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The Strategic Support to Thrive Beyond Survival Model: An Administrative Support Framework for Improving Student Outcomes and Addressing Educator Staffing in Rural and Urban High-Needs Schools

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Abstract

This paper presents an empirically grounded conceptual model that positions the principal as the talent developer, who when provided mentorship on how to strategically scaffold their teachers, will improve their own self-efficacy and competencies to provide better administrative support. Not only will this mentorship decrease their feelings of job-related overburden and improve their retention, but they will also jointly increase teacher support (thereby reducing their turnover) and increase performance by improving student learning. The model advances scholarship by addressing administrative and leadership mentoring and role modeling in cross-cultural contexts through a multi-level framework (i.e., mentorship to school leaders on how to mentor and support teachers), with the goal of improving social justice through the advancement of social inclusion. The paper will interrogate how mentoring and development is conceived by distinguishing the different types of administrative support that leaders in rural and urban high-needs (high poverty and low-performing) schools must

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provide for their teachers in their respective settings. The relevance of these distinctions and the emphasis of the paper for an international context will be discussed.

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Introduction

In recent years, scholars and policymakers have increasingly encouraged the adoption of strategic human resources (HR) management to directly link HR practices to measurable organizational outcomes. Case in point, policymakers have invested significant financial capital and made efforts to independently address the three outcomes of student performance (Baker, 2017), teacher retention (Kolbe & Strunk, 2012), and principal retention (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). These mostly disconnected and individualized attempts have yielded varying levels of success, with some yielding positive outcomes (Feng & Sass, 2018; Springer, Swain, & Rodriguez, 2016) and others less so (Imberman & Lovenheim, 2015; Spring et al., 2012). Perhaps a lack of more sustained progress can be attributed to the uncoordinated efforts that omit a strategic talent management perspective to link bundles of HR practices and employee talent to the school district strategy for improving student outcomes.

Talent Management can be defined in many ways, but we opt for Stahl et al.'s (2007) more general definition of recruiting, selecting, developing, and retaining critical employees. Within the context of

this study, we specifically focus on the development and retention of principals to develop and retain teachers. We treat educators (i.e., principals and teachers) as critical employees, recognizing they are the strongest within-school influence on student learning outcomes (Araujo, Carniero, Cruz-Aguayso, & Schady, 2016; Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). This is a more inclusive approach than other definitions of talent that may more narrowly focus on employer-identified "high potential" employees (Björkman et al., 2013). We use this broader definition because we recognize that even those who lack sufficient human capital can grow and gain (therefore becoming "high potential") if they have access to the requisite social capital and growth opportunities provided by administrative support (Crane & Hartwell, 2019).

Research on student performance, teacher retention, and principal retention suggests that school leadership development may serve as a convergence point to mitigate teacher shortages, enhance teacher effectiveness, improve school performance, and create work environments more conducive to the principal's own retention (Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2015; Miller, 2012). While there are many useful theories concerning effective school leadership (Barber, Whelan, & Clark, 2010; Preston & Barnes, 2017), absent from the literature is an exploration of the potential for principal leadership development to affect educational (e.g., student achievement) *and* HR outcomes (e.g., principal and teacher retention) across "high-needs" (high poverty and low-performing) contexts. Urban and rural school environments deserve special attention because they often serve the most "at-risk" populations—i.e., populations largely consisting of academically underperforming, and economically disadvantaged students of color; and are often staffed with the least "qualified" teachers - across a variety of "quality"

indicators (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2010; Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobold, 2015), reinforcing inequity and social injustice.

Disconnected policy initiatives ignore problems such as the systemic challenges that many schools face (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, & Dutton, 2012), that principal and teacher turnover are directly related (Jacob et al., 2015), and that educator turnover harms student achievement (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012). An example of this myopia: most of the efforts to address the teacher supply problem "have focused primarily on recruiting promising teachers into high-poverty schools, often with little attention to systematically supporting and retaining them once they are there" (Simon & Johnson, 2015, p. 2). Given that 19-30% of new teachers in the U.S. teaching workforce leave the profession within their first five years and that percentage dramatically increases for high poverty schools (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016), improvement initiatives need reassessing. We aim to intervene and suggest a more balanced approach.

Based on evidence from past research, we argue that a comprehensive theory of strategic talent management in high-needs academic contexts should address the following questions:

1) What is the relationship between geographic context (urban, rural) and the type of school administrative support needed?
2) What is the relationship between school administrative support and educator retention?
3) What is the relationship between school administrative support, educator retention, and student achievement?

In this paper, we present the *Thrive Beyond Survival* model, a conceptual model for talent management in high-needs school

settings, developed and based on an integration of scholarly theory and empirical research findings. The model is part of a progressive approach to employee management known as Talent Centered Education Leadership (Tran, 2020). As opposed to treating people as resources towards an end, this talent-centric approach starts with employee needs. Paying attention to the disparate needs of rural and urban contexts, and keeping in mind the aforementioned questions, we demonstrate how the implementation of the HR strategy of principal development can improve educator performance, principal and teacher retention, ultimately contributing to improved student success. Specifically, this paper will present the *Thrive Beyond Survival* model and sequentially discuss each of its components: *The role of the principal as a talent developer*, the necessity of *place conscious principal development* to provide *contextualized urban and rural administrative support* to *reduce principal and teacher turnover*, and *improve student achievement*. The paper concludes with recommendations for model implementation and future research. Our presentation of the *Thrive Beyond Survival* model is grounded in our exploration, analysis, and synthesis of an international body of scholarly literature on the specific topics of a) the principal's role in developing talent, b) principal mentorship in supporting teachers, and c) principal self-efficacy, while drawing specific attention to works addressing rural and urban high-need contexts.

