INTERDEPARTMENTAL DESIGN THINKING COMMITTEES: ADDRESSING THE
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS OF CLIMBER TURNOVER IN THE INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL CONTEXT

by

Alli Gubanich Williams

A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Baltimore, Maryland
July 2019

© 2019 Allison Gubanich Williams
All rights reserved
Abstract
The current paradigm in independent school leadership encourages a leave-to-lead model, in which a teacher who wants to take on a more influential leadership role must leave his/her classroom to do so (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; Ingersoll, 2001; Murphy & Hart, 1986). This dissertation proposal first offers a literature review that situates the problem within the organizational scholarship and explicates the unique organizational qualities of independent schools that contribute to the problem. The second chapter details a needs assessment that investigates the presence and extent of the factors associated with this specific type of turnover at a private school in the greater Philadelphia area. Given the findings of the first two chapters, the third chapter explores intervention possibilities from the extant literature. The fourth chapter describes a research study to assess the effects of an intervention on climber turnover. Finally, the fifth chapter reviews the findings of that study and suggests implications for both research and practice.

Keywords: turnover, organizational hybrids, independent schools

Primary Reader: Henry Smith
Secondary Readers: Camille Bryant, Bryan Garman
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated with love to my family:

To my parents, Chris and Kathy, my first and greatest teachers.

To my husband, Pete, who makes all things better.

And to my daughter, Prudence. May you be curious, too.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation was a labor of love, an enormous project that grew out of a simple belief in the power of teachers, a love of teams, and a curiosity about the capacity of motivated individuals. While it was born of my own musings, it developed into its final product through the help and guidance of several key people for whom I am indebted.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my dissertation committee. To Dr. Henry Smith, my dissertation advisor and committee chair, thank you for your time, your patience, your sense of humor, and your honesty. Many essential aspects of my scholarly journey would not have come to be had it not been for your direction. To Dr. Camille Bryant, thank you for your discerning feedback and attention to detail. You pushed me to be a better researcher. To Dr. Bryan Garman, thank you for your willingness to join me on this journey. Your wisdom and experience were invaluable for my work.

Thank you to my fellow doctoral classmates and now lifelong friends, Carole English, Brent Jones, and Juliana Ospina-Cano. I could not have made it without the shared knowledge, the commiseration, and above all, the laughter.

To my husband, Pete, who supported my completion of this dissertation in every way one can, thank you and I love you.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii

Dedication .............................................................................................................................. iii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ iv

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 1

Problem of Practice .................................................................................................................. 1

Theoretical Framework .............................................................................................................. 3

Research Purpose and Objectives ............................................................................................ 4

Findings ................................................................................................................................... 5

CHAPTER ONE ............................................................................................................................ 7

A Context for Independent Schools ........................................................................................ 8

The History of Independent Schools in the United States .................................................... 8

Key Characteristics of Independent Schools .......................................................................... 10

Literature Review of Teacher Turnover .................................................................................. 12

Misalignment with Mission ..................................................................................................... 14

Issues with Leadership ............................................................................................................. 14

Lack of Influence Within the Organization ............................................................................. 16

Insufficient Salary .................................................................................................................... 17

Poor Sense of Community ....................................................................................................... 19

Hiring Practices of Independent Schools ............................................................................... 20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for a Promotion</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Institutionalism</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Hybridity</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybridity in higher education</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybridity in healthcare</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Schools as Hybrid Organizations</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals and Objectives</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Recruitment</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative data</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative data</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merging data</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

## Findings

- Quantitative Data: Survey Responses ................................................................. 43
  - Current teaching positions ............................................................ 44
  - Attrition intent ............................................................................. 48
  - Leadership ..................................................................................... 51
  - Influence ....................................................................................... 53
  - Salary ............................................................................................. 54
  - Sense of community ...................................................................... 55
  - Hiring practices .......................................................................... 56
  - Perceived value ........................................................................... 56
  - Climber turnover ......................................................................... 58

## Merging Data: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

- Alignment with mission .................................................................... 59
  - Leadership ..................................................................................... 60
  - Influence ....................................................................................... 61
  - Salary ............................................................................................. 61
  - Sense of community ...................................................................... 62
  - Hiring practices .......................................................................... 62
  - Climber turnover ......................................................................... 63

## Conclusions................................................................................................. 64
## CHAPTER THREE

**Theoretical Framework** ................................ ................................ ................................ ........... 66

**Fractal Organizations** ................................................................................................................. 69

**Issues of Governance** .................................................................................................................. 73

**Intervention Possibilities** ............................................................................................................ 75

**Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s)** ................................................................................ 77

**Hybrid Roles** .................................................................................................................................. 79

**Design-thinking Teams** ................................................................................................................ 82

- Examples of design-thinking teams in practice ............................................................................. 82
- Effects on design-thinking team participants ............................................................................... 85

**Interdepartmental Design-thinking Committees (IDC)** ................................ ............................... 87

**Interdepartmental Collaboration** ................................................................................................ 89

**Criteria for Success** ...................................................................................................................... 91

- Leveraging Mission Alignment and Expanding Community ......................................................... 91
- Improving Perceived Organizational Support ............................................................................. 92
- Overcoming Complex Leadership ................................................................................................. 92
- Improving Sense of Influence ....................................................................................................... 93
- Creating Opportunities for Career Advancement ......................................................................... 93
- Job Satisfaction ............................................................................................................................... 94

**Conclusion** .................................................................................................................................... 95
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale and Purpose</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Research Questions</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Research Questions</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Evaluation</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Responsiveness</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dose</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Evaluation Methods</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and Post-test Survey</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Observation Notes</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Evaluation Procedures</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Recruitment</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1: Variables Investigated in Each Instrument ................................................................. 40
Table 2: Variable Codes ............................................................................................................ 42
Table 3: Survey Respondent Demographics ............................................................................. 44
Table 4: Satisfaction with Teaching Position Responses .......................................................... 45
Table 5: School Characteristics Responses .............................................................................. 46
Table 6: Attrition Intent ........................................................................................................... 48
Table 7: Rationale for Planned Attrition ................................................................................. 49
Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Survey Constructs ............................................................... 116
Table 9: Tests of Normality ..................................................................................................... 117
Table 10: Tests of Between Subject Effects .............................................................................. 118
Table 11: T-Test Results for Organizational Influence ............................................................. 119
Table 12: T-Test Results for Sense of Community ................................................................ 123
Table 13: T-test Results for Perceived Organizational Support .............................................. 125
Table 14: T-Test Results for Leadership Ambiguity ................................................................. 128
Table 15: Design-Thinking Workshop Survey ....................................................................... 137
Table 16: IDC Exit Survey Responses ..................................................................................... 138
List of Figures

Figure 1: NAIS: Admin to Faculty Ratio ................................................................. 11
Figure 2: Turnover, by Years of Experience .......................................................... 12
Figure 3: Private/Public Wage Difference ............................................................ 17
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework ........................................................................ 23
Figure 5: Independent School Criteria ............................................................... 33
Figure 6: Theory of Change ................................................................................. 97
Figure 7: Attrition Responses ............................................................................ 134
Figure 8: Planned Length of Teaching Career ................................................... 135
Figure 9: Statistical Power ................................................................................. 141
Executive Summary

Addressing the issue of teacher turnover in the independent school context requires specific attention to both the kind of attrition and the unique school context in which it resides. Focusing on climber turnover, this dissertation describes an intervention designed to bolster teachers’ sense of community, organizational influence, perceived organizational support, and belief in their leaders. It strove to maximize teacher engagement and expand potential career trajectories. In doing so, the researcher hoped to decrease turnover by changing the way independent schools—and the teachers within them—thought about what a teacher’s career should look like.

Problem of Practice

Climber turnover—a term conceptualized for the purposes of this dissertation—reflects a specific type of attrition that follows as a result of the paucity of career options for classroom teachers. Climber turnover occurs when highly qualified teachers desire upward mobility on their professional paths and must look to positions outside of the classroom in order to satisfy their want for advancement. Those positions may be in administrative work within their own organization, they may be educational work at another school, or they could be positions completely outside the field. Regardless of the exact landing point, climber turnover constitutes a loss in the classroom that could be mitigated by changing the career options for teaching faculty.

Independent schools could be at a particular disadvantage, as they often hire from elite colleges and universities, and from outside the field of education (Kane, 1992). Their highly qualified staff may be equipped to take on increasingly complex careers, but the teaching profession remains limited in its trajectory (Murphy & Hart, 1986). Extant literature on teaching
attrition often focuses on either an individual or organizational lens. Research oriented toward the individual has addressed numerous drivers of the problem, including demographic qualities (Borman & Dowling, 2008; MacLaure, 1993; Smith, 2011), individual agency (Smith, 2011; Wilson & Deaney, 2010), efficacy (Lasky, 2005; Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991; Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005; Swanson, 2012), resilience (Doney, 2013; Tait, 2008), and career orientation (Gilbert, 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; You & Conley, 2015). But while independent schools may be particularly susceptible to climber turnover as a result of their hiring preferences, their organizational structure also makes them nimbler and more capable of addressing issues. For this reason, the following dissertation endeavored to address the issue of climber turnover through the organizational lens.

The major organizational factors that may contribute to turnover include misalignment with the mission (Ingersoll, 2001), issues with leadership (Boyd et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2007; Weiss, 1999; You & Conley, 2015), lack of influence within the organization (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Malen & Hart, 1987; Weiss, 1999), insufficient salary (Brewer, 1996; Chubb, 2014; Dolton & van der Klaaw, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Shen, 1997; Theobald, 1990), a poor sense of community (Doney, 2013; Hausman & Goldring, 2001; You & Conley, 2015), independent school hiring practices (Chubb & Moe, 1992; Davies & Quirke, 2007; Kane, 1992; Trickett et al., 1992; Quirke, 2009), and a desire for advancement (Brewer, 1996; Gilbert, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The research that follows attempted to address those factors while keeping the unique independent school context at the forefront of design.
Theoretical Framework

Fractal organizational theory (e.g., Fairholm, 2004; Raye, 2014; Zimmerman & Hurst, 1993) served as the theoretical framework through which the intervention was designed. A fractal is a mathematical concept from Benoit Mandelbrot wherein organisms have identical micro- and macro-structures. Fractal organizations are those in which leadership structures, work teams, and individual employees are all reflective of the same philosophical patterns. In lieu of a top-down leadership style, fractal organizations use clearly stated mission and vision statements to drive the majority of day-to-day work. Leadership is not absent. Rather, it is used to effectively distribute resources to far-reaching areas of the organization and to make sure those parts of the organization can communicate information back to the center (Fairholm, 2004). This organizational style lends itself well to the establishment of hybrid roles, as hybrid employees, by their very existence, break down the silos that exist in the typical workplace and engender greater communication across departments.

While hybrid work for teachers was the ultimate end-goal of this research, extant literature suggested that a middle step was necessary before hybrid roles could be created in the independent school context. Without proper training for both the individuals taking on hybrid work and those other employees that would interact with them, hybrid positions can cause difficulty (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001). Hybrid leadership is fragile in situations where there are multiple competing objectives and, therefore, requires collaboration of ideals at the individual, team, and organization levels. In essence, fractal organizations require hybrid employees as much as hybrid employees require the structure of fractal organizations. One without the other is problematic.
This research, therefore, sought to provide a program for increasing teachers’ capacities to take on hybrid roles through the creation of an interdepartmental design-thinking committee (IDC). Inspired by the approach of fractal organizations, the IDC brought together employees from every area of the independent school: admissions, development, technology, athletics, related services, marketing, and all academic divisions. The researcher tasked the members with creating a five-year vision plan that reflected the aspirations and needs of each department in the school.

Research Purpose and Objectives

With fractal organizations and hybrid work in mind, the purpose of this study was to measure the effects of the IDC on a number of mediating variables as well as the ultimate desired outcome, reduced climber turnover. The intervention was predicted to increase job satisfaction by increasing teachers’ organizational influence, expanding their sense of community, increasing their perceived organizational support, and overcoming leadership conflicts and ambiguity. The intervention was also predicted to create mechanisms for the creation of hybrid roles by increasing teachers’ organizational acumen and increasing their promotion potential. While reducing climber turnover was the ultimate goal of the intervention—and increasing job satisfaction and creating hybrid roles was predicted to achieve that—the distal effects of the program fell outside the timeline of this particular study. The research questions for the study were as follows:

RQ1: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers’ organizational influence?

RQ2: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' sense of community within the organization?
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

RQ3: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' perceived organizational support (POS)?

RQ4: In what ways does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' perceived leadership conflict?

RQ5: To what extent does an IDC increase independent school climber teachers' organizational knowledge?

RQ6: To what extent does an independent school climber teachers' organizational knowledge affect hybrid promotion opportunities?

RQ7: To what extent does an IDC decrease climber turnover?

RQ8: To what extent do contextual factors, including participants' initial scope of influence and job satisfaction, affect participants' experience of the intervention?

RQ9: To what extent are design-thinking materials and concepts integrated into the intervention?

RQ9A. To what extent does the researcher deliver an overview of the design-thinking process with fidelity?

RQ9B. To what extent do participants in the IDC integrate design-thinking strategies into their meeting conversations and the writing of their 5-Year Vision Plan?

RQ10: To what extent are participants engaged in the intervention process?

Findings

Data was collected using a mixed methods design. A pre- and post-survey was administered to both a treatment and control group. Participants in the treatment group took part in the IDC and also participated in interviews at the start and end of the program. Findings from
the survey indicated a positive shift in participants' sense of community, perceived organizational influence, perceived organizational support, and understanding of leadership. Although the change was significant across all four constructs, both the small sample size and the effect sizes for each construct rendered the statistical power quite low, so results from the survey alone should be interpreted with caution.

That said, the interviews and the structured observation notes from the IDC meetings offered further data to more elaborately illustrate various phenomena associated with the study. Participants ultimately felt more engaged with their organization and relished the opportunity to collaborate with individuals from other areas of their school. Despite communication issues that the researcher observed, the participants reflected positively on their experience in the IDC and voiced a desire to continue their participation. Participants demonstrated an increased understanding of their organization and a heightened sense of empathy for employees from other departments and divisions.

But while administrators involved in the IDC welcomed the idea of hybrid-working teachers in their departments, the teachers participating in the intervention were unanimous in their decision not to take on hybrid roles. In this way, the intervention was successful in bolstering the promotion potential of teachers, but unsuccessful in building their capacity to take on hybrid work. Although originally designed as a means to an end, in light of the findings, the IDC might be better suited as an end point in and of itself. Indeed, participation alone in the IDC had a positive impact on teachers' retention. Results of the survey indicated a shift in planned attrition following participation in the intervention.
CHAPTER ONE

Within most organizational structures currently available in schools, teachers who are seeking greater organizational influence and autonomy must leave the classroom to take on a leadership role (Miles & Baroody, 2012). Researchers have documented the adverse effects of teacher turnover (Price, 1989; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Synar & Maiden, 2012), but this particular strain of turnover poses additional disadvantages for organizations. It may contribute to the ballooning administration to teacher ratio seen in independent schools (Bidwell, 2001; Price, 1989; DASL, 2017), and it reinforces the distance between decisions and their resulting actions (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; Ingersoll, 1996; Price, 1989). Furthermore, teachers’ perceptions of low professional status within a school that offers limited career opportunities have effects on their goals and behaviors (Bandura, 1986). The desire to better situate oneself professionally serves as a catalyst to leaving the classroom (Gilbert, 2011).

It is necessary to examine this paradigm within the context of independent education as this sector of schools represents a unique organizational setting (Kane, 1992). Accordingly, this literature synthesis first offers an overview of the history and general characteristics of independent schools in the United States. It follows with a review of the literature on teacher turnover, generally speaking, before providing a conceptual framework, wherein aspects of independent school organizations that affect their ability to retain teachers is explored. The author continues by situating the specific problem of practice within the framework of organizational theory and, more specifically, organizational hybridity (Battilana & Lee, 2014), first establishing independent schools as hybrid organizations and then explaining the unique context for research such a designation creates. The chapter concludes by explaining the ways
this literature review can contribute to further understanding of this type of turnover and providing a rationale for the factors studied in the subsequent chapter on the needs assessment.

A Context for Independent Schools

The History of Independent Schools in the United States

The existence of independent schools in the United States predates the birth of the nation itself, as schools in colonial America were founded—and funded—by churches and local communities in the 1600s (Carpenter & Kafer, 2012). Early private\(^1\) schools had a bifurcated instructional mandate: to teach academic content and instill religious principles (Carpenter & Kafer, 2012). In this way, independent schools were first born as values-based organizations. In keeping with their dual mission of academic and religious education, schools in the colonial era were funded through a mixture of religious charity, philanthropic donations, and fees, but by the 19\(^{th}\) century, needs based tuition and financial aid were introduced in an attempt to educate a larger population (Goldin, 1999). At this time, independent schools became both values-based and tuition-reliant. When the concept of public schooling gained traction in the late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries, private schools largely became the domain of the Catholic Church, as public schools followed the Protestant agenda present in American politics (Carpenter & Kafer, 2012; Ravitch, 1992).

Despite anti-American rhetoric and failed attempts to pass legislation that forced all children in the United States to attend public schools, private schools survived (Carpenter & Kafer, 2012; Ravitch, 1992). In 1925, the Supreme Court ruled in Pierce v. Society of Sisters (1925) that no student could be forced to attend public schools, as it “conflicts with the right of

\(^{1}\) Although Kane (1992) made a distinction between the terms “private” and “independent” in response to popular cultural stereotypes, for the purposes of this paper, “private” and “independent” are used interchangeably to describe schools that are neither public nor parochial.
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

parents to choose schools where their children will receive appropriate mental and religious training, the right of the child to influence the parents' choice of a school, the right of schools and teachers therein to engage in a useful business or profession, and is accordingly repugnant to the Constitution and void” (p.268). Although open for business, independent schools remained only a small fraction of the market for the first half of the 20th century (Carpenter & Kafer, 2012).

Fortunately for the independent education sector, the 1960s and 1970s brought relief in the form of popular disdain for public schools (Ravitch, 1992). The publishing of the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report (Coleman et al., 1966) brought harsh criticism of the effectiveness of public schools as it concerned economic, racial, and geographic diversity. In a reaction to an overbearing bureaucracy and a program many accused of stifling pluralistic principles, private schools became an outlet for celebrating and exploring the alternative (Ravitch, 1992). With their open market and diverse characteristics, independent schools stood as a beacon of democratic ideals, the answer to education in a multicultural nation (Brosnan, 2006). Many small, alternative, independent schools with niche missions opened their doors during the 1970s and 1980s, targeting students ranging from underserved youth in the inner city (Ravitch, 1992) to students with learning disabilities (Barbieri, 2006). Through these actions, independent schools became values-based, tuition-reliant, and comprised a range of diverse missions.

In 1982, James Coleman and his colleagues declared that private schools created better outcomes in key academic areas, but all in ways that could be replicated in the public sector (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982). Therefore, independent schools became known for being values-based, tuition-reliant, comprising a range of diverse missions, and holding high academic standards. Over the next 30 years, creating greater school choice became a priority for many

**Key Characteristics of Independent Schools**

Understanding the history of independent schools in America is vital for appreciating their current existence. Many of their key characteristics—values-based teaching, tuition-reliant financial structures, diverse missions, and high standards of excellence (Kane, 1992)—were born out of that historical context. But while the items listed above are true for most private schools, Barbieri (1992) argued that one distinction was true for all: independent schools do not need to educate—or please—the entire population. They may design a mission that seeks to educate a small and specific group of students, and they need not worry about excluding or offending those who do not fit their focus (Barbieri, 1992).

This values-based structure is a departure from the pluralistic view of public education, yet its success has caught the attention of many former public-school advocates (Ravitch, 1992). For just as is true in other spheres, the open market in which independent schools exist forces them to compete with one another by targeting specific areas of the population, maintaining high standards, listening to their constituents, and responding to distinct market needs (Chubb & Moe, 1992). Yet, as will be examined throughout this paper, the need to stay afloat in a competitive market while still attending to the internal needs of an educational organization creates challenges for independent schools. Shifting personnel structures within schools is one such challenge. Member schools in the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) reported
a growth in the administration:teacher ratio from .17 in the 1986-87 school year to .3 in the 2017-2018 school year (DASL, 2017), as Figure 1 depicts.

Figure 1

NAIS: Admin to Faculty Ratio

Some of this may be due to the need to compete in the market through the creation of new programs or initiatives that require administrative leaders (Hunt, McGovern, & Taylor, 2016). But given the typical difference between administrative and teacher salaries (i.e., administrators tend to earn more than teachers), the increased administrative corps might help explain why independent school teacher salaries are so low compared to their public-school counterparts (NCES, 2009a). In essence, as more of the budget allocated toward salaries goes to an ever-increasing number of administrators, fewer dollars may be available for teacher salaries. This phenomenon might also explain why the gap between independent and public-school teacher salaries has grown over the last 20 years (Chubb, 2014). And although unsettling,
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

perhaps it is unsurprising that independent schools experience higher rates of teacher turnover than public schools (Ingersoll, 2001; NCES, 2009b), as is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*Turnover, by Years of Experience*

Keeping in mind this amplified rate of faculty attrition in independent school is crucial to understanding the specific type of turnover on which this research focuses.

**Literature Review of Teacher Turnover**

The vast majority of extant scholarship on teacher turnover centers around two overarching perspectives: turnover as an outcome of *individual* phenomena and turnover as an outcome of *organizational* phenomena. Those researchers who subscribe to the former school of thought study such factors as demographic qualities (Borman & Dowling, 2008; MacLaure, 1993; Smith, 2011), individual agency (Smith, 2011; Wilson & Deaney, 2010), efficacy (Lasky, 2005; Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991; Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005; Swanson, 2012), resilience (Doney, 2013; Tait, 2008), and career orientation (Gilbert, 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003;
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

You & Conley, 2015). While much can be learned about turnover at the individual level, the focus of this paper is on the second perspective mentioned above, that of the organization.

Before continuing, it is important to clarify turnover terminology. Bobbitt, Leich, Whitener, and Lynch (1994), in their analysis of the 1991-92 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), used the following language to describe specific turnover behavior: stayers are those teachers who stayed in their current school; movers refers to teachers who left one school for a teaching position at another; and leavers describes teachers who left the teaching profession all together. These terms were adopted by subsequent researchers (e.g., Ingersoll, 2001; Hanushek, 2010; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Shen, 1997). Gilbert (2011), in his ethnographic study of science teachers, suggested the addition of the term transitioners to describe those teachers who never viewed teaching as a permanent profession in the first place and use teaching as a temporary job before moving to something more long-term. In this paper, the term climber is suggested to describe the behavior associated with leaving the classroom in order to take on a leadership position. Because in this latter model teachers may stay within their organizations while still leaving the teaching profession, none of the previous terms accurately captures the full scope of this particular turnover behavior. Thus, the new term is warranted.

Before exploring the potentiality of climber turnover, the following sections outline the major organizational factors that may contribute to turnover writ large: misalignment with the mission (Ingersoll, 2001), issues with leadership (Boyd et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2007; Weiss, 1999; You & Conley, 2015), lack of influence within the organization (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Malen & Hart, 1987; Weiss, 1999), insufficient salary (Brewer, 1996; Clubb, 2014; Dolton & van der Klaaw, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Shen, 1997; Theobald, 1990), a poor sense of community (Doney, 2013; Hausman & Goldring, 2001;
You & Conley, 2015), independent school hiring practices (Chubb & Moe, 1992; Davies & Quirke, 2007, Kane, 1992; Trickett et al., 1992; Quirke, 2009), and a desire for advancement (Brewer, 1996; Gilbert, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

**Misalignment with Mission**

A key characteristic of any independent school is its unique mission (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). In fact, Barbieri (1992) argued that given the marketplace in which they compete, a school’s mission statement is a vital tool for identifying and attracting a niche subgroup within a diverse consumer base. A school may seek to educate a specific type of student—girls, students of color, or underprivileged youth, for instance—or may strive to deliver instruction using a particular methodology, such as Montessori or Waldorf approaches (Barbieri, 1992). So while the mission drives academic and moral educational aims within the school (Simons, 1992), it also plays a financial role in the school’s sustainability. In his seminal work on turnover, Ingersoll (2001) studied the role organizations play in teacher attrition. He used the Schools and Staffing Survey and its supplement, the Teacher Followup [sic] Survey, to track the retention and attrition behaviors of 6,733 public and private school teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). He found that independent schools had higher turnover rates than public schools, and he posited that the narrow mission of independent schools was to blame (Ingersoll, 2001). In essence, when a school has specific and clearly defined values that govern their work but limited to no mechanisms for disagreement with those values (in the way that teachers’ unions offer, for instance), turnover is more likely (Ingersoll, 2001).

**Issues with Leadership**

While a school’s mission generally focuses on instructional or community values, independent schools are also small businesses that must stay economically afloat. When
organizations have dueling identities, breakdowns often occur between leadership and their constituents, particularly when internal constituents (e.g., teachers) notice inconsistencies within the system (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Extant literature on teacher turnover across all sectors has established the importance of leadership for teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Ross & Gray, 2007; Weiss, 1999; You & Conley, 2015). Ross and Gray (2007), for instance, surveyed 3,074 teachers from 218 elementary schools in Ontario on three topics: transformational leadership, collective efficacy, and commitment to community. They found that transformational leaders were capable of creating community commitment and collective efficacy within their organizations, which in turn aided in retention (Ross & Gray, 2007). Both Boyd et al. (2011) and Weiss (1999) found a lack of involvement, appreciation, or support from administration to be a significant predictor of teacher attrition. The former research team surveyed all first-year teachers in New York City (Boyd et al., 2011), while the latter author pulled data from first-year teacher responses to the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (Weiss, 1999). You and Conley (2015) mirrored those findings, but they added to the literature by identifying variation across career stages. Also utilizing data from the SASS, they found that, while issues with administration drove turnover at all career stages directly or indirectly, the influence was direct and most significant for mid-career teachers (You & Conley, 2015).

You and Conley’s (2015) findings on mid-career teachers are particularly troubling, given that mid-career teachers are typically the most stable of the teaching workforce (Shen, 1997). When you factor in the heightened rates of turnover in independent schools\(^2\) (NCES, 2009a) and the increased risk of conflict between leaders and their internal constituents that organizational plurality engenders (Kraatz & Block, 2008), the severity of the problem begins to become clear.

\(^2\) 23.6% of private school teachers have less than three years of experience, as opposed to 13.4% of public school teachers.
Effective leadership is essential for all schools, as it directly and indirectly affects teacher retention, but it is particularly vital for independent schools who are at greater risk for internal conflict and teacher turnover.

