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The Path to Equity: Teacher Retention at 40/40

Rationale

Educational achievement is a result of schools providing high quality curriculum and instruction. Quality teachers are the source of quality instruction. Today we experience significant teacher turnover rates in the U.S. especially in Title I schools, located in low income neighborhoods serving children that have historically been deprived of high quality education due to “inequities intentionally structured into our society, and schools”. (Terrell, Lindsey 2009)

Literature

During the 2011–12 school year for example, 16 percent of the 3.4 million public school teachers in the United States transitioned left their current positions for new ones (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). 8 percent of these teachers left the teaching profession altogether, while the remaining 8 percent transferred to other schools. This constant movement of teachers creates inconsistencies in the lives of students who go to school in schools that have high turnover rates. The issues brought upon by high turnover rates include economic deficits (loss of tax dollars, and other money allocated for professional development and training), as well as perpetuating low student performance and adding to existing educational inequalities.

Economic Consequences

In order to examine the magnitude of this problem with high turnover rates The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) conducted a pilot study in five school districts to get real dollar amounts of how much teacher turnovers are costing the education system. The study compared suburban, rural, and urban areas in Chicago and found that the cost of each teacher turnover to the district in each location was \$4,366, \$10,000, and \$15,325 respectively (Barnes). In very large urban settings the cost was even higher at a staggering \$17,872 per teacher. The same study calculated the overall cost of teacher turnover rates in Chicago Public Schools and found that they were over \$86 million per year. National costs are not expected to be much different and the pattern of urban school districts losing more money than non-urban districts remains.

Data/Tools/Process

The school of study was selected because of its retention of highly effective teachers irrespective of the fact that it is a Title I school located in a low-income neighborhood. Data was obtained through teacher, principal and assistant principal interviews, and surveys. The qualitative findings were aligned to the quantitative findings in regards to teacher retention. The researcher anticipated qualitative surveys and interviews to conflict with the quantitative findings because individuals were self-reporting. In order to prevent this from occurring participants were informed that the surveys and interviews would not have any identifiable information that could be traced back to the participant. Disclaimer: The school of study can serve as an exceptional role model for teacher retention for other schools with similar demographics if the recommendations can be piloted at other schools with the same context and produce the same desired outcomes. Otherwise, the sample size is too small to make a broad generalization.

Data Analysis

Based on 2012 data, the U.S. average mathematics score of 481 was lower than the average for all OECD countries. In science, the U.S. average science score 497 was slightly below OECD average. In reading, the U.S. average score 498 was not significantly higher than the average of OECD (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). This data demonstrates that the U.S. is not leading the world in mathematics, science or reading. In order for the U.S. to become more competitive on a global platform it needs quality instruction that is accessible to all students. Quality teachers are the source of quality instruction. One of the issues with education in the U.S. however is the significant turnover rate for teachers, as well as the constant "moving" of teachers within the educational system.

Recommendations

Hire culturally and linguistically diverse leaders invested in providing equal opportunities for all students. Provide ongoing contextualized training based on the diverse needs of the school community. Build partnerships, asset map to determine what your current families, and community can bring to the table. Engage families and teachers and inform them of the historical context of underserved populations within the U.S. Continue to evolve and provide as much support as needed via wrap around services. Provide needs based professional development to teaching staff to meet their individual needs to increase teacher effectiveness. Create a school culture of information sharing where teachers lead school wide initiatives .

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