² Because “vigor” is defined in the literature as a willingness to invest, I felt the term “investment” would be a more easily recognizable substitute. “Dedication” refers to a sense of inspiration and pride in one’s work in the literature, rather than a commitment to one’s work, as it is sometimes understood. The difference between the way the word dedication is understood colloquially and the way it is used in the literature is one of the reasons, I chose to use the term “enthusiasm” instead.

(Louis, Smith, & National Center on Effective, Secondary Schools, 1991; Louis & North Central Regional, 1995; Newmann, Wisconsin Center for, & Others, 1991). Teachers' work engagement has been linked to positive teacher outcomes, such as commitment to the school (Hakanen et al., 2006). Student drop-out rates tend to be lower among teachers who are more highly engaged (Bryk & Thum, 1989). Additionally, high levels of teacher engagement have been positively associated with student achievement (Wehlage, 1989; Wilson & Corcoran, 1988). In a report for the Urban Educational Network, Karen Seashore Louis wrote "Unless teachers are engaged with teaching and feel that they are effective, students are less likely to make rapid progress in learning" (Louis & North Central Regional, 1995).

Empirical evidence suggests that teacher work engagement varies quite a bit (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2008; Louis & North Central Regional, 1995) and may be explained by both individual and contextual characteristics (Klusmann et al., 2008). Teaching has long been described as a very isolating occupation in which many teachers operate independently (Hargreaves, 2001; Lortie, 1975) enabling teachers to make individual decisions about how to approach their work. Additionally, research on effective schools has suggested that characteristics of schools such as the availability of learning opportunities, principal support, or collegial interaction can influence work-related attitudes and behaviors among teachers (Hirsch, Freitas, Church, & Villar, 2009; Johnson, 2006; Rosenholtz, 1985; Rosenholtz &

Simpson, 1990). School characteristics have been associated with differences in teacher job satisfaction (Liu & Ramsey, 2008), self-efficacy (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003) and commitment (Johnson, 2006; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990) and work engagement (2007; Klusmann et al., 2008). There is also evidence to suggest that the relationship between various workplace conditions and teacher work-related attitudes, might be different at various stages of a teachers' career (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

A sub-set of the literature examining effective schools and their characteristics has focused on the importance of professional culture and its potential to influence the work of teachers and the success of students. A school's professional culture has been defined as "the prevailing institutional and individual values that determine what teachers do and how they do it." (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). It is dynamic because it can be shaped by people, policies and reforms (Strahan, 2003). Healthy professional cultures have been associated with better adjusted teachers, and school success (Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Little, 1982). Schools' professional cultures are also thought to guide how teachers approach their work (Little, 1982), suggesting a connection to teachers' work engagement.

As a result of the current climate of high-stakes accountability, the work of teaching has changed and intensified in many ways (Bailey, 2000; Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; O'Day, 2002; Valli & Buese, 2007), making attending to teachers' work engagement even more important. This is

particularly true among urban schools (Murnane, 2007; Valli & Buese, 2007). These changes could inspire some teachers to engage in their work or may put inordinate stress and pressure on teachers, which could result in their diminished engagement.

Why Explore Work Engagement Among Second-Stage Teachers?

I am particularly interested in work engagement among second-stage teachers, or those with 4-10 years of experience. Identifying second-stage teachers in this way grows out of exploratory research conducted by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers and trends among teachers with different levels of experience. Exploratory research indicates that, at least by the end of the third year, teachers seldom describe themselves as novices (Charner-Laird, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Szczesiul, 2007). Most are not involved in teacher induction programs, even if they once had been. In most states, teachers who are adequately certified receive professional status or tenure after three years of full-time teaching in the same district. Because teacher attrition remains high in the first decade of employment (Marvel et al., 2007), we chose to focus on teachers with no more than 10 full years of experience.

Although little research exists on the particular needs and conditions of this group of teachers, there are good reasons to examine teachers in this particular career stage. First, the challenges of retention persist for teachers who remain in the classroom beyond their novice years (Arnold & , 1993). Nationally,

in 2005 over 17% of teachers with 4-9 years of experience either left their school to teach in another district or left teaching altogether (Marvel et al., 2007). This could, in part, stem from waning interest in and enthusiasm for teaching (Huberman, 1993), leading some to re-evaluate their decision to teach.

It is also important to motivate and selectively retain second-stage teachers because they may be poised to make important contributions to their students and schools in ways that other teachers are not. Teachers at this career stage report that they feel confident in their teaching (Charner-Laird, 2007; Huberman, 1993; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Szczesiul, 2007) and tend to possess greater skills than novices (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006; Murnane & Phillips, 1981; Rockoff, 2004). By virtue of their experience, second-stage teachers often have important institutional and community knowledge. Also, some second-stage teachers take on leadership roles (Berg et al., 2005; Donaldson et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2005), thereby providing potentially valuable service and increasing the instructional capacity of their schools.

In exploratory research examining the work engagement of second-stage teachers in two high schools, I found that engagement among second-stage teachers varied considerably. Some expressed enthusiasm about their ability, at this stage of their career to engage in their work in new and interesting ways, such as incorporating technology into their pedagogy and learning new instructional strategies. Others described relying on what they had done in the

past, putting less time and effort into their teaching. Ironically, teachers who chose to approach their teaching with more enthusiasm and investment often seemed more frustrated with their work than those who worked less hard due to the fact that their efforts largely went unacknowledged (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

This paper builds on that research by reporting on the findings of a study designed to explore teacher work engagement across contexts, with a larger sample of teachers. I was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do second-stage teachers describe their engagement in their work at this stage of their career?
2. What individual and organizational factors do these teachers say influence their engagement in their work?
3. What similarities and differences exist in teachers' descriptions of their engagement both within and across schools and districts?

Study Design

This study was designed in collaboration with other researchers for the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers as part of a larger study on the experiences of second-stage teachers. The study is a qualitative interview study of 85 second-stage teachers from 14 public schools in 3 low-performing urban districts in the Northeast (see Table 1). The larger study addressed four main areas of interest: teachers' work engagement, and their experiences of autonomy,

professional learning, and differentiated roles. Studying these topics together enabled us to explore important intersections among these topics.

Our sample, selected purposively to ensure variation in teacher experience, subject taught and gender³, consisted of 3-12 second-stage teachers at each of the 14 schools represented in the study. This sample consisted of 22 elementary teachers, 29 middle school teachers and 34 high school teachers. Most participants were female (72%) and white (85%), reflecting general trends in public school staffing today. First-career entrants, typically those entering teaching right after college, comprised 51% of the sample. This meant that nearly half of the sample was mid-career entrants, those entering teaching after at least

³ Please, see Appendix A for detailed description of methods used to select and invite participants.