**Lack of Influence Within the Organization**

Teachers in both public and private schools have cited a lack of input in organizational decisions as a reason for leaving the classroom (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Malen & Hart, 1987; Weiss, 1999). Organizational influence is different than classroom autonomy, so while teachers’ ability to control their classroom is a common characteristic of independent schools (Chubb & Moe, 1992), their role in programmatic or organizational decision-making is less consistent. Malen and Hart (1987) chronicled the public reform efforts in the 1980s that sought to augment career possibilities for teachers, so the knowledge that teachers’ insulated roles are problematic for the profession is not new. Despite efforts to increase organizational influence and create career ladders for teachers, however, early efforts at reform did not stick (Malen & Hart, 1987).

Ingersoll (1996) studied classroom autonomy and organizational influence separately and found that a lack of teacher influence over the social functioning of the school at large was associated with increased school conflict. Other researchers have linked a negative school climate to teacher attrition (e.g., Borman & Dowling, 2008; Doney, 2013) and the later study by Ingersoll (2001) reaffirmed that notion. As has been mentioned and will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, the bifurcated identity of independent schools alone lends itself to greater internal conflict. Schools only compound their vulnerability if they ignore the additional conflict caused by a diminished faculty role in decision-making.

The findings of Sarafidou and Chatzioannidis (2013) offer additional support for the inclusion of teachers in internal policymaking. The authors studied the participation in decision-
making of 143 teachers in Greek primary schools (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). They compared actual levels with desired levels of participation and found that higher levels of actual participation in decision making and lower levels of deprivation in participation were associated with healthier perceptions of leadership and greater collegiality among colleagues (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). As such, their findings also have bearing on other drivers of climber turnover, namely, leadership issues and sense of community.

**Insufficient Salary**

That teachers' salaries are low relative to other professions is nearly axiomatic. The discrepancy between independent school teacher salaries and public school teacher salaries, however, is well-documented (NCES, 2009b), if not as publically well-known. Figure 3 depicts this difference.

![Wage Difference 2007-2008SY](image)

Figure 3

*Private/Public Wage Difference*
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Not only do independent school teachers make less than their public school counterparts, but the gap in salaries between the two groups has also grown over the last twenty years (Chubb, 2014). Independent teacher salaries also misalign with the increased tuition over the same period, with independent school tuition rising 167%, while median teacher salary increased only 80% (Chubb, 2014).

That does not bode well for teacher turnover in independent schools, as several authors have established the link between teacher salaries and attrition (Brewer, 1996; Dolton & van der Klaaw, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Theobald, 1990; Shen, 1997). Moreover, the nuances of the findings on salary consideration paint a particularly grim picture for independent schools. Murnane and Olsen (1990), in a quantitative study of 13,890 North Carolina teachers, found that higher salaries were associated with teacher retention. Even after controlling for political and environmental factors that would affect attrition, the results indicated an association between salaries and the amount of time teachers stay in the field (Murnane & Olsen, 1990).

Brewer (1996), Dolton and van der Klaaw (1999), and Theobald (1990) all established a link between teacher retention and available earnings. Brewer (1996) found that when high salaries were posted for available positions (those that teachers typically were able to fill) at their schools, teachers stayed in their jobs. However, when higher salaried, available positions were posted elsewhere, teachers were likely to leave (Brewer, 1996). Dolton and van der Klaaw (1999) found similar findings across professions. When available jobs outside the teaching profession boasted higher salaries, teachers were likely to leave their positions (Dolton & van der Klaaw, 1999). Theobald’s (1990) hypothesis about relative deprivation might provide an underlying rationale for the phenomena described by Brewer (1990) and Dolton and van der
Klaaw (1999). The author suggested that teachers leave their positions as a result of assessed valuation (Theobald, 1990). Teachers working in more affluent areas are more likely to leave their positions than teachers in economically disadvantaged areas because the former group's salaries, although equal in outright number to the latter group, are lower relative to their surrounding areas (Theobald, 1990).

In other words, while both groups of teachers may earn the same salary, teachers who work in affluent areas feel like they make less, because their salaries are lower than other professionals' in their area and cannot buy the same amount of goods as they might be able to do elsewhere. Given that independent schools most often service more affluent areas (Kane, 1992), they would seem to be more at risk for this driver of turnover. Indeed, Ingersoll (2001) found that 73% of independent school teachers who left their positions identified a weak salary as a reason for leaving.

Poor Sense of Community

While a school-wide sense of community is a key feature attributed to independent schools (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987), a sense of community among the teaching faculty is a separate issue, and one associated with teacher retention (Doney, 2013; Hausman & Goldring, 2001; You & Conley, 2015). Both Hausman and Goldring (2001) and You and Conley (2015) found that a sense of community engendered collective efficacy and community commitment. Doney (2013), in a longitudinal, ethnographic study of teachers, found that a sense of community was a predictor of teacher resiliency and that teachers who felt part of a community were less likely to leave their positions.

Other researchers have pointed to the cyclical relationship between teacher turnover and a poor sense of community. Ingersoll (2001) posited that turnover was both a cause and effect of
unhealthy organizations (p. 505). Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013), in a quantitative study that utilized data from over 850,000 observations of 4th and 5th grade classrooms over an eight-year period, went further in describing the disruptive effect that extends beyond the “compositional” turnover of teachers (p. 7). In other words, even when equally qualified teachers replaced instructors who left, students’ performance suffered (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The authors linked this diminished performance to a lack of staff cohesion (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). This finding, taken with those of Doney (2013), You and Conley (2015), and Hausman and Goldring (2001), reinforce Ingersoll’s (2001) assertion that turnover is both a cause and effect of unhealthy organizations. Teachers who leave create disruption in staff cohesion (Ronfeldt et al., 2013) which causes less community commitment (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; You & Conley, 2015) which in turn diminishes resiliency and provokes attrition (Doney, 2013).

**Hiring Practices of Independent Schools**

An important consideration, in situating the problem of practice within independent schools, is that the types of teachers hired in the independent setting are quite different from those hired in public schools. For starters, independent schools may select their faculty based on qualities that are uniquely important to their mission, and they do not have to choose from a pool of state-licensed teachers like public school principals must (Chubb & Moe, 1988; Kane, 1992). Davies and Quirke (2007) and Quirke (2009) studied 49 new-sector independent schools in Canada. They found that independent school leaders often prioritize personality traits and soft skills over more objective measures of achievement (Davies & Quirke, 2007; Quirke, 2009).

Kane (1992) also reported that independent schools prefer to hire teachers with non-education degrees from competitive colleges. These hiring preferences are important to consider when taken with the work of Murnane and Olsen (1990), who found that teachers with high
opportunity-cost (those whose educational backgrounds were competitive in their field) were more likely to leave the classroom than teachers with low opportunity-cost. Kane’s (1992) and Murnane and Olsen’s (1990) findings, when taken together, suggest that independent school teachers, by nature of the very characteristics that earned them their jobs, are more likely to leave them.

It is also worth considering the generational qualities of teachers in the workforce. Hunt, McGovern, and Taylor (2016) called attention to the growing number of Millennial teachers currently employed by independent schools. They echoed the findings of Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons (2010) that members of the Millennial generation place a high priority on opportunities for advancement and a low priority on company loyalty (Hunt et al., 2016). In other words, without an opportunity for leadership within the school in which they work, Millennial teachers are likely to leave their positions.

Desire for a Promotion

In light of the findings on hiring practices of independent schools, it is unsurprising that a common reason for turnover is the desire for a new job (Brewer, 1996; Gilbert, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Ingersoll (2001) found that nearly one-third of independent school teachers who left their positions did so to pursue a different job. Brewer’s (1996) findings suggested a reason: when administrative positions were available elsewhere, teachers left to fill them. Building on the work of Murnane and Olsen (1990) in North Carolina, Brewer (1996) used a variety of economic models to measure the probability of a teacher quitting against the increasing path of his salary and the probability of obtaining an administrative position. The results indicated that when higher salaries were available for positions that teachers generally filled, teachers were more likely to stay in their career. Conversely, when administrative
positions were available in districts other than their own, teachers were more likely to leave. Both Gilbert (2011) and Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that career orientation frequently determined whether or not teachers stayed in their positions. Gilbert (2011) followed two teachers over the course of several years as they entered and exited the teaching profession, while Johnson and Birkeland (2003) interviewed 60 new teachers in Massachusetts as part of the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. Both studies found that individuals who left the teaching field did so because they never viewed teaching as a permanent career in the first place (Gilbert, 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). This is particularly important to note, as independent schools favor hiring individuals who don’t have education degrees (Kane, 1992), a possible indicator that they do not view education as a life-long career option.

**Conceptual Framework**

In the past, researchers of teacher turnover have often relied on conceptual frameworks drawn from the economic theory of supply and demand (Borman & Downling, 2008) and from Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory (e.g., Swanson, 2012; Tait 2008). In light of the findings described in the literature review, and specifically responding to the positions of Ingersoll (2001) and Borman and Dowling (2008), this author employs a conceptual framework more closely aligned with the sociology of organizations. Figure 4 presents the conceptual
In the suggested conceptual framework, desire for advancement or a change in position serves as a mediator between climber turnover and either independent school teacher characteristics or dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is caused by lack of input or influence (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Malen & Hart, 1987; Weiss, 1999), insufficient salary (Brewer, 1996; Chubb, 2014; Dolton & van der Klaaw, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Shen, 1997; Theobald, 1990), poor leadership (Boyd et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2007; Weiss, 1999; You & Conley, 2015), or a lack of community (Doney, 2013; Hausman & Goldring, 2001; You & Conley, 2015).

Teacher characteristics can either directly or indirectly predict a desire for advancement. The items shaded in gray represent factors that may be affected by the consequences of
organizational plurality, which will be discussed in the next section. For instance, a lack of a sense of community may be a result of tensions between internal constituents who attend to different organizational identities (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Alternatively, preferred teacher characteristics might be driven by financial realities as much as educational mission (Kane, 1992; Orlin, 2013). Insufficient salaries could be explained away as a problem with the educational institution at large (Eggers & Calageri, 2011; Loeb & Page, 2000) or as the result of financial trade-offs necessary in independent school organizations (Kane, 1992; Orlin, 2013).

Theoretical Frameworks

New Institutionalism

In order to understand organizational hybridity (Battilana & Lee, 2014) and plurality (Kraatz & Block, 2008)—the theoretical framework through which this researcher views the issue of turnover—it is important to first understand new institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), the school of thought from which hybridity and plurality was developed. In the beginning of the twentieth century, Max Weber’s seminal work on bureaucracy was translated into English and quickly adopted by American scholars (Handel, 2003). Sociologists interested in organizations, following Weber’s lead, studied the rational behaviors of managers and subordinates (Handel, 2003).

Over the last half of a century, however, the field of organizational theory, born from the sociology of organizations, has undergone shifts in focus (Greenwood, Hinings, & Whetten, 2014). Organization theorists in the middle of the twentieth century explored the ways in which organizations negotiated the bureaucracy Weber had described (Child, 1972; Pugh, Hickson, & Hinings, 1969). Influenced by work on contingency theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), many researchers took up the charge of exploring various mechanisms that drive organizational
conditions. As Greenwood et al. (2014) pointed out, the work of scholars interested in contingency theory focused on processes within an organization. New institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), on the other hand, situated the organization within its broader institutional context and studied the relationship between the organization and the institution.

This newer theory gained considerable momentum (Greenwood et al., 2014). Extending the work of Karl Weick (1976) on loose coupling in organizations, Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that the public mission of an organization “reflects the myth of their institutional environments” (p. 341), while actual practicalities drive the day-to-day exercises and behaviors of employees. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) contributed to the new institutional literature with their work on isomorphism. They maintained that a need to conform to those institutional myths to gain legitimacy in the market caused organizations to become increasingly homogenous (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). These seminal studies spurred an era of new institutionalism in organizational theory, wherein researchers focused heavily on the societal norms that frame organizations but not necessarily on the organizations themselves (Greenwood et al., 2014).

Regarding the problem of climber turnover, new institutionalism could help to explain why independent schools—which are affected by market competition (Chubb & Moe, 1988)—do not always make decisions that are best for the day-to-day mechanisms of their organizations. In an effort to meet financial goals, for instance, they may deprioritize the educational mandate of their missions. Unfortunately, extant scholarship on loose coupling in education (e.g., Aurini, 2012; Malen & Hart, 1987; Robinson, 2012) do not investigate its presence in independent schools. Aurini (2012) studied the phenomenon in for-profit learning centers, Malen and Hart

While each of the works above identified the presence of loose coupling, their research contexts did not align with the bifurcated environment present in independent schools. Davies and Quirke (2007) and Quirke (2009) did explore isomorphism among new independent schools in Toronto, but their findings were mixed. The schools they studied engaged in competitive marketing through measures that were not institutionally established (i.e., storytelling in lieu of quantitative test scores) (Davies & Quirke, 2007), but the patterns of competitive behavior (e.g., catering to parent perceptions) were more typical of institutional norms (Quirke, 2009). According to Greenwood et al. (2014), a major flaw of new institutional research is that, in an effort to understand the societal landscape within which organizations function, it ignores the differences among organizations themselves. The authors also argued that it is possible for organizations to function within more than one institutional landscape at once (Greenwood et al., 2014). This latter contention could help explain the mixed findings of Davies and Quirke (2007) and Quirke (2009) and allude to the limitations of new institutional theory for understanding independent schools. In other words, the Toronto private schools may be functioning within at least two institutional settings: the business institution that mandates catering to the customer and the educational institution that mandates specific social-emotional and pedagogical standards.

**Organizational Hybridity**

Organizational hybridity offers one possible answer for researchers interested in taking up Greenwood et al.’s (2014) call for a return to an organizational theory that, unlike institutionalism, focuses on the organizations themselves. Battilana and Lee (2014), in their study of social enterprises, defined hybridity as an enterprise that combines several
organizational identities, organizational forms, or institutional logics (p. 400-401).

Organizational theorists interested in hybridity often study the ways in which tensions between multiple identities, for instance, within a single organization play out (Battilana & Lee, 2014). For example, Kraatz and Block (2008) identified numerous organizations that function with multiple identities, ranging from crisis centers to public broadcasters.

It is this author’s contention that independent schools also fall into the category of organizational hybrids, as they must balance two fundamental identities: educational institution and nonprofit organization (Kane, 1992). They must meet dueling demands: an edge in a competitive marketplace and best practice in teaching and learning (Chubb & Moe, 1988).

Indeed, this pluralistic dynamic finds new institutional theory inadequate for explaining the ways healthy organizations function (Kraatz & Block, 2008). While organizations strive for legitimacy in each of the institutional environments they inhabit, additional forces must also be at play to allow for the organization to work effectively.

**Hybridity in higher education.** Understanding this phenomenon within the context of independent education is challenging because of the scarcity of literature or data available on this sector (Goldin, 1999). Therefore, it is helpful to look to other enterprises for guidance. Private universities offer obvious grounds for comparison, as they are educational institutions that, like independent schools, are mission-driven and dependent on income from tuition and other internally created fundraising ventures (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007). As private organizations, they must respond to market shifts and meet the needs of their constituents (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007; Kraatz & Zajac, 1996). But multiple identities within the organization threaten their ability to maintain organizational healthiness (Kraatz & Block, 2008).
The tension between the athletic and academic wings of private universities is an excellent example of that vulnerability (Benford, 2007; Kraatz & Block, 2008). Benford (2007) chronicled the faculty-led movement against what he called “edutainment” (p. 12), the university’s involvement in the entertainment industry via their athletic departments. Kraatz and Block (2008) drew attention to the fact that universities rely as much on their athletic departments as they do their academic departments for financial sustainability, yet tensions remain high between the two. Despite a shared community and organizational mission, “relationships that are cooperative in their effect might remain quite conflictual in their process” (Kraatz & Block, 2008, p. 18).

This phenomenon has been documented in higher educational institutions around the world. For instance, in a study of 26 universities in Europe, Canhilal, Lepori, and Seeber (2016) found that universities compartmentalized themselves when faced with competing institutional influences. In response to pressure from New Public Management measures that sought to apply more managerial logic to academic institutions, universities negotiated the shift by adapting highly individualized responses based on the specific need at the moment (Canhilal, Lepori, & Seeber, 2016). Furthermore, Christopher and Leung (2015), in their study of the same institutional shift in Australian universities, found that the compartmentalization reached unhealthy levels and resulted in a “silo mentality” (p. 187). Parker (2011) cited harmful increases in workloads among academics as they attempted to meet the demands of a new, financially-driven academic institution, one characterized by larger class-sizes and increased teaching loads. These normative shifts can create antagonism between various constituents within the organization (Kraatz & Block, 2008).
Some scholars have pointed to the rise in accountability measures to explain increased internal tensions (Brown, 2017; Burke, 2005). While Brown (2017) recognized seven “silos” of accountability in higher education institutions, he described the real problem as arising from the “accountability triangle” (Burke, 2005): the market, the state, and the profession. Although universities, he argued, did compartmentalize themselves in attending to diverse accountability measures (e.g., accreditation, research output, educational effectiveness), the problem arose when multiple logics existed within each silo (Brown, 2017). For instance, those responsible for accountability of instructional effectiveness had to function within state logics (compliance with federal or state educational mandates), professional logics (best practice promulgated by learning sciences), and market logics (performance as measured in career attainment of graduates) (Brown, 2017).

Similarly, independent schools, while not beholden to the state, certainly must function within professional and market logics. Additionally, schools internally compartmentalize themselves into organizational silos (e.g., development, admissions, teaching faculty) that must function within both logics: development teams must “sell” the academic merits of the school while also meeting monetary fundraising goals; admissions officers must admit students that fit the educational mission of the school while also fulfilling enrollment goals; teachers must meet the instructional needs of their students while maintaining marketability. In other words, much like higher education, independent schools demonstrate organizational hybridity.

The tension between economic and academic tension in postsecondary education (Birnbaum, 2004) is also present in the community college setting. Twambly and Townsend (2001) credit the shifting purpose of community colleges—from transitional or vocational settings in the 20th century to important degree-granting institutions in their own right in the
globalized 21st century—as a reason for bifurcation. As the new economy calls for specific technical training, and as four-year universities face scrutiny for their failure to prepare students at a reasonable price (Twambly & Townsend, 2001), community colleges have adapted toward what Levin (2006) called “academic capitalism” (p.62). Teaching faculty sit at the crossroads between the academy and the market:

Their work as educators—teaching, the development of curriculum, counseling and advising of students, and committee service—is configured or framed within an economic and competitive context, even though their values may be based upon other principles and other goals, such as personal and cognitive development of students or the social advancement of their society. Faculty frame this tension as a conflict between education and training; between traditional institutional goals, such as student-centered aims, and economic interests, such as business- and industry-centered aims; and between centralized, hierarchical decision-making and decentralized, democratic, or shared decision-making. (Levin, 2006, p. 84)

The notion that community college faculty’s work is imbedded within an economic context aligns with the experience of independent school teachers. While teachers may not be directly called upon to market their classrooms, their work is situated within a market-driven institution (Chubb & Moe, 1988). As such, they must balance their own values against those of a more consumer-driven ethos, much like independent schools.

**Hybridity in healthcare.** The healthcare field provides another area for comparison, as healthcare and education are both service-oriented enterprises in the nonprofit sector (Barrett, Balloun, & Weinstein, 2005), and both fields are dominated by “resilient professional cultures which establish different modes of managing” (Canhilal et al., 2016, p. 170). As service-
providing institutions, they both must manage the difficulty in measuring the "output" of their respective enterprises (Quirke, 2009). Similar to private universities, health care is a pluralistic enterprise that must contend with a multitude of constituents, objectives, and ideologies (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001).

For example, Dunn and Jones (2010) found that shifts in the characteristics of medical education over time resulted in a tension between medical practices born from a care logic and those born from a science logic. The professional practice is not the only entity affected by multiple logics; the organizational structures present in the healthcare field have also been forced to change. Rundell, Davies, and Hodges (2014) studied conflict between physicians and managers in the United States and United Kingdom. The authors found that external demands at both the institutional and organizational levels got in the way of cohesion between these two groups (Rundell et al., 2014). Here, the pattern continues. As health care becomes an increasingly complex field that must work to satisfy many (occasionally conflicting) demands, breakdowns can occur (Denis et al., 2001).

Given these trends in private universities, community colleges, and healthcare, it is no surprise that scholars are interested in finding solutions to the problems that abound from the pluralism present in organizational hybrids (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Kraatz & Block, 2008). Although the literature on independent schools and markets does not make use of the term hybrid or pluralistic, several authors have captured the phenomena described by Battilana and Lee (2014) and Kraatz and Block (2008). These scholars recognize the occasionally conflicting priorities of independent schools, and they situate them within equally contentious environments.
Independent Schools as Hybrid Organizations

As discussed in the institutional settings above, hybrid organizations contain two or more organizational identities, organizational forms, or institutional logics (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Independent schools certainly contain multiple organizational identities (Kane, 1992; Kane & Mason, 1992) and, in many cases, must work within multiple institutional logics (Davies & Quirke, 2007; Quirke, 2009). In her study of Ontario private schools, Quirke (2009) captured the complex identity-negotiating new independent schools engage in to legitimize themselves in the market. They must satisfy the educational and moral values ingrained in their mission, compete for enrollment, and stay financially afloat (Quirke, 2009).

In an attempt to define the diverse landscape of American independent schools, Kane (1992) identified six criteria: “self-governance, self-support, self-defined curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected faculty, and small size” (p. 7). While some items on that list can be divided between independent schools’ divergent objectives—educational excellence and financial sustainability—many of those criteria could be said to fall into both classifications. Figure 5 illustrates the six criteria along a hybrid continuum.

---

3 The nature of private schools in Canada is dependent on their province (Quirke, 2009). While not all private schools in Canada are comparable to American independent schools, Ontario’s system offers fair grounds for comparison. Private schools in Ontario do not have to participate in the standardized tests required of public schools, and there are no regulations on the schools’ hiring practices or curriculum (Quirke, 2009).
Figure 5

Independent School Criteria

Self-selected faculty and self-defined curriculum fall neatly into the category of educational excellence. Self-support is a clear financial matter. Small size, on the other hand, serves as a bedrock of educational excellence (Chubb & Moe, 1992) while simultaneously creating obstacles to those responsible for financial viability (Kane, 1992). Self-governance is another criterion replete with conflicting objectives. School heads, for instance, must balance issues of curriculum, hiring, student enrollment, and fundraising, and the characteristics of their job often drastically change from year to year as some matters become more pressing than others (Kane & Mason, 1992). Student selection is also both an educational and financial matter. Schools admit students based on their alignment with the school’s mission and values (Trickett, Trickett, Castro, & Schaffner, 1982), but they must also consider the financial realities regarding full-pay or financial-aid students (Kane, 1992).

The oscillation between educational and financial objectives creates a certain landscape in independent schools not seen in other education sectors (Kane, 1992). Both the educational body of the school and the business side of the organization contribute to and are affected by the
consequences of hybridity. There are positive trade-offs to many of the hardships created by dueling identities. Curricular flexibility, for instance, is a common feature of independent school teaching (Chubb & Moe, 1992), born out of the fact that independent schools do not have to satisfy state or federal education mandates. It may serve as an ameliorating factor for teachers, who—as a result of the tight financial budgets typical of small, private organizations—are paid less in independent schools than they are in public schools (Chubb, 2014; Ingersoll, 2001).

Similarly, the positive effects of autonomy are well-documented in the independent school literature (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Shen, 1997; Weiss, 1999; You & Conley, 2015) and classroom autonomy is a mainstay of independent teaching (Chubb & Moe, 1992; Kane, 1992). This factor may serve as a buffer for the climate of competition in which independent schools must operate (Davies & Quirke, 2007; Quirke, 2009). Indeed, the bureaucracy of independent schools resembles a business as much as it does any department of education (Chubb & Moe, 1988). Teachers often must serve as de facto admissions representatives as well as content instructors (Bullard, 1992). Above all, as was mentioned previously in this paper, independent schools are driven by their mission (Barbieri, 1992). This key criterion can create a sense of community, (Chubb & Moe, 1988; Kane, 1992), an idea propagated by Coleman and Hoffer (1987). But, as was discussed earlier in the literature review, it can also serve as a catalyst for attrition (Ingersoll, 2001).

It is for the reasons outlined above—self-governance of internally competing interests, self-support measures that may conflict with educational values, self-selected faculty that are at high risk for turnover, and a self-selected curriculum and small class size that may drive up cost—that this author views independent schools as a unique setting for researching the issue of teacher turnover. While there are many attractive qualities about independent school teaching,
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

small, private schools experience higher rates of turnover than public schools (Ingersoll, 2001). The advent of charter schools and the rapid increase in home schooling have created new market competition that did not exist before (Hunt, McGovern, & Taylor, 2016). Over the past 20 years, independent schools have fallen further and further behind their public-school counterparts in teacher salaries (Chubb, 2014). In other words, independent schools are facing challenges in retaining teachers not experienced in other school settings.

Conclusions

While the conceptual framework offered earlier draws from the extant scholarship on teacher turnover and organizational hybridity, more research is necessary to determine the relationships described therein, and to establish a clearer understanding of the concept of climber turnover. Independent schools, perhaps because of the diversity of their missions and community demographics, or because of the small percentage of the total school population they constitute, are not very present in the literature on turnover. While findings can be precemecaled together, little is written about the organizational effects independent schools have on attrition behavior.

Therefore, the ensuing chapter seeks to address those holes in the research through a needs assessment performed at an independent school in suburban Pennsylvania. Through teacher surveys and faculty focus groups, the author investigates the characteristics of the teachers employed at the school and their opinions regarding the factors presented in the conceptual framework. Additionally, the author interviews school leaders in an effort to triangulate data collected from the teachers and confirm findings from the literature regarding independent school hiring practices.
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Important questions regarding *climber* turnover remain unanswered. Do independent schools inadvertently create inevitable turnover through their hiring practices? Do the small communities that researchers extol as the key to effective education actually push their teachers out the door? Is climber turnover actually a phenomenon affecting independent schools? It is this author’s intention to seek out answers to those questions and, if possible, create sustaining solutions.
Chapter one examined the literature on teacher attrition and retention, particularly teasing out the drivers of turnover. At the organizational level, the extant scholarship points to several key factors. These include misalignment with the mission (Ingersoll, 2001), issues with leadership (Boyd et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2007; Weiss, 1999; You & Conley, 2015), lack of influence within the organization (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Weiss, 1999), insufficient salary (Brewer, 1996; Chubb, 2014; Dolton & van der Klaaw, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Murmane & Olsen, 1990; NCES, 2009a; Shen, 1997; Theobald, 1990), a poor sense of community (Doney, 2013; Hausman & Goldring, 2001; You & Conley, 2015), independent school hiring practices (Chubb & Moe, 1992; Davies & Quirke, 2007; Kane, 1992; Trickett, Trickett, Castro, & Schaffner, 1992; Quirke, 2009), and a desire for advancement (Brewer, 1996; Gilbert, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). This chapter describes a needs assessment, conducted in the spring of 2017, that sought to investigate the presence and extent of these factors at Northeastern Academy⁴, an independent school in the greater Philadelphia area. Subsequent sections of this paper provide a rationale for the study before describing the participants, measures, and data collection methods employed. It concludes with a summary of the findings.