Educator Turnover Challenges and its Detriment to Students

While almost 20% of U.S. principals leave their positions each year (Goldring, Taei, & Owens, 2018), student enrollment is projected to increase the demand of new principals by 8% annually until 2026 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). High turnover rates and increased

demand contribute significantly to the principal staffing problem (Beteille et al., 2012; Tran & Buckman, 2016). Prior studies have established that principal departures are typically followed by higher teacher turnover (Miller, 2009) and downturn in school's academic performance (Miller, 2009; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Because principal development has been linked to principal retention (Jacob et al., 2015), universities, school districts, and other principal preparation organizations should work in tandem to provide the requisite principal development to support both principals and teachers in urban and rural areas, both of which are disproportionately more affected by turnover.

The distribution of teachers and their turnovers are nonrandom across schools, with high-needs schools often experiencing the greatest shortage in both teachers in quantity and quality. The latter point holds true across a variety of teacher quality measures such as strong credentials or test score gains (Gawlik, Kearney, Addonizio, & LaPlante-Sosnowsky, 2012; Goldhaber, et al., 2015). To exacerbate the inequity, less effective and experienced teachers often replace those who leave high-poverty schools with large concentrations of students of color (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Springer et al., 2016).

To date, much of the policies instituted to address teacher supply issues have emphasized financial interventions (Feng & Sass, 2018; Podolsky, & Kini, 2016; Shifrer, Turley, & Heard, 2017; Springer et al., 2016), predicated on the theory that districts can "offset" the adverse working conditions and improve teacher supply in hard-to-staff contexts by offering financial incentives, such as bonuses. While financial incentives do affect teacher supply in hard-to-staff schools (Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2008; Springer et al., 2016), and can yield temporary improvements, it does not address the root cause

for teacher attrition (Boyd et al., 2011). According to both prospective (Tran & Smith, 2020a) and active teachers (Balu, Beteille, & Loeb, 2009; Horng, 2009; Kraft, Marinell, & Shein-Wei Yee, 2016) school administrative support has been reported to be more critical than any other single factor for teacher retention in research throughout the globe (Ladd, 2011; Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2010; Robinson, 2012; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004; Tran & Dou, 2019). This is in line with the broader retention literature outside of education that suggests successful efforts to retain employees cannot be restricted only to financial factors such as salaries, as addressing pecuniary concerns is necessary but insufficient by itself (Ambrosius, 2018; Boyd et al., 2011; Tran & Smith, 2020b).

The literature suggests leadership support for employees, such as developing personal growth plans for individual career goals and getting to know individuals, has more potential as a long-term retention strategy (Mancuso et al., 2010; Margolis, 2008). According to Festing and Shafer (2014), organizations that make

> *"…long-term development of talent through highly engaged TM [talent management] which focuses on developing not only job-specific but also long-term and firm-specific knowledge, skills, and competencies creates a higher emotional involvement and higher degree of mutual interdependence between talent and the employer…It reflects a long-term and stable orientation due to formalized obligations by the employer, with a scope and focus on a firm as a whole and not only the job" (p. 266).*

Beyond the direct impact of the strategies itself, they explain that the investment in developmental and retention support for employees signals to them that they are valued by the organization. Despite their relationship, policymakers rarely treat leadership development as a teacher retention initiative. Our model argues against this omission.

The *Thrive Beyond Survival* model argues that school districts and leadership preparation institutions can provide the support needed for school leaders; in turn, school leaders can provide the administration support teachers need. Multi-level support of this kind would likely positively impact principal and teacher retention, which would then positively impact student achievement. Unfortunately, current research has found that professional development (PD) offered through university coursework is, on average, not positively correlated to teacher rated principal performance in a substantive manner (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Top performing principals focus on instructional leadership and developing their teachers (Wallin & Newton, 2013), yet teacher development is precisely the area most principals report struggling with (Barber et al., 2010). School leadership development deserves more attention given that it can serve as a viable avenue to improve not only educator supply, but student performance as well due to the established links between district support and principal turnover, principal turnover with teacher turnover, and both turnovers on student achievement outcomes (Jacob et al., 2015; Miller, 2012).

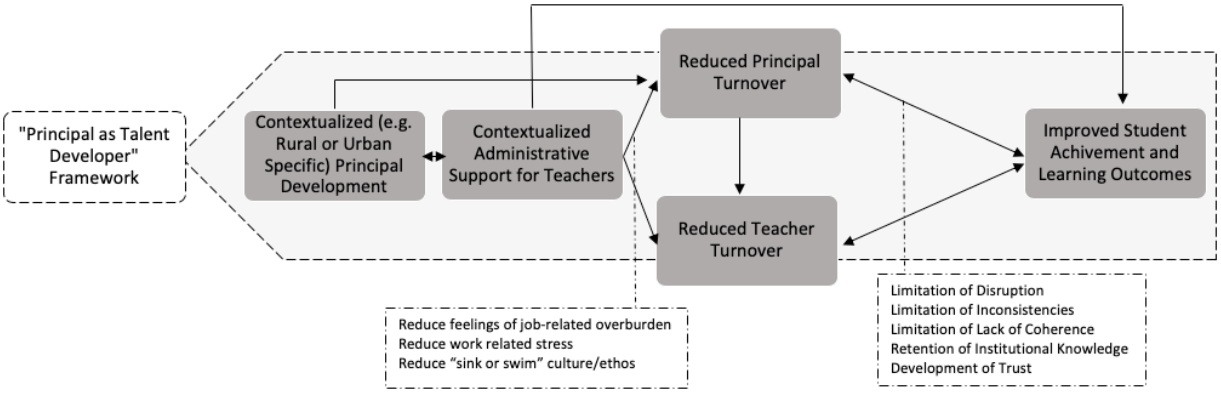
The Thrive Beyond Survival Model

The *Thrive Beyond Survival* model is so named because it theorizes that administrative support for principals and teachers in high-needs contexts will not only help them "survive" in their positions, but eventually "thrive" in success as their retention and growing performance improves student outcomes. A visual representation of the model can be seen in figure 1 below; the single-headed arrows represent the direction of effect, while the double-

headed arrows represent reciprocal relationships as documented in the literature.