Table 1. *School Demographics*

	School Pseudonym	Total Student Enrollment*	Free & Reduced Price Lunch (%)*	Students of Color (%)*	Made AYP 2008		Total number of Participants		
					Math	ELA	Elem	Mid	High
District 1	Gansford High School	1739	55%	65%	Y	N	.	.	8
	Conifer School	867	62%	71%	N	N	2	4	.
	Greentree School	1117	67%	70%	N	Y	3	3	.
District 2	Bingham High School	231	78%	67%	Y	Y	.	.	4
	Williams High School	1121	75%	70%	N	N	.	.	10
	Deer Park Middle School	584	84%	70%	N	N	.	6	.
	Hill Middle School	581	65%	61%	N	N	.	5	.
	Lane Elementary	345	81%	79%	N	N	5	.	.
	Partridge Elementary	377	83%	72%	Y	N	3	.	.
District 3	Dryden High School	3421	60%	61%	N	N	.	.	12
	Montgomery Middle School	558	82%	62%	N	N	.	6	.
	Allendale Middle School	575	88%	64%	N	N	.	5	.
	Alpine Elementary	482	70%	56%	N	N	3	.	.
	Keller Elementary	470	66%	74%	N	N	6	.	.
	Totals							22	29

* Figures taken from state DOE website for the 2008-2009 academic year

3 years in a different profession⁴. Additionally, 12% of the teachers in our sample currently held a specialized role⁵.

Analytic Methods

After each interview members of the research team created thematic summaries, comparisons of which illuminated possible trends emerging in the data. We also assembled demographic and descriptive data about each participant on a spreadsheet, which was used to sort participants by personal and reported organizational characteristics in order to identify possible patterns that might be worth exploring in more depth. We also coded interview transcripts using Atlasti software with a list of codes that represented general information that we wanted to track, and themes that emerged from prior, exploratory research on SSTs as well as literature related to the four research themes. Additionally, I included codes drawn from the literature on work engagement. For example, I used “invest” to represent vigor, one of the two core components of engagement drawn from the literature. Finally, I developed detailed summaries from the coded data of the ways that each teacher described his or her engagement. I used the coded data and these summaries to explore patterns within and across schools.

Next, I evaluated each teachers’ engagement on a scale of 1-4 as a way of checking the patterns I observed qualitatively. A score of 1 meant that the teacher’s

⁴ For the purpose of this study, a first-career entrant is defined as a teacher who had no significant professional experience prior to entering teaching. A mid-career entrant is defined as a teacher who had at least 3 years of full-time professional experience in another field prior to entering teaching.

⁵ For the purpose of this study, a differentiated role is a role that a teacher might take on in for which he or she either receives extra compensation or release time. Differentiated roles can take many forms such as department head, math resource specialist, literacy coach, or curriculum developer.

description of her enthusiasm and investment in her work led me to believe she was quite disengaged. A score of 4 indicated that the teacher's description led me to believe that she was highly engaged. Scores of 2 or 3 were assigned to teachers whose descriptions did not seem to put them at one end of the spectrum or the other, with a score of 2 leaning toward lower engagement and a score of 3 leaning towards highly engaged. In order to assign each teacher a score, I brought questions from the Utrecht Work Engagement (UWE) scale to bear on an examination of the thematic summary and/or transcript of each participant (see Appendix B, Quantitative Engagement Determinations). After scoring the engagement of each participant, I provided research colleagues with the guiding questions from the UWE scale and asked them to provide a second rating for each participant. I averaged the two scores for each participant, as a way of improving the reliability of the ratings.

Despite the coarseness and subjectivity of this measure, I found it useful to check the trends I had observed qualitatively. The mean engagement score was 3.2, and though the distribution was skewed towards the engaged end of the scale, teachers' scores varied between 2 and 4 on the scale. This was another way of observing both that these SSTs seemed engaged in their work, overall, but also that variation did exist. I ran some simple regressions to test the explanatory power of single predictors of engagement. The variable that, in these very basic regressions, explained the largest amount of variance in engagement among teachers was the school ($R^2=0.29$). Other variables investigated, including district, school-level, career entry, years experience, whether or not they taught a "tested" subject, explained very little of the variation in

engagement among teachers. Given the size of the sample, the regression results were very rarely significant, however, they did provide a way to confirm patterns about the importance of schools in explaining teacher engagement that were emerging qualitatively.

By grouping teachers by school, as my preliminary analysis and regressions suggested I should, I was able to closely examine patterns in teacher engagement both within and across schools. In most schools teachers described some of the values and expectations held by those in their schools remarkably consistently. These observations led me to identify and describe schools' professional cultures. In refining my analysis and identification of these schools' professional cultures, I consulted with other members of the research team as a validity check on my observations. Additionally, I was able to check the characteristics of these professional cultures described by teachers in this study with school-level results from a state-wide study of teachers' perspectives of their schools' working environments (Hirsch et al., 2009). In many instances, as I will note in my findings, this survey confirms the same school-level characteristics that our participants described⁶.

Findings

Career Stage Provides More Freedom and Flexibility about Whether and How to Engage

SSTs reported that, as a result of their experience, the work of teaching was different in many ways than it was when they were novices. Teachers described feeling confident

⁶ Because MTeLLS only reported school data if 40% or more teachers responded to the survey, school-level data from Williams High School, which had a response rate of 39.5%, could not be examined.

with their work and comfortable with procedures at their schools. They also described experiencing less supervision and oversight as second-stage teachers than they did as new teachers. Finally, as a result of their experience, these many of these teachers felt that their jobs were stable and secure. These conditions provided most teachers, regardless of context, with freedom and flexibility about whether and how to engage in their work that they had not experienced as novices.

After teaching for at least four years, these teachers were confident about their ability to do their work. Their self-efficacy had developed with experience. Instead of spending countless hours planning their classes, most second-stage teachers had a repertoire of ideas on which they could draw. Victoria explained, "I have been doing this. So I know what works and what doesn't work. So for the most part I have my lesson plans, I have a system. I mean I know how I run my classroom. I know the policies and procedures that go on here." (Victoria, Dryden). Danielle explained, "I think [teaching is] more enjoyable. Now I have the basics down. It's not a stressor anymore. Now I think that I could probably teach anything out of a paper bag" (Danielle, Hill MS). Teachers' confidence made their work less stressful, more enjoyable and more efficient. This provided many second-stage teachers with freedom and flexibility in the way they could use their time and energy in their work that they had not experienced as new teachers.

Increased freedom and flexibility in how they might engage in their work also came from more infrequent supervision than they had experienced as novices. Whereas in their first couple of years they had more evaluations and often were required to meet with

mentors and participate in induction programs, now these teachers were much more independent. Even in a school like Lane Elementary in which the principal was visible and worked with teachers, teachers felt less supervised than they had in the past. Rebecca explained that at this point in her career, "Some years, [the principal] doesn't do a formal evaluation. Some years she does. So, the years that she does, she's in your class for an hour [or] an hour and a half" (Rebecca, Lane). Some teachers saw more infrequent supervision as tacit acknowledgement of the administration's trust in them – acknowledgment of their experiential expertise. Anya explained, "I think that [the principal] is confident with the things that I do in the classroom and the way I conduct it so she, kind of, leaves me alone, in terms of, what I'm doing" (Anya, Lane). Ultimately, for most, being a second-stage teacher meant they had more independence than they did as novices and, therefore, greater freedom and flexibility about whether and how to engage than they had in the past.