**Goals and Objectives**

Northeastern Academy is a college preparatory school that serves 315 students in grades 1-12, all who have a diagnosed learning disability (Northeastern Academy, 2017). It employs approximately 75 teaching faculty and 40 administrative staff. Founded in 2006, Northeastern

---

⁴ For confidentiality purposes, a code name is employed to protect the privacy of the school in question. Data retrieved from Northeastern Academy publications are cited within the text with these pseudonyms and the year they were retrieved. Pseudonyms also appear in the references.
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

grew from 24 students in its inaugural year to its 2017 enrollment of over 300; in that time, the school also moved to a new, expansive campus (Northeastern Academy, 2017). The target population for the ensuing study is all teachers at Northeastern Academy. While participation in the needs assessment, and certainly involvement in the subsequent intervention, likely has direct effects on participants, it is the researcher's hope that the effects of both studies will reach beyond those who actually took part in them.

The needs assessment establishes the problem of climber turnover at Northeastern Academy and investigates the degree to which each of the drivers above is present. Existing scholarship has approached the issue of turnover through both individual and organizational frameworks. Those researchers interested in the former perspective have studied demographic qualities (Borman & Dowling, 2008; MacLaure, 1993; Smith, 2011), individual agency (Gilbert, 2011; Smith, 2011; Wilson & Deaney, 2010), efficacy (Lasky, 2005; Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991; Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005; Swanson, 2012), resilience (Doney, 2013; Tait, 2008), and career orientation (Gilbert, 2011; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; You & Conley, 2015). That said, Gilbert's (2011) assertions that teachers' career decisions are constructivist in nature suggest that attempting to create an intervention that could meet the diverse individual needs of all teachers would need to be sizable in order to be successful. Soriano (2013) warned against designing needs assessments with unreasonable outcomes, so given the temporal and financial limitations of this researcher's work, this needs assessment only focuses on the organizational factors that contribute to the problem.

The purpose of this study is to explore the presence of climber turnover drivers at Northeastern and to discern the organizational levers that may exacerbate the problem. As such, the needs assessment aims to answer the following research questions:
1. To what extent is climber turnover present at Northeastern Academy?
2. To what extent is mission alignment related to climber turnover?
3. To what extent is leadership related to climber turnover?
4. To what extent is organizational influence related to climber turnover?
5. To what extent is salary related to climber turnover?
6. To what extent is a sense of community related to climber turnover?
7. To what extent are hiring practices related to climber turnover?

Methodology

Participants

The participants included 46 teachers and three division heads employed at Northeastern Academy during the 2016-17 school year. The teachers represented the school's three divisions: lower school (n=17; N=27), middle school (n=14; N=28), and upper school (n=15; N=20). The three division heads each represented one of those divisions. All participants were volunteers who responded to a request for participation sent via email to the entire faculty at Northeastern Academy. Of the teacher-participants listed above, six upper school teachers, three middle school teachers, and seven lower school teachers participated in follow-up focus groups.

Measures

Three separate instruments were used to gather data on the factors that contribute to turnover: a teacher survey, leadership interviews, and follow-up focus groups with teachers who completed the survey. The teacher survey (Appendix A) was adapted from the 2012-2013 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) (NCES, 2012), a supplement to the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) administered by the National Center for Education Statistics. Appendix B
presents the survey questions administered to teachers alongside the corresponding TFS question number from which each item from the needs assessment survey was pulled.

Following a semi-structured interview style (O’Leary, 2014) the leadership interview questions (Appendix C) and the focus group interview questions (Appendix D) were both developed by the researcher to provide structure and cohesion to both data collections. The question sets were designed to investigate the presence of the turnover constructs previously described. Table 1 presents those variables and the specific items from each instrument that measured them.

Table 1: Variables Investigated in Each Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Teacher Survey</th>
<th>Leadership Interviews</th>
<th>Faculty Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misalignment with mission</td>
<td>Q7i, j</td>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Q6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with leadership</td>
<td>Q6g, l, Q7a, g, l, Q11l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of influence within the organization</td>
<td>Q6c,i,j, Q11m,n</td>
<td>Q5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient salary</td>
<td>Q6a,b, Q7b, Q11c,d</td>
<td>Q3, Q4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor sense of community</td>
<td>Q6e,f, Q7h, i, k, q</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q4, Q5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring practices of independent schools</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
<td>Q1, Q2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for a better job</td>
<td>Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11a, f, i, j, Q11n</td>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>Q2, Q3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the survey covered the variables in question in detail, the leadership interviews and focus groups were able to provide a deeper description of the factors under investigation. Although the focus group questions did not specifically target all variables, the responses did. Those findings will be explicated in a later section.
Data Collection

The study followed a mixed-method approach. As was stated above, the researcher utilized surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather information on the organizational factors that drive climber turnover.

Participant Recruitment

Before data collection began, the researcher invited all teaching faculty and all division heads at Northeastern Academy to participate. Those teachers interested in participating stayed late to take the survey on an in-service day. Because of the nature of the professional development offerings on the day the survey was administered, the middle and upper school teacher-participants took the survey together in a shared space, and the lower school teacher-participants took the survey separately shortly afterward. The survey, composed entirely of closed and Likert-scale questions, was administered using Qualtrics software (Qualtrics, 2017). Teachers signed a paper consent form and also digitally consented in order to access the survey. At the completion of the survey, the participants were invited to sign up for a follow-up focus group.

From the names of the interested teachers, three focus groups were created: one upper school focus group, one lower school focus group, and one multi-division focus group. Both the number of total participants and the number of teachers interested in participating in a focus group were less for the middle school, so the multi-division focus group was meant to even out the sizes of the groups. The focus groups met before and after school hours, and each lasted between 35 and 45 minutes. All conversations were recorded and transcribed using Rev software (Rev, 2014).
Additionally, all three division heads at Northeastern Academy agreed to participate in 1:1 interviews. Each interview happened during school hours and lasted between 35 and 45 minutes. The division heads each signed a paper consent form and gave verbal consent at the start of the interview. As was the case with the focus groups, the interviews were recorded and transcribed using Rev software (Rev, 2014).

Data analysis

Quantitative data. The survey data was first converted into tables by question type so that general trends could be identified from the responses. The data was then color coded to denote an association with one or more of the research questions. The table below shows the pre-established color codes.

Table 2: Variable Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is climber turnover present at Northeastern Academy?</td>
<td>CLIMBER</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is mission alignment related to climber turnover?</td>
<td>MISSION</td>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is leadership related to climber turnover?</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is organizational influence related to climber turnover?</td>
<td>INFLUENCE</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is salary related to climber turnover?</td>
<td>SALARY</td>
<td>Gray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is a sense of community related to climber turnover?</td>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are hiring practices related to climber turnover?</td>
<td>HIRING</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative data. Following O’Leary’s (2014) methods for qualitative data analysis, the researcher noted personal bias before iteratively reading and coding each transcript. Because the
researcher serves in both a teaching and administrative capacity, all data was coded twice with
each perspective prioritized and examined. Both positive and negative attributes of each code
were noted, regardless of discrepancy among participants. As a whole, the responses were coded
using the same color coding utilized in the quantitative data analysis in order to align the
responses with the original research questions.

Merging data. The researcher employed the data transformation method (Creswell &
Plano Clark, 2011, p. 213) to merge the quantitative and qualitative data. By coding both data
sets with the same color codes and categories, themselves taken from the research questions, the
qualitative and quantitative data could be easily grouped together and used to tell a more
complete story. By keeping both the research questions in mind as well as the factors identified
through a synthesis of the literature, the coding of variables remained closely tied to the aims of
the needs assessment (Soriano, 2013). One additional factor clearly emerged in the study: the
perceived sense of low value from the organization. While this did not align with any previously
established codes, its presence across both qualitative and quantitative data warranted its
inclusion in the discussion of findings below.

Findings

Quantitative Data: Survey Responses

The 46 survey respondents were more or less evenly distributed across the three divisions
at Northeastern Academy: upper, middle, and lower schools. Nearly 70% of them held a
Master’s degree, but their level of teaching experiences varied. Of the 46 participants, 17% were
in the 1-3 year category for experience, making Northeastern’s faculty better than the national
independent school average for percentage of new teachers, although worse than the national
public school average. The responses for household income were dispersed, and no clear trend emerged. Table 3 displays those demographic statistics.

Table 3: Survey Respondent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Lower School</td>
<td>17 (N=27)</td>
<td>36.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>14 (N=28)</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper School</td>
<td>15 (N=20)</td>
<td>32.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of Education</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>69.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of teaching experience</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-10 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income</td>
<td>Less than $35k</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$35k- $49,999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$50k- $74,999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$75k- $99,999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$100k- $149,999</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$150k or more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current teaching positions. The teachers were asked to consider their teaching position and rate those aspects of their job as “Excellent/Highly Effective,” “Satisfactory/Effective,” and “Unsatisfactory/Not that Effective.” Table 4 provides the responses and identifies the majority trends. Teachers identified salary, benefits, recognition from administrators, influence over school policies, performance evaluation, workload manageability, and work/life balance as being unsatisfactory or ineffective components of their teaching positions. Many aspects of their jobs were rated highly, with safety, autonomy, work conditions, intellectual challenge, sense of personal accomplishment, opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others, and teacher efficacy among some of the most highly rated features.
Table 4: Satisfaction with Teaching Position Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent/Highly Effective</th>
<th>Satisfactory/Effective</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory/Not that effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plan)</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>58.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for professional advancement or promotion</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for professional development</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for learning from colleagues</td>
<td>52.71%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social relationships with colleagues</td>
<td>54.35%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition and support from administrators</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>69.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety of environment</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>54.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence over school policies and practices</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy and control over your own work</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional prestige</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>71.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures for performance evaluation</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manageability of workload</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to balance personal life and work</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of resources and materials/equipment for doing your job</td>
<td>32.61%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General work conditions</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked about their school, teachers at Northeastern Academy responded positively, by and large. In fact, after identifying the majority trends, only 3 of 17 indicators fell into the “Disagree or Strongly Disagree” category for the majority, and those dealt with salary and student behavior. There were two items that were nearly evenly distributed between agreement and disagreement, both dealing with issues of leadership. Those points will be further explicated in the discussion section. Table 5 displays the findings regarding school characteristics.

Table 5: School Characteristics Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school administration’s behavior toward the staff is</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supportive and encouraging.</td>
<td>13.04</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my teaching salary.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of student misbehavior in this school (such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interferes with my teaching.</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32.61</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.</td>
<td>17.39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>69.57</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff.</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65.22</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My division head enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35.56</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes.</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30.43</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.</td>
<td>32.61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52.17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.</td>
<td>17.39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34.78</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members.</td>
<td>43.48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45.65</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done. | 19.57 | 9 | 50.0 | 23 | 23.91 | 11 | 6.52 | 3
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
School mandated standards have had a positive influence on my satisfaction with teaching. | 8.7 | 4 | 52.17 | 24 | 34.78 | 16 | 4.35 | 2
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
I am given the support I need to teach students with special learning needs. | 34.78 | 16 | 52.17 | 24 | 10.87 | 5 | 2.17 | 1
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
The amount of student tardiness and absenteeism in this school interferes with my teaching. | 35.56 | 16 | 44.44 | 20 | 13.33 | 6 | 6.67 | 3
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school. | 30.43 | 14 | 60.78 | 28 | 6.52 | 3 | 2.17 | 1
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses with that of other teachers. | 36.96 | 17 | 50.0 | 23 | 13.04 | 6 | 0 | 0

**Attrition intent.** Of the 46 respondents, approximately 60% considered applying or actually applied for a teaching position elsewhere, and roughly 24% considered applying or actually applied for a non-teaching position elsewhere. For those who indicated that they had considered leaving, a second series of questions asked them to provide reasoning for their planned attrition. Table 6 describes general attrition intent and Table 7 illustrates teachers’ rationale for leaving.

Table 6: *Attrition Intent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considered applying, or</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.86%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>actually applied, for a teaching position at another school</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>39.13%</th>
<th>18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considered applying, or actually applied, for a non-teaching position elsewhere</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>76.09%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7: Rationale for Planned Attrition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I want to take a job more conveniently located</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family)</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I want or need a higher salary</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I need better benefits</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I am concerned about my job security</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with my job description or assignment (e.g., grade level, responsibilities, subjects taught)</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I do not have enough autonomy over my classroom</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I feel like there are too many intrusions on my teaching time</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I want the opportunity to work at a specific school/company</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with my current workplace conditions</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because student discipline problems are an issue</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with the administration</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with the lack of influence I have over school policies and practices</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with my opportunity to professionally advance at this school</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative Data: Interview and Focus Group Responses**

Based on the contributions of faculty and leaders who took part in the focus groups and interviews, the researcher identified key characteristics for each of the codes established in the initial coding table. One additional code was added in response to its high frequency in all of the qualitative data. Those findings are described below.
Alignment with mission. In the focus groups, the teachers unanimously extolled the school’s mission. Many of them mentioned it as a driving force behind why they stayed at Northeastern. One teacher, in response to a question about what kept her from leaving responded, “I think the mission of the school. I really think it’s positive. A lot of schools should be modeled after a lot of stuff that we do.” Another faculty member cited the school’s secondary mission (focused on disseminating best teaching practices to educators outside the school’s walls) as one of the most positive aspects of his job.

“Yeah, I would describe relationships both with students and faculty as being the most center point of positivity. I would also describe that when [Northeastern] shares its mission of improving the lives of students with fidelity to the outside world, that’s also, I think, a seed of positivity. I don’t know that it always does it in the right way, but when it does do it in the right way, I think that is really impactful. And that can be really motivating and inspiring.”

Another frequently mentioned retention driver was instructional independence. And while autonomy in the classroom is not explicitly stated in the school’s mission, the teachers largely contributed the mission to their freedom to teach how they wanted. One teacher shared, “We’re all working here, lifelong learners, people that absorb space and the people and the world around us, which is really amazing. And having that opportunity to bring whatever to the classroom, and have that flexibility is really special… you work really hard to get the kids to want to know, to not be defeated by their disabilities, but to be like, ‘Whoa, cool, that exists?’…it’s exciting.”

Leadership. At the time of the needs assessment, one division was having a particularly difficult time with their division head, so there was a variety of responses from teachers about the effectiveness of their immediate supervisors, ranging from very positive (“I feel well supported
by my direct supervisor. Anytime I’ve said I wanted to do something, they said do it and we’ll figure out how to make it work”) to very negative (“I think that [my division head] is not capable of running a division and I think we do pick up a lot of what she can’t do and I think it’s been really kind of difficult”). Despite the variety of responses about the effectiveness of leadership, all three leaders gave concrete examples of things they did to nurture a sense of community, serve their teams, and create a positive work environment for their staff.

Perhaps part of the discrepancy between teachers’ and leaders’ views of the success of leaders could be attributed to confusion about what leader to go to. Teachers attributed leadership confusion to communication errors, as can be seen in this teacher’s questions: “I have to always ask, ‘What’s your specific role?’ ‘What’s your specific role?’ You know, what is everybody’s role, and if you say you’re going to sign on for this and you’re going to do it, then you need to do it and get it done… because it does impact us, especially with parents.” Others lamented not knowing where to go with questions. As one teacher explained, the rapid growth of the school could be a contributing factor.

“In the beginning years, there were so few of us. And the directives were coming directly from people in the front office. And now that there’s a lot of middle ring people, I have less and less contact with people that run the school. But they’re still running the school. They’re still doing all the hiring and firing, but there are all these middle guys that sort of go out. So, there’s a funny disconnect there that I think could add to the negativity for most people because there’s not a direct… the people that run the school are still doing the important jobs of hiring and firing, setting salary and all that, in a very kind of secretive way. But then there are all these middle guys that are handling all this other stuff. And often when you have a problem, you don’t know even where you’re supposed
to go. Should you be going to the middle guys? Should you be going straight to the top?

I think that adds to people feeling less supported, that little bit of confusion about who is really running the ship around here."

The growth of the administration during the school’s twelve years in business was a theme among the faculty, although it took two directions. On the one hand, teachers made note of the fact that the culture of the school was entrepreneurial in nature, and that if they had an idea, they felt there was room to pitch it and see it grow to fruition and possibly become a new job. On the other hand, some saw the newly created leadership positions as lacking in substance. One faculty member explained, “The number of students, number of faculty, number of leaders. I don’t know enough, but I would like to know more of, are we now just so top heavy? If you ask me what [her] role is, I could not explain it. There’s a couple of things like that. I think titles are given and some are so beneficial, but then other ones, I’m just very unclear of who I would go to in certain situations.”

In interviews, leaders were also split about the rapid growth of leadership at Northeastern. Two division heads saw the quick creation of leadership roles as a positive retention driver for faculty. They described Northeastern’s leadership pipeline as “responsive to faculty’s desires” and an “incredible opportunity” they would have “loved to have had during [their] teaching career.” One division head was less optimistic. He wondered if the school could “really come through with some of the promises and some of the guarantees that they’ve made either behind closed doors or out in front. I think it’s often used as a motivational tactic, and I think a lot of that will come to some kind of… fruition in the next two or three years.”

Influence. During their interviews, all three of the leaders described efforts to create mechanisms for collaboration and faculty-led decision making in their divisions. In fact, one
division head stated, “Someone who comes in who doesn’t want autonomy is going to have a hard time working with me.” Teachers substantiated these claims, also citing instances where they worked with colleagues to create curricula and solve problems that arose with students. But despite opportunities to participate in problem solving at the instructional level, teachers did not feel satisfied in their desire to be heard in the greater community. One teacher described in greater detail how she imagined faculty could be better leveraged. “The admissions, faculty, division head triangle. That triangle. Admissions could be using us as focus groups. We need to close the gap on what they need to know about what is happening in our school. If we’re really the ones that are the ticket to enrollment, you need to engage us and admit that you need to be taught about what is happening in our program for the betterment of everyone.” Two of the three focus groups also discussed the desire to see a faculty member sit on the board. Teachers in all groups mentioned the inconsistent use of hiring committees for important positions in the community. Another pervasive comment, which will be explored more in a later section, was the idea that faculty’s lack of influence in a ceremonial way—in other words, their inclusion as important stakeholders in messaging—was a problem that weighed heavily on them.

**Salary.** With the exception of one division head, no one who took part in the interviews or focus groups felt that Northeastern adequately compensated its teachers. A belief that the salary was insufficient was the strongest point of commonality among teachers and between teachers and leaders. Faculty complained of having to piece meal together tutoring and coaching gigs to make up for their low pay. Division heads lamented that their hands were tied by the budget. They sought ways to “give bumps” to teachers’ salaries when they could. One division head reported telling his faculty to go and interview for another job in order to force the hands of those above him. “What I often tell my folks is that it’s going to come to a head and at some
point, you're going to want more and you should position yourself with leverage. You should position yourself with another offer and give us a chance to match and when that happens, people are willing to roll the dice and hopefully I can beat you. At the end of the day, it's really not up to us [division heads].” Some teachers corroborated that story, describing events like those suggested by the division head. While some felt that finding an outside offer was standard practice, others viewed the process negatively.

**Sense of community.** As was stated in an earlier section, all three division heads described efforts to create a sense of community among their staff. Those efforts ranged from hosting breakfasts for faculty to pairing teachers up for mentoring experiences. All of them agreed that creating a positive community was vital to the division's success. One division head remarked that nurturing morale was a retention driver. “I think that it's the teachers next door to that teacher that work to retain teachers, so I think, in that way, it's my job to make sure everybody is on a level of satisfaction that contributes to an overall happiness, and that in turn will retain teachers.” Another division head offered that the most important part of her job was to ensure “that people feel like they are part of a community. A real community of teachers, that we have fun together, that we can support each other.”

Teachers, across all focus groups, identified their sense of community with other teachers as a driving force behind their retention and their satisfaction with their job. They described positive experiences collaborating with other teachers, helping each other solve problems, and working together to create teaching materials. On the other hand, teachers in the focus group felt disconnected from the greater community of non-teaching staff. This feeling was encapsulated in the following statement from a faculty member.
...I think it's worthy to be noted...is that this climate that we work in is what keeps us, but not how they treat us. So they divide...And if it was both, if it was that we didn't have a climate of camaraderie and support from each other and such, and also not from the admin, then, of course, no one would be here ever. So, when the parents say that they value the teachers and that the teachers make [Northeastern], it is, we are our retention.

We are our retention package. We are the thing that keeps us.

**Hiring practices.** All three division heads reported character traits or soft skills as their highest priority in hiring. Factors like “spark,” “flexibility, humility, and humbleness,” and “connectability with humans” were cited as the characteristics of an ideal candidate. The leaders at Northeastern recognized the importance of professional skill sets, but they asserted that a candidate’s character took priority over their resume. The hiring procedures varied slightly from division to division, as did the formality of onboarding newly hired faculty. Some division heads had formalized the mentoring of new faculty, while others relied on more organically created relationships. The inconsistency in hiring and onboarding carried over to salary assignment, as each division head described a different approach to setting the initial salary of new faculty and to assigning raises to returning faculty.

While hiring practices were discussed at much greater length in the leadership interviews than the teacher focus groups, the idea that Northeastern tried to hire individuals with the same ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ that the organization embodied came up in two of the three discussions. Teachers attributed the school’s desire for independent thinkers to its leadership pipeline and ever-increasing administrative corps.

**Perceived value.** All three division heads listed specific actions they take to ensure their teachers felt valued. Reward systems, public accolades, and personal favors were all listed as
small steps to ensuring their faculty felt like vital members of a community. While many teachers recognized the work of division heads to this end, they recounted the ways that the school, in a larger sense, communicated a lack of value in its teachers. Failure to include the faculty in ceremonies and public messages about stakeholders came up in all three focus groups. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new building, described in the conversation below, was mentioned in two of the three groups.

Teacher 1: It represents devaluation. An example of that would be when we broke ground on this building. And there was not one teacher in the line holding a shovel—

Teacher 2: --Exactly. The picture is of community members, even students, financiers.

Teacher 3: Community members, students, parents who are big donors.

Teacher 2: But there are no teachers.

Teacher 1: Not even the ones who were here since the beginning. Like how about [our colleague], who’s been teaching without a gym and could have been in there a while now. I don’t care about me being there, but I would love to see the presence of somebody.

Teacher 3: It was symbolic, I think, of how things are viewed.

Teacher 2: Yeah, of that missing link.

Aside from moments like the one just described, teachers recognized the directors’ attempt to publicly recognize faculty members who went above and beyond at periodic all-school events, but they reported a misconception between teachers and leadership about the work necessary to perform the duties of a teacher’s job at Northeastern. Several teachers reported difficulty balancing their personal life and school, and some indicated that the imbalance created tension at
home. According to some teachers, the effort to simply meet expectations was difficult, so exceeding them was at times impossible. One division head noted this fact and reported that "teachers earn their weekends around here."

Climber turnover. While climber turnover is a term used by this researcher alone, the concept of climber turnover came up in the focus groups and leadership interviews. Some teachers linked the instructional autonomy to a desire for greater autonomy, writ large. As one teacher stated, "Nobody in our day and age really wants to have a boss anymore…especially because we have so much autonomy in the classroom. You can’t start bossing people around that have that much freedom." Other teachers saw climber turnover as a defense mechanism for the school to retain employees, if not teachers. One faculty member said, "They give you these opportunities, especially if they feel like you are going to leave. They’re like, ‘Here, opportunities.’" Another offered, "When I first blurted out a ‘Yes! They work to retain you, it’s ‘cause I keep threatening to leave. So that’s the only time I’ll get it.’"

Regardless, however, of why climber turnover might be happening, the leadership interviews confirmed, in fact, that it is indeed happening at Northeastern. One division head described the turnover during her discussion of the leadership program.

"I think we allow for leadership opportunities here and I've never seen that before. I've never seen a school that really abides by that. I'll tell you that that's not easy for the school because what happens, and you probably know, I've lost three classroom teachers to management leadership positions. I mean really excellent teachers, and then you have to replace those teachers. But I do think that it's an incredible opportunity. I think that it's great. I mean, I would've loved that when I was teaching, to have that opportunity. Otherwise, it's like, ‘Okay, teach twenty years, then see if you can become a principal or
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

an assistant principal.' There's nothing in between. We really allow for a lot of professional growth here.”

Another division head was up front about the potential loss of personnel, but he saw it as a natural side effect of training qualified employees.

“I'd like to think that we spend the time to think about the school, and think about the individual, and find a place where the individual professional goals of that person and the school needs are both met to help push them along in their career. I don't think that I'm only speaking for myself on this one because this is something I learned from [another head of school] a long time ago, which is, 'If not here, somewhere,' and I don't know. An alumni of [Northeastern] that's successful is what we want, whether they stay here for 12th grade or not. I think the same way for faculty. So, at the end of the day, you want to be building your resume. Whether it's here or not, if a really great opportunity comes along, I'd like you to be, I'd like anyone to be, eligible for it and to feel like they've been able to pursue all their interests here to make themselves qualified.”

Merging Data: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

An advantage to mixed method research is that qualitative findings can often be used to explain quantitative findings, and quantitative findings can often be used to generalize qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In essence, mixed method practitioners combine the positive benefits of both strands of research to reach a more complete understanding of the topic. Such is the case in this study. The following sections discuss the presence of each variable in both data sets and explore the implications of all findings taken together.

Alignment with mission. The importance of the mission expressed in the focus groups was corroborated by some of the survey responses. Nearly 85% of respondents agreed or
strongly agreed with the statement, “Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.” 100% of respondents listed “opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others” as either a satisfactory or excellent aspect of their job. 60% felt the school’s standards had a positive impact on their job satisfaction. While alignment (or lack thereof) with the mission was not an option to choose as a reason for leaving, items associated with the actual work of teaching students trended as unimportant to attrition decisions, suggesting that the mission-associated work (i.e., teaching) was not a problem. The faculty at Northeastern believed in the mission of the school and proudly brought it to fruition. These findings align with the assertions of Ingersoll (2001) that independent school teachers’ attrition was tied to a misalignment with the school’s mission. At Northeastern, teachers’ confidence in the mission was associated with retention.

**Leadership.** Issues with leadership fell into two categories in the focus groups and interviews: 1) problems with specific leaders and 2) confusion about which leader to go to in a given situation. While recognition and support from administration trended toward the negative, only 18% listed it as unsatisfactory. That said, in another negatively trending category, 37% of faculty participants listed the procedures for performance evaluation—a duty of leadership—as unsatisfactory or ineffective. In the portion of the survey that asked respondents to identify their level of agreement with various phrases about their school, almost every category trended positively, a great sign for Northeastern Academy. After salary and student behavior concerns, however, the two highest categories of disagreement are leadership related: “My division head enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it” and “The principal knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.” Transformational leadership has been shown to have positive effects on both staff cohesion and retention (Ross &
Gray, 2007), so the presence of charismatic division heads is vital. You and Conley (2015) found that the presence of effective leaders was particularly important for the retention decisions of mid-career teachers—the teachers Northeastern depends on to mentor new faculty—so the prevalence of leadership problems is troubling. While some of those findings could be attributed to problems contained in one division, addressing those concerns could go a long way in retaining teachers.