Figure 1.

The Thrive Beyond Survival model: Principal administrative support development as a leverage point to reduce educator turnover and increase student achievement



The foundation of the model is predicated on the organization applying a framework that positions school principals as talent developers (Donaldson, 2013) who, when provided mentorship on how to strategically scaffold their teacher talent (e.g., by the district, by principal preparation programs), will improve their own self-efficacy and competencies, thereby reducing their own likelihood of turnover (Farley-Ripple, Raffel, & Welch's, 2012). Talent development can be thought of as being comprised of the development of both human and social capital (Crane & Hartwell, 2019).

Human capital can be defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) associated with an employee's experience and training that represent the value of an employee to an organization and "[a]t a very basic level, an organization's stock of human capital

dictates the nature and extent of employees' potential contributions to the organization" (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007, p. 1070). To the extent that those human capital KSAs can be developed, the corresponding potential contribution to the organization will increase. Within the school environment, one such contribution is the improvement of school academic achievement resulting from teachers gaining context-specific administrative support to improve student outcomes (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010).

Beyond directly addressing teachers' human capital, our model also addresses social capital, given the increasing recognition of the importance of the provision of social support to teachers, leveraged from the social connectivity of the principal. Traditional perspectives on talent management primarily focus on human capital, often ignoring the social capital that captures the "relational dimensions of talent" (Crane, Hartwell, 2019, p. 82). These dimensions include networks, collaboration, interpersonal trust and leveraging relationships. HR scholars have been recently suggesting that the relational component of talent management is integral to its performance (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014) and that social capital can enhance human capital if facilitated both individually and collectively among peers and mentors. Given the labor-intensive occupation of educators, the relational dimensions of talent management are even more critical in schools. By providing social support for teachers, teachers can gain the human capital for their job, building their confidence to do the work and incentivizing their retention as a result.

Based on findings from prior empirical studies across the globe (Jacob et al., 2015), the model theorizes that teacher turnover will be

reduced not only by increased (e.g., frequency, duration) context specific (e.g., rural or urban) administrative support provided to teachers (Boyd et al., 2011; Horng, 2009; Rhodes et al., 2004), but also by reduction in principal turnover (Beteille et al., 2012; Jacob et al., 2015; Miller, 2012). These reductions are theorized to occur because the provision of administrative support reduces the feelings of job-related overburden, stress, and reducing the "sink or swim" culture or ethos of the school (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Given the negative relationship between educator turnover and student achievement (Miller, 2009; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), reducing principal and teacher turnover will result in greater student academic success through the reduction of organizational disruptions, inconsistencies of direction, lack of coherence, and loss of institutional knowledge and trust that is associated with personnel instability (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Beteille et al., 2012). Furthermore, the improvement of academic success also reduces educator turnover as the school becomes a more attractive workplace when its students achieve at a higher level (Clotfelter et al., 2010; Goldhaber et al., 2015; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Miller, 2009).

Beyond empirical support, our proposed model is theoretically informed by a blend of organizational, social cognitive, and contextualized leadership theories, leveraging each theory's advantages while minimizing their limitations by balancing them with one another. Within the teacher retention context, organizational theory suggests that school characteristics, cultures, and structures, including administrative support, influence teacher mobility and retention rates (Sullivan, 2009). It, however, emphasizes institutional characteristics, while seemingly ignoring the individual (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). In response, we account for individual characteristics by incorporating the self-efficacy component of

Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which would suggest that educators—teachers and principals alike—are less likely to resign and more likely to improve performance when they feel they have the requisite skills and training to successfully meet the demands of their position (a positive internal sense of efficacy) due to receiving the necessary support (a workplace condition). Neither theory considers the context in which the principal would implement said support, which is why the model incorporates the principle of contextual leadership (Noman, Awang Hashim, & Shaik Abdullah, 2018), a theory that recognizes the myriad of needs across differing school contexts. Further, the framework advances the literature by strategically linking school leadership development to educator retention (direct influence) and student performance (indirect influence). As discussed in the next section, evidence from empirical literature supports the efficacy of the model in addition to being informed by these theoretical underpinnings.

Principal as the Talent Developer

At the heart of the *Thrive Beyond Survival* model is the convergence of administrative support and differing school contexts (urban, rural), a fact that necessitates an exploration of both facets. The model's emphasis on administrative support is not arbitrary, as scholars across the world have argued school capacity building is essential for improving teacher working conditions and student outcomes, with principals being best suited to build faculty capacity (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Yakavets, Frost, & Khoroshash, 2017). For example, Arar and Arar (2016) emphasize the mentorship role of principals in Arab schools to help teachers grow and develop teaching and pedagogic skills. However, capacity building requires highly contextualized knowledge and

"varied contexts and capacity necessitate differentiated capacity building" (Stoll, 2009, p. 117). While there are similarities between urban and rural educational contexts, administrators must also be cognizant to differentiate the support needed, as teachers in rural high-needs schools face different challenges (e.g., differences in community politics, resources, human capacity) than those of urban high-needs schools (Matsumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). Indeed, research supports the argument that the impact of strategic talent management processes utilized by principals will vary across settings (Donaldson, 2013). External factors—such as school location—can affect stakeholders, like teachers, in specific ways and can moderate the type of actions needed by a principal (Hutton, 2017). Principals can help build teachers' self-confidence in different contexts to stay and grow via administrative support that allows teachers to feel safe and supported, as well as develop trust and mentorship (Hammonds, 2017). This is particularly crucial in urban and rural areas, as they experience the most severe teacher shortages, which disproportionately impacts economically disadvantaged students of color (Balu et al., 2009). Differentiating teaching context, Preston describes the nature of teaching experiences in Canadian rural schools as nurturing "close teacher-student-community relationships, while urban schools serve a larger, culturally-diverse student populace" (2012, p. 41). Although both have concentrations of poverty, high frequencies of student mobility, and native language learners, rural and urban districts also have challenges distinct to their setting. Thus, it is necessary to explore the needs of each context amongst broader efforts to address social justice through social inclusion.