One other aspect of the work of teaching that affected the freedom these teachers experienced was that their relative seniority made second-stage teachers feel that their jobs were secure and stable. Brian said, "I'm a permanent teacher. After your 3-year status, your first day of your 4th year you're permanent, so . . . I can't get fired without obviously poor evaluations" (Brian, Keller). Whereas when they felt less secure and stable in their positions they may have done whatever they were told, now they could experiment and make more of their own decisions. Danielle explained, "Where as a brand new teacher: okay, not a problem. Let me put that up without questioning it. . . . Now I say, well, wait a minute" (Danielle, Hill).

Having more freedom in their work did not mean that second-stage teachers had fewer responsibilities or worked less than other teachers. In fact, many teachers felt they

worked harder as second-stage teachers than they did as novices. Shirley compared teaching now to teaching when she was a novice:

I will say it's a harder job now. It's getting more and more demanding. I'm not in a situation where I can say, 'Well, I've been teaching seven years, so I can kind of start to coast a little bit, and it's easier now.' The requirements of the job are getting harder and harder. . . We're an underperforming school. . . And we are required to be very accountable. (Shirley, Hill)

Despite the work demands that many of these teachers faced, their confidence, independence and job security still often provided these teachers with more freedom and flexibility about whether and how to engage in their work.

Varied Engagement Among Second-Stage Teachers

Feeling confident about their teaching, experiencing infrequent supervision and viewing their job as stable and secure provided teachers with more discretion about whether and how to engage in their work. Some took advantage of new opportunities to engage in ways they hadn't been able to in the past. For others, this discretion enabled teachers to diminish their engagement.

Deciding to Engage in their Work

There were many examples of teachers who described using the flexibility they had as second-stage teachers to engage in their work in different ways. Now that they were less pre-occupied with lesson planning and classroom management, they were able to put time and effort into things that interested them, and that they thought were important.

Larry, for example, explained that over the past nine years the time he spent on planning diminished by “more than 50%.” As a result, Larry reallocated this time by adding more complex and frequent assessments to his curriculum. He said, “I find myself giving them a lot more work as the years have gone on.” Larry made these additions to his curriculum because he felt they would benefit his students.

For some, time that they used to spend planning was now occupied with leadership activities and responsibilities. Gary explained, “Now I have more experience, more is asked of me and so the number of things that I have to balance has grown”(Gary, Gansford). In his case, the time and energy he used to spend getting ready for class was now invested in developing curriculum maps for his department and serving as a math mentor. Anya led professional development workshops in her district. For both Gary and Anya, these were new, time-consuming parts of their work, but ways of engaging that interested both of them.

Still others were excited to participate in various types of professional learning. Now that their planning was under control and their systems established, they had time to think about how to improve their teaching. Harvey, for example, explained how he had recently been able to take Biology courses that he thought would help his teaching. He was happy that this career stage offered him the ability to focus on his practice in ways that were interesting to him.

Deciding to diminish their engagement

While some teachers used the freedom they experienced as SSTs to engage in their work, others saw it as an opportunity to relax their effort and investment in their work.

When it came to the day-to-day grind, some teachers were simply happy they could put less into their lesson planning. Simon said, "So it's kind of like all of that preparation work that really took a lot of my time and effort the first couple years is now done. And I can just kind of, you know, go back and look at what I did three years ago, and follow the same type of schedule" (Simon, Dryden).

Because of the increased security and stability experienced at this stage of the career, most teachers knew that even if they took a break from trying to improve their practice or build their pedagogy that they would neither lose their jobs nor be singled out. And, although none of our participants admitted to completely disengaging in their work, some participants described others who did. Tia said, "Once somebody has tenure, and that is the huge problem. . . . they call in sick once a month, sometimes twice a month. . . . They don't show up to professional days and when they leave, they leave early. They might get scolded, but ultimately nothing happens to them." Not only was disengaging enabled and tolerated, the fact that some teachers disengaged and got away with it was seen as unfair and a disincentive to those who chose to continue to invest a great deal of effort.

But, the fact that SSTs could disengage from their work potentially helped sustain some teachers. Nearly 40% of the teachers in this study had young children and some of them described needing to scale back on their teaching responsibilities and the time they invested in their work, at least temporarily, while their children were young. Allison explained,

“My family is my number one priority. So I definitely feel . . . that stress of going home to make sure that my daughter’s homework is completed and that I put dinner on the table and we have that quality family time. Once they go to bed then I give myself anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour of okay I’ll do some schoolwork then. If I can’t complete it, I’ve learned to say okay there is always tomorrow.” (Allison, Partridge)

Many second-stage teachers in similar circumstances made adjustments to the way they engaged in their work accordingly. For these teachers, having the freedom to be able to diminish the time and effort they put into their work, at least temporarily, was important for sustaining them in teaching.

That said, when teachers disengage from their work over the long-term, or to such an extent that their pedagogy stagnates, students likely suffer (Louis et al., 1991). As a result it is important to consider how second-stage teachers can be inspired to use the freedom they experience to continually engage in their work.

Schools’ Professional Cultures Influence Second-Stage Teachers’ Work Engagement

Second-stage teachers’ descriptions of their work experiences indicated that their schools’ professional cultures influenced their engagement decisions. Simple regressions showed that school-level differences explained the greatest proportion of the variation ($R^2=0.29$) in engagement among teachers in this sample of any of the personal or organizational characteristics considered⁷. Closer analysis of teachers’ descriptions of their experiences in their schools enabled me to make observations

⁷ I considered career entry, experience, age, marital status, parental status, whether teachers taught high-stakes subjects, district,

about patterns within and across schools and ultimately, to identify the prevailing professional cultures operating in most schools. These professional cultures guided the way these teachers used the freedom they experienced and the way they approached their work.

Three distinct professional cultures emerged. *Encouraging professional cultures* tended to motivate second-stage teachers to engage in their work in ways they might not have otherwise. *Laissez-faire professional cultures* had little to no influence on teacher engagement; enabling teachers to engage in their work ways they were personally inclined. *Discouraging professional cultures* actually dissuaded and discouraged teachers from engaging in their work.

In the next three sections, describe each of these professional cultures and teachers' responses to them by drawing on teachers' descriptions from 3 representative schools⁸.

Encouraging Professional Cultures

Teachers from only 2 schools consistently described their schools as places that encouraged their engagement. Teachers described the professional cultures at these schools as motivating and encouraging them to engage in their work. They did this by establishing a shared sense of collective responsibility and high expectations among teachers and administrators, providing opportunities for teachers to invest in their work and acknowledging and utilizing teachers' expertise. I draw on teachers' description of

⁸ I selected 3 high schools because I felt they provided good examples of each culture and I felt choosing all high schools might facilitate comparisons between these cultures.