The other more commonly cited issue with leadership, that of confusion over individuals’ roles, was not investigated in the survey. Future quantitative research, therefore, should explore this variable among the staff at Northeastern.

**Influence.** Teachers in the focus groups described a longing to contribute to decision making at the organizational level, and this notion was substantiated by the survey findings.

“Influence over school policies and practices” was a negatively trending category, with 33% of respondents saying that it was an unsatisfactory or ineffective aspect of their job. Interestingly, 96% of respondents said they were satisfied with their autonomy over their own work. Those two findings, taken together, suggest that granting teachers autonomy over their instructional work or giving them decision-making power in the instructional realm may not be enough to satisfy their desire for influence more broadly speaking. Of the teachers who indicated they had considered leaving, nearly a quarter of them cited a lack of influence over school policies and procedures as a rationale for their attrition intent.

**Salary.** All sources of data—the survey responses, the leadership interviews, and the teacher focus groups—indicated that the teacher salaries were insufficient. This category came up often in the faculty discussions, a fact substantiated by the surveys. Not a single survey respondent listed salary as an excellent or highly effective aspect of their job, and 52% listed it as
unsatisfactory or ineffective. 74% of teachers disagreed with the phrase, “I am satisfied with my teaching salary” and, of teachers who considered leaving, 86% listed the need for a higher salary as an important or extremely important reason for leaving.

**Sense of community.** Teachers reported a strong sense of community among other teachers, and the morale-building work described by division leaders seemed to be largely successful. Within their divisions, the academic community reported feeling connected. Outside of the faculty, however, teachers felt disconnected from the larger organization. This feeling wove its way into some of the other categories in the data analysis, both perceived value and influence. In the survey, faculty collegiality was positively noted: 92% of respondents said their “social relationships with colleagues” were satisfactory or excellent, 89% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “there is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members,” and 87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses with that of other teachers.” There were no survey items to verify the larger sense of community that teachers reported was lacking, so this could also be an area of focus for future studies.

**Hiring practices.** The division heads reported a number of hiring practices that aligned with the findings of Chubb and Moe (1988) that independent school heads hire, first and foremost, for the creation of cohesive teams with shared values. Perhaps those choices played into the positive sense of community previously described. Either way, the hiring practices did not seem to consciously play a large role in the experiences of teachers or, more specifically, their desires to stay or go. The demographic features of the participants also did not seem to indicate any particular trend regarding the types of teachers that are hired.
Climber turnover. Faculty offered a couple possible drivers of climber turnover—retention efforts on the part of the school and the entrepreneurial nature of Northeastern’s hires—in their focus groups. The division heads, while not positing on reason, did confirm climber turnover anecdotally. The survey data offers a third perspective on the topic. 20% of participants said that they planned to leave the job as soon as something more desirable came along. While “desirable” could mean a number of things, 24% of participants who looked for a job elsewhere indicated that they looked for something outside of the classroom. Additionally, of those who reported some form of attrition intent, 41% listed dissatisfaction with their current job assignment as important or very important, 24% listed a lack of influence as an important or extremely important reason for leaving, and 38% indicated that a lack of advancement opportunities was important or extremely important to their attrition plans.

Again, 0% of respondents listed lack of classroom autonomy as extremely important, and only 10% listed it as important. This underscores the fact that teachers’ power over their own academic domains is not enough. In fact, the increased instructional autonomy may exacerbate the process, as it throws into relief the lack of autonomy or influence elsewhere. Recall that one division head reported that “Someone who comes in who doesn’t want autonomy is going to have a hard time working with me” and a teacher offered, “Nobody in our day and age really wants to have a boss anymore…especially because we have so much autonomy in the classroom.” It could be that teachers who function well within the autonomous domain of the independent school classroom are those that crave autonomy—or agency—in a more general sense. Whether it is a symptom of the turnover or not remains to be seen, but it seems certain that power in the classroom does not make up for a lack of power in the greater community. The desire to climb seems to remain.
Conclusions

It was clear from the data that both teachers and school leaders at Northeastern Academy strived to create an effective and satisfied community. Faculty members were devoted to the mission of the school and happily worked hard to bring it into being. Unfortunately, missteps abounded around a few key areas: a diminished sense of community with nonteaching faculty, confusion about leadership, a lack of opportunities for organizational influence, a low sense of value in the organization, and insufficient salaries. Based on the findings of this needs assessment, interventions could focus on bolstering protocols and programs that offer opportunities for creating community, distributing organizational decision-making, and clarifying leadership. Faculty would also benefit from codified, institutionalized measures to communicate value. Rather than ad hoc actions on the part of division heads, Northeastern could commit more wholeheartedly to a program that compensates its faculty through both concrete and culture-focused ventures.

Regardless of the specific content of any future intervention, a common theme that ran throughout the findings of the needs assessment was a disconnect between the school’s efforts and the faculty’s experiences. At Northeastern, a perceived confusing leadership structure, competing organizational demands, and an underdeveloped internal communication system threaten all policy executions. Bryk and Gomez (2015) associated a lack of involvement on the part of teachers and principals with failed policy implementation of the past. Here, Northeastern also seems to fall short. By not including its faculty in decision-making, the school misses an opportunity to bring key constituents into the process and thus increase buy-in. Alternatively, by rushing through the decision-making process and only including a limited number of
stakeholders, Northeastern risks brushing over the nuances that will affect implementation as a result of quick and narrow thinking (Bryk & Gomez, 2015).

According to Skelcher and Smith (2015), Northeastern may be described as a “blocked hybrid” (p. 443). Blocked hybridity, often the result of rapid growth, occurs when an organization’s original and externally imposed logics are at odds (Skelcher & Smith, 2015). This often results in a failure to implement new policies, usually the teachers’ role, or engage in forward organizational momentum (Skelcher & Smith, 2015). As Northeastern Academy divided its efforts to meet the normative demands of multiple institutions, cohesion diminished and policy implementation fractured. Division heads may sit at the fulcrum of this fracture, as they serve as intermediaries between the various administrative offices and the teaching faculty. But despite well intentions, their ability to navigate so many competing logics seems limited. It may be time for Northeastern to respond more directly to climber ambitions by embracing new mechanisms for influence and invovlement.
CHAPTER THREE

The extant literature identifies six factors that drive teacher turnover in independent schools. They are: (1) misalignment with the school mission (Ingersoll, 2001); (2) insufficient salaries (Brewer, 1996; Chubb, 2014; Dolton & van der Klaaw, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Murmane & Olsen, 1990; Shen, 1997; Theobald, 1990); (3) issues with leadership (Boyd et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2007; Weiss, 1999, You & Conley, 2015); (4) a lack of involvement in or influence over organizational decisions (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Malen & Hart, 1987; Weiss, 1999); (5) a poor sense of community (Doney, 2013; Hausman & Goldring, 2001; You & Conley, 2015); and (6) independent school hiring practices (Chubb & Moe, 1992; Davies & Quirke, 2007; Kane, 1992, Trickett et al., 1992; Quirke, 2009).

The needs assessment conducted at Northeastern Academy validated many of those findings and sought to establish the presence of climber turnover. First, Northeastern teachers’ alignment with the mission served as a retention driver. In his seminal study, Ingersoll (2001) posited that the high rate of teacher turnover in independent schools resulted from teachers’ misalignment with the schools’ mission. Therefore, the needs assessment supported, albeit in a reverse fashion, Ingersoll’s (2001) findings. Teachers also reported a sense of community with other faculty members, although not with the organization as a whole. In focus groups, they described a complex leadership structure that left them confused on where to go with issues or ideas. This was particularly troubling, given that a perceived sense of low value and a paucity of opportunities to be involved in organizational decision-making permeated the group. Finally, teachers cited a lack of opportunities for advancement that did not necessitate leaving the classroom.
Considering both the direct reports of the teachers and the observations of group dynamics and organizational culture at Northeastern Academy is of the utmost importance to developing an effective intervention. In their discussion of the design thinking model, Brown and Wyatt (2007) offered the following anecdote as a way to emphasize the importance of listening to direct reporting and thinking beyond what people say they want: “Henry Ford understood this when he said, ‘If I’d asked my customers what they wanted, they’d have said ‘a faster horse.’” Although people often can’t tell us what their needs are, their actual behaviors can provide us with invaluable clues about their range of unmet needs” (33). Bryk and colleagues (2015) added to this notion by highlighting the importance of considering the effects of all current organizational programs, structures, and cultures on the problem and eventual solution. With that in mind, given the findings described above, a successful intervention will: (a) leverage teachers’ alignment with the mission and expand their sense of community beyond the teaching faculty; (b) improve teachers’ perceived organizational support; (c) overcome the issues attributed to complex leadership structures; (d) increase teachers' self-efficacy as it concerns organizational influence; and (e) create opportunities for advancement that keep teachers in the classroom.

**Theoretical Framework**

In the previous chapters, the author established organizational hybridity as the theoretical framework through which the problem of practice is viewed. Here, a return to that framework is helpful. Organizational hybrids contain more than one identity, form, or institutional logic (Battilana & Lee, 2014), and these multiple logics are present in a range of fields (Besharov & Smith, 2014). Social enterprises, for instance, must balance socially-, commercially-, and publicly-minded interests (Pache & Chowdhury, 2012). In another good example, institutes of
higher education need to address market-based missions to increase revenue and academic missions to create high-caliber students and scholars (Smith & Humberstone, 2017). The health care industry, as is evident to all, must balance the needs of individual patients, public health concerns, and financial realities (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001). In finance, Battilana and Dorado (2010) explored the ways in which microfinance organizations negotiated the tensions between their development logic, aiding the poor, and their banking logic, which required a certain level of profit for continued success. Even represented in the arts, Glynn and Lounsbury (2005) charted the multiple logics of a symphony orchestra as it strived to meet aesthetic and market demands simultaneously. And as was discussed in the first chapter, independent schools also meet the criteria for hybrid status, as they must balance educational and financial directives (Chubb & Moe, 1988).

A sound intervention, then, must be one that keeps that reality in the forefront of its design (Bryk et al., 2015). For instance, an intervention for climber turnover that addressed issues associated with the academic arm of the organization without addressing issues emerging from the business arm would be insufficient in solving the problem. This is because of the mutually beneficial relationship that social and financial logics have on each other in hybrid organizations. An intervention must meet the needs of all logics, as the health of one domain of the organization affects the health of the other (Battilana, Sengul, Pache, & Model, 2015).

The notion that the intervention design should mirror the organizational design of the school aligns with Gialamas, Pelonis, and Medeiros’ (2014) description of organizational “self-similarity” (p. 74), wherein schools structure their organizational behaviors to match the values and expectations of their teaching and learning behaviors.
The image of the fractal provides a helpful metaphor for envisioning the culture of a healthy school, in which each “neighborhood” of the institution (leadership, institutional dynamics, the teaching and learning experience, operational patterns) is “self-similar” and reflective of the other and of the whole, in that they embody and express the fundamental values and beliefs of the learning community. (Gialamas et al., 2014, p. 74)

Previously, the needs assessment drew attention to possible issues with implementation protocols at Northeastern. Given that teachers spoke positively about their belief in the mission and its role in their retention, it is possible that program roll outs to date have missed the importance of aligning with that mission. An incongruity between the academic mission and the organizational behavior could be a factor in the poor execution of other programs at Northeastern. Indeed, Ingersoll (1996) found that school communities experienced more conflict when teachers were not involved in social programming design. Those findings could be a manifestation of the dynamic Gialamas et al. (2014) described. In other words, a school that espouses interdisciplinary learning should also embrace interdepartmental decision-making. In heeding the suggestions of Gialamas and colleagues (2014) and in keeping with the theory of organizational hybridity (Battilana & Lee, 2014), the intervention outlined in this chapter will seek to mirror the hybrid nature of the independent school and incorporate the values of Northeastern Academy’s teaching mission, particularly as it concerns interdisciplinarity and whole-child learning.

**Fractal Organizations**

Fractal organizations embody the self-similarity championed by Gialamas and colleagues (2014). Taken from the mathematical concept discovered by Benoit Mandelbrot, fractal organizations are complex systems wherein each individual, team, department, and division is
self-similar in values, goals, and behaviors (Raye, 2014). In nature, fractals are organisms with scaled variation or, explained another way, identical micro- and macro-organization (Zimmerman & Hurst, 1993). Broccoli, ferns, and clouds are all examples of fractals. Tearing a piece of broccoli off of the head, for instance, yields what looks like a smaller head of broccoli.

In lieu of a command-and-control style of leadership, fractal organizations use short, clear value statements to drive a large body of behaviors. Leadership is not absent. Rather, it is used to effectively distribute resources to far-reaching areas of the organization and to make sure those parts of the organization can communicate information back to the center (Fairholm, 2004). Raye (2004) described the problem with top-down organizations and, in doing so, provided an argument for fractal organizing:

Information silos naturally develop in [top-down] situations and hinder an organization’s ability to compete in the marketplace (without acquiring competitors), because information acquired at the edges of a system (the bottom in top-down hierarchies), which is required for evolutionary change and adaptation to the surrounding environment, rarely flows efficiently to the top. Stress builds among the ranks of employees whose natural impulse to be creative is squandered in such situations, to the ultimate detriment of the organization. (Raye, 2004)

The squandering of creative impulses among teachers is an iteration of one of the drivers of climber turnover (the lack of influence), as part of teachers’ creativity could contribute to systems thinking.

Fractals, according to Zimmerman and Hurst (1993) have three distinct features: fluctuations, self-similarity, and boundaries. In the case of organizations, widely distributed information, responsibilities, and activities create fluctuations within a company; a shared
mission and collective vision, however, drive self-similarity across those various constituencies (Zimmerman & Hurst, 1993). Leadership is replicated formally or organically throughout the company (Fairholm, 2004), resulting in an interesting effect on the ‘boundary’ of the organization. Consider the cloud: from a distance, it appears to have a clear edge against the sky, but one need only to fly in an airplane to know that the borders of a cloud are so incredibly permeable that it is hard to distinguish the exact moment when one crosses the boundary of the cloud itself. So, too, it is for fractal organizations (Zimmerman & Hurst, 1993). With information flowing freely from the center of the organization outward, and with leaders granting autonomy to all members of the organization, customers have an easier time interacting with the organization, as any employee is a potential contact person for service.

Increasingly, organizations are shifting from top-down management styles to fractal structures in response to employee dissatisfaction, turnover, and general inefficiencies. In a perfect example of fractal organization theory at work, Raye (2014) relayed the story of Mondragon, a Spanish cooperative that underwent a shift from a command-and-control structure to a fractal one:

The experiment began [in 1973] with the removal of the 7.5-meter-long conveyer belt and the substitution of a 2.8-meter-long work table. Workers were seated around the table and could now set their own work rhythm and freely exchange information and ideas. The table provided more work stations than workers so that people needed to move around from time to time to advance work on lagging operations and to avoid delaying interrelated tasks. All workers were expected to perform all the tasks and could rotate tasks as they themselves decided. As they gained skill and confidence in this new way of working, the workers began to take over such supervisory and staff functions as
requisitioning tools and materials and recording their output (Whyte & Whyte, 1998 [as quoted in Raye, 2014])

In the story above, it is worth noting that not only did the restructuring result in greater autonomy, but the initial redundancy (i.e., all workers performing all duties) actually resulted in eventual efficiency, with workers taking over the responsibilities normally ascribed to supervisors. The fractal organizing created opportunities for shared knowledge, which resulted in autonomous, empowered, and effective workers.

In their case study of the steel company, Fednet, Zimmerman and Hurst (1993) described similar experiences. Faced at two different points in the company’s history with environmental pressures and declining business, Fednet shifted to a fractal structure and recovered. They utilized a matrix wherein all of the company’s departments took on all of the company’s functions—and problems—to find solutions quickly and often. As was the case in the illustrative cloud description, customers had an easier time accessing Fednet employees and, reciprocally, Fednet employees had a clearer understanding of the customers’ needs through increased contact.

In their research on entrepreneurial universities, Bodunkova and Chernaya (2012) suggest that fractal organizing is the best way for universities to become more entrepreneurial. Because becoming entrepreneurial involves both the execution of new organizational methods and the spread and integration of new knowledge, fractal clusters at the individual, group, and organization level ensure the fastest and most sustainable change (Bodunkova & Chernaya, 2012).

The discussion of fractal organizations certainly has implications for this research. It suggests that Northeastern Academy, itself a hybrid organization, would do well to mirror that hybridity in its employees and employee functions. Similarly, Northeastern’s interdisciplinary
focus in its teaching and learning should be present in its non-academic organizational functions (e.g., admissions or marketing). Most importantly, fractal organizations are empowering entities that distribute responsibilities, visioning, and decision-making outward. It is that shared set of values that serve as the “constant” in their fractal pattern (Raye, 2014). As such, fractals serve as a positive framework for empowerment and retention of employees and should, therefore, be considered in the development of an intervention for climber turnover.

Issues of Governance

While Northeastern may experience organizational success by shifting to a more fractal organizing configuration, it is important to consider its present structure, as it is the current organization in which any intervention will be situated. Additionally, Northeastern’s organizational structure is similar to other independent schools in the country; therefore, exploring its current state also offers a window into possibilities for the generalization of research later on.

According to Kane (1992), an independent school’s self-selected governance (i.e., a board of trustees) is a defining feature of independent schools everywhere. While not all school boards look the same, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) makes suggestions for its member schools. NAIS recognizes three types of boards: the “parents’ cooperative model,” wherein parents play a vital role in the election of board members, the approval of a budget, and other policy decisions; the “Carver Model,” a more authoritative and objective board that comprises objective outsiders; and finally, the “corporate model” (NAIS, 2018). It is this latter model that NAIS endorses. In corporate model boards, members are self-selected and self-perpetuating. The board is responsible for strategically planning for its own future and that of the school. In the corporate model, governance and management are entirely
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

different ventures, with the board being involved in the former, but leaving the latter to the head of school.

Northeastern Academy’s board falls under the category of a corporate model. Its first members were selected by the founders, and they have since charged themselves with attracting and retaining new talent to their ranks. A portion of the board is made up of current and past parents, with the remainder comprising local businesspeople, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and other professionals. As was mentioned in the second chapter, no teachers sit on the board. The board characteristics at Northeastern align with the recommendations of a 2006 report, executed by NAIS and funded by the Klingenstein School at NYU, about the state of board governance in independent schools in the United States.

Each year, the founders of Northeastern deliver a “state of the school,” during which they share the board’s annual goals with all faculty and staff. Those goals range in focus from hiring and retaining high-quality faculty to expanding the physical campus. The sharing of governance goals with employees at all organizational levels is meant to help with mission cohesion among various departments in the schools. Kathuria, Joshi, and Porth (2007) crafted a review of the literature on the relationship between organizational alignment and performance. Although they found that vertical alignment—much like the sharing of governance goals with functional employees at Northeastern—was attributed to sound organizational performance, it was the integration of vertical and horizontal alignment that had the greatest impact. For successful implementation of strategy, the authors argue, an organization must align vertically, from its governance to its floor employees, as well as horizontally, from one department to another (Kathuria, Joshi, & Porth, 2007).
The findings of Kathuria, Joshi, and Porth (2007) have implications for the development of an intervention at Northeastern. These findings, taken with the recommendations of NAIS, suggest that an ideal intervention would incorporate the annual goals of the board and leverage interdepartmental collaboration. An intervention program that simultaneously achieved vertical and horizontal alignment may have optimal impact on both participants and the organization. Indeed, the 2006 NAIS Report, while affirming that teacher not be members of the board, did suggest that teachers “should be included on committees and task forces where their expertise will be of value” (p. 5). Keeping these considerations in mind is vital to any exploration of viable intervention programs.

**Intervention Possibilities**

Unsurprisingly, interventions for teacher turnover, writ large, often reflect the lens through which the turnover is viewed or the particular drivers of the turnover in question. For example, Simon and Johnson (2015), in their study of teacher turnover in high-poverty schools, suggested that schools invest in better preparing school leadership and in developing programs to enhance collegial relationships, since weak leadership and a paucity of social resources were to blame for turnover in those schools. The authors performed an analysis of six recent, large-scale studies of turnover in high-poverty schools and found a common thread across all the studies in their meta-analysis: teachers were not exiting in response to their students (a previous assertion), but rather in response to their environment. As such, Simon and Johnson (2015) called for programs that train leaders and enhance the full scope of a teacher’s social environment, from parent-engagement programs to collegial support measures.

Similarly, in response to burn-out, job dissatisfaction, and the eventual attrition of special education teachers, Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) intervened by implementing stress-management
workshops and paired peer collaboration meetings. In a study of 92 special educators, the authors created three participant groups: two treatment groups that participated in stress-management workshops and peer collaboration meetings in different orders, and a wait-list control group that received the intervention after both treatment groups had finished. The pre- and post-tests of the study revealed that the order of the interventions had no significance, but both treatment groups improved across all measures when compared to the control group. The most significant improvement was in emotional exhaustion, but organizational commitment was also significantly and positively affected (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996).

On a much larger scale, some states have adopted recruitment and retention efforts that use high quality teacher preparation programs, mentorship, and incentives for veteran teachers to become board-certified as a way to combat turnover (Berry & Shields, 2017). Still, many researchers have insisted that the best intervention for teacher turnover is increased compensation (e.g., Brewer, 1996; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). While the range of previously-tested interventions is vast, the utility of those interventions for climber turnover is limited. For instance, better preparing extant leadership would not likely change teachers’ desires to inhabit leadership roles. And while the needs assessment found dissatisfaction among teachers, their desire to take on more, not less, suggests that an intervention aimed at burnout would be inappropriate. Raye (2014) also contended that stress-management measures are temporary fixes that do nothing to solve the root of the problem. Additionally, interventions that seek to keep teachers in the classroom through incentives that do not afford them more influence are unlikely to satisfy the career aims of climbers. The same could be said of salary increases.
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Early on, this researcher gave more serious considerations for an intervention to climber turnover to professional learning communities (PLC’s) and hybrid roles. Both of those options were eventually proven ineffective solutions to the problem, though, as the former is too narrow in its focus and the latter requires an environment and a skill set not yet developed within Northeastern. Nevertheless, their merits are worth exploration, and a deeper explanation of each of them helps to paint a clearer picture of how the eventual intervention was chosen.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s)

PLC’s are collaborative inquiry groups, typically made up of a group of teachers—and occasionally administrators—learning together in an effort to improve some aspect of their craft and thus improve student achievement (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Because of their tendency to engage teachers in the community and empower them to drive their own professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011), PLC’s could potentially combat some of the drivers of climber turnover. They already exist at Northeastern Academy, so leveraging them for a new purpose would work within pre-existing structures, a characteristic of successful program implementation (McFadden, 2013).

Empirically, researchers have established the positive effects of PLC’s on teaching practice, albeit some in greater detail than others. Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2008) conducted a review of the empirical literature on PLC’s and concluded that of the 11 studies included their analysis, only five explicitly stated the ways that teaching practices changed. That said, for the purposes of this research, it may be of less concern whether teaching practices actually changed and of more interest how teachers felt about the effects of their participation.

To that end, several studies offered encouraging findings. Andrews and Lewis (2004), in their qualitative study of PLC implementation at a school in Queensland, Australia, found that
teachers not only self-reported a change in their teaching practice, but described feeling a responsibility to be a leader in their community to spread the pedagogical knowledge they had acquired in their PLC. Similarly, Berry, Johnson, and Montgomery (2004) studied the utility of learning groups that leveraged board certified teachers at a failing school in North Carolina. In a series of observations and interviews, they recognized the power of PLC’s to enhance the role of teacher-leaders in what was typically an egalitarian teaching culture (Berry et al., 2004).

Supovitz (2002) used surveys and follow-up interviews in 79 schools in Ohio (representing approximately 3,000 teachers and administrators) to explore the difference between team-based and non-team-based schools. While the author found no statistically significant difference in teaching practices between the two groups, school culture emerged as a notable difference between team-based and non-team-based schools (Supovitz, 2002). All of these studies seem to suggest that PLC’s have a positive effect on teachers’ perceptions of their organizations.

Despite these findings, the nuances of the needs assessment conclusions called for specific items not addressed by professional learning communities. First, teachers at Northeastern reported feeling a healthy sense of community with other teachers already; it was with non-teaching staff that faculty felt a disconnect. To that end, PLC’s are unlikely to effectively expand the sense of community (an aforementioned characteristic of a successful intervention), as they typically comprise teachers and academic administrators, like principals and school heads (Stoll et al., 2006).

Because a PLC’s goal is to increase an organization’s “capacity to learn” (Vescio et al., 2008, p. 81), and because it places teachers at the center of that growth, it is possible that PLC’s would improve teachers’ feelings of perceived organizational support, another necessary characteristic of an effective intervention. Still, the two intervention characteristics specifically
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

tied to the issue of climber turnover—increasing organizational influence and creating mechanisms for career advancement—are not addressed through PLC’s. The first goal of a PLC is always to improve student learning (Bolam et al., 2005). As such, teachers’ participation remains within the realm of academic instruction and does not cross boundaries to other areas of the organization. Additionally, any professional growth on the part of the teachers also happens within the academic domain (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008), so any advancement would remain in the narrow career trajectory already available to teachers (Murphy & Hart, 1986). For these reasons, PLC’s were abandoned as a potential intervention.

Hybrid Roles

As its bifurcated obligations (i.e., financial and social) make Northeastern a hybrid organization, another logical consideration for an intervention is the creation of hybrid roles. Hybrid roles abound in the health care industry (Denis et al., 2001; Montgomery, 2001; Spyridonidis, Hendy, & Rlow, 2015) and are increasingly present in higher education (Kogan, 2007), information technology (Glover & Guerrier, 2010), and urban planning (Steele, 2009). As a member of a bifurcated organization, a teacher in a hybrid role—working, perhaps, half the day in the classroom and half the day for the development team—would be situated within both the educational and financial domains of the school (Spyridonidis et al., 2015). Hybrid roles are likely to empower teachers, as they “break down modernist binaries” (Steele, 2009, p. 4) that may otherwise stigmatize them and impede their professional advancement. Assuming that those inhabiting the hybrid roles are capable of developing acumen in both of their professional sets, their increased understanding may constitute what Bhabha (1994) called a third space. In essence, hybrid workers’ third space knowledge, which spans across otherwise closed
boundaries, acquires a synergistic quality, wherein the collective knowledge becomes greater than the sum of its parts (Steele, 2009).