Principal Professional Development for Urban School Contexts

Urban school contexts tend to have larger school districts that are often associated with complicated bureaucratic systems and have stronger private school competition for their public schools. In addition, high-need urban institutions experience more severe student discipline issues—ranging from insubordination, use/sale of illegal narcotics, and verbal/physical assault of teachers and students—than do their non-urban counterparts (Smith & Smith, 2006), an actuality that directly impacts teacher turnover (Allensworth et al., 2009) and instruction (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). Relatedly, teachers have reported needing administrative support to handle disciplinary issues so that they can focus on providing instruction (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

Urban schools face stiffer political, social, and economic challenges than non-urban schools (Cuban, 2004); thus, their PD needs are different. The political complexities of urban schools (e.g., local and state issues, media relations, collective bargaining, political advocacy) provide for unique challenges that urban principals must address and that formal PD activities for principals often overlook (Davis, Leon, & Fultz, 2013). Urban principals often must navigate complex bureaucratic channels in order to obtain resources for the students in their schools. Likewise, principal preparation programs often lack substantive training in multicultural leadership, yet urban schools face context specific cultural challenges that include low expectations associated with perceptions of race and class as predictors of low school achievement and intellectual deficiencies, and the lack of cultural responsiveness in current policies and practices (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011). Properly structured, on-going professional development affords greater

opportunities to instill in urban principals the capacity to be multicultural leaders (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006).

Grissom, Loeb, and Master's (2013) work established the importance of administrative support, teacher coaching, meaningful teacher evaluation, and teacher education programing to student success in a large urban district. Others (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Horng et al., 2010) have identified the importance of organizational management skills (i.e., managing the "school business" including budgeting, maintenance, hiring, safety, professional development, etc.) that similarly predict not only student achievement gains, but also teacher and parent assessment of school climate, and ultimately teacher retention. Brown and Wynn (2009), for instance, found that the principals of schools who experienced the lowest beginning teacher turnover and transfer rates (0-10%) within a high-turnover small urban district emphasized supporting teachers, citing that "spending more time, providing more resources, and building capacity are critical components in retaining good teachers" (p. 51).

Houle (2006) studied an urban principals' academy for school leaders and found that principals' most significant developmental needs were in the areas of facing complex urban environments, leading the improvement of student achievement in these contexts, capacity building, and instructional leadership. Additionally, Peter-Hawkins, Reed, and Kingsberry (2018) reported that urban principals identified succession planning as a significant leadership challenge facing current leaders, which points to the turbulence that changes in principal leadership often cause for urban schools. To address these challenges, principal leadership preparation programs alone are unlikely to prepare practice-ready principals to be turnaround and change experts in high-need urban contexts. Rather, on-the-job

experiences, mentorship and on-going professional development opportunities for principals are needed to supplement initial preparation and to advance principals to lead in their urban specific contexts (Davis et al., 2013).

Principal Professional Development for Rural School Contexts

Rural education requires a different focus than does urban education, and "it cannot be assumed that the way school principals in the urban context build capacity of their staff can be 'translated' to the rural context" (Hardwick-Franco, 2018, p.2). The role of a principal in a rural high-needs setting differs from that of their urban counterparts. One major distinction is the fact that rural districts often operate with smaller organizational systems, which means administrators often have to wear "many hats," sometimes occupying the role of both a principal and superintendent (Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, & Slate, 2008) or taking on additional responsibilities in their position (Stewart & Matthews, 2015). Björk and Browne-Ferrigno (2018) note that "[a]lthough superintendents of small districts may handle several areas of responsibility, CEOs of large county or urban districts delegate responsibilities to their middle management staffs" (p. 183).

According to Townsell (2007), rural principals often have to become involved in all aspects of school decision making in a manner that differs from non-rural principals given the lack of administrative support they receive (e.g., fewer or non-existent assistant principals) and must have an acute awareness of the culture of the community for reasons including how to better acclimate new teachers to the context. They also have to be able to help mitigate their teachers' feelings of social, cultural, and professional isolation that is promoted by the geographic isolation that is common to many rural locales

(Townsell, 2007). This may involve connecting teachers to the community. In fact, in rural environments, there is often a social expectation that rural principals are not just school leaders, but community leaders as well (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). For example, Kawana studied the role of principal leadership in rural Nambia and found "the principal is heavily dependent on factors that lie outside his immediate personal influence" (2007, p. 65) in order to be effective.

In addition, rural districts experience tremendous staffing issues (UCEA, 2018). Rural districts are disadvantaged with lower number of educator applications, eroding tax bases, lower salaries, remoteness, geographic isolation and cultural differences (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). Despite the fact that rural schools face more teacher staffing issues than urban schools (Starr & White, 2008), rural schools receive comparatively less scholarly and governmental attention (Howley, Rhodes, & Beall, 2009).

