

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: What's Behind the Revolving Door: A Study of Push and Pull Factors Influencing Teacher Retention

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The researcher investigated how full-time, secondary-level teachers in high poverty or high minority and non-high poverty or high minority schools in Indiana and across the nation perceived the working conditions in their schools and investigated whether a relationship existed between these working conditions and teachers' plans to remain in teaching or leave the profession. The concepts of push and pull factors from migration studies provided the theoretical framework to understand decisions that may impact the supply and demand for teachers, an outcome that impacts student achievement. Findings indicate seventeen working conditions acted as push and pull factors during the 2011-212 school year, influencing teachers to plan to remain in or to leave teaching. Four addressed the support first year teachers received: a reduced teaching schedule or number of classes to prepare for, extra classroom assistance, a mentor in the same subject area, and improvement from working with a mentor. Three working conditions addressed professional development: attended workshops, conferences, or training sessions, the usefulness of content specific professional development, and receiving scheduled time in the school year for professional development. Five working conditions related to teachers influence on school policy were predictors of teacher retention: establishing curriculum, determining the content of in-service professional development programs, evaluating teachers,

hiring new full-time teachers, and disciplining students. Three working conditions that gave teachers more control over their work in the classroom acted as pull or push factors: selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught, selecting teaching techniques, and disciplining students. Peer observations and serving as a formal mentor were shown to be pull factors. Salary acted as a pull factor, no matter whether the teacher was satisfied with their salary or not. Knowing which working conditions predicted teachers' plans to remain in or leave teaching was discovered to be insufficient because it was often the extent to which teachers perceived the working conditions in their schools that influenced their plans to remain or leave. Improving site-specific working conditions may be a cost-effective way to reduce turnover and the negative effects turnover has on schools and the students they serve.