Bingham High School as an example of a school with an encouraging professional culture.

Bingham High School – A school with an encouraging professional culture. Bingham is a small high school employing approximately 20 teachers, 4 of whom we interviewed for this study. It serves approximately 250 students.

At Bingham second-stage teachers did not feel that they were solely responsible for the instruction and care of their students. Their experience was more one of being a part of a culture that, in the words of participants, enabled them to be “on the same page” or “on board” with each other. Being on the same page meant everyone focused on instruction and instructional improvement – a responsibility that could not be ignored. This culture of collective responsibility made it so that wherever teachers looked they saw administrators and colleagues working hard towards the goals of helping kids learn, providing them with the motivation to continue investing in their teaching.

Bingham’s administration was critical in shaping this culture. Although the principal was often away from the school, teachers saw her and the school’s “coordinator,” a teacher leader role occupied by one of our participants, as focused on instruction. Paul said, “Our principal and our coordinator, first and foremost, are instructional leaders, which I don’t think is usually the case in most places” (Paul, Bingham). With school leaders who attended to instruction in meaningful ways, a culture evolved in which all teachers were encouraged to focus on improving their

instruction. Everyone at Bingham had high expectations of themselves and each other. Thomas described the culture at Bingham this way: “Everybody is on the same page. Everybody tries their best. There’s not one teacher at this school that doesn’t work hard and really try and that doesn’t like kids” (Thomas, Bingham).

Bingham provided their teachers with and guided their teachers toward many opportunities that enabled them to engage in their teaching in new and meaningful ways. As a biology teacher, Lydia was very interested in learning more about her subject area. Because the school partnered with a local university to sponsor their student teachers, Lydia was introduced to and encouraged to get involved with university faculty. Although taking advanced biology classes at the university required that her principal rearrange her schedule, she was given that opportunity. Since then, Lydia worked with one biology professor for 2 summers, and during this time, this professor inspired Lydia to incorporate case studies into her teaching. In Lydia’s case these opportunities inspired her to engage in her teaching in ways she may never have considered.

Bingham’s partnership with a the same university’s teacher education program and another national teacher training initiative offered other opportunities for these teachers. Teachers at Bingham had the opportunity to participate in “rounds,” modeled after medical rounds, and some led workshops on pedagogy and opened up their classrooms to allow visiting to watch them teach in what they referred to as “teaching labs.” When asked if he enjoyed teaching more now or when he first started, Thomas, one of the teachers who participated in the teaching labs, said, “I enjoy it a little bit

more now because I have more responsibility. . . I like to have a little bit of extra responsibility. Obviously, not too, too much of it so that I get overwhelmed, but now that I'm involved with different aspects of the school."

The fact that teachers at Bingham felt they had plenty of opportunities to engage in their work in new and meaningful ways was confirmed by Hirsch et al.'s 2008 study of teachers' perceptions of their work environments. Hirsch et al.'s data disaggregated for Bingham only reveals that with a 100% response rate among Bingham teachers, 94% of teachers at Bingham felt they were encouraged to participate in leadership positions and 88% of teachers felt there were opportunities for career growth (Hirsch et al., 2009). These staggering percentages match our participants' descriptions plentiful and important opportunities to engage at Bingham, and stand in stark contrast to the responses from other schools.

Finally, teachers at Bingham consistently spoke about their skills being valued and respected. One way they felt this respect was by being asked to take on various responsibilities and leadership roles. Fred, the school's coordinator, said, "So, there's a lot of opportunity for you to really be recognized as a content and a teacher expert, a master teacher. And that's rewarding, it's rewarding to be treated that way." (Fred, Bingham). Additionally, teachers felt trusted and in this way felt respected as experts. Lydia said, "I feel as though . . . I'm trusted that I am the professional in my classroom, and I know what's best." (Lydia, Bingham HS). Once again, Hirsch et al.'s survey results reflected what our participants described about the acknowledgement they

received. One hundred percent of Bingham teachers reported both that they felt trusted and were recognized as experts (Hirsch et al., 2009).

Teachers' responses to the encouraging professional culture at Bingham. Ultimately, guided by an encouraging professional culture, there was a great deal of consistency in how teachers at Bingham described their engagement in their work. The average engagement score for teachers at Bingham was 3.9 out of 4. By and large these teachers were enthusiastic about their work, committed to their schools and inclined to invest their time and effort into many different aspects of their work. Lydia, for example, not only mentored student teachers, she volunteered to host teacher rounds, worked on developing curriculum, and ran seminars for teachers who visited the Bingham school. Paul had taught in a different school prior to working at Bingham HS, and compared the contexts in this way:

I taught for a couple of years somewhere else and it was entirely possible to basically photocopy some worksheet and just give that out all day long to every class that would come in and I could, if I wanted to, sit at my desk all day. I don't know, I think I would hate myself if that were my job and I wouldn't like my job either. But that wouldn't even be possible here. . . Someone not pulling their weight here would just not fit in. (Paul, Bingham)

Teachers at Bingham also tended to be dedicated and committed to their school. Fred and Lydia both commuted over an hour to work at Bingham. When asked if he'd

ever consider teaching elsewhere, perhaps somewhere closer to his home, Fred replied, “No.” He said:

I think that’s why I drive an hour to get here. People are like, oh, why don’t you work closer to where you live? Why don’t you get a job at X, Y, Z high? I don’t want to work at X, Y, Z high! . . . so I’m willing to make that compromise. That’s why I always say - - and I say this to my friends and family, when I leave [Bingham HS], I’ll be leaving teaching. (Fred, Bingham)

Discouraging Professional Cultures

Teachers from 3 schools described their schools as places where they felt their work was impeded, their efforts to invest in their work were frustrated and their teaching skills were unappreciated and unacknowledged. I called these schools Discouraging Professional Cultures and draw on descriptions of Williams High School to illustrate the effect of these cultures on second-stage teachers’ engagement.

Williams High School – A school with a discouraging professional culture. Williams is a comprehensive high school with a student population of approximately 1200. It employs approximately 80 teachers, 10 of whom we interviewed for this study. Because fewer than 40% of the teachers responded to Hirsch et al.’s teacher survey and disaggregated data was only published for schools with 40% or higher response rates, I cannot compare Hirsch et al.’s data to participants’ descriptions of their work in this school. However, teachers’

descriptions of Williams paint a picture of a school that stands in stark contrast to Bingham.