Because rural principals often have less access to professional networks (Pendola & Fuller, 2018), their development needs differ. Hardwick-Franco (2018) reviewed the literature on professional development support needed by rural school principals in Australia and concluded that rural school leaders require differentiated PD specific to their rural context, preferably developed through a collaborative co-creation between the training providers and rural principals. This collaboration would ensure that urban school leadership models that are not compatible with rural environments would not be imposed upon participating rural principals.

Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) conducted a case study analysis of three high-poverty under resourced, yet high-performing, rural schools and found the schools compensated for the lack of

resources by partnering extensively with external partners such as parents, business professionals, professional organizations, universities, etc. in formal and informal capacities. Two-way communication between the entities allowed parties to be responsive to each other's needs, increasing the active engagement of parents and communities with the school. This suggests the importance of developing the partnership skills of rural principals as rural leaders.

Given that rural schools are often severely resource constrained and that, in order to best serve students, rural principals across the world must collaborate across a variety of networks outside the school, therefore developing their partnership skills is critical (Hardwick-Franco, 2018). Bauch (2001) identifies six rural-specific community attributes that school leaders can depend on for support. They include: social capital, sense of place, parent involvement, strong church ties, school-community-business partnership, and community as curriculum. Districts and other community stakeholders should call for and provide increased opportunities for rural principals to develop collaborative skills.

Administrative Support in Rural and Urban Contexts

The disparate concerns of urban and rural educational contexts necessitate differentiated administrative solutions, particularly with regards to teacher retention. Table 1 compiles and compares the administrative support activities that scholars and researchers have linked to either retention or satisfaction in urban and rural high-need schools. These administrative support activities are an expansion of the categories of administrative thematic components originally suggested by Cancio, Albrecht, and Johns (2013) and House (1981) including: guidance and feedback (e.g. on performance, improvement, responsibilities), opportunity for growth (e.g.,

workshops, peer-learning, planning time), appreciation (e.g., acknowledgment, sense of value), and trust (e.g., confidence, support, presence). It is worth noting the traits found to be more important in one context (urban, rural) rather than another may reflect not its potential value, but rather its prevalence of use in the locale. For example, while the provision of strong instructional leadership is clearly important in urban schools (Grissom, 2011), the lack of consistent finding for its importance in rural schools may be a reflection of the lower frequency of its use (Parson, Hunter, & Kallio, 2016). Rural principals have cited the importance of instructional leadership, yet they often report spending less time on instructional leadership activities than their non-rural counterparts due to time constraints associated with having to fulfill multiple roles (Lynch, 2012; Renihan, & Noonan, 2012).

Table 1.
Urban and Rural Principal Administrative Support

	Guidance and Feedback/Appraisal	Opportunities for Growth/Informational Support	Trust/Emotional Support	Appreciation	Instrumental Support
Urban Administrative Support	Providing ongoing feedback and coaching services (Hammonds, 2017) Providing strong instructional leadership (Grissom, 2011)	Providing transformational leadership (Finnigan, 2012) Providing school-based professional development (Hammonds, 2017) Building strong staff relations (Abel & Sewell, 2010; Hammonds, 2017)	"Backing up" teachers (Kokka, 2016); Planning with teachers (Hammonds, 2017); Recognizing and appreciating teachers' contributions (Jacob, Vidyarthi, & Carroll, 2012; Margolis, 2008)	Supporting teachers with disciplinary issues and strong disciplinary policies; Maintaining a safe school environment (Kokka, 2016; Gregory, et al., 2010; Hammonds, 2017)	Emphasizing organizational management (e.g., hiring, budget) (Grissom, 2011; Horng, et al., 2010)
Rural Administrative Support	Providing detailed feedback (Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010)	Building capacity (helping teachers balance multiple grades, maximize instruction without assistants and with minimal material resources; address time pressures) (Anderson et al., 2010; Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Kawana, 2007; Wallin & Newton, 2013)	Empowering teachers (Bartling, 2013; Melia, 2012)	Developing strong individual interpersonal relationships with faculty (Preston & Barnes, 2017; Barley & Beesley, 2007; Cortez-Jiminez, 2012; Preston, 2012; Goodpaster, Adedokun, & Weaver, 2012)	Providing flexible scheduling and personal days (Ulferts, 2015) Developing external partnerships; connecting teachers with the community (Pendola & Fuller, 2018; Adams & Woods, 2015; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009)

Reducing Educator Turnover: Principals

Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, and Ikemoto (2012) studied 519 first-year principals from 2007 to 2011 in six large urban U.S. school districts (Washington, DC; New York City; Chicago; Memphis; Baltimore; Oakland) and found that 11.8% left within the first year, with that percentage increasing to 22.5% by the second year. Retention rates were higher in New York (92.3%) and Chicago (92.5%) and lower in Baltimore (69.2%) and Washington (66.7%). Moreover, they found principals that were placed in schools that did not achieve the U.S. federal government's performance expectations (i.e., expected adequately yearly progress gains) the year before their placement were more likely to leave after just one year. The majority (78%) of the principals that left after only one year led schools that experienced further achievement decline under their leadership. This trend of performance decline continued after they left for most of the schools that experienced the principal turnover. Focusing on understanding principal burnout, Yildrim and Dinc (2019) found role conflict, role ambiguity, and workload to be significant influences on burnout in the Flemish schools of Belgium.

Similarly, results from a nationally representative sample of U.S. schools show that principals leave rural and urban schools at a rate higher than from any other context (11.8% and 10.0% respectively as compared to 8.6% in Suburban areas or 8.1% in Towns) (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Longitudinal research has shown that rural principals leave their schools earlier and have less school level employment stability than non-rural principals (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). Like teachers, rural principals are often replaced with less qualified personnel, who upon gaining some experience, transfer to lower-need schools to reproduce the vicious cycle of quality

educator shortage for rural schools (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012; Harrison & Tran, 2020). Strategic professional development for school leaders could address some of these issues.