Unfortunately, hybrid roles come with some inextricable threats. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the very nature of hybrid roles—the competing standards, directives, and values of two or more domains—is challenging to negotiate (Denis et al., 2001). Denis and colleagues (2001) performed an analysis of six case studies of hospitals in Canada. They found that, while forming a collective of leaders from a variety of backgrounds is best for decision-making in pluralistic organizations, hybrid leadership is fragile in situations where there are multiple competing objectives and, therefore, requires collaboration of ideals at the individual, team, and organization levels (Denis et al., 2001). Furthermore, individuals who take on hybrid positions often struggle to make sense of their new identities. In their five-year longitudinal case study of physician-managers in the English National Health Service, Spyridonidis, Hendy, and Barlow (2015) found that while it was possible for physicians to successfully also inhabit the role of manager, the identity sense-making took time and was not always an easy process, as is illustrated in the comment below from a participant in the study.

You have to be clear about the different roles you have at various times, in order to be consistent with yourself, and if you skip from one to the other without knowing you’re changing the hat, you get internally very discomforted and you become, actually quite paralysing or anxiety provoking, as I myself have discovered before I became more skilled at that doffing caps myself. (Spyridonidis et al., 2015, p. 401)

Ultimately, the authors categorized the physician-managers into three categories: innovators, sceptics, and late-adopters (Spyridonidis et al., 2015, p. 401). As sceptics comprised those
physicians that never successfully fully adopted the hybrid role, it is clear that important identity-
building work is necessary on the part of the individual taking on the hybrid role.

Educating hybrid employees, themselves, in an effort to negotiate those issues is also not
enough. If leaders in their different departments do not allow space for workers to manage those
identities, or if leaders are unable to recognize and validate new identities as they emerge, the
role could become ineffective. Steele (2009) studied the emergence of hybrid-roles in the
Australian urban-planning industry. She found that even when workers were able to inhabit
those roles personally, they often conflicted with the established ethos of the workplace; in
essence, public-private workers conflicted with the still homogenous sectors within which they
functioned (Steele, 2009). To return to the topic of hybrid-teachers, it would be important, to use
the previous example, for the school development team to allow their hybrid member to
sometimes assume the role of development expert and sometimes assume the role of a teacher
expert in order to maximize the third-space knowledge of the position. That may require some
preparation and training, as is true for other aspects of the hybrid job creation.

As such, the transition into hybrid roles takes time, as individuals and organizations work
to figure out the necessary repertoires of knowledge for the new role. Oftentimes, that
knowledge-building is an iterative process (Denis et al., 2001), and autonomy is vital for the
effectiveness of the role (Steele, 2009). While the creation of hybrid roles would be a positive
step in the right direction, without broad-spectrum structural change, hybrid employees would
still be working in a heavily bifurcated setting. While in the best case, hybrid employees would
have autonomy within each domain they inhabited, there is no guarantee that their work in one
department would not conflict with their work in another.
These findings seem to suggest that, while hybrid roles might eventually achieve self-similarity, a middle step is necessary to successfully pave the way for the eventual creation of hybrid positions. This middle step would need to properly enable both employees and their potential supervisory to create the new landscape that hybrid positions would require in order to flourish. The following section describes such a middle step.

**Design-thinking Teams**

Design-thinking teams exhibit some of the characteristics of both PLC's and hybrid roles. Used across a variety of industries, they have been established for purposes ranging from reorganizing in education (de Guerre, Séguin, Pace, & Burke, 2013) to driving innovation in technology (Yoo & Kim, 2015), from co-creating new products (Suciu & Baughn, 2016) to solving seemingly unsolvable problems (Kim, Meyer, & Allen, 2017). They have even been established to house newly created hybrid roles (Body, 2008). While the rationale for their creation has been unsurprisingly dependent on their unique contexts, their effects on the team members they comprise is of particular importance to this research. Before exploring those effects, it is first helpful to understand the emergence of design-thinking teams across so many disciplines.

**Examples of design-thinking teams in practice.** Perhaps an obvious starting point for exploring design-thinking teams is their use in fields that employ professional designers. Yoo and Kim (2015) chronicled Samsung's journey from a company focused on efficiency and technology to one that embraced innovation and risk-taking. Earlier in the company's history, its engineers and programmers inhabited a higher role in the organization's hierarchy, and they functioned within established protocols and modes of thinking. When Samsung determined that, in order to compete with rival company, Apple, it needed to increase its design capabilities, low-
valued designers faced an up-hill battle. Samsung empowered its own designers by partnering with universities to train in-house, rather than hire from outside. In doing so, the designers developed a resiliency that allowed them to overcome initial resistance in the company. Now, Samsung’s innovation process is well-established, and it begins with “multidisciplinary teams of designers, engineers, marketers, ethnographers, musicians, and writers who search for users’ unmet needs and identify cultural, technological, and economic trends” (Yoo & Kim, 2005, p. 74). Along the way, they’ve won numerous design awards and aggressively competed with Apple through their popular Galaxy product line (Yoo & Kim, 2005).

LEGO, the well-known toy company, also used an interdisciplinary design-team to drive innovation within their company (Suciu & Baughn, 2016). In response to threats from the ever-growing video game industry, they looked to the periphery of their organization and built a design-thinking team that comprised LEGO employees as well as outside programmers, designers, and hackers. By leveraging customers who were already versed in LEGO technology, they created LEGO-Technic, a line of successful new products born from the collaboration of users and designers (Sucio & Baughn, 2016).

Design-thinking also has plenty of utility in industries not normally associated with traditional design. Kim, Meyers, and Allen (2017), for instance, detailed the use of design-thinking for solving complex issues in health-care. The authors use the issue of missed medical appointments—a problem that costs hospitals billions of dollars and can have dire consequences for patients’ care—as an area where design-thinking can make a difference. Hospitals like the Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins Hospital successfully employed design-thinking teams to solve issues around pre-natal care and patient experience, respectively. Design-thinking’s focus on users make it particularly useful in a service-oriented industry like healthcare.
In another example, Body (2008) described the process of adopting a design focus in the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The ATO, akin to the United States’ IRS, is responsible for collecting federal taxes from Australian citizens. Its choice to embrace design-thinking arose from a desire to more closely bridge strategy and action and to make paying taxes easier and more inexpensive for taxpayers (Body, 2008). As the design-thinking ethos took hold, however, the ATO recognized the need to hire employees that could more adeptly work on design-thinking teams. While Body (2008) did not use the term “hybrid employee,” his description of the hiring process suggests such a need:

The recruitment was challenging because these were not job titles that would be recognized by the reader in a job advertisement. We were looking for people with a range of backgrounds. One of the key requirements was that applicants had well-developed creativity and innovation but, at the same time, a systematic approach to their work. (p. 60)

Ultimately, the ATO developed categories of roles for the design process that were filled by individuals from a variety of contexts (Body, 2008).

Perhaps most similar to this dissertation inquiry, de Guerre and colleagues (2013) provided a case study of the restructuring of the School of Extended Learning (SEL) at Concordia University in Montreal. At its start, all members of the school offered an ideal vision for the future of the school and then worked to flesh out its feasibility. Over the course of the one-year reorganization, “group composition in all parts of the process—research, design, and implementation—cut across departments and levels of organizational hierarchy” (de Guerre et al., 2013, p. 266). At a mid-point in the restructuring, those involved in the design-thinking teams recognized a need to learn more about each other, given the disparate backgrounds of all
its members, and facilitated a two-day long intensive workshop, called “IDEA” to practice rapid design-thinking and reconnect as a group (de Guerre et al., 2013). Ultimately, the design-thinking team structure, the two-day intensive, and the overall reorganization were successes.

**Effects on design-thinking team participants.** While the examples above provide evidence for the benefits of design-thinking for organizational success, the question of whether design-thinking had positive effects on those who participated in its processes is an important one. Here, several findings are promising. First, design-thinking teams have the power to elevate previously stigmatized employees, as was the case with designers at Samsung (Yoo & Kim, 2015). Given the similarly stigmatized status of teachers—as the needs assessment pointed out at Northeastern—a design-thinking team could combat the perceived low value of teachers at the school.

Design-thinking also de-silos work in organizations. As was seen in the cases of LEGO, the SEL at Concordia University, and the ATO, the infusion of design-thinking forced collaboration across departments and the creation of new roles that inhabited many organizational spaces (Body, 2008; de Guerre et al., 2013, Suciu & Baughin, 2016). In essence, the more individuals co-created, the more organizational boundaries came down. Employees stopped protecting their siloed workspace as solely their jurisdiction and, as a result, innovation occurred. Co-creation also results in diffused customer-empathy. Even for those employees that are not “customer-facing” (Elsbach & Stigliani, 2018), the design-thinking process forces them to explore that facet of their organization’s work. Kolko (2015) emphasized the importance of customer-empathy, as “team members discuss the emotional resonance of a value proposition as much as they discuss utility and product requirements” (p. 68). In the context of independent schools, teachers represent the most customer-facing members of the organization. As such,
their opinions would be of high value in a design-thinking team, a key characteristic of an effective intervention.

Another positive aspect of the experience for participants of design-thinking teams—and a clear benefit for purposes here—is their ability to create leadership opportunities for all members of the team. De Guerre and colleagues (2013) described the all-hands-on-deck mentality of the design-thinking infused restructuring: “Everyone is a leader at some point in time, either in their activity area teams, cross-functional teams, or InnoPods” (p. 268). In their case, the overlapping existence of many collaborative teams at once created an opportunity for people to inhabit a variety of hierarchical roles as well.

Finally, design-thinking teams engender feelings of shared ownership that lead to a sense of commitment. This was seen clearly in both the SEL and Samsung case studies. At Concordia University, the authors described that collective ownership:

The staff is working in area teams and cross-area teams, and they are optimizing existing offerings. When they are working in InnoPods with stakeholders and potential stakeholders, they are innovating new offerings and all SEL staff has the opportunity to be engaged in any, or all, of these types of teams…As opposed to having ‘my job’ and ‘my desk,’ employees will now become team members. (de Guerre et al., 2013, p. 277)

Yoo and Kim (2015) described similar experiences from designers at Samsung who were trained and developed in-house. “An Yong-II, the vice president of design strategy, puts it this way: ‘When we had our own place in the organization, we started caring about the future of the company.’ The designers also developed a capacity for strategic thinking and a tenacity that enabled them to overcome resistance over the long term” (p. 75). It is this effect—the sense of
ownership that engenders commitment—that an effective intervention for climber turnover should catalyze.

**Interdepartmental Design-thinking Committees (IDC)**

To return to the beginning of this chapter, an effective intervention will: (a) leverage teachers' alignment with the mission and expand their sense of community beyond the teaching faculty; (b) improve teachers' perceived value; (c) overcome the issues attributed to complex leadership structures; (d) increase teachers' self-efficacy as it concerns organizational influence; (e) create opportunities for advancement that keep teachers in the classroom. In its essence, this latter criterion calls to mind the groundwork for the hybrid roles previously described. The creation of opportunities, then, would need to entail educating individuals on how to negotiate multiple identities within a single work space and allow for those multiple identities to shine at different moments.

An interdepartmental design-thinking committee (IDC) meets all the criteria above. The IDC is a small group of employees composed of representatives from all instructional and non-academic departments within the organization (i.e., lower, middle, and upper school teachers, division heads, and representatives from development, technology, institute, admissions, communications, athletics, and business departments). Through engagement in the design-thinking process (IDEO, 2011), these individuals would collaborate to create a 5-year vision plan for the school. An exploration of the two distinctive traits of the intervention—design thinking and interdepartmental collaboration—follows below.

**Design Thinking**

Design thinking became increasingly popular outside the field of design at the end of the 20th Century, and the business community showed particular interest in its utility more recently
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

(Dorst, 2011; Liedtka, 2015). Although initially attractive for its effectiveness in product innovation, design thinking has made its way, with much popularity, into the leadership literature (Liedtka, 2015). The design thinking protocol follows a cycle of inspiration (wherein participants consider a problem from the user’s perspective), ideation (wherein participants rapidly prototype solutions), and implementation (wherein participants refine their ideas, fabricate a final solution, and test its success) (IDEO, 2011). Liedtka (2015) found that the design thinking process diminished cognitive biases across nine categories of decision-making flaws. The process, as has been previously illuminated, has also seen real-life success across several sectors (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). More important for this research, working in design-thinking teams engenders leadership development. As David Kelley (2014), who led an “anti-disciplinary” design-thinking team made up of professors from fields ranging from dance to computer science, noted, “a well-recognized by-product of the creative confidence that accompanies the act of [design-thinking] is a sense of self-efficacy: a belief system about one’s own ability to affect change and have a positive impact on the world” (p. 2).

Design thinking is also well-suited for hybrid organizations, as it is most successful at problem solving in paradoxical situations (Dorst, 2011). Because paradoxes—like the tension created by effective but expensive academic programs in schools—are a mainstay of hybrid organizations (Smith, Besharov, Wessels, & Chertok, 2012), this approach would seem to have clear benefits. Design thinking is also uniquely positioned to address the needs associated with climber turnover, as it works best when carried out by diverse teams of professionals (Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Liedtka, 2015). Brown and Wyatt (2010) identified interdisciplinarity as a key characteristic of design groups, and Liedtka (2015) charted the shift, over time, from a view of
successful design at the hands of experts to one that favored active participants from a diverse audience.

**Interdepartmental Collaboration**

Because of the proposed make-up of the IDC, concepts of problems, users, and solutions are likely to be diverse. Brown and Wyatt (2010), in their discussion of the importance of diversity for a successful design team, wrote:

> To achieve divergent thinking, it is important to have a diverse group of people involved in the process. Multidisciplinary people—architects who have studied psychology, artists with MBAs, or engineers with marketing experience—often demonstrate this quality. They’re people with the capacity and the disposition for collaboration across disciplines. (Brown & Wyatt, 2010, p. 34)

While the authors seem to be endorsing the notion of hybrid roles, their emphasis on multidisciplinarity is clear. Battilana, Sengul, Pache, and Model (2015) found that hybrid organizations often overcame issues associated with bifurcation tensions through the use of multidisciplinary teams who met in "spaces of negotiations" (p. 1676). Similarly, Fang, Lee, and Schilling (2010) found that the optimal path to high performance in organizations was through compartmentalized sectors that engaged in moderate levels of "cross-group linking" (p. 626). This fluid notion of teams, referred to as organizational ambidexterity (Fang et al., 2010), may be the key to bifurcated institutional logics within a single organization. In the case of Northeastern, in essence, departments would remain intact and largely function in their 'silos.' The IDC, however, would offer an opportunity for a healthy amount of boundary crossing to happen among otherwise disconnected domains.
Through that transfer, the IDC would force the sharing of knowledge, opinions, and values among a group of individuals who may not have another opportunity to interact. Ferlie, Fitzgerald, Wood, and Hawkins (2005) found that a lack of social and cognitive similarities within an organization inhibits the spread of innovative ideas. It would follow that engaging in mechanisms to increase socialization and shared knowledge among employees would improve innovation spread. Additionally, Dovey and Rembach (2015), in their study of intrapreneurial practices within institutes of higher education, found that interdepartmental committees achieved “Mode-2 knowledge” (p. 280), a synergistic understanding found through the sharing of disciplinary expertise, strategic and procedural knowledge, and deeply contextualized tacit knowledge on the part of a broad range of professionals in the university setting. Here, the work of Smith et al. (2012) is helpful for understanding how that Mode-2 knowledge is developed. They found that using hypothetical scenarios to practice integration—creating synergistic solutions that meet the needs of divergent missions—helped with integrative, innovative thinking in day-to-day operations (Smith et al., 2012). While the IDC must be granted the authority to make decisions about real, not hypothetical, issues, the semi-structured nature of the design-thinking process (IDEO, 2011) could serve as practice for more innovative thinking outside the IDC time. In this way, the intervention would not only empower employees by expanding their knowledge-base and scope of influence, but it would improve the innovative thinking skills of the group at large.

Finally, the creation of the IDC would disrupt the organizational culture at Northeastern, a school, according to the needs assessment, that is plagued by a perceived leadership confusion and stifled voices. Morrison and Milliken (2000), in their study of organizational silence (a state wherein employees are unwilling or unable to voice concerns about the organization), found that
moving from a top-down structure toward a democratic decision-making structure reduced the condition. Because organizational silence puts the organization at risk for overlooking problems or missing opportunities, combatting it is of vital importance (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Another way to combat organizational silence is by bringing together employees from diverse backgrounds (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Diverse groups also induce greater empathy (Jackson, Wood, & Zboja, 2012), which is the first step in the design-thinking cycle and an integral activity for identifying user-friendly solutions (IDEO, 2011).

While it will be important to not overly inflate the level of consensus, a risk in delegate group decisions (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007), the hope of the IDC is that by bringing together members from all areas of the organization to contribute to a shared vision, there will be a greater sense of buy-in within the community (Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012; Vroom, 2003). Baum, Lockwood, and Kirkpatrick (1998) found that the content of vision was vital to its effectiveness, but the authors listed possibilities as disparate entities (e.g., market vision or product quality vision). It is this author’s hope that the IDC’s interdepartmental nature will contribute to a vision that is as multidisciplinary as its members.

Criteria for Success

In an effort to keep a tight alignment between the objectives of the intervention and its design, it is worthwhile to return to the criteria for success one last time.

Leveraging Mission Alignment and Expanding Community

The first criterion, leveraging teachers’ alignment with the mission and expanding their sense of community, is addressed through the theoretical foundations of the IDC and through its most general structure. Northeastern Academy values interdisciplinary learning, a principle that the teachers reported they embraced, and the interdepartmental committee work would mirror the
interdisciplinary work happening in classrooms. As such, the design achieves a degree of self-similarity (Gialamas et al., 2014), leverages teachers’ support of the mission, and creates an opportunity for interactions with community members outside the teaching faculty.

**Improving Perceived Organizational Support**

The second criterion, improving teachers’ perceptions of their own value within the organization, is addressed through teachers’ participation in the IDC. Organizations that offer training and have mechanisms for recognizing their employees have larger margins of perceived organizational support (POS) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Although sampling will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, teachers will be chosen for the intervention group through their current enrollment in the school’s “Leadership for the Future” program, a to-date inconsistently successful program designed to train teachers interested in leadership. While the needs assessment findings suggested that the teachers had diminished faith in the effectiveness of the program, its presence is helpful in nurturing POS. Rhoades and Eisenberger’s (2002) findings suggest that by sampling from the school’s LFF program—thereby recognizing those teachers who are interested in taking on leadership positions—and training teachers in organizational strategizing, the intervention is likely to lead to increased job satisfaction via POS.

**Overcoming Complex Leadership**

The third criterion, overcoming the complex leadership structure present at Northeastern, is likely to be addressed alongside the fourth criterion, increasing teachers’ self-efficacy as it concerns their influence in the organization. As was described above, moving from an authoritarian model to an egalitarian one reduces organizational silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Participation in the IDC—by design, an egalitarian model—should diminish organizational silence and thus increase teachers’ voices in organizational decision-making,
while simultaneously neutralizing some of the confusion associated with having to navigate complex leadership structures. The intervention is also likely to address issues with the effectiveness of the leadership already in place, as practicing integration skills—generating solutions that meet the needs of several constituents—in semi-structured settings (like the IDC) can result in quicker synergistic answers to issues in the day-to-day setting (Smith et al., 2012). Therefore, the creation of the IDC could inspire integrative problem-solving from leaders at times when the group is not meeting. Furthermore, contact time with leaders involved in the IDC may make communication clearer and more available to participating teachers.

**Improving Sense of Influence**

In addition to the predicted outcomes described in the previous section, participation in the IDC should have an empowering effect on teachers separate from their relationship to leadership. Design-thinking teams tend to break down hierarchical boundaries (de Guerre et al., 2013) and, in the process, all voices at the table become vital for the success of the team and the organization. While teachers may feel like they currently inhabit a role of little influence or respect, being a part of the IDC could elevate their status and create sustaining levels of influence, as was the case of the designers at Samsung (Yoo & Kim, 2015).

**Creating Opportunities for Career Advancement**

Finally, implementing the IDC will address the last criterion, creating opportunities for career advancement while keeping teachers in the classroom, through its capacity-building toward hybrid roles. As teachers gain new repertoires of knowledge from other members of the IDC, their capacity to take on new roles within the organization will expand (Stahl et al., 2016), and the opportunity to inhabit hybrid roles will become increasingly available. Simultaneously, representatives from departments around the organization will grow accustomed to creating
solutions that meet the needs of a range of constituents. As such, they, too, will be better equipped to hold space for multiple identities within their organization.

**Job Satisfaction**

As is noted in the theory of change in the next chapter, the author predicts that addressing the criteria above will have a positive effect on the mediating variable of job satisfaction. The extant literature describes a link between teachers’ involvement in their organization and job satisfaction. For instance, Hausman and Goldring (2001) studied ten magnet schools (serving over 36,000 students) in a large, urban district, along with ten non-magnet schools chosen through pair-matching on racial balance. They used surveys, follow-up on-site visits, and phone calls to collect data from teachers regarding their feelings of commitment, professionalism, and efficacy. The findings suggested that regardless of school type (i.e., magnet or non-magnet), teachers felt greater commitment when they were part of a professional community that allowed them to share their knowledge with teachers and other community members. The authors supported “mechanisms that change hierarchical structure in schools” (p.44) and suggested making teachers a central part of school change. Although their study focused on magnet and non-magnet schools, the authors’ working definition of magnet schools (a thematic curriculum or method of instruction, admissions criteria, choice by families, and access to pupils from other neighborhoods) could easily be applied to independent schools as well. Their study reinforces the importance of faculty influence in organizational decisions.

Other studies have found a link between job satisfaction and teacher retention. Boyd et al. (2011), for example, surveyed 4,360 teachers in New York City in the spring of 2005. The surveys collected data on teacher influence, administration, staff relationships, students, facilities, and safety. The study found that a negative view of one’s school predicted attrition in
the following year (Boyd et al., 2011). Therefore, addressing the factors that affect satisfaction through the implementation of the IDC could successfully thwart climber turnover.

**Conclusion**

While a plethora of possibilities exist for intervening in teacher turnover, few options are viable for climber turnover, specifically. Because of the particular drivers of the issue, popular interventions that focus on teacher training, mentoring, or mental healthiness fall short of addressing climber attrition. In the end, creating more opportunities for influence and leadership that are not predicated on leaving the classroom will eliminate the need to climb. In independent schools, the de-siloing of academic and business departments could afford more of those opportunities. Hybrid roles, however, require a shift in organizational thinking and the development of skill sets at the individual level. The interdepartmental design-thinking committee would provide a platform for the previously bifurcated legs of the hybrid organization to come together and develop those skills, simultaneously creating a middle-space for climber-teachers to inhabit—a space wherein their expertise as classroom teachers could positively influence organizational functions and, ultimately, give them a reason to stay.
CHAPTER FOUR

The needs assessment revealed that an appropriate intervention would meet the following criteria: (a) leverage teachers' alignment with the mission and expand their sense of community beyond the teaching faculty; (b) improve teachers' perceived organizational support; (c) overcome the issues attributed to complex leadership structures; (d) increase teachers' self-efficacy as it concerns organizational influence; and (e) create opportunities for advancement that keep teachers in the classroom. A review of the intervention literature revealed several options, although none satisfied the requirement as much as an interdepartmental design-thinking committee (IDC). Therefore, this chapter describes the research design for the study of the implementation of an IDC at Northeastern Academy. In an effort to ensure fidelity of implementation—and therefore increase the validity of the study as a whole—the design included both a process evaluation and an outcome evaluation. The following chapter explicates the purpose of study, research questions, and specifics of the design, including the units, treatments, observations, and setting (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002), for a mixed-method study on the effects of the IDC on climber turnover at Northeastern Academy.

Rationale and Purpose

Given the characteristics of a strong intervention outlined above, and in alignment with the theory of change (Figure 6), the purpose of this study was to measure the effects of the IDC on both the mediating variables present in the model and the ultimate desired outcome, reduced climber turnover. The IDC pulled together representatives from each division of the teaching faculty and delegates from each administrative department in the school to create a vision plan. In doing so, the intervention was predicted to increase job satisfaction by increasing teachers' organizational influence, expanding their sense of community, increasing their perceived
organizational support, and overcoming leadership conflicts and ambiguity. The intervention was also predicted to create mechanisms for the creation of hybrid roles by increasing teachers’ organizational acumen and increasing their promotion potential. While reducing climber turnover was the ultimate goal of the intervention—and increasing job satisfaction and creating hybrid roles should achieve that—the distal effects of the program fell outside the timeline of this particular study. Nevertheless, the outcome research questions below include both proximal and distal outcomes.

Figure 6

*Theory of Change*
Increasingly, process evaluations are used in the field of social sciences to determine the extent to which programs were implemented with fidelity (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2003). Process evaluations assess both the manner in which programs were executed and the way in which participants experienced them (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). Evaluating programs in such a way helps to clarify where successes and failures occurred and bring to the forefront nuances of change (Dusenbury et al., 2003). Therefore, in addition to measuring the effect of the intervention on the variables described in the logic model (Appendix E), the study also evaluated the process in which the intervention was delivered and received.

Outcome Research Questions

RQ1: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers’ organizational influence?

RQ2: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' sense of community within the organization?

RQ3: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' perceived organizational support (POS)?

RQ4: In what ways does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' perceived leadership conflict?

RQ5: To what extent does an IDC increase independent school climber teachers' organizational knowledge?

RQ6: To what extent does an independent school climber teachers' organizational knowledge affect hybrid promotion opportunities?
RQ7: To what extent does an IDC decrease climber turnover?

**Process Research Questions**

RQ8: To what extent do contextual factors, including participants’ initial scope of influence and job satisfaction, affect participants’ experience of the intervention?

RQ9: To what extent are design-thinking materials and concepts integrated into the intervention?

RQ9A. To what extent does the researcher deliver an overview of the design-thinking process with fidelity?

RQ9B. To what extent do participants in the IDC integrate design-thinking strategies into their meeting conversations and the writing of their 5-Year Vision Plan?

RQ10: To what extent are participants engaged in the intervention process?