Teachers at Williams consistently described their school as a place where their work was impeded by both administrators and sometimes colleagues. Tiffany explained how administrative mismanagement of discipline issues made teaching much more difficult. She said, "I don't like it when a kid in the classroom disrupts the learning environment and there's no consequence for them, and they get put back into that same environment. Sometimes it can happen that same class period." (Tiffany, Williams). Bianca described the professional culture of Williams this way: "Like I said before about just kind of not being supported when you need it. [Teachers] really need an administrator to do something or have their back and help them. And a lot of the time, it won't happen" (Bianca, Williams). Meredith described Williams as a school in which students did whatever they wanted, including cutting classes, because they knew that nothing would happen to them. Likewise, teachers felt that they would not be held accountable. Tiffany described how her colleagues who were supposed to be assisting her as special education aids would simply not show up for her math class. She said, "Most special ed teachers will walk away and go - 'I'm not doing math because I don't know it.'" In these and other ways, both the administration and teachers at Williams undermined and impeded the work of teachers.

Teachers described Williams as a place where investing in one's work was frustrating because all too often, efforts went unrecognized and unrewarded. At Williams there were not opportunities for all teachers to engage in new and interesting

ways, primarily because factions and favoritism dominated the professional culture. Bianca said, "It's like who your friends are, you know. It's like total Boys Club here." (Bianca, Williams). Mike, who was one of the favored teachers admitted, "I mean I'm pretty tight with the principal and vice principal and kind of run in the same crowd even though I'm younger. So, I think that probably benefits me" (Mike, Williams). But, the culture that benefitted Mike and a handful of other teachers, discouraged many others from engaging in new ways. Teachers wondered why they should bother try to get involved if they were not among the favored.

Finally, second-stage teachers at Williams did not often feel that their skills were acknowledged or utilized. Teachers felt that their work and their skills were actually disparaged and demeaned at times. For example, Rene described a situation in which she was falsely accused of swearing at her students. According to Rene, the principal didn't believe her side of the story until some students in her class decided to tell the principal the truth. Rene was angry and felt her reputation had been tarnished. She felt betrayed by administrators who did not have enough faith in her to believe she would not do such a thing. Their lack of trust and the way they inappropriately handled the situation, in her opinion, was disparaging. Although not all teachers from Williams had such dramatic stories to recount, only a couple spoke of being acknowledged or rewarded for their work, and these teachers seemed to be among those the administration favored.

Teachers' responses to the discouraging professional culture at Williams. In terms of their work engagement, teachers at Williams generally seemed less engaged in their work than teachers from Bingham. The average engagement score among teachers at Williams High School was 2.9. This score reflects two important observations. First, average engagement at Williams tended to be lower than at a school like Bingham. Second, teachers at Williams are not all disengaged. As a matter of fact, although the average engagement at Williams is slightly below the mean for the sample, it still indicates that teachers were somewhat engaged in their work, overall.

Teachers' lower engagement was observed in descriptions from some of the teachers of relying on texts recycling lessons without effort to improve, avoiding professional development and not pursuing leadership positions. Importantly, teachers at Williams tended to blame the school for their diminished engagement. Edward, for example, was discouraged from pursuing the role of department head as a result of the professional culture of the school. He said, "Um, I think one of the reasons why I decided not to go for department head is the culture doesn't support it. . .push comes to shove, it takes an inordinate amount of energy just to get people together at all." (Edward, Williams). For Edward, a different environment may have inspired his engagement, but the environment at Williams actually discouraged him from taking this step.

However, just as important as the observation that teachers, in general, seemed less engaged at Williams than teachers at Bingham, is the observation that a couple of teachers at Williams actually seemed highly engaged. Based on my analysis of teachers'

descriptions, although teacher engagement at Williams was, on average, lower than teacher engagement at Bingham, it was not as consistently low as engagement at Bingham was high. Some teachers did not seem to be as negatively influenced by the school's professional culture as others. Bianca, for example, described her school as a place that was, at times, unsupportive and unfair, but she still involved herself in many aspects of it. She explained, "I just like being like a part of things. I like being in like a leadership position. I just have like this -- I don't know -- this little voice -- this drive -- that something is telling me to like do good for my school" (Bianca, Williams). In fact, Bianca had a very supportive and nurturing department head who may have buffered her from the school's professional culture in some ways. But whatever the reason, it is clear that some teachers were able to remain highly engaged in their work even in a place with a professional culture that most found discouraging.

Laissez-Faire Professional Cultures

Teachers described 9 schools as places that either currently or in the recent past⁹ operated in ways that left teachers on their own to decide whether and how to engage in their work. I called the professional cultures in these schools *laissez-faire*. In schools with *laissez-faire* professional cultures, teachers were left on their own a great deal, engaging

⁹ Four of these schools were described by teachers in ways that suggested they had *laissez-faire* professional cultures until recent state or district interventions made it so that teachers no longer were left on their own to the same extent. Although these 4 schools no longer had professional cultures that were *laissez-faire* due to the ways their schools had responded to state and district mandates for improvement, teachers also did not consistently describe the cultures as either encouraging or discouraging either. Teachers in these schools seemed to be actively trying to determine what the new professional culture of their schools would become given the recent changes the schools were experiencing. I called these schools *Disrupted Professional Cultures* and describe them in detail in my dissertation (Kirkpatrick, 2009). However, for the purposes of this paper, I focus the description of my findings on the three main professional cultures presented here – Encouraging Professional Cultures, Discouraging Professional Cultures and *Laissez-Faire Professional Cultures*.

was not expected, but also not discouraged, and teachers' decisions about whether and how to engage were self-determined.

Dryden High School – A school with a laissez-faire professional culture. In order to illustrate schools with laissez-faire professional cultures, I draw on teachers' descriptions of Dryden High School. Dryden was the largest high school in our study, serving approximately, 3420 students, and employing approximately 260 teachers. The building, which covered more than an entire city block was sub-divided into houses, each of which had its own House Master. All House Masters reported to a single school Headmaster, who was regarded as the building's principal, but was obviously one of a vast network of administrators responsible for keeping the school operating.

One of the aspects of the school that contributed to its laissez-faire professional culture was that the administration seemed quite removed from and, as one participant put it, "hands off" when it came to instruction. Administrators had other things to worry about and, as a result did not get involved with instruction. Suzanne explained, "I just feel like the kids are my number one priority. And I feel like they [the Headmaster, House Master and Curriculum Coordinator] have more political agendas" (Suzanne, Dryden).

As a result, teachers at Dryden often did not feel well known within their school. Liam said, "I don't know anyone who would ever feel comfortable going to [the Headmaster] with any sort of issue. I mean it's - that's just not how you would have operated. I don't even know he'd know what you were talking about." (Liam, Dryden). Andy corroborated Liam's description of the administrations' lack of involvement with teaching and teachers independence at Dryden High School: "I've never had any

significant input or impact with anyone other than my department head down” (Andy, Dryden). Interestingly, teachers at Dryden seemed to believe that administrators could not realistically be bothered with what happened in classrooms because of the other mammoth responsibilities they shouldered. Simon said,

But as far as the administration -- it's not really their fault, but like there's so much stuff that they deal with, you know, in a school as large as this that, you know, I don't think they're as actively involved with the teaching staff as they could be. But again, it's no fault of their own.