To demonstrate, Farley-Ripple et al.'s (2012) interviewed 48 principals from both urban and rural schools and found that district support is one of two main factors that influenced administrators to stay in their position. This was likely related to developing the administrators' "sense of efficacy or ability to rise to the challenge" of the job (p. 804). Conversely, principals with less-self efficacy will more likely turnover, and this has ramifications for teacher turnover. In fact, Beteille et al. (2012) reported that teachers in a large urban district with higher value-added student gain scores were more likely to leave the school following a principal change and that every 1 standard deviation increase in the teachers' value added score above the average of 19% is associated with a 32% increase in the likelihood of a teacher leaving at the end of a new principal's initial year at a school.

One reason for teacher turnover is a lack of context-specific teacher preparation. Evidence suggests, however, that increased principal retention ameliorates teacher turnover problems, even when teachers feel under prepared. Jacob et al. (2015) evaluated the McRel Balanced Leadership Principal professional development program in rural Michigan schools. The program was developed based on 21 leadership responsibilities identified by meta-analysis on the relationship between school leadership and student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). The authors posit that because teachers did not report perceiving substantive changes from their principals, the positive effect on teacher retention may be a result of the positive effect the program had on principal retention. This

suggests that a key lever to retaining teachers is retaining principals. The program was found to be effective for improving principal and teacher retention, supporting the value of principal development for multiple outcomes.

Though research on the topics of necessary principal knowledge, skills, and abilities—and the best format of appropriate training—are thin (Jacob et al., 2015; Grissom & Harrington, 2010), the literature has suggested several areas worth further emphasis. For example, improving time management skills is a potentially worthy area of development, given that scholars find that better time management skills allow principals to focus their time on priority tasks and reduce their stress, which has been found to be related to their retention (Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015). Burkhauser's (2017) study evinces this by finding principals significantly impact teachers' perception of school environmental factors like how much time teachers have to focus on teaching (time use), physical environment, teacher empowerment, and professional development. Based on this finding, she recommended that principals engage in professional development to improve their leadership skills. Suggested areas of development include "addressing teacher concerns, providing useful feedback, or establishing a feeling of mutual respect and trust at the school" (p. 139).

There exists empirical support that school leadership development can positively impact educator retention. For instance, Jacob et al. (2015) used a randomized controlled design to determine the causal effect of the Balanced Leadership principal development program on a variety of outcomes. Over the 3 years of the program, principals who participated were more likely (than control principals) to stay in their school, and this was also true for their teachers.

Similarly, principals with more in-depth professional development on how to support teachers reported lower barriers in developing their schools' human capital (Donaldson, 2013).

Handford and Leithwood (2012) argue for the centrality of school leadership development for student achievement, given empirical support for its influence. Due to the importance of principal development for educator supply and student achievement outcomes, adequate support should be provided to school principals so that they can support their teachers. This development can take many forms. For instance, to better address differences in the knowledge, skill, and ability needs of principals in different locales, input of multiple stakeholders—the community and district/school personnel, etc.—could be used to define a contextualized standard for principal quality (Tran & Bon, 2015; Tran & Bon, 2016). Additionally, districts can encourage collaboration between their schools and other districts to create a network of principals who can support each other. This not only helps to counter the isolation of the position, especially in rural areas, but also can be "a source of both coping and learning on the job" (Farley-Ripple, et al., 2012, p. 805).

Reducing Educator Turnover: Teachers

Given that trust is critical for teacher retention (Allensworth et al., 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) and student achievement (Handford & Leithwood, 2012), principal development efforts could train school leaders on how to engender trust through consistency and transparency, particularly with regards to school funds (Tran, 2017). Allensworth et al. (2009) cite the presence of "positive, trusting, working relationships" as the chief predictor of teacher retention. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) came to a similar conclusion. They interviewed 50 new teachers over 4 years and those that stayed

overwhelmingly identified supportive workplace environment and administrative support as critical for their retention. Other areas that school leaders can affect to create a supportive school culture are facilitating peer mentoring, providing common planning periods, offering political support for teachers from external forces, exhibiting inclusive decision-making, addressing school discipline issues, developing opportunities for teacher collaboration and role differentiation, and building relationships with the community for additional teacher and student support (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Studying teachers in Belgium, Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer (2009) found "Teachers feel committed to the school if it is led by a leadership team working in a cooperative way and where all leaders support teachers sufficiently" (p. 47). Additionally, in a study of teacher induction in Belgium, Finland, and Portugal, Costa, Almeida, Pinho, and Pipa (2019) stressed the importance of school leaders supporting the differentiated pedagogy, critical reflection, and collaborative practices of new teachers.

Ultimately, principals want to retain "effective teachers," not necessarily every teacher. This makes sense, given that schools with principals who retain higher value-added teachers and remove lower value-added ones achieve higher value-added student gains (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Beteille, 2012). More effective principals have been found to be associated with lower teacher turnover overall, but higher turnover with lower performing teachers (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). In fact, principals who lead schools with greater student learning gains employ different strategies to strategically support and retain effective teachers as opposed to ineffective ones (Donaldson, 2013; Loeb, et al., 2012).

For instance, principals in Masumoto and Brown-Welty's (2009) study of high-performing, high-poverty rural schools had a strong focus on standards and high expectations. According to the educators at the schools, this led to the turnover of teachers who "did not embrace the culture of high expectations and whose impact on learning did not meet defined standards" (p. 11). Other studies similarly document that teachers who are less effective at improving student test score gains are more likely to turnover than those that are more so (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2007; Goldhaber, Gross, & Player, 2007).