**Effect Size**

The effect size is a measure of the differences between groups. Because sample sizes vary from study to study, determining the effect size is a helpful way to understand whether or not an intervention worked in a range of instances (Coe, 2002). While in some cases, effect sizes can be found by comparing results with a scale used in similar studies, oftentimes research designs lack an easy comparison elsewhere. Primary studies have a responsibility to report effect sizes, as failure to do so threatens the validity of the research (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In those situations, it is helpful to use a standardized effect size calculation (Lipsey & Hurley, 2009). When a treatment and control group are compared to one another, simply knowing the mean score of each group is not, in and of itself, a helpful indicator to researchers that an intervention was effective. If each groups’ individual scores were tightly clustered
around their respective means, and if the treatment group’s mean was much higher than the control group’s mean, then researchers can fairly infer that the intervention was a success. But if the two groups’ scores were spread out, and if there was a fair amount of overlap between the two groups’ scores, then the mean difference would not be as telling (Coe, 2002). Given these two scenarios, the following equation helps to determine a standard effect size (Lipsey & Hurley, 2009):

\[
\text{Effect Size} = \frac{[\text{Mean for treatment group}] - [\text{Mean for control group}]}{\text{Standard Deviation}}
\]

Knowing which standard deviation to use is also crucial. While, theoretically, the control group’s standard deviation should be representative of the larger population, small sample sizes can make that assumption inaccurate (Coe, 2002). Therefore, using a pooled standard deviation is the better option. While the particulars of sampling will be discussed later in this chapter, given the study’s sample size (10 participants in the treatment group and 29 participants in the control group), the following equation was used to calculate the pooled standard deviation used to determine effect size:

\[
\text{Pooled Standard Deviation} = \frac{\sqrt{[(10 - 1)(\text{TreatmentSD}) + (29 - 1)(\text{ControlSD})]}}{37}
\]

With the appropriate standard deviation established, the effect size can be determined. For this study, one in which the sample sizes were so small, a high statistical power would go a long way in achieving greater overall validity. Lipsey and Hurley (2009) provided a useful chart for determining the desired effect size given a specific sample size and desired statistical power.
for studies that use t-tests or similar parametric tests (p. 6). A copy of their chart can be found in Appendix G. Using their calculations and assuming a sample size of 10 for each group, an effect size of 1.5 would ensure a statistical power of .96. With that established, it is now worthwhile to explore the specifics of the research design.

Research Design

The study employed a quasi-experimental, mixed method research design, wherein a quantitative survey was embedded into a phenomenological study (O’Leary, 2014). Using purposive, stratified sampling, control and treatment groups were formed. The researcher collected qualitative data via structured observations and semi-formal interviews during the implementation of the IDC. The quantitative survey, created through an amalgam of existing instruments (Appendix F), served as a pre- and post-test for both the control and treatment groups to assess change and ascertain any difference between the two groups. Before describing the details of the outcome-oriented research, the details of the process evaluation are below.

Process Evaluation

Type III error can abound when programs are not properly implemented but nevertheless evaluated (Dusenbury et al. 2003). Therefore, it is crucial that all components of a program’s execution are considered using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Baranowski & Stables. 2000). By focusing on the articulated mechanisms for change found in the program’s logic model, researchers are more able to tease out how programs will be both delivered and received and thus ensure that the program is actually implemented with integrity before they set out to investigate its effectiveness. It was this researcher’s hope that by analyzing the processes inherent in the program’s logic model (Appendix E), there could be greater certainty that the
program was rolled out in the manner in which it was intended so that all subsequent research was internally and externally valid.

**Context**

The context of the program includes all the environmental factors of the intervention (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). In assessing the context, it is worthwhile to consider both the direct and indirect effects (Linnen & Steckler, 2002) of the environment on the program. Baranowski and Stables (2000) discuss the need to investigate both the type and level of contextual factors (p. 159), and they also note the potential for intervention targets that can arise from contextual factors. While Northeastern Academy was supportive of the intervention program, the needs assessment revealed that it has historically been unevenly supportive of its employees’ desire to have an organizational influence. Therefore, it was worthwhile to consider the participants’ scope of influence (measured via the organizational chart), job satisfaction, and planned, as they were contextually driven and, ultimately, a target for intervention.

The researcher measured the scope of influence once at the start of the program by quantifying the number of individuals who fell below each of the participants on the school’s organizational chart. Because the survey was anonymous, and therefore could not be matched with a specific individual, for the purposes of the process evaluation, job satisfaction and planned attrition were measured via the interviews. Note that in the logic model (Appendix E), many different kinds of employees (e.g., climber teachers, non-teaching staff) participated in the program. Therefore, it was helpful to assess how the context affected each of them differently from the outset. This provided a point of comparison at the program’s conclusion.
Implementation

A program's implementation includes three key parts: reach, dose, and fidelity (Linnan & Steckler, 2002, p. 14). The reach pertains to who participates, in this case, the IDC participants. The dose refers to what was provided and what was received. As it concerns the IDC, the researcher provided design-thinking training (IDEO, 2018), and the participants 'received' that training and demonstrated their understanding of the design-thinking process through the integration of its principles in the IDC meetings. Fidelity indicates how the program was implemented and the quality in which it was delivered. Fidelity was measured through the use of standard design-thinking materials (IDEO, 2018) as well as the spoken and written contributions of participants.

In order to ensure that the researcher reached the appropriate kinds of participants, the study used the school directory and the enrollment list for the school's "Leadership for the Future" (LFF) program to recruit participants. While the target population was teacher-climbers—which could be found in the LFF enrollment list—extant literature mandated that the rest of the IDC needed to comprise an even number of delegates from across the organization. Therefore, the researcher used the school’s directory to make sure all departments are represented.

IDEO's Facilitator's Guide for Introducing Human-Centered Design (2018) served as the curriculum for teaching the participants about the design-thinking process as well as the supportive material for framing each of the IDC meetings. The study assessed participants’ understanding and integration of this material through a feedback form following the in-service training (part of the facilitator guide), exit-surveys after each meeting, and structured observation notes of each IDC meeting (O'Leary, 2014). Of course, fidelity of the program requires the
commitment of participants (Linnan & Steckler, 2002), so the study measured 100% attendance using sign-in sheets at the in-service training and the eight IDC meetings, 100% participation in meetings by quantifying the number of spoken contributions for each participant on the structured observation notes, and 100% participation in the creation of the 5-Year Vision Plan by coding the document by contributor during its development.

**Participant Responsiveness**

Participant responsiveness refers to the degree to which “participants are engaged by and involved in the activities and content of the program” (Dusenbury et al., 2003, p. 244). Dusenbury et al. (2003) asserted that self-reporting was a reliable method for measuring this component so, in the case of the IDC, responsiveness was measured by asking participants to complete a brief exit-survey at the end of each meeting to assess their awareness of design-thinking in practice and their feelings of efficacy as it concerns the program. Additionally, the researcher used the 1:1 interviews to push participants to provide deep descriptions of their experiences in the program. The two 1:1 interviews occurred at the start and end of the program. Participant responsiveness played an important role in achieving the desired outcomes listed in the logic model (Appendix E), as none of the short-term goals could be realized without the engagement and buy-in of all IDC members.

**Dose**

Finally, dose refers to how much of the program each participant actually received (Dusenbury et al., 2003). For this program evaluation, the researcher evaluated dose using three indicators: content planned, content covered, and content awareness. Each of these indicators represents a different phase of design-thinking integration. In essence, they seek to measure what participants planned to integrate, what the group as a whole actually integrated, and to what
extent each individual understood the principles in play. The study measured the first indicator using each of the eight IDC meeting agendas. The second indicator was assessed using structured observation notes, and the final indicator was measured using the exit-surveys and the 1:1 interviews.

**Outcome Evaluation Methods**

The following section outlines the participants, instruments, and procedures of the study. In almost all cases, the outcome evaluation happened concurrently with the process evaluation, and data from both strands of the study were analyzed during the final stage of research.

**Participants**

The treatment group (n=10) comprised five climber-teachers (sampled from the school’s LFF program and equally stratified across the school’s three divisions) and a representative from each of the school’s non-academic departments (i.e., marketing, admissions, development, integrated services, athletics, technology). The control group (n=29) comprised the remainder of the LFF enrollees and non-academic staff members who are not participating in the intervention.

**Instruments**

An open-source curriculum (IDEO, 2018) provided a framework for participants’ engagement in the IDC, and their work culminated in a document that detailed their 5-Year Vision Plan for the school. Both of those materials were used for the process evaluation. Additionally, three instruments—a survey, structured observation forms, and pre-planned questions for semi-formal interviews—were used to collect data on the effectiveness of the intervention. The table in Appendix F provides the variables in the study and their associated instruments.
Pre- and Post-test Survey. The survey (Appendix G) assessed several variables: organizational influence, sense of community, perceived organizational support, leadership awareness, and planned attrition. Organizational influence, sense of community, and planned attrition were taken from the relevant sections of the Teacher Follow-Up Survey, a subset of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) from the National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Perceived organizational support (POS) was measured using the short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). Leadership awareness was measured using the Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). Each of these surveys asked participants to respond to statements about their respective topics using a Likert-scale of agreeability or satisfaction.

Structured Observation Notes. The researcher documented all IDC meetings using structured observation notes. Structured observation notes ensure that key aspects of the intervention are considered at each meeting and help to keep the researcher objective and focused (O'Leary, 2014). The observation notes template (Appendix I) included sections for describing interactions related to organizational influence, sense of community, POS, leadership awareness, and organizational acumen. Additionally, there were sections of the template that included areas for noting process evaluation components, including attendance, participation levels, and meeting content. In this way, the presence and degree of key components were easily tracked across meetings.

Semi-structured interviews. Pre-planned interview questions served to provide a similar structure to that of the observation notes. By asking the same questions of all participants, the researcher was able to track trends and disparities among participants while still allowing for the additional information garnered from participants' deep descriptions of
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

experiences. The interview questions (Appendix J) explored all the mediating variables (organizational influence, sense of community, POS, leadership awareness, and organizational acumen) and moderating variables (job satisfaction and hybrid role creation) associated with the study. Because they occurred at both the start and end of the study, there are two slightly different question sets provided in the appendix.

Outcome Evaluation Procedures

Participant Recruitment

Teacher participants were recruited for the study via their enrollment in the school’s “Leadership for the Future” (LFF) program. The program requires teachers to apply into the experience and volunteer their time to learn about aspects of leadership in a salon-style format. By design, LFF is meant to attract teachers interested in leadership, but the needs assessment revealed frustration from teachers regarding its effectiveness in being a catalyst for influence or promotion. As such, the program served as a natural repository of teachers at risk for climber turnover.

At the start of the research phase—October of 2018—all teachers in the LFF program were invited to participate in the study and indicate their participation-level willingness (i.e., survey-only or survey and IDC participation). From the list of those willing to participate in the full scope of the program, a stratified sample was created to evenly represent the school’s three divisions. Because the needs assessment revealed disparities across divisions on a number of variables, this stratification was important for internal validity.

Concurrently, all non-academic staff members were invited to participate in the study and indicate their participation-level willingness. Again, from the list of those willing to participate in the full scope of the intervention, a stratified sample was created to evenly represent all non-
academic departments in the school. The treatment group—the stratified sample of teachers and the stratified sample of non-academic department members—were brought together to participate in the IDC. Those employees (both teachers and staff) who were invited to participate and either did not volunteer for the IDC or were not chosen for the intervention group served as the control group.

**Pre-Test**

Prior to taking the initial survey that served as a pre-test, all participants were read a consent form and signed a paper copy. Additionally, digital consent was necessary in order to access the survey. All participants, regardless of their placement in the treatment or control groups, took the survey together. The findings of the survey served as a benchmark but was not used to place participants in either group or influence their activities in the study. The pre-test was given to the participants using Qualtrics software (Qualtrics, 2017).

**Intervention**

**Design-thinking professional development.** At the start of the research, the treatment group gathered for a design-thinking professional development, led by the researcher. Using IDEO’s *Facilitator’s Guide for Introducing Human-Centered Design* (2018), the treatment group learned about the phases of the design-thinking cycle. The guide provided a slide deck and script for the presenter and hypothetical scenarios for the group to practice the process. To maintain the integrity of the program, the researcher did not deviate from the materials provided in the guide. At the end of the professional development, the participants completed a survey (also included in the guide), which was used for the process evaluation later in the research cycle.

**IDC sessions.** The IDC met biweekly from November to March, for a total of ten sessions. The treatment group met in the school’s staff lounge, a centrally located “neutral
space” that was available for anyone in the school to reserve. Because the study was taking place during the first year of a new head of school’s tenure, the IDC was charged with creating a 5-Year Vision plan that reflected the state of each facet of the organization, pain points, and desires for change, growth, or innovation. The researcher attended each session and took structured observation notes but did not participate or facilitate the discussion in any way. The meetings were meant to follow the design-thinking cycle of inspiration, ideation, and implementation (IDEO, 2018). In that vein, the final few meetings involved the creation and revision of the vision plan itself.

**Interviews.** One-on-one interviews happened twice over the course of the study. Once at the start of the IDC period (November) and once at the end (March). The interviews took approximately twenty minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed for later coding. The researcher used Rev software (Rev, 2014) to record and transcribe the interviews. All interviews happened at a convenient time for each participant but within a two-week window that did not overlap with any IDC sessions. For instance, the first interview took place between the design-thinking professional development and the first IDC session. The final interview happened within two weeks of the final IDC session. Using a two-week window allowed the researcher to meet with each participant at a time most convenient to them but also guaranteed a similar context across respondents.

**Post-Test**

At the conclusion of the intervention program, the treatment and control groups once again took the survey. While the five-month period between the pre- and post-test might have ameliorated some testing effects (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2012), the items on the survey
were rearranged in the post-test to combat any threats to validity from testing bias. The post-test was also given to the participants using Qualtrics software (Qualtrics, 2017).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The embedded mixed-method design resulted in the collection of quantitative data at the start and end of the study to complement the on-going qualitative data collection. The quantitative data provided a point of comparison between the treatment and control groups, while the qualitative data helped to explain the experiences of those in the treatment group in greater detail. Additionally, process evaluation data was collected at all stages of the treatment to ensure fidelity of implementation. Therefore, the data analysis included statistical tests of the survey data and coded observation notes and interview transcripts.

**Quantitative data.** All data from the surveys was imported into Excel software. Each item on the Likert-scale was assigned a number from 1-7, and a composite score was calculated for each variable. For negative statements, the numbers were reversed before entry. To compare change between the pre- and post-tests for the intervention and control groups, the author employed a MANOVA, followed by a series of t-tests for each construct.

**Qualitative data.** All data collected from the observations and interviews were iteratively coded using double margin coding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), with both *in vivo* coding and variable labels. To this end, the researcher was able to track the presence of key variables across different domains, while also allowing emergent information to arise from the data. In addition to hand-coding the actual transcripts, a coding table was developed in an attempt to triangulate the findings across multiple data sets.

**Merging data.** In alignment with mixed-methods design, the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed alongside each other using the data transformation method (Creswell &...
Plano Clark, 2011, p. 213). Coding the qualitative data using variable-labels rendered it similar to the measures present in the survey, allowing the two data sets to be more easily analyzed side by side. It was the researcher’s hope that any change indicated by the quantitative data would be further explained by the qualitative data. The use of variable-labels alongside in vivo coding allowed the researcher to align the findings of the surveys with verbatim comments from the participants.

**Threats to Validity**

**Limitations**

While the researcher made every effort to mitigate any threats to internal and external validity, protecting against one oftentimes exacerbates the other (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2012). Therefore, the following threats to validity have been identified as unavoidable characteristics of the study.

**Participant bias.** The researcher is an employee at Northeastern Academy and works alongside many of the individuals who took part in the study. O’Leary (2014) commented that “the paradox here is that the more entwined you become with the researched, the richer and more meaningful the data you might generate” (p. 233). But while there are benefits to a researcher’s embeddedness in a community she is studying, such as an understanding of tacit knowledge (Schutt, 2015), there is also the danger that participants will respond in a way that they perceive as desirable to the researcher. Some of this was combatted through the messaging at the outset of the intervention and the general conduct of the researcher, but it is a factor that was considered during data analysis.

**Low statistical power.** Northeastern is a small school with approximately 330 students and 100 total staff (teaching and non-teaching). The target population—climber teachers—is a
subset of the teaching staff, comprising perhaps 20 individuals across the organization. Given
the type of intervention (a committee), it was implausible to invite all 20 teachers to
participate. In keeping with other similar committees, five climber teachers and five non-
teaching staff took part in the IDC. The concern, given the small sample size, was that the study
would have low statistical power. Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002) warn that studies with
low statistical power have less precise findings and risk false null conclusions. Other
characteristics of the research design, such as fidelity checks, the use of previously-established
measures, and the control group, helped to increase the power. Nevertheless, the small sample
size created a threat to statistical conclusion validity and external validity.

History. The study took place during the 2018-2019 school year, a time in which the
school was experiencing significant shifts in its leadership. The previous Head of Upper School
assumed the role of Head of School, and new Heads of Lower and Upper Schools also began at
the same time. Therefore, the study happened concurrently to three new leadership tenures.
Because issues with leadership is a driver of climber turnover (Boyd et al., 2011; Kraatz &
Block, 2008; Ross & Gray, 2007; Weiss, 1999; You & Conley, 2015) and a problem that was
reiterated in the needs assessment, effects of the new leadership—whether positive or negative—
could be a confounding variable in the study. While this was an unavoidable aspect of the
research context, it was also noted during the data analysis.

Delimitations

Teacher type. Although the survey could have measured planned attrition among all
teachers at Northeastern, the intervention was specifically designed to combat climber turnover.
Teacher turnover, writ large, is driven by a variety of factors that are unlikely to be mitigated by
a single intervention. For instance, teachers who plan to leave their position for reasons
associated with a low salary are unlikely to be deterred by involvement in the IDC. Therefore, those teachers outside the LFF program were not invited to take part in the study.

**Drivers of turnover.** While literature on turnover typically falls into one of two categories, individual and organizational, this research only focused on the latter. An intervention geared toward the former, one that successfully met the needs of a vast array of individuals, would need to be complex and multi-faceted in order to be effective. Therefore, it was beyond the temporal and financial scope of this dissertation research.
CHAPTER FIVE

The intervention study was performed between November 2018 and March 2019. The following chapter describes the major findings for each research question and positions those findings within extant research and theory. Where applicable, findings are explained first in separate method strands (i.e., quantitative findings and qualitative findings) before merging them for more integrated exploration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The chapter then turns to an explication of the limitations of the study and a discussion of the implications for both future research and practice.

To review, the researcher used quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain answers to the research questions below.

RQ1: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers’ organizational influence?

RQ2: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' sense of community within the organization?

RQ3: How does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers' perceived organizational support (POS)?

RQ4: In what ways does an IDC affect independent school climber teachers’ perceived leadership conflict?

RQ5: To what extent does an IDC increase independent school climber teachers' organizational knowledge?

RQ6: To what extent does an independent school climber teachers' organizational knowledge affect hybrid promotion opportunities?

RQ7: To what extent does an IDC decrease climber turnover?
RQ8: To what extent do contextual factors, including participants’ initial scope of influence and job satisfaction, affect participants’ experience of the intervention?

RQ9: To what extent are design thinking materials and concepts integrated into the intervention?

RQ9A. To what extent does the researcher deliver an overview of the design-thinking process with fidelity?

RQ9B. To what extent do participants in the IDC integrate design-thinking strategies into their meeting conversations and the writing of their 5-Year Vision Plan?

RQ10: To what extent are participants engaged in the intervention process?

Findings

Before any discussion of the findings for each discrete research question can begin, it is worthwhile to look at some general characteristics of the survey responses provided by the intervention and control groups. Although the survey was administered in one sitting, it actually measured four disparate constructs. The researcher administered the survey to each group at the start and completion of the research study. Table 8 displays relevant descriptive statistics for the pre- and post-tests for both groups.

Both the skewness and kurtosis of the data suggest that the responses did not follow a normal distribution. A data set with a normal distribution would have a skewness and a kurtosis between 0 and 1. In the case of the data below, most constructs have responses that are clustered to the left of the ‘curve’ with a few outliers to the right. The presence of outliers may be further validated by some of the kurtosis scores. Positive kurtosis indicates a low number of responses in the ‘tails’ of a normal curve, resulting in a high ‘peak,’ as is the case with the intervention...
group’s post-test for Sense of Community. The post-test for the control group in the same construct category indicates a flatter curve, suggesting more dispersed responses.

While the shift in mean scores will be taken up more thoroughly throughout this chapter, it is worth noting here that across all constructs, the intervention group saw a downward trend in mean scores (indicating a positive shift in mindset) while the control group saw an upward trend in mean scores across the same time (indicating a negative shift in mindset).

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Survey Constructs

Descriptive Statistics for Survey Constructs

Construct: Sense of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>-.45</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>-.83</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Construct: Organizational Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>-.71</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Construct: Perceived Organizational Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9: Tests of Normality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>Significance (p&lt;.05)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box’s M</td>
<td>1.098</td>
<td>.360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levene’s Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Influence</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Organizational Support</td>
<td>3.095</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ambiguity</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was stated earlier, while many constructs emerged from the research questions and were examined across both quantitative and qualitative strands, the survey measured four specific variables: *sense of community, organizational influence, perceived organizational support (POS)*, and *leadership ambiguity*. The author employed a MANOVA to examine the relationships among those variables on the pre- and post-tests for both the treatment and control groups. Table 9 displays some of the key findings from that test.
Box’s M ($p = .360$) was used to test the normality of the distributions when all outcomes were examined simultaneously. The score indicated that multivariate normality was upheld. Levene’s Test was used to verify the normality of distributions at the univariate level. Again, all scores were non-significant ($p > .05$), indicating that the variances were equal. To determine group differences, the author used Wilks’ Lambda. The findings of that test revealed that the treatment and control conditions were statistically different across the combined outcomes (sense of community, organizational influence, perceived organizational support, and leadership ambiguity), ($\lambda = .67, F_{4,71} = 5.42, p = .001$) when controlling for the pre-scores.

The author performed a follow-up post-hoc analysis to examine each outcome separately, and looked at the tests of between-subject effects. Table 10 displays those findings. Here, the findings are more emphatic. Sense of community, organizational influence, and POS all had large F-statistic values, indicating that differences in the groups for the multivariate means were statistically significant. The lack of movement on the leadership ambiguity measure will be discussed later in this section.

Table 10. Tests of Between Subject Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>Significance ($p &lt; .05$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>5.814</td>
<td>.018*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Influence</td>
<td>5.651</td>
<td>.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Organizational Support</td>
<td>9.141</td>
<td>.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ambiguity</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>.537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$
RQ1: Organizational Influence

Organizational influence was measured in the survey using adapted items from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Shen, 1997). Table 11 below shows the results of the pre- and post-tests for both the intervention and control groups for this construct. Participants answered Likert-scale questions with a 7-point response range, and each response was numerically coded. Lower numerical scores represented a more positive outlook on each measure. Because the researcher wanted to test the possibility of the intervention having either a positive or negative effect on participants, a two-tailed t-test was administered. The absolute value of the obtained value (t=2.1) was slightly larger than the critical value (2.02) and the p-value (p=.042) was slightly less than the alpha value (α=.05). The results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in responses, albeit a slight one. The effect size computed to .63. These findings suggest a positive shift in participants’ perceptions of their organizational influence.

Table 11: T-Test Results for Organizational Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intervention Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained Value</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value</td>
<td>.042*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .05

In the interviews, the theme of organizational influence focused on the extent to which participants felt they had the power to make change, weigh in on decisions, and contribute to problem-solving across the organization. For the purposes of this study, a distinction was made
between the power one had in their own domain (e.g., a teacher’s ability to choose curricular materials) and the power one had to influence broad-spectrum topics (e.g., a teacher’s ability to weigh in on admissions protocols). Participants discussed their level of influence before, during, and after involvement in the IDC, and their responses were coded in an effort to track any change in their outlook.

The interviews shed light on the topic of influence. Teachers came to feel a higher sense of influence from their time in the IDC, a construct tracked through the code *increased influence*. For instance, one teacher remarked before the outset of the intervention, “So, with a person like me who likes to be involved in that level of work, there really hasn't been a way to get there, I guess” (John⁵, personal communication, 2019). Another said, “Well, not being a part of the management team, I'm left out of the loop until things are already been decided on that level, usually” (Carol, personal communication, 2019). However, after taking part in the IDC, responses tended to be more aspirational. While participation in the intervention did not give teachers anymore outright additional influence, it seemed to make them more optimistic of the potential for their influence to expand. For example, one teacher said, “I guess I don't feel like I've influenced much, but I feel like I have, could potentially have the opportunity to now. I think I've read the lay of the land and I know...I may be able to recognize new things now” (Diane, personal communication, 2019).

Conversely, the intervention forced nonacademic staff to reflect on the scope of their influence in new light. The researcher used the code *shifting mindset* to track that phenomenon. Nonteaching staff went from feeling quite confident in their scope of influence to being somewhat more reflective of it. For instance, in an early interview with an administrator, he

---

⁵ All interviewees' names are pseudonyms
stated, “Because of what my role is and how it crosses over so many divisions and so many initiatives and programs and everything, I'm comfortable and confident in my role” (Mark, personal communication, 2019). That same administrator remarked after the IDC, “Right. I think, if anything, I've come to realize that my level of influence has not changed. What I thought of my level of influence has not changed, but my thoughts on my sphere of influence may have changed because I realize that my influence only goes to a certain department. If I thought about it, I would've realized it before, but you sit there with all these people, and you realize that they all have their own shtick” (Brendan, personal communication, 2019). A common theme among the latter interviews with nonacademic staff was a more expanded view of what it was like to be a teacher at the school (coded as empathy, a recurrent code across themes). For example, one participant noted, “I think it definitely made me, if anything, personally realize that I feel like both personally but also professionally I have relationships with so many different realms of the school that I feel like some faculty members might not feel, both in terms of my understanding of how departments work and how we work together, but then also personal relationships. I have time to make those relationships happen, and they don’t” (Allison, personal communication, 2019).

These trends in remarks align with some of the findings regarding the empathy-building qualities of design thinking and committee work. Elsbach and Stigliani (2018) described the degree to which design-thinking forced participants to think about parts of the organization outside their own realms. The diverse makeup of the group also likely contributed to greater empathy on the part of administrators, as diversity of committee members often engenders empathic thinking (Jackson, Wood, & Zboja, 2012).
The interviews shed light on some of the findings from the survey. For instance, question Q3_9 focused on influence over school policies and procedures, which was at the heart of the work the IDC took on. Question Q8_1 asked participants the degree to which they agreed that the organization valued their opinion. As the participants learned from one another and came together to build a five-year vision plan, it is unsurprising that their feelings of influence and their sense of being valued grew. On the other hand, question Q3_20, which asked participants to reflect on the extent to which they had opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others, saw little movement. It remained a highly positive factor for participants before and after the process. This was likely owing to the ambiguous nature of the “difference” that was being made; teachers made a difference in the lives of their students, and nonacademic staff felt they made positive contributions to other constituents within the organization both before and after the intervention.