They're just so busy. (Simon, Dryden)

The lack of significant interactions with administrators, however, made many teachers at Dryden feel that they were, for better or worse, on their own when it came to teaching and making decisions about whether and how to engage in their teaching.

In addition to the absence of administrative involvement in instruction, teachers also tended to feel isolated from each other. Even with so many teachers in the building, many teachers at Dryden rarely got opportunities to meet with other teachers to discuss pedagogy and practice. Izzy explained that she was supposed to meet with other teachers in her department twice a week, but it had been months since that had happened. Andy described his interaction with colleagues this way: “In my lunch period is the only time I'm interacting with any other staff members. And that depends on who is off that 25-minute block. It is never the other Latin teacher. It may be another language teacher, but even that isn't a guarantee”(Andy, Dryden).

Teachers' responses to the laissez-faire professional culture in Dryden. Being on their own to such an extent meant that these teachers determined whether and how they would engage in their work on their own. In this respect, these teachers were not only able to engage in ways that were exciting to them, but they were also able to disengage if they chose. As a result, a spectrum of work engagement among teachers at Dryden emerged as some teachers created and pursued their own opportunities to engage in their work while others did not.

The average engagement score at Dryden was 3.1, a score that was much lower than the average engagement score at Bingham, but only slightly higher than Williams. The range of engagement scores was wide, with some teachers describing their approach to their work in ways that made them seem highly engaged, while others seemed only slightly engaged. And, although the average engagement score of teachers from Dryden was slightly higher than that of Williams, the real difference between the responses of teachers at Williams and Dryden is that while teachers at Williams blamed their experiences in their schools for discouraging their engagement, teachers at Dryden did not. Their engagement, or lack thereof was a reflection of their choice.

As a result of the discretion these teachers experienced when it came to their engagement, Andy, a highly engaged Latin teacher, described taking courses and reading books on his own to develop his practice. Although he felt he worked very hard, he considered himself "lucky" and felt that, for his enjoyment, his effort was "worth it." In another part of the building, Victoria, a science teacher, described her approach to her work in ways that made her seem moderately engaged. Although she enjoyed her work and wanted to invest in her practice, she did so sparingly, mostly due to the fact that she had a

young son and another baby on the way. Down the Hall from Victoria, Liam taught math. Liam described not enjoying his subject but choosing to stay in teaching because it was the “sort of job I could get” and because he needed the money to pay for his mortgage. He was not personally motivated to engage in his work, and consequently did not, yet he remained in the classroom potentially reminding other teachers that they could, likewise, disengage if they chose.

Because teachers from Dryden had so much autonomy when it came to their engagement and their work, they could approach their work in ways that benefitted them. In many different ways, the independence, self-determination and anonymity that they experienced suited many of these participants, and as a result, many were sufficiently satisfied with their work, though not necessarily engaged in their work. Simon said, “I see it as a way for me to provide a stable income, you know, not the greatest income, but it’s enough for us to like live and be happy. You know, we both have summers off, so it just seems like, you know, down the line it’s just going to be really -- a really cool lifestyle” (Simon, Dryden). Ultimately, though this kind of professional culture may work well for teachers in that they can operate in ways that are best for them, the students of some of these teachers likely do not benefit.

Discussion and Implications

Our interviews with SSTs both provide affirmation that work engagement among SSTs varied and offer insight about how engagement among these teachers might be encouraged. This study suggests that schools’ professional cultures can be influential in encouraging these teachers to continue to engage in their work. However,

although many SSTs remained, to some extent, interested and enthusiastic about teaching, few of the schools in this study established professional cultures that guided, motivated or encouraged teachers to engage in their work. Thus, many second-stage teachers engaged only when they wanted to and in ways they knew how. This research suggests that school leaders and policy makers take more proactive approaches to monitoring and developing professional cultures that will encourage teachers to engage in their work during the second stage of their career and beyond.

Teachers described stark differences in the ways their schools' professional cultures influenced their engagement. On the one hand were schools that had professional cultures that encouraged SSTs to engage by providing them with guidance, high expectations, stage-appropriate opportunities and acknowledgement. At the other extreme were professional cultures that actively discouraged teacher engagement. Although some teachers were able to engage in their work despite these discouraging cultures, engagement in these schools was far from optimal and teachers were often frustrated and bitter by their experiences in their schools. However, most teachers in this study described professional cultures that either were, or had been until recently, *laissez-faire*. Perhaps as a relic of the isolation that has historically been a characteristic of teaching (Hargreaves, 2001; Lortie, 1975), in these schools, teachers were left to engage in ways they were inclined - a situation that may fit with teachers lives but may not be optimal in the long-run for students.

Ultimately, work engagement among teachers in schools with *laissez-faire* professional cultures was more similar to work engagement in schools with

discouraging professional cultures than schools with encouraging professional cultures. Optimistically, this may reflect resilience among many teachers who find themselves in discouraging professional cultures, to want to continue to engage in their work. However, it is also clear that when teachers are left on their own, some choose to relax their engagement at this stage of their career. This may not be surprising since these teachers generally had greater freedom with whether and how they engaged in their work due to their experience and since many of them had other responsibilities vying for their time and attention. However, the lesson from encouraging professional cultures is that, diminished engagement may be avoidable.

As such, these findings suggest implications for school leaders and policy makers to consider in order to encourage engagement among SSTs. They also raise questions that future research should explore.

Implications for School Leaders

Focus on Instruction

Teachers' descriptions of their schools' professional cultures indicate that school leaders can have a profound influence on the way teachers approach their work. When school leaders are knowledgeable about and involved with instruction as they were at Bingham, a spotlight is focused on what happens in classrooms. A message is sent to teachers that what they do is critical and well-understood when principals and other administrators. Because teachers' work is the focus of everyone's attention in Bingham,

teaches simultaneously felt supported and pressured to do their best. As Paul put it a teacher who attempted to do otherwise would simply “not fit in.”

Integrally related to the creation of a message that instruction is critical is the provision of structures and resources that will allow teachers to focus on improving and developing their instruction in meaningful ways. This means time with colleagues to discuss and develop pedagogies, and time spent evaluating their own practice. Without this, teachers will not only miss opportunities to engage in their work, they will fail to believe continually developing the practice really matters. This could be especially important among second-stage teachers, many of whom already think they are doing a pretty good job at this stage in their career.

Acknowledge and Improve Teaching Skill Simultaneously

In a relatively short period of time, this study confirms that many SSTs come to believe that they are sufficiently competent. Therefore, it is tricky but essential to both acknowledge the skills and expertise of SSTs while at the same time inspiring their ongoing improvement. Leaving one of these components out is likely to leave teachers unmotivated or frustrated.

In too many schools, the skills that many second-stage teachers felt they had developed over the years went unacknowledged and unutilized. However, as was illustrated with Bingham, acknowledgement of skill can be a powerful motivator both as a reward for good work and as a way of helping teachers find new ways to engage in their work. Teachers at Bingham felt acknowledged and utilized when they were called

on to fill various instructional leadership roles. They developed a sense that, as SSTs, the work of teaching was more than just what happened in the walls of their own classroom. As their skills had evolved, they had a responsibility to use them, not just in their own classes, but for the benefit of others.