Adnot, Dee, Katz, and Wyckoff (2017) examined the District of Columbia's Public Schools' IMPACT teacher evaluation program, a program designed to remove teachers with low test score gains and provided financial incentive for those with high test score gains (such as a one-time bonus and increase in base pay). In this setting, teacher turnover actually resulted in improvement in math test score gains (by .08 standard deviation) because "lower performing" teachers were replaced with "higher performing" ones. The IMPACT strategy was based on improvement through changing the composition of the teacher workforce. However, given that some impoverished rural districts can be hard pressed to even generate one candidate's interest for a position, one must wonder if this strategy will work in a rural high-needs context.

Other activities associated with strategic retention of effective teachers can include principal-sponsored mobility of teacher to formal and informal leadership roles (e.g., department chair), strategic professional development aimed at enhancing the skillset of high performers while providing coaching or district-facilitated peer assistance to poor performers, and differentiated degrees of

monitoring for employees of varying levels of effectiveness (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

The provision of support for strategic retention has promise but can be difficult to implement in school cultures that often prioritizes "sameness" and identical treatment over individualization (Tran, 2015). This is evident in both the near-universal reliance on the single salary schedule teacher compensation model and the lack of variation in teacher performance evaluation outcomes. Given this, how does a leader strategically manage the school talent within district policies, labor laws, collective bargaining agreements, and education codes that are often perceived as oppositional to differential treatment of employees? Avoiding the buildup of resentment in the school and creation of factions as a result of that differential treatment can be difficult (Balu et al., 2009). According to Leader-Member Exchange Theory, leaders cultivate and maintain different interpersonal relationships with each employee (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This creates "out-groups" and "in-groups," where individuals who are in the "in-group" receive preferential treatment, support, and authority over those in the "out-group," who maintain minimum contractual exchange with the principal beyond what is required for the job. Because those in the "in-group" receive more support and attention, success breeds success, and they outperform their "out-group" peers. Efforts to expand those in the "in-group" should focus on social inclusion to improve the ability and opportunities for teachers from historically disadvantaged groups. However, if employees perceive that those in the "in-group" receive such status because of favoritism shown by the principal, this can create a toxic and unhealthy school culture. Consequently, it is important that any provision of differential treatment is perceived as fair and justified.

Improved Student Achievement

Constant change in principals (especially effective ones) often results in constant changes in classroom and school culture, which researchers have found detrimental to student achievement (Beteille et al., 2012; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Repeated principal turnover can lead to inconsistency in the strategic direction of the school (Beteille et al., 2012) and prevents the school from building the capacity needed to improve (Allensworth et al., 2009). Everything from the school's vision to the way teachers are evaluated by their school leader could change when a new principal arrives. This lack of coherence can embolden teachers to resist change efforts by a new leader, opting to "wait out" a new principal if they expect that he/she will be replaced soon anyway (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009).

Another mechanism by which principal turnover can negatively affect learning is through teacher turnover. Miller (2012) found that the years before and after a principal departure are typically associated with teacher turnover increases at 1.3% and 1.6% respectively. Others (Beteille et al., 2012; Jacob et al., 2015) have likewise found a relationship between principal turnover and teacher turnover, which indirectly links principal attrition to student learning outcomes (Beteille et al., 2012; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Of course, teachers matter for student learning in school and long-term life outcomes (Chetty et al., 2014), and frequent teacher turnover is a detriment for these outcomes. First, teacher replacement can result in inconsistencies that are detrimental for student learning (Beteille et al., 2012). Constant teacher turnover can result in a demoralizing effect on students, rendering it hard for them to trust and respect the new teachers coming through the "revolving door" of their schools (Marinell & Coca, 2013; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

This lack of trust weakens all aspects of school culture, such as the sustenance of wavering parental engagement.

Ronfeldt et al. (2013), in their analysis of 850,000 observations of 4th and 5th grade students in all New York City elementary schools across eight academic years, found empirical evidence to support the negative impact of teacher turnover on student English and math test scores, especially among high-needs schools. In addition, turnover negatively impacted the performance of teachers (e.g. student outcomes) who stayed in the schools, perhaps due to the disruption of the school culture, institutional knowledge, and consistency. There are always exceptions, however. Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) found that teacher turnover could yield positive results for student achievement, provided that leaving teachers are replaced with more effective teachers. As previously noted, though, urban and rural districts/schools often struggle to find qualified teaching candidates, a fact that potentially moots the possible benefits of teacher turnover for some in these contexts.

Given the anticipated and present shortages, stabilizing the rural and urban teacher workforce is of utmost urgency (UCEA, 2018). Even interventions and educational programs with high potential will not yield the fruits of the labor if the educator force is constantly replaced (Tran, McCormick, & Nguyen, 2018). Consequently, a better understanding of the educator supply problem is critical to addressing student achievement issues. However, with the increased emphasis on student learning gains promulgated by state and federal accountability systems, the focus and attention of education leaders may be occupied elsewhere. Our model mitigates some of this issue by suggesting that leadership

development may yield potential with not only educator retention but performance as well.