RQ2: Sense of Community

Sense of community was measured in the survey via adapted items from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Shen, 1997). Table 10 below shows the results of the pre- and post-tests for both the intervention and control groups for this construct. As was the case for organizational influence, participants answered Likert-scale questions with a 7-response range, and each response was numerically coded. The researcher ran a t-test to compare the two group’s scores. As Table 12 illustrates, the absolute value of the obtained value (t=7.92) was larger than the critical value (1.65) and the p-value (p < .001) was less than the alpha value (α=.05). These results indicate that there was a statistically significant shift in responses. Furthermore, the effect size computes to .94, which suggests a large magnitude of change.
The results of the survey showed a sizeable shift in thinking regarding sense of community, and the topic dominated the interviews, particularly during the final round in which participants reflected on their experience in the IDC and the merits of the program in general. The theme *sense of community* included participants' beliefs and feelings about the extent to which people within the organization connected with one another on a personal level, the extent to which the participants felt like part of a workplace family, and whether the organization did anything to cultivate (or obstruct) those feelings. Within the theme, a few codes emerged. *Obstacles to community* and *mechanisms for community* reflected those processes, events, and structures that either impeded or bolstered a sense of community. The IDC was frequently mentioned in that latter group. In most cases, both codes were present in a single participant's interviews. For instance, the same participant said in their first interview, “I think people just like, in reality are heads down at getting their stuff done, and it's hard to feel part of this big community” and later remarked, “I felt more part of everything else, being in a group of diverse, people from diverse parts of the organization. I guess it makes me hopeful” (Avery, personal communication, 2019). Participants from both the teaching and nonacademic subgroups were energized by the feeling of community that the IDC engendered. From a teacher-participant:
"I think that any time there's a conscious effort to make time for collaboration across not just divisions in this case but all areas, I think that that's a really positive experience for everyone. I know we had a very specific purpose, but I just think to get people in the room from lower school, middle school, upper school, development, tech, admissions, I feel like those opportunities are few and far between. It was really interesting to hear everyone's different perspectives because we all work in such different realms. To me it's obviously through the teaching lens, that's one thing, but to sit in the room and have Alex, and Lauren in there, and Joseph in there, and Eric in there, and Matt⁶, I thought it just really created this whole experience that I feel like we don't often have" (Diane, personal communication, 2019).

Equally excited discussion abounded from staff. For example,

"It was interesting to interact in group work, to be with individuals who I don't normally get a chance to work with, and kind of had to learn to be flexible with their styles that maybe I'm not used to. And the last meeting, I felt like, was really great, because I felt like we've really made this plan, something that could actually work, whether it was a little bit ... [there were a] couple meetings where I was like, are we ever going to get there? But it was nice to see something actually come from this" (John, personal communication, 2019).

Of all the themes tracked in the interview transcripts (Appendix K), sense of community came up more than any other construct. That fact was particularly interesting given the number of communication conflicts that were noted on the researcher’s observation notes. While the communication issues will be discussed in a later section, it is worth noting here that the

⁶ Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants.
meetings did not always run smoothly. But despite regular communication breakdowns, only two participants (including the one above) mentioned any problems with working together at all. Quite the opposite: the participants unanimously commented on the positive sense of community that the IDC engendered.

RQ3: Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived organization support was quantitatively measured using the short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). Participants were asked to indicate agreement on a Likert scale (1=Strongly Agree, 7=Strongly Disagree) in response to statements about their workplace. For items that were negatively worded, scores were reversed before they were inputted for data analysis. Table 13 shows the results of that portion of the survey. The absolute value of the obtained value (t=7.18) was larger than the critical value (1.96) and the p-value (p<.001) was less than the alpha value (α=.05). The results indicate that there was a statistically significant shift in responses. Furthermore, the effect size computes to .78, which suggests a fairly large magnitude of change.

Table 13: T-test Results for Perceived Organizational Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-Test Results: Perceived Organizational Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the data suggests an overall shift in thinking about this construct, one of the largest shifts in the entire survey, however, was on an item from this section that asked participants how much they agreed with the idea that their organization had concern for them.
According to the interview responses, the significant shift in this response was likely due to the fact that the 5-year vision plan (the real work of the IDC sessions) was actually submitted to the head of school, as opposed to being created solely for the purpose of this research study. Additionally, the participants decided to include a statement at the opening of their document that called for feedback from leadership about their plan. In this way, not only was the document authentic, but it also spurred a conversation with the Head of School that would have otherwise not happened.

In the interviews, the theme perceived organizational support included participants’ perceptions about the degree to which the school supported them as individual professionals, had their best interest at heart, and strove to create an optimal workplace environment for its employees. Within this theme, the code authenticity was prevalent. Not only was it important for participants to feel like the organization was looking out for them, but the degree to which acts of support were genuine mattered greatly. As an example, one participant differentiated between the good feelings praise from her supervisor engendered when delivered in a private conversation in the hallway and the less impactful feelings public “kudos” created when part of an end-of-year all school meeting.

The authentic nature of the IDC’s vision plan and the positive response it received, as described above, came up in many of the final interviews. One participant said, “I think especially now since [the Head of School] has sent that email about wanting to meet with us, that we do have the ability to have our voices heard in a more powerful way, especially because we are a collective group” (Diane, personal communication, 2019). Another offered, “Yeah. I think knowing that this plan we’ve made is going to [the Head of School], and that even though maybe nothing will come of it, but knowing that there are things … something could, or that he’s
actually going to look at it and provide feedback, was reassuring” (Betty, personal communication, 2019). The importance of the authenticity of the report and its effect on positive feelings toward the organization is perfectly summed up in the following statement from a participant:

“I think a lot of it was the connection that you and [the Head of School] made for this to actually be presented as a real five-year plan, like I think when everyone was just like ‘oh it’s a fun experiment’ then my answer would probably have stayed mostly the same as the first time around, but I think the idea that it’s like “oh, maybe there is like, let's kind of open this up and see and get some input.” Yeah, I do think it has made my attachment to the school a little bit stronger and made what I think it cares about how I think a little more” (Sharon, personal communication, 2019).

One factor that may have contributed to mixed results on this survey measure was the way in which the IDC drummed up feelings and perspectives that may have otherwise remained below the surface. The code negative empathy captured this phenomenon. As members of the committee shared their thoughts on various aspects of the organization, a byproduct of the constructive discussion was the sharing of some unsavory stories of various individual’s time in the organization. For instance, one participant described how the IDC brought to light the work/life struggles people were experiencing: “I feel like the IDC conversations definitely brought that out. That people are definitely feeling like there's a lot of pull and tucks on their time, and the expectations. And maybe I'm just more conscious of different divisions feeling like they're burdened in different ways. I feel like, I might just be paying a bit more attention to that than I had previously” (Allison, personal communication, 2019).
The discussion of the school’s past was a great example of this double-edged sword. One participant shared the positive side of learning about the history of the school: “Just understanding the historical culture here, how things happened ten years ago, five years ago, two, one year ago. It's really interesting to hear everyone's perspective and how things have grown” (John, personal communication, 2019). But another shared the flipside of that coin: “The whole purpose of this was a very hopeful thing, and I think that there were still a lot of pieces that seemed to be negatively impacted by things in... like in my experience, I don’t even have actual experience with them because they happened prior to me being there. So, there were parts of conversation that I’m like … I mean, just move on” (Linda, personal communication, 2019).

Indeed, an unintended consequence of the collaboration and empathy building that took place was that participants came to learn about each other’s work in a comprehensive way, the good and bad included. As a result, the increased sense of support may have been tempered by an increased sense of the organization’s injustices.

**RQ4: Perceived Leadership Conflict**

Perceived leadership conflict was measured on the survey using adapted items from the Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). As can be seen in Table 14, this construct saw the least overall change in responses. The absolute value of the obtained value \( t=2.56 \) was larger than the critical value \( t=1.97 \) and the p-value \( p=.01 \) was less than the alpha value \( \alpha=.05 \). The results indicate that there was a statistically significant shift in responses, although it was slight. The effect size was the smallest of all constructs measured in the survey, at .29, which suggests a small magnitude of change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-Test Results: Leadership Ambiguity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interview responses were helpful in explaining the lack of change in this category. The theme *leadership ambiguity* captured participants’ feelings about the leadership structure of the organization, the degree to which leaders were motivating and helpful in their roles, and the extent to which participants felt clear directives and vision from their supervisors. Recall that, by design, the committee was without a leader. In order to empower the members to play a strong role in the decision-making process, and in keeping with the literature on egalitarianism in the workplace (Morrison & Milliken, 2000), teachers and nonacademic staff were charged with engaging the vision plan development through consensus and democratic means. While ultimately, the vision plan was created, it was not without conflict and frustration. A lack of a leader in the group could be the reason that *communication breakdowns* (a code within this theme) occurred, and feelings of organization-wide leadership ambiguity might have been exacerbated by the lack of a leader within the IDC.

In the initial interviews, participants shared various feelings about confusing leadership structures in the school. This notion was captured with the code *leadership confusion*. One teacher said, “I do have a ton of things [to contribute], but it doesn't feel like either being a representative or having department heads or managerial type meetings with people that coordinate aspects of the divisions or disciplines or whatever. We just don't have that in place yet and we haven't had that in place” (Sharon, personal communication, 2019). Two different nonacademic staff members offered comments about ambiguity in this area. One stated, “[They]
want your ideas, but do you want my ideas and who do I have to run them by first? Do I have to run them by [points in all directions]… That kind of thing” (Betty, personal communication, 2019). Another remarked, “it becomes difficult for me to constantly go into that environment knowing that I'm going to ... I know that there's a problem, I'm not being told what the problem is and I can't fix it. So we're just kind of spinning our wheels” (Linda, personal communication, 2019).

It was the researcher’s hope that involvement in decision-making would empower members of the IDC to transcend their reliance on a leadership structure that seemed weak within the organization. That did not turn out to be the case. One participant shared, “It's challenging to work with so many people. Obviously, the people that were part of this are people that like to have their voices heard. Sitting in any room with ten very vocal opinionated people can pose challenges just in terms of focus and accomplishing our tasks” (John, personal communication, 2019). Another lamented, “We barely got to arranging priorities before the meeting would be over, and then ... I don't know. It seemed like three or four meetings in a row, we were doing the same thing on the spreadsheet, arranging priorities and arguing over which ones are priorities.” While participants spoke less about leadership confusion issues in the second interview, their comments were replaced by communication breakdown complaints like the ones above.

**RQ5: Organizational Knowledge**

*Organizational knowledge* was measured through the researcher’s observations during meetings and the participant interviews. As a theme in the transcript analysis, it included comments about interdepartmental learning and participants’ perceived or actual expanding knowledge of organizational processes. Two noteworthy trends emerged. The first is that
teacher-participants all commented during their final interviews about how much they learned from collaborating with people outside their typical organizational realm. This notion was captured by the code *cross-training*. Not only did the collaboration inform their work within the IDC, however. It also started to take effect outside of it. Comments emerged like, “I think it’s coming up slowly in those conversations [during outside meetings]. I just feel like I’m paying more attention to it outside of [the IDC]” (Diane, personal communication, 2019) and “as I would have more of those [IDC] meetings, I felt that sometimes my attitude or perception shifted a little bit in terms of understanding why things work in our institution the way that they do. And I felt like it was ... I was able to really think of more logical solutions, instead of just how we feel” (Brendan, personal communication, 2019).

Additionally, several nonacademic staff noted that they enjoyed the ability to share their work with people who were normally not privy to it. The code *staff as teachers* captured this phenomenon. For instance, one administrator remarked, “I think it definitely helps, just obviously coming at it from the admin side where I do have a little bit more of a global perspective, a little bit. I think it helps explain that to others and have them start to recognize it and see it” (Mark, personal communication, 2019). A member from the business office—a decidedly siloed department at the school—shared their experience with the group slowly coming to realize the importance of their work:

“I think it was really interesting when we were trying to prioritize. Everyone based on their individual roles has different priorities that are best for them. I think it’s really important for groups like this to sit down and be like, ‘Okay, so like how do all these priorities fit together?’ It became very clear after four meetings that the financial stability of the institution was the most important, but from a teacher’s perspective at first they
might have thought what's most important to us is having curriculum materials. I'm not necessarily saying that's the case, but it felt good” (Betty, personal communication, 2019).

While the intervention was ultimately focused on empowering teachers, the potential to promote teachers into hybrid roles (a topic addressed in the next section) depends largely on the nonacademic department heads’ willingness to do so. Their satisfaction with sharing their work was a promising finding for that end.

**RQ6: Promotion Potential**

Promotion potential was also measured through the researcher’s observations and the participant interviews. Similar to the exchange of organizational knowledge, an interesting split trend emerged between the teachers and the nonacademic staff members who participated in the intervention. These two emergent findings were tracked using the codes *teacher desire for hybrid* and *staff desire for hybrid*. During the final interview, the researcher asked the faculty whether or not they would be interested in working in one of the departments of a person from the IDC. Conversely, the nonacademic staff were asked how they felt about the possibility of bringing a teacher onto their team. The responses were decidedly different.

Not a single teacher-participant indicated that they would be interested in working—in an official capacity—for another department after taking part in the IDC. In fact, several of them were emphatic in their refusal. As one teacher said, “No, I definitely was like, I don't want that job. But I think it helped me understand departments more, which I think is important that somebody know, but I don’t necessarily want to do that job” (Avery, personal communication, 2019). Another teacher offered, “I would definitely be interested in continuing doing, kind of,
these more informal things like this, but then in the future, looking to have potentially something that's more stable. But yes, just not right now” (Diane, personal communication, 2019).

The nonacademic staff, on the other hand, were equally unanimous in their welcoming of teachers to their team. One administrator noted the helpful perspective having a representative in each teaching division would bring to his department:

"I think that I would have loved one before and I would love one now. So I don't necessarily know if [the IDC has] changed it at all, but I do think that maybe it's more important than I think it was before just to get, to be able to if there is an opportunity to have these sorts of meetings and have an IDC meeting to be like really have someone in [each division] all the time… like people going to upper school, middle school meetings and like actually teaching the kids everyday all the time, and having that valuable input and feedback so when teachers are like "I need this" and we're like "do you really need that?" But having someone with us, it's like "I do need this and here's x, y, and z, and here's why." Okay, now I can see someone who can bridge both the things they need and the technology meetings, I think would be useful" (Ethan, personal communication, 2019).

Another nonacademic staff offered a much more succinct statement: "Yeah, absolutely. I think there is a huge value to starting that process, when can it happen?" Allison, personal communication, 2019). These findings—particularly teachers’ disinterest in hybrid work—is an important consideration for this research. The IDC was initially designed as a bridge between the school’s current structure and an imagined improved structure predicated on hybrid roles. The findings from this theme suggest that the IDC, rather than a means to an end, might simply be the end point. This notion is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.
RQ7: Climber Turnover

Despite the teachers not wanting to take on hybrid roles—which the researcher originally thought the IDC could facilitate—the intervention did seem to influence thoughts of attrition in its teaching members. Turnover was measured through three items on the survey, taken from the Schools and Staffing Survey, as well as information obtained from the participant interviews. At the start of the research study, all five of the teacher participants indicated that they had thought of applying or had applied to a teaching position at another school, and four of the five participants indicated they had considered applying or had applied to a position outside the classroom. Figure 7 displays those findings. Figure 8, however, displays the responses to an item that asked how long teachers planned to stay in their positions, from both the pre- and post-tests. While before the IDC, three of the five members indicated they would leave as soon as something more desirable came along and one member even noted they would leave as soon as possible, their responses were far less decisive after taking part in the IDC. Although the respondents did not emphatically indicate a renewed, lifelong commitment to teaching, their increased undecidedness may suggest that the IDC at least gave their thoughts of attrition pause.
Figure 8

Projected Length of Teaching Career

RQ8-10: Fidelity of Implementation

In line with the extant research on implementation science, research questions 8-10 focused on the degree to which the intervention was implemented with fidelity (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2003). Performing a process evaluation allowed the research to explore both the extent to which the program was executed as designed and the way in which participants experienced it (Baranowski & Stables, 2000).

Context. It was important to understand the scope of influence of each of the participants at the start of the study to ascertain whether the program was appropriately targeting all kinds of participants. The researcher initially looked at the organization chart and ascribed each participant a number between one and four, based on where they fell in the organization chart. However, during the 1:1 interviews, it became increasingly clear that the number of individuals one supervised was not the determinant of influence, but rather the number of individuals with which one typically interacted. In much the same vein as the fractal
organizations described in the previous chapter, a person’s scope of influence was far more dependent on their level of practical, integrated impact than in their official, top-down authority.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the participants who reported having more networked positions (those that called them to various departments and divisions) were less likely to engage in communication breakdowns during the IDC meetings and were more likely to step in to mediate disagreement or impasse that occurred. This aligns, albeit in an opposite direction, with the work of Smith et al. (2012). They found that practiced integration in structured meetings led to more integrated solutions in the day-to-day workplace. Here, practice in integrated workplace behavior seems to have led to integrated thinking during meetings.

**Implementation.** The IDC was launched in late October 2018 with a design-thinking workshop. The workshop occurred after the school day and followed the *Facilitator’s Guide for Introducing Human-Centered Design* (IDEO, 2018). Following the workshop, participants completed a brief survey on their feelings about their own expertise and their satisfaction with the delivery of the professional development session. The results of that survey are in Table 15 below. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the participants worked day-to-day with the researcher (who facilitated the workshop), so it is very possible that the results of this survey are a reflection of positive participant bias. Nevertheless, the participants did leave the session feeling confident and excited to use design-thinking in the meetings to come.
Table 15: Design-Thinking Workshop Survey

In practice, the researcher observed far less design-thinking practice than was hoped for. Participants, particularly in the face of complex or ambiguous topics, fell back on more familiar productivity tools (e.g., Google Docs, spreadsheets) and used voting to move through decisions rather than building consensus. At the end of each session, the researcher collected brief, two-question exit surveys (Appendix L) that asked participants to indicate their level of confidence with their design-thinking as well as their overall satisfaction. The results of those surveys are illustrated in Table 16. It is worth noting that, while imperfect, the confidence with design-thinking trended similarly to the satisfaction with the entire meeting. The researcher observed as
much; when design-thinking was abandoned, communication often broke down, and people left feeling less satisfied with their time spent in the IDC.

Table 16: IDC Exit Survey Responses

Many participants voiced their desire to have integrated design-thinking more often, but without an expert to facilitate them, they either forgot what they had learned or relied on more familiar methods for the sake of expediency. For instance, one participant expressed his wish that participants had been more willing to embrace the open-endedness of design-thinking: “We kind of did skip back. We skipped to like reality pretty quick. So, if it were to be done again, if we do it in the future, I would love to start at the anything at all as possible. Even moving buildings or going into a different state or even going to space. Like I feel like we joked about that. And then everyone's like, ha, let's looks at reality again” (Ethan, personal communication, 2019). Others simply asked for more time in training or a reminder of the norms at every meeting. Again, without a leader, this facet of the program was not implemented to its fullest potential.
**Participant Responsiveness.** While the style of participation did not go precisely as planned, the frequency of participation did. Of the ten members of the IDC, nine attended 100% of the meetings. The tenth member attended eight of the ten meetings. Finding a time when all ten members could meet, however, was a nearly impossible task. The three teaching divisions ran on different daily schedules, and the nonacademic staff worked from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, while the teaching faculty were required to be on campus from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm. The daily routines that resulted from these different schedules meant that some of the members needed release time from their responsibilities (e.g., a substitute teacher or permission to skip a standing meeting).

Within the meetings themselves, participation was frequent among all members. While certain members undoubtedly dominated the airtime more than others, the structured observation notes revealed that all participants contributed. This data was further supported by a document analysis of the final vision plan. All members added material to the document, and the vision plan incorporated facets of each participant’s department or division.

**Dose.** The content of the intervention—the creation of a vision plan via the design-thinking protocol—was measured by tracking the agenda of each meeting, the actual progress of each meeting, and the final outcome. While each meeting’s agenda was created by the group in the prior week’s gathering, there were only a few weeks when the full agenda was actually completed. As has been described in other sections, communication breakdowns often stalled progress. Nevertheless, a five-year vision plan was created and submitted to the Head of School at the close of the research study. The trend of the group’s satisfaction, displayed in Table 16, demonstrates a dip in satisfaction in the middle of the process, but a return to positivity at the program’s close. The completion of the vision-plan could be the reason for this trend.
Emergent theme: Wanting more

An emergent theme in the final interviews, and in the observations of the researcher as well, was the notion of wanting to continue the IDC program (coded as wanting more). Nine of the ten participants expressed a desire to continue gathering as a committee beyond the study’s timeline. They voiced a new belief in the power of this kind of collaborative thinking. One participant stated, “I think you have to do it that way, or else the solutions you make aren’t going to work for the entire school” (Avery, personal communication, 2019) and another (despite the inconsistent use of design-thinking) remarked, “Because it’s so tricky… I think that using design thinking like this is the only way to really come to a resolution. I don’t know what it is!” (Mark, personal communication, 2019) Perhaps nothing underscored the group’s belief in the power of the IDC more than their decision to continue to meet after the close of the research project.

While the researcher was no longer present for the meetings, the members continued to make the time to come together, they engaged in dialogue with the Head of School, and they made further revisions to their vision plan.

Limitations

While every measure was taken to ensure the validity of this research, there were some unavoidable issues that limit the study’s scope of generalizability. Those limitations are taken up in this section.

Low Statistical Power

In Chapter 4, the author discussed the topic of effect size and statistical power. Recall that computing a standard effect size was necessary to fully understand the difference between the two groups’ means (Lipsey & Hurley, 2009). Again, choosing the correct standard deviation was essential to finding an accurate effect size. Because of this study’s small sample size, the
control group’s standard deviation could not be assumed correct (Coe, 2002). Therefore, using a pooled standard deviation was necessary. Given the study’s sample size (10 participants in the treatment group and 29 participants in the control group), the effect sizes ranged from .29 to .94. As was stated in Chapter 4, high statistical power would go a long way in achieving greater overall validity for this study, one in which the sample sizes were so small. The researcher employed Lipsey and Hurley’s (2009) chart (Appendix G) for determining the desired effect size given a specific sample size and desired statistical power for studies that use t-tests or similar parametric tests (p. 6). Using their calculations and assuming a sample size of 10 for each group, the four effect sizes of .29, .63, .78, and .94 resulted in a range of statistical powers, only one of which (sense of community) reaches the desired statistical power. Figure 9 illustrates the scenario. Given that the study was unable to achieve high statistical power, any statistical findings must be considered cautiously.

Figure 9 Statistical Power

Specificity of Context

While the study was intended to shed light on the independent school context, and the hope was that schools within that sector could glean lessons from this study, there were specific
aspects of the research site that might have affected the findings. First, the school is relatively new; at the time of the study it was in its twelfth year. In fact, the school’s age and the extent to which employees were part of the “original school” or not were mentioned so often in the interviews that it was coded as its own theme.

The age of the school, paired with the fact that the organization’s founders still held sway over many of the top-level decisions, make it a unique context. Older schools with more established protocols, more defined leadership, and clearer or more publicly shared visions may not benefit as widely from a program like the IDC.

Additionally, at the time of the study, the school saw a significant shift in leadership. Two of the three division heads were new to their position, and the Head of School was in his first year (having been promoted from Head of Upper School). While it is unclear whether this new leadership had a positive, negative, or neutral effect on teachers’ feelings about their organization, it is possible that the personnel shift affected the findings. For that reason, schools in a more stable state may not see the same shift in thinking (either in the intervention or control groups).

**Implications for Further Research**

While this study strove to contribute to the research on hybrid roles, it raised as many questions as it answered. Identity management is a documented struggle of hybrid role acquisition (Denis et al., 2001), but further investigation could help to unpack the paradox of teachers wanting leadership outside the classroom, but eschewing it when given the opportunity in this context. Explicit education on the nature of hybrid work, both for the individual and the organization, before the start of the intervention could steer members toward a more welcome mindset.
Additionally, given the positive effects of this particular program (e.g., increased sense of community, increased sense of influence), more inductive research should be conducted to track the emergent benefits of a program like this. While this study sought to validate hypotheses about particular mechanisms related to teacher attrition, there may be further advantages (or disadvantages for that matter) that were not explored here.

Finally, an interesting trend emerged in the intervention and control group responses. The mean scores for the intervention groups trended in a downward direction (indicating a more positive outlook). This was the predicted outcome of the treatment. The control group’s mean scores, however, trended in an upward direction (indicating a more negative outlook). Because the control group did not receive any treatment, the shift in their mindsets is worth further study for a couple of reasons. First, understanding what mechanisms are in play to produce increasingly negative feelings about one’s workplace over time is a worthwhile endeavor for any organization to take on. Second, if that trend is replicated in other populations, the results of the intervention group are all the more meaningful. It would suggest that the intervention not only staved off negative feelings, but reversed the trend altogether toward the positive. Further studies are necessary to make that claim.

**Implications for Practice**

There are three important considerations for schools wishing to implement a program like the IDC. The first is timing. As was stated above, gathering such a diverse group of people together at once required participants to miss typically vital aspects of their job. Because this program was being run as a pilot and was part of a research study, concessions were made by participants, their colleagues, and their supervisors. That said, the model was not sustainable for long-term implementation outside of such special conditions. Schools interested in running a
truly interdepartmental collaborative group must create the scheduling infrastructure to do so. Committing to this type of committee work prior to start of the school year and planning accordingly will likely result in more sustainable programs.

The lack of leadership in the IDC, although part of its original design, will need to be addressed. Ideally, an individual with design-thinking expertise would take on the position. The role of the IDC leader would be focused more on norming communication and helping to facilitate the design-thinking process than it would be on setting the agenda or driving the content of the meeting. For that reason, the leader of the IDC would not have to be an official leader within the organization. In fact, choosing someone who is not normally in a supervisory role could achieve the needed leadership within the IDC while also maintaining the egalitarian style around which the program was originally designed.

The training is another facet that needs attention. The participants in this study took part in a single day design-thinking professional development session. While the group worked their way through the entirety of IDEO’s (2018) Human-Centered Design Tool Kit, the single-day schedule did not seem to result in long-term retention. Therefore, spreading out the design-thinking training, perhaps over the summer months or throughout an entire school year via a PLC structure, could stimulate deeper understanding, which in turn would translate to more seamless integration of design-thinking into decision-making inside and outside the IDC sessions.

In considering the logic model (Appendix E), schools looking to replicate the IDC should be cautious about its ability to produce all of the outcomes predicted there. The short-term outcomes—those associated with learning—are likely achievable within a single iteration of the program. That said, the intermediate and long-term outcomes will almost certainly require multiple cycles of participation in the IDC and may not be true of all participants. As was seen
in this study, teachers did show diminished attrition plans, although what catalyzed that shift in thinking was not the predicted driver. Additionally, whether or not teachers would follow their stated plans with action remains to be seen.

**Conclusions**

This research endeavored to overcome the organizational drivers of climber turnover. While many of those drivers were particularly problematic within the independent school context, the environment of independent schools might also be equally conducive to a solution. Independent schools lack a central office, that structurally and geographically separate operational entity present in public schools. The existence of the entirety of the organization on one campus lends itself to programs like the IDC. While intentional steps must be taken to bridge the current siloed framework of schools with the integrated nature of the IDC, independent schools are arguably much closer to that communication structure than other education sectors.