Additionally, the acknowledgement of their skill also has to be balanced with an expectation of continued growth, otherwise SSTs might not feel the need to continue to engage. School leaders need help SSTs understand why they should bother putting their time and effort into developing their practice if they are already doing fine. They need to develop professional cultures that value teaching as a continually evolving craft. In short, acknowledgement and improvement seem to go hand-in-hand when it comes to developing professional cultures that continue to engage teachers.

Implications for Policy Makers

Second-stage teachers' perspectives and experience make it important to introduce policies and programs in ways that honor their expertise and acknowledge the realities of their lives. In an era of high-stakes accountability, teachers are often confronted with mandates and forced to change the way they operate that are interpreted as affronts to their skills and expertise. Although changes may be necessary, policies need to be implemented in ways that will help SSTs understand the need for change as something other than an indication of their deficiencies.

Additionally, this study reveals that many second-stage teachers feel that they are working harder now than ever. Often the demands have increased as a result of the

same need to implement mandatory changes to curriculum and pedagogy. Once again, although teachers should be encouraged to work hard, policy makers need to be aware of the demands that these teachers are shouldering so that they do not burn out. One interesting observation this study raises is the possibility that enabling teachers to at least temporarily diminish their engagement when their personal lives dictate may have positive effects of teachers' longevity.

The Need for Further Research

This study certainly raises more questions than it answers, but three important areas for future research stand out. First, there is a need to learn more about both contextual and personal factors that influence SSTs' engagement, how these influences might interact and how they might differ for teachers at other stages of their career. This study specifically suggests that schools need to develop professional cultures that encourage teachers' engagement, but many questions remain about how professional cultures can be developed. Finally, this study makes a case for the uniqueness of the second stage of a teachers' career and underscores the need for researchers to investigate this career stage further.

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Appendix A: Detailed Explanation of Sample Selection

District Selection

We drew our sample from 3 urban districts in the same northeastern state because research indicates that urban districts face greater challenges maintaining a qualified teaching force (Jacob, B. A. 2007; Ingersoll, R.M. 2004;). Selecting three districts enabled us to compare teachers' experience across districts. Because urban schools from the same state operate in the same state-level context with the same accountability requirements, selecting districts within the same state facilitated comparisons between districts and schools by eliminating state-level variation.

In each district, we obtained the district's permission for the study and requested a list of all teachers that had been employed in the district from 1-10 years. Although we were only interested in speaking with teachers who had taught for 4-10 years, our decision to request district lists of teachers who had been employed in the district for 1-10 years, we found that because the lists did not reflect teachers' experience prior to entering the district, that it was necessary to invite some teachers who may have taught in the district for fewer than 4 years. Additionally, because some teachers with 1-10 years of experience in a district actually had more than 10 years of total teaching experience, some of the teachers on these lists were not able to participate in the study.

Despite this problem, the lists indicated roughly how many potential second-stage teachers worked at each school in the district. Thus we could target schools with more than one or two second-stage teachers. These lists also enabled us to contact teachers

without involving school personnel and, thus, we could protect the confidentiality of participants.

School Selection

Within each district we selected three to six schools from which we invited teachers to participate. In part, the schools were selected because each of them seemed to have ample second-stage teachers. Also, we aimed to include teachers who taught at the high school, middle school and elementary levels in our sample. Thus, we selected schools in each district to achieve this distribution (see Table 2). In District 1, we selected the one and only high school in the district and, two of the districts' K-8 schools. In District 2, we selected two high schools; one a mid-sized comprehensive high school, and the other was a small, alternative high school. We also selected two middle schools and two elementary schools. In District 3 we selected the only high school in the district as well as two middle schools and two elementary schools.

Except when there was only on high school, our decisions were based on a number of factors. First, we wanted schools with sufficient numbers of potential second-stage teachers. Second, we selected schools that were not extremes in their districts in terms of student demographics. That is to say, we selected schools that neither had the lowest nor the highest percentage of students with free & reduced priced lunch, percentage of students of color, or percentages of dropouts. Size was a factor when it came to the selection of the high schools in District 2, and we selected 2 schools that were very different in size. In total 14 schools were selected from these 3 districts, and principals

were sent a letter informing them that we had received permission from the district to interview teachers in their schools.

Table 2. Obtaining the Sample of Second-Stage Teachers (SSTs)

	School Pseudonym	Total possible SSTs	Teachers invited	Invited teachers who were not SSTs	No Reply or Declined	Interviewed*
District 1	Gansford High School	52	14	2	4	8 (67%)
	Conifer School	39	16	1	9	6 (40%)
	Greentree School	39	20	3	11	6 (33%)
District 2	Bingham High School	9	9	2	3	4 (57%)
	Williams High School	36	25	1	12	10 (42%)
	Deer Park Middle School	10	9	0	2	6 (67%)
	Hill Middle School	36	16	1	10	5 (33%)
	Lane Elementary	8	8	2	1	5 (83%)
	Partridge Elementary	10	9	3	3	3 (50%)
District 3	Dryden High School	141	27	3	9	12 (50%)
	Montgomery Middle School	31	16	3	7	6 (46%)
	Allendale Middle School	25	10	2	3	5 (63%)
	Alpine Elementary	14	9	2	4	3 (43%)
	Keller Elementary	22	14	1	7	6 (46%)

*Percentage of teachers interviewed is calculated by dividing the number of teachers interviewed at each school by the number of teachers invited minus the number of teachers who were invited but were not SSTs

Teacher selection

Once schools were chosen, we selected teachers from the lists provided by the district. Since these lists had teacher subjects, grade taught and years of experience, we were able to use them to ensure variation in all of these variables. We also tried to invite both men and women to participate, but had to make these determinations using only participant names as gender was not a field on these lists.

We sent invitations by mail to participants' schools. In each school we over-sampled anticipating that some teachers would refuse or not respond to our invitation¹⁰. Follow-up emails were sent to those teachers who did not initially respond. After 2-3 follow-up emails, we attempted to contact teachers by phone. Table 2 describes the number of invitations and response rate at each school.

We confirmed the teachers' years of experience prior to scheduling an interview, since many teachers had more experience than the lists indicated. In some cases, additional invitations had to be issued in an attempt to meet our school targets. Targets varied depending on the size of the schools¹¹.

We conducted individual interviews at the convenience of participants (See protocol in Appendix A). Most interviews occurred after school in the teachers' classrooms. On average, interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. Each interview was recorded for the purpose of transcription. Participants' background information

¹⁰ Since we obtained permission from districts at different times, teacher invitations in each district were sent out at different times. As such our over-sampling strategy evolved. In District 1, we minimally over-sampled teachers and spent a great deal of time contacting invitees. However, when it came to inviting participants from District 3, we had less time to contact participants before the end of the school year, and therefore, over-sample much more.