Conclusion

High-need schools are often "hard-to-staff" because teachers with more experience and credentials typically leave for other lower-need schools (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Constant teacher turnover is problematic because replacements are usually less experienced than those they replaced, and students of new teachers often experience less achievement test score gains than those of experienced teachers (Ladd & Sorenson, 2017). This occurs especially in high-need schools with more low-income students, whose academic growths are more dependent on teachers than that of students from wealthier backgrounds (Downey, Von Hippel, & Hughes, 2008). Teacher turnover can also cause disruption for teachers that stay in schools because experienced teachers may have to pick up additional instructional workload and mentor new teachers when replacements are hired (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Contrary to the perception that large proportions of students of color and from low-income backgrounds cause teacher attrition, recent literature suggests that school leadership and administrative support matter much more (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

While improvement of student learning is the primary desired outcome of schools and the ultimate objective of principals, their impact on student learning is largely indirect and mediated through their teachers (Waters et al., 2004). This suggests that teacher retention, specifically, is critical to student learning. Despite this, the relationship among principal development, teacher development, and student achievement is often overlooked (Grissom, 2011). A

school is only as effective as its staff, and school leaders must be able to provide the necessary support structure to the staff to maximize learning opportunities for students. The provision of appropriate administrative support to teachers is a human relations skill that is essential for school leaders. Those who effectively demonstrate this skill will not only increase the chances of teacher attraction (Tran & Smith, 2018) and retention (Horng, 2009) but also "have a better chance to motivate the worker to go 'the extra mile'" (Hutton, 2017, p. 571). Administrative support allows teachers, especially those new to the profession, to explore their pedagogical style and take chances to find what works for their students. This administrative support creates communication, which is linked with trust enhancement (Hutton, 2017). Trust is a necessary component of any leader and employee relationship and is directly related to decreases in teacher turnover (Tran, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

According to findings from a nationally representative sample of schools, when teachers perceive their leaders to be more effective, teachers are generally more satisfied with their work environment and less likely to leave their schools, and this relationship is more pronounced in high-need schools (Grissom, 2011). Effective principals must be able to manage interpersonal relationships within their specific context and to differentiate their administrative roles according to the context, accounting for differing external factors like culture and location (Hutton, 2017). In short, the role of a principal in a rural environment differs from that of a principal in an urban school, and appropriate development is needed in each setting (Hardwick-Franco, 2018).

The link between administrative support and teacher retention may be more complicated than a simplistic positive relationship. For

example, there is international evidence to support that employees who receive general development may actually be more likely to leave their organization (Ambrosius, 2018; Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden & Bravo, 2011). This is because better-developed employees become more attractive in the labor market and therefore may be more likely to leave their employer for more attractive employment opportunities. For high-needs schools, it is has been documented that teachers who gain human capital (such as experience) often leave for lower need environments (Feng & Sass, 2017; Tran & Dou, 2019).

Still it has been argued that the relational bond between employers with their employees is strengthened when employers provide the type of support that shows employees they are cared about and valued (Ambrosius, 2018). Moreover, school leadership has been found to predict teacher retention, without moderation by teacher and school characteristics (Player, Youngs, Perrone & Grogan, 2017), and that school climate (which the principal has influence in shaping) is critical for teacher mobility (Djonko-Moore, 2016). Consequently, it is important that any model of support account for both the human and social capital components of development in a comprehensive Talent Centered Education Leadership framework (Tran, 2020). While employer needs are often prioritized with employees utilized as human *resources* to respond to those needs, Talent Centered Education Leadership emphasizes the importance of responding to employee needs in order to better support them in their work.

Given the emphasis of multi-level and contextual support in our model, it is logical to extend that thinking to local and federal governments, who could encourage context-specific leadership development by providing funding and technical assistance to school

districts and leadership preparation programs. Governments could also direct professional development funding towards principals, financially incentivizing them to update their skillsets. In fact, existing mechanisms and structures can be taken advantage of for this. For instance, in the U.S., states could utilize Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title II-A funding to support high-quality principal preparation or utilize the ESSA Leader Recruitment and Support Program, which provides grant funding for the recruitment and development of principals of high-needs schools (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

There have been calls to better understand the management styles that predict lower teacher turnover and improve student outcomes (Grissom, 2011) because of the dearth of research on connecting principals to teacher talent management. This research would have policy implications for pre-service and in-service professional development. Although the bulk of this paper addressed the need for administrative support, Louis et al. (2010) argued that "…leaders must have the time, the knowledge, and the consultative skills needed to provide teachers support" (p.11). Therefore, the next logical question becomes how do we provide school leaders with the support so that they are able to carry out their duties and effectively to address teacher needs? The questionable effectiveness of principal preparation programs has raised concerns for many despite the evidence supporting the importance of strong leadership for teacher performance and retention (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). This suggests a need to better understand the specific professional development areas that are necessary for school leaders to strategically leverage their talent to improve student outcomes, especially in high-need schools.

In this conceptual paper, we posited a theoretically informed model based on the body of empirical evidence that suggests improving school administrative support will positively impact principal retention, teacher retention, and student achievement. We consulted empirical evidence to develop a model to address the following questions: Are the administrative supports needed in rural contexts different from those needed in urban contexts? What is the relationship between administrative support provided to teachers and teacher retention? What is the relationship between administrative support provided to teachers and student outcomes? The next step is to empirically validate the model.

In future work, the model can be extended in numerous ways. For instance, while we highlight the need to contextualize administrative support based on location, research suggests that teachers may need differentiated support to connect with students from different ethnic and socio-economic background (Simon & Johnson, 2015). For example, given that public teachers are mostly non-Hispanic White (80%) and female (77%) (Taie & Goldring, 2017), what kind of support do they need to succeed in schools with students that may be majority persons of color? Research has suggested that teachers with vastly different lived experiences than those of their students may make faulty assumptions and fail to understand the academic barriers their students face (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Given this understanding, future research should address how and what districts, schools, and their personnel need to support these teachers in forging better, more meaningful connections with their students.

Finally, it is important to note that rural and urban communities are not monolithic, and the complexity of their respective localities

often require development more attuned to their specific context. Future work should further distinguish between the support needs associated with different types of rural and urban high-need schools. Exploration of these areas should lead to a greater understanding of how school leaders can demolish the barriers that prevent teachers from performing their jobs and serve their students to their full potential.

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