The needs assessment indicated that a successful intervention would achieve the following: (1) leverage mission alignment and expand community, (2) improve perceived organizational support; (3) overcome complex leadership; (4) improve the sense of influence; (5) create opportunities for career advancement; and (6) increase job satisfaction. The actual intervention program was successful on several of those measures. It expanded participants’ sense of community, and its use of a vision plan as its focus certainly leveraged the mission alignment of its members. It improved the perceived organizational support, participants’ sense of influence, and their overall job satisfaction. It was unsuccessful in overcoming leadership ambiguities, however, and it may have actually exacerbated participants’ negative feelings on topic. And while the opportunities for career advancement may have presented themselves at the
end of the intervention, teachers' disinterest in that potential remains one of the more interesting findings of this research. Again, the IDC, while initially seen as a "middle step" to achieving something loftier, might actually be sufficient in ameliorating turnover by itself.

In their discussion of fractal school communities, Gialamas, Pelonis, and Medeiros' (2014) describe leaders at every layer of the organization. Their vision of leadership—layered within each other like concentric circles—provides a tremendous image of what a school could be.

"The leader then (of the institution/of the individual school/of the department or division/of the faculty group/of the classroom/of the learning group in the classroom: here again we draw on the notion of self-similarity) takes on the Socratic role of daring inquiry by posing questions that demand reflection and re-evaluation and reconstruction of understandings. In this sense, leaders (like teachers in their classrooms) are truly researchers/learners, probing to understand others' understandings and creating scaffolds on which others can expand and create new knowledge and understandings." (p. 77)

This notion of engagement at every level, of leading from the place where one stands, has the potential to reframe what it means to be a teacher, an administrator, a staff member. In self-similar organizations, all members of the community are equally essential to its vitality. All members are required to ask questions of themselves and each other.

An interdepartmental design-thinking committee is just one mechanism for achieving the kind of thoughtful community Gialamas and colleagues imagined. It is a stepping stone toward an organization where career trajectories are not linear, but rather dynamic and amorphous. It is this researcher's hope that through empowering programs like the IDC, schools can
reconceptualize what it means to be a teacher, not only for the individuals who stand at the front of the classroom every day, but for each and every member of the organization.
References


Battilana, J., & Lee, M. (2014). Advancing research on hybrid organizing – Insights from the
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

study of social enterprises. *The Academy of Management Annals, 8*(1), 397–441.
doi:10.1080/19416520.2014.893615

vision communication to venture growth in entrepreneurial firms. *Journal of Applied
Psychology, 83*(1), 43–54. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.83.1.43

Benford, R.D. (2007). The college sports reform movement: Reframing the “edutainment”

leadership, 62*(5), 56-60. Retrieved from

doi:10.1177/0031721717708289

doi:10.5465/amr.2011.0431


Bidwell, C. (2001). Analyzing schools as organizations: Long-term permanence and short-

directions for higher education*. Los Angeles, CA: Center for Higher Education Policy
Analysis. doi:10.1002/he.152
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS


CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS


Brown, T., & Wyatt, J. (2010). Design thinking for social innovation. _Development Outreach, 12_(1), 29–43. doi:10.1596/1020-797x_12_1_29


Coe, R. (2002). It's the effect size, stupid: What effect size is and why it is important. Paper
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association,
University of Exeter, England.

Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, F., Mood, A. M., Weinfield, F. D.,
Government Printing Office.


York: Basic.

reduce burnout and improve retention of special educators. *Exceptional Children, 62*(4),


doi:10.1177/003172171109200622

DASL: Data and analysis for school leadership. (2017). *Administrative duties, last 35 years*

Davies, S., & Quirke, L. (2007). The impact of sector on school organizations: Institutional
doi:10.1177/003804070708000104

de Guerre, D., Séguin, D., Pace, A., & Burke, N. (2013). IDEA: A collaborative organizational
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS


doi:10.1177/0149206317744252


doi:10.1108/01437730410538699


doi:10.5465/AMJ.2005.15993150
CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS


CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

National Association of Independent Schools.


CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS


doi:10.1111/jpim.12163


doi:10.1080/0141192930190401


CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

In Advances in Health Care Management (pp. 215-241). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.


National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). Number, highest degree, and years of full-
time teaching experience of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary
schools, by selected teacher characteristics: 1999-2000, 2003-04, and 2007-08 [Table 80].

*Digest of Education Statistics.* Retrieved from

Questionnaire. Published instrument. Retrieved from

Ng, E., Schweitzer, L., & Lyons, S. (2010). New generation, great expectations: A field
doi:10.1007/s10869-010-9159-4

school website

O’Leary, Z. (2014). *The essential guide to doing your research project (2nd ed.)*. Los Angeles:
Sage.

Oren, B. (2013, October 24). Why are private-school teachers paid less than public-school
https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/why-are-private-school-teachers-
paid-less-than-public-school-teachers/280829/

entrepreneurs: Toward a new model of social entrepreneurship education. *Academy of

CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS


doi:10.14221/ajte.2005v30n2.3


doi:10.1080/01425690903115809


Climber Turnover in Independent Schools


CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

doi:10.1177/1741143210383900


doi:10.1111/padm.12114


doi:10.1007/s10833-006-0001-8

Suciu, C., & Baughn, C. (2016). Design thinking and organizational change:

Developing a human-centered culture. In European Conference on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (p. 787). Academic Conferences International Limited. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Flrancesca_Cesaroni/publication/308606224_She_is_the_Founder_Who_is_the_Emotional_Leader/links/57e7f02d08ae9e5e4558be5e/She-is-the-Founder-Who-is-the-Emotional-Leader.pdf#page=813


CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS


Appendix A: Teacher Survey Questions

1. In which division do you spend the MOST time working?
   a. Lower School
   b. Middle School
   c. Upper School

2. Which of the following best describes your highest level of educational attainment?
   a. Bachelor’s degree
   b. Bachelor’s degree with some additional Master’s courses
   c. Master’s degree
   d. Master’s degree with some additional Master’s courses
   e. Multiple Master’s degrees
   f. Master’s degree with some additional Doctoral courses
   g. Doctoral degree

3. Which category represents the total number of years you have worked as a K-12 teacher?
   Round up to the nearest whole number.
   a. 1-3 years
   b. 4-6 years
   c. 7-10 years
   d. More than 10 years

4. Which category represents the total combined BEFORE-TAX income of ALL FAMILY
   MEMBERS in your household during 2016?
   a. Less than $35,000
   b. $35,000-$49,999
   c. $50,000-$74,999
   d. $75,000-$99,999
   e. $100,000-$149,999
   f. $150,000 or more

5. If you have another position at this school, other than your teaching position, which of
   the following best describes your OTHER assignment?
   a. Administrator
   b. Integrated Services Team member
   c. Support staff
   d. Other ______________
   e. I do not have another position

6. How would you rate your current teaching position in terms of the following aspects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent/</th>
<th>Satisfactory/</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Not that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td></td>
<td>effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

168
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Opportunities for professional advancement or promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Opportunities for professional development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Opportunities for learning from colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Social relationships with colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>Recognition and support from administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Safety of environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Influence over school policies and practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>Autonomy and control over your own work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>Professional prestige</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>Procedures for performance evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>Manageability of workload</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td>Ability to balance personal life and work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o.</td>
<td>Availability of resources and materials/equipment for doing your job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.</td>
<td>General work conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q.</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r.</td>
<td>Intellectual challenge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.</td>
<td>Sense of personal accomplishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t.</td>
<td>Opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u.</td>
<td>Your own effectiveness as a teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>The school administration’s behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I am satisfied with my teaching salary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>The level of student misbehavior in this school (such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interferes with my teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>My division head enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>The principal knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>School mandated standards have had a positive influence on my satisfaction with teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td>I am given the support I need to teach students with special learning needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o.</td>
<td>The amount of student tardiness and absenteeism in this school interferes with my teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.</td>
<td>I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q.</td>
<td>I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses with that of other teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. How long do you plan to remain in the position of a K-12 teacher?
   a. As long as I am able
   b. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job
   c. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job
   d. Until I am eligible for Social Security benefits
   e. Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage)
   f. Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along
   g. Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can
   h. Undecided at this time

9. In the last 12 months, have you considered applying, or actually applied, for a teaching job at another school?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. In the last 12 months, have you considered applying, or actually applied, for a job outside of teaching in an attempt to leave the position of a K-12 teacher? This would include jobs in education that are not teaching positions.
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. If you replied “Yes” to question 9 or 10, indicate the level of importance each of the following played in your decision to explore other career options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Because I want to take a job more conveniently located</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Because of personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Because I want or need a higher salary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Because I need better benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Because I am concerned about my job security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Because I am dissatisfied with my job description or assignment (e.g., grade level, responsibilities, subjects taught)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Because I do not have enough autonomy over my classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Because I feel like there are too many intrusions on my teaching time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Because I want the opportunity to work at a specific school/company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with my current workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, resources, safety)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td>Because student discipline problems are an issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with the administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with the lack of influence I have over school policies and practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td>Because I am dissatisfied with my opportunity to professionally advance at this school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B: Teacher Survey Questions and Corresponding TFS Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Assessment Item</th>
<th>Corresponding TFS Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. In which division do you spend the MOST time working?</td>
<td>Question 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Which of the following best describes your highest level of educational attainment?</td>
<td>Question 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Which category represents the total number of years you have worked as a K-12 teacher? Round up to the nearest whole number.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Which category represents the total combined BEFORE-TAX income of ALL FAMILY MEMBERS in your household during 2016?</td>
<td>Question 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. If you have another position at this school, other than your teaching position, which of the following best describes your OTHER assignment?</td>
<td>Question 3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How would you rate your current teaching position in terms of the following aspects? [21 items follow]</td>
<td>Question 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your school? [17 items follow]</td>
<td>Question 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How long do you plan to remain in the position of a K-12 teacher?</td>
<td>Question 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. In the last 12 months, have you considered applying, or actually applied, for a teaching job at another school?</td>
<td>Question 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. In the last 12 months, have you considered applying, or actually applied, for a job outside of teaching in an attempt to leave the position of a K-12 teacher? This would include jobs in education that are not teaching positions.</td>
<td>Question 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. If you replied “Yes” to question 9 or 10, indicate the level of importance each of the following played in your decision to explore other career options. [14 items follow]</td>
<td>Question 23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Leadership Interview Questions

1. Please describe the characteristics you look for in an ideal teacher candidate.
2. Please describe the various efforts that go into onboarding a new faculty member.
3. How do you determine the salaries of each of the teachers in your division?
4. How do you determine the salary raises of each of the teachers in your division?
5. Do you see teacher retention as a responsibility of the school leadership team?
   a. If yes, what efforts go into retaining existing teachers?
6. Do you think Northeastern Academy, as an organization, is supportive of teachers’ long
term career aspirations?
   a. If yes, how so?
   b. If no, where might you send teachers looking for support to that end?
7. Do you see teacher turnover as a problem in your division? If yes, why? If no, why not?
Appendix D: Faculty Focus-Group Questions
1. My research is on retention. Do you feel like Northeastern makes efforts to retain you?
2. What are the factors that keep you here?
3. What are the factors that make you consider leaving?
4. Do you think there is a fulcrum or center point for positive experiences of teachers?
5. Do you think there is a fulcrum or center point for negative experiences of teachers?
6. Talk to me about leaders. What works and what doesn’t?
7. Can you imagine a single solution you’d like to see explored at Northeastern?
### Appendix E: Logic Model

#### Situation
Teacher turnover adversely affects educational organizations financially, academically, and structurally, but independent schools are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of teacher turnover. In this high-turnover model, teachers must leave the classroom to take on greater leadership roles within their organizations. As a result, those more significant solutions are, by design, created by one body and implemented by another, so the model inherently creates distance between decisions and their resulting actions.

#### Priorities
1. Tackle the drivers of teacher turnover
2. Improve career trajectory options for teachers
3. Improve decision-making processes

#### Inputs
- Staff Time
- Planning Time
- Disciplinary Knowledge
- Tech Knowledge
- Human Capital
- Design-thinking materials
- Laptops
- Google Docs
- Meeting space: BoardRoom

#### Outputs
- **Who I reach**
  - "Climbers" Non-teaching staff participants
  - School leaders
  - Teachers outside of intervention (control group)
- **What I do**
  - Train participants in design-thinking principles
  - Facilitate design-thinking process practice
  - Conduct regular meetings to create a 5-Year Vision Plan for the school
- **What I create**
  - Meeting notes
  - Information sharing
  - 5-Year Vision Plan

#### Outcomes
- **Short term**
  - Results in terms of learning
    - Sense of community
    - Perceived organizational support (POS)
    - Organizational climate
    - Knowledge
  - Results in terms of changing action
    - Organizational climate for teachers
    - Improved employee satisfaction
    - Improved staff cohesion
    - Mechanisms for hybrid roles/faster organizational hierarchy

- **Intermediate term**
  - Results in terms of change to the conditions
    - Decreased turnover
    - Efficient organizational structures (i.e., hybrid roles)
    - Improved student performance

#### Evaluation
- Focus: Collect Data - Analyze and Interpret - Report
### Appendix F: Variable and Instrument List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>A group of teachers at the research setting that receive no treatment (Schutt, 2015).</td>
<td>Absence from participation in the intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment group</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>A group of teachers at the research setting who take part in the intervention (participation in the IDC) (Schutt, 2015).</td>
<td>Participation in the intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Influence</td>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>Decision-making power in the “schoolwide zone…[i.e.,] the allocative, planning, and strategic policies” of the organization (Ingersoll, 1996, p. 163).</td>
<td>Adapted items from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Shen, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Structured observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>A belief that one shares with their community a value system, common goals, and understandings of the state of affairs within the community (Hausman &amp; Goldring, 2001).</td>
<td>Adapted items from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (Ingersoll, 1996, 2001; Shen, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Structured observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Organizational Support</td>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>The belief that the following factors are present: fairness, supervisor support, organizational reward and job conditions (Rhoades &amp; Eisenberger, 2002)</td>
<td>Short Version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, &amp; Sowa, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Structured observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Awareness</td>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>The degree to which employees perceive unity of command (Rizzo, House, &amp; Lirtzman, 1970) or role ambiguity.</td>
<td>Adapted items from the Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale (Rizzo, House &amp; Lirtzman, 1970) Structured observations Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Acumen</td>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>The integration of business knowledge and technical (i.e., teaching and learning) knowledge for the purposes of making decisions (Ko &amp; Kirsch, 2017).</td>
<td>Structured observations Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion Potential</td>
<td>Mediating</td>
<td>The likelihood of a “status enhancement” of an employee “in terms of their rank in the organizational hierarchy” (Kim, 2002, p. J4)</td>
<td>Structured observations Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>A positive emotional state resulting from the alignment between one’s job, one’s ability to achieve that job, and one’s personal values (Locke, 1969).</td>
<td>Structured observations Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid Role Creation</td>
<td>Moderating</td>
<td>The creation of roles wherein “individuals with a professional background [i.e., teachers] … take on managerial roles, requiring them to move between different organizational groups” (Croft, Currie, &amp; Locket, p. 380).</td>
<td>Structured observations Interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climber Turnover</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Turnover that is a result of teachers leaving the classroom to take on greater leadership roles</td>
<td>Observations unlikely to occur during the timeline of this specific study; would be measured as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>percentage of total faculty (suggestion for future research).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLIMBER TURNOVER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

179
Appendix G: Survey Questions

Part I:
1. Are you a teacher?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Part II (For teachers)
2. How would you rate your current teaching position in terms of the following aspects?

   1 = Excellent; 2 = Very Good; 3 = Good; 4 = Neutral; 5 = Not good; 6 = Poor; 7 = Very Poor
   v. Salary
   w. Benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plan)
   x. Opportunities for professional advancement or promotion
   y. Opportunities for professional development
   z. Opportunities for learning from colleagues
   aa. Social relationships with colleagues
   bb. Recognition and support from administrators
   cc. Safety of environment
   dd. Influence over school policies and practices
   ee. Autonomy and control over your own work
   ff. Professional prestige
   gg. Procedures for performance evaluation
   hh. Manageability of workload
   ii. Ability to balance personal life and work
   jj. Availability of resources and materials/equipment for doing your job
   kk. General work conditions
   ll. Job security
   mm. Intellectual challenge
   nn. Sense of personal accomplishment
   oo. Opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others
   pp. Your own effectiveness as a teacher

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your school?

   1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = Somewhat agree; 6 = Agree; 7 = Strongly Agree.
   r. The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.
   s. I am satisfied with my teaching salary.
   t. The level of student misbehavior in this school (such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interferes with my teaching.
   u. I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.
v. Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff.
w. Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.
x. My division head enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.
y. Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes.
z. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.
aa. The principal knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.
bb. There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members.
cc. In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.
dd. School mandated standards have had a positive influence on my satisfaction with teaching.
e. I am given the support I need to teach students with special learning needs.
ff. The amount of student tardiness and absenteeism in this school interferes with my teaching.
gg. I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.
hh. I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses with that of other teachers.

4. How long do you plan to remain in the position of a K-12 teacher?
a. As long as I am able
b. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job
c. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job
d. Until I am eligible for Social Security benefits
e. Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage)
f. Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along
g. Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can
h. Undecided at this time

5. In the last 12 months, have you considered applying, or actually applied, for a teaching job at another school?
i. Yes
j. No

6. In the last 12 months, have you considered applying, or actually applied, for a job outside of teaching in an attempt to leave the position of a K-12 teacher? This would include jobs in education that are not teaching positions.
k. Yes
l. No
Part III: (For all)

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 5 = Somewhat agree; 6 = Agree; 7 = Strongly Agree.

a) The organization values my opinion.
b) If the organization could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary, it would do so. **
c) The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. **
d) The organization strongly considers my goals and values.
e) The organization would ignore any complaint from me. **
f) The organization disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me. **
g) Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.
h) The organization really cares about my well-being.
i) Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice. **
j) The organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor.
k) The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
l) If given the opportunity, the organization would take advantage of me. **
m) The organization shows very little concern for me. **
n) The organization cares about my opinions.
o) The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
p) The organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible.
q) I feel certain about how much authority I have.
r) I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.
s) There are a lack of policies and guidelines to help me. **
t) I am corrected and rewarded when I really don’t expect it. **
u) I work under incompatible policies and guidelines. **
v) I know that I have divided my time properly.
w) I know what my responsibilities are.
x) I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment. **
y) I have to “feel my way” in performing my duties. **
z) I received incompatible requests from two or more people. **
aa) I am uncertain as to how my job is linked. **
bb) I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others. **
c) I am told how well I am doing my job.
d) Explanation is clear of what is to be done.
e) I have to work under vague directives or orders. **

**Negative responses.
Appendix H: Statistical Power & Effect Size

Figure 2.1 Power Chart for $\alpha = .05$, Two-Tailed, or $\alpha = .025$, One-Tailed

(Lipsey & Hurley, 2009, p. 6)
Appendix I: Structured Observation Notes

Meeting #:
Participants in attendance:

Stage of Design-thinking Process:
Agenda:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participant Contributions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Demonstration of Organizational Acumen Outside of Home Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional Notes by Code

- Organizational Influence:
  - Community
  - Perceived Organizational Support
- Leadership
- Organizational Knowledge
- Promotion Opportunity
- Turnover
Appendix J: Interview Questions

Interview Questions: Start of Intervention

1. How do you feel about your involvement in the IDC so far?
   [What are the positive aspects? What are the negative aspects?]

2. Can you tell me about your own level of influence in the organization?

3. Are you comfortable with that level of influence?
   [Would you prefer more or less?]

4. How do you feel about the sense of community here?
   [Do you feel a strong sense of community? Why/why not?]

5. Do you feel like the organization values you as an employee?
   [Why/why not?]

6. Do you feel like the organization supports you in your professional and personal goals?
   [Why/why not?]

7. Do you feel like you have a strong knowledge base regarding your specific department’s work?

8. Do you feel like you have a strong knowledge base regarding the organization as a whole, or the work of specific other departments?

9. Would you like to work in any other departments?

10. Do you think you possess the skills to work in other departments?

11. Do you ever think about leaving this position to do something else?
    [Are you conscious of any factors that trigger considerations to look for a new position?]
Interview Questions – Post Intervention

1. How do you feel about your involvement in the IDC since we last talked? [What are the positive aspects? What are the negative aspects?]

2. Has the IDC changed your feelings about your own level of influence in the organization one way or another?

3. Are you comfortable with that level of influence? [Would you prefer more or less?]

4. Has the IDC changed your feelings about the sense of community at AIM? [Do you feel a strong sense of community? Why/why not?]

5. Has the IDC changed your feelings about the degree to which the organization values you as an employee? [Why/why not?]

6. Has the IDC changed your feelings about whether you would like to work in any other departments?

7. Has the IDC shaped, shifted, or informed your thoughts on the utility and feasibility of cross-departmental work?

8. Has the IDC changed your feelings regarding leaving this position to do something else? [Are you conscious of any factors that trigger considerations to look for a new position?]

9. For admin: after working in the IDC, are you more or less likely to welcome the addition of a teaching faculty member to your department?

10. For teachers: after working in the IDC, are you more or less likely to welcome the idea of taking on a role in a non-academic department?
## Appendix K: Transcript Code Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Number of Sources</th>
<th>Number of Coding References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Influence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Organization</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Conflict</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Knowledge</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion Opportunities</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for More*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Issues*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Organization*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Constraints*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L: IDC Exit Survey

Today, I would describe my design-thinking skills as:

- [ ] Novice
- [ ] Knowledgeable Beginner
- [ ] Comfortable Practitioner
- [ ] Expert

Today, my level of satisfaction with the IDC is… (circle one).

[Smiley face] [Neutral face] [Frown face]
Curriculum Vitae

Alli Gubanich Williams
1303 Fairville Road
Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania 19317
T: 520-400-3517 E: agubanich@aimpa.org

Summary:
Teacher and leader dedicated to educational excellence for all students, empowerment and autonomy for faculty and staff, and inclusive dialogue with families and community stakeholders. An engaged member of the organization with experience in exceptional teaching, instructional coaching, enrollment management, development, academic planning, and communications.

Education:
Johns Hopkins University
Doctor of Education, Entrepreneurial Leadership in Education; August 2019
University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education
Certificate in Post-Baccalaureate Studies, Virtual & Online Teaching (VOLT); August 2015
University of Arizona
Master of Education, Secondary Education; May 2011
University of Arizona
Bachelor of Arts, Creative Writing, Classics; May 2008

Professional Affiliations

Teach for America – Greater Philadelphia, Board member; 2018 to present
Folger Shakespeare Library, National Teaching Corps; 2015 to present
NEH Scholar; Folger Shakespeare Library, Teaching Shakespeare Institute, 2014
Socratic Seminar: Teacher Trainer; PaTTRAN, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2014
Orton-Gillingham Literacy Instruction, Language Teacher, 2011

Presentations

Presenter: “Psychoeducational Evaluations in the Classroom”
AIM Academy, August 2017
Co-Presenter: “Shakespeare Is for Everyone—a Hands-on Workshop in Differentiation”
National Council for Teachers of English, NCTE Conference, November 2015
Presenter: “Interactive E-Literature via Digital Annotation and Multimedia Storytelling”
International Society of Technology in Education, ISTE Conference, June 2015
Co-Presenter: “Another Way: Doing it Differently at AIM Academy”
Partnership for 21st Century Skills, P21 Summit, March 2015
Presenter: “Socratic Seminar in the LD Classroom”
AIM Academy, August 2014, 2015

Professional Overview

Head of Upper School, AIM Academy [2018-Present]
Curriculum and Instruction Leader, AIM Academy [2016-2018]
Underclassmen Dean, AIM Academy [2014-2016]
Upper School English Faculty, AIM Academy [2013-2018]
Head of the Girls' Dormitory, The Kildonan School [2011-2013]
Upper School English Faculty, The Kildonan School [2011-2013]
Instructor, American Sign Language, Upward Bound Program [2010]
Support Service Coordinator, Community Outreach Program for the Deaf [2008-2011]
Alli Gubanich Williams
1303 Fairville Road
Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania 19317
T: 520-400-3517 E: agubanich@aimpa.org

Professional Experience:

✦ AIM Academy
Interim Head of Upper School
2018- Present
- Oversee all academic, social, and disciplinary processes for 145 students in the Upper School
- Support and motivate a teaching staff of thirty faculty members to maintain high standards of academic excellence and best practice for teaching students with learning differences
- Manage $1.5 million Upper School budget
- Facilitate open communication and healthy relationships between families, faculty, and students
- Manage enrollment in the Upper School in order to meet admissions goals for the division

Curriculum and Instruction Leader
2016- 2018
- Provided instructional coaching to ensure faculty create learning experiences that were both college preparatory and appropriately supportive for all students in the classroom
- Translated the psychoeducational testing of every student in the upper school into meaningful documents that could be used to tailor instruction
- Oversaw weekly progress monitoring meetings with all faculty in the upper school
- Reviewed all prospective student files to ensure the school admits students who are best served by our program

Chair of Annual Faculty and Staff Campaign
2017- Present
- Developed new messaging for faculty and staff annual giving campaign
- Increased faculty giving by 36% in first year

Underclassmen Dean
2014- 2016
- Facilitated communication between students, teachers, and parents surrounding programmatic changes
- Supported various constituencies in making appropriate changes to instruction/learning routine

Upper School Faculty
2013- Present
- Build and implement a multi-sensory, individualized curriculum for students with language-based learning differences
- Develop curricula within a literacy framework tailored toward meeting the needs of each individual in the classroom
- Set goals, monitor and assess progress through the use of weekly literacy probes and writing samples

✦ The Kildonan School
Literature Teacher
2011 - June
- Led courses in American Literature and World Literature with eighth, ninth, and tenth grade students
- Built and implemented a multi-sensory, constructivist curriculum tailored toward the specific student population with whom I was working

Orton-Gillingham Language Tutor
2011 - 2013
- Worked in a daily, one-on-one setting with students with dyslexia to remediate language, bolster the cognitive advantages associated with their learning difference, and practice the skills necessary for success in other core academic areas

Residential Life: Head of Girls’ Dormitory
2011 - 2013

- Maintained an emotionally and physically safe environment for female students to live and work outside of the traditional school day

**Camp Dunnabeck at Kildonan**
Orton-Gillingham Language Tutor
2011, 2012

Worked in a daily, one-on-one setting with students with dyslexia to remediate language, bolster the cognitive advantages associated with their language difference, and practice the skills necessary for success in other core academic areas.

**Upward Bound Program**
American Sign Language Instructor
2010

- Developed and implemented an American Sign Language curriculum for a class of at-risk freshman, sophomore, and junior level students

**Community Outreach Program for the Deaf**
Support Service Coordinator
May 2008 - March 2011

- Coordinated support services to meet the needs of Dead-Blind adults in the Tucson community
- Provided support to Dead-Blind adults by facilitating communication and exchange of information through tactile sign language and various assistive technologies