¹¹ For smaller schools we hoped for between 3-5 participants. We interviewed many more participants in the larger high schools.

including age, education history, number of students, and employment history, was collected prior to each interview. Later, each interview was transcribed, and names and identifiers changed in order to protect participant confidentiality.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Introduction

This is a study where we're interviewing teachers. We're interested in the experiences of teachers who have been teaching between for four to ten years. First I have some questions about you and your entry into teaching.

1. How many years have you been teaching? How many in this district? In this school? And you have professional status or tenure?
2. Did you enter teaching right out of college?
 - a. **If no**, What did you do prior to entering teaching and for how long?
3. Where did you do your teacher preparation?
 - a. Undergrad? Graduate? Alternative certification?
4. What do you teach? Have you taught other subjects or grades?
5. Have you worked in any other role that takes you out of the classroom (i.e. coach, lead mentor)?

Engagement

Segue: Now I'm going to ask you about different areas of your work.

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher? (keep brief, if possible)
2. Since you started teaching, have your reasons for being a teacher changed? If so, why?
3. Do you enjoy being a teacher today? (Compared to when you first started) Has this changed since you started teaching? Why?
4. New teachers often describe being overwhelmed and not having enough time to do what they need to do. Was that true for you? Has it changed? [Potentially probe to get at their evaluation of *how much* time and effort *now verses then: Are they more or less overwhelmed?*]
5. Do you spend time on different things than you did as a new teacher?

Probe: Do these changes (or lack thereof) make teaching more/less enjoyable?

Probe: So, does that take more time or effort than it did when you started?
6. Does anyone or anything [in school or out of school] guide you, instruct you, or otherwise influence you about how to spend your time as a teacher?

[Alternate ways to ask the question: Employees, teachers included, often have to make choices about how much time and effort to put into their work, and how to spend their time. What influences your decisions about how you spend your time as a teacher? Are there people or

things at your school that you consider before you make a decision about how to spend your time?]

Probe, depending on how they interpret the question:

a. Do you have other responsibilities or commitments that influence whether and how you spend your time as a teacher?

Teacher Autonomy and Decision-Making

Segue: We're also interested in understanding how teachers like you decide what and how to teach at this point in your career.

- Could you tell me how you decide **what** and **how** you teach in Math/Science/ELA/SS?

Probe for details if they have a hard time answering: For example, could you tell me in your X class, yesterday what did you teach and how did you teach? (Why did you decide to teach what you taught? Why did you decide to teach it the way that you did? Listen for: curriculum, team, other teachers, etc)

- Looking for what types of support and material they get, where it comes from (teacher generated, district mandated, etc.), and whether they think what they get is any good. Also would like to know if they change what they get; if so, how? [*What kinds of support or materials do you get when it comes to planning? Do you change what you get? If so, how?*]
 - Looking to find out if they are coordinating w/ others to prepare curriculum or teach in particular ways: [*Are other teachers in your school or in the district using the same curriculum or the same teaching strategies? If so, why? How did that happen? Is that good?*]
- Want to know if they have all that they need to feel prepared to teach their students (materials, training, time to prepare, opportunities to improve). Also want to know if they have what they need in all of their classes (is it different in US History than Civics). [*Do you feel you have everything you need to teach? Is this the case in all subject? If no, what do you need?*]

Probe for influences on HOW they teach; if they don't touch on it, ask again: *How do you decide HOW to teach?*

- Want to know if teachers in the school/district/department are required to teach in particular ways (*Do they have to use project-based learning? do they have to use cooperative grouping? Do they have to assess in the same ways?*)
 - *If they are required to teach using specific strategies, how do they learn them and what do they think of them?*
- If not, would they like to be taught new strategies? (what types, by whom) [*Would it appeal to you to have required ways of teaching*]

Teacher Learning

Segue: I'm interested in understanding how at this time in your career you learn best and how you use what you learn in your teaching.

1. Think of a recent time where your teaching improved. What kind of learning experience led to that improvement? Could you discuss two of these experiences? They could be formal learning opportunities or informal ones. [What did you learn? How did you change your practice?

2. How do you use [learning experiences #1 ()] in the classroom with your students/in your teaching?

1. Probe: What did it [discussion, activities, classes?] look like before and after this learning took place? How is your teaching better? How has this affected your curriculum? Pedagogy? How did it help your students/why was it good for your students and their needs?]

How you deal with different students? Why was this “the right thing” for your students (or vice versa: Why wasn’t what you learned a good match for your students?)?

Another possible probe: Before this learning experience, your class looked like this...

Depending on what they discuss, follow-up with probes about:

- Coaching: Was a coach involved at all in this learning? If so, how?
- Teaming: Did you work with a team of other teachers on this? Was this required or voluntary?
- Formal PD at school or district: Where did this learning take place? Was it required? [Is it expected that this is going to be part of your teaching repertoire? Who is expecting it? What happens if you don’t use this?]
- Outside of school learning: teachers’ network, external workshop, etc. Listen for this, but this isn’t a direct question.
 - Does this connect to anything that is going on in your school?
- How the learning took place (alone, with others, interactive, receptive, one-shot deal, ongoing)
- Admin support for the learning (e.g. was there time set aside for team meetings?)/What makes this learning possible? Is there anything that the school or admin does to support learning that matters to you?

3. *If we know they have a coach, structured teams, etc, and they don’t mention them, follow-up to see if they have helped them learn anything valuable:* I know that you have time set aside at your school for team meetings (grade or subject). Did that team structure support your learning in this example at all? If so, how?

4. Have you had to learn any new things because of MCAS? Or, has MCAS shaped your learning in any specific ways?

Differentiated Roles

1. **Roles Lead-In:** Do any teachers here have special roles that take them out of the classroom to work with other teachers? If so, what are they? **[If the respondent has such a role, skip to questions 1A-4A]**
2. Have you worked with (a teacher in such a role) [name it: coach]? If so, was it worthwhile?

3. Do you think it's a good thing for the district to sponsor such roles?

4. Would you be interested in taking on such a role some day? Why?/Why not?

1A. You mentioned that you have worked as a [literacy coach]. What are/were your responsibilities in that role?

2A. Can you describe what it was/has been like to have this role? [Note whether it was school-based or district-wide.]

3A. How did your principal and colleagues respond?

4A. What do you see as the benefits and drawbacks of such a role? Do you think it's a good thing for the district to sponsor such roles?

Note: If they talk a lot about individual benefits, then push for school or district or student benefits and vice versa.

Teacher Retention

Seque: You've talked a lot about the teaching experiences you've had over the past x years.

1. When you think about where you are now, what do you think about your future career plans? How long do you plan to stay in teaching?

2. How will you decide?

3. Has this always been the case?

a. Probe: Did you ever consider teaching as something you might do for your career? Did you ever consider teaching as something you might do short-term? If it changed, what changed it for you?