

The Teacher Experience

Recognize the Real Cause

The data show: It is not collective bargaining

By F. Howard Nelson

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, 19 percent of teachers in the typical high-poverty school have three or fewer years of experience, compared to 15 percent in low-poverty schools and 16 percent in medium-poverty schools. Like all averages, this one masks the much more extreme experience gap that exists in some areas (and the nonexistent one in other areas). Since new teachers are, on average, less effective than experienced teachers, closing this teacher experience gap is an important ingredient in closing the student achievement gap. But how do we best do it?

The policy debate around this problem has often been characterized by assumptions rather than evidence, with the premier assumption being that the seniority provisions in collectively bargained contracts are to blame for high-poverty schools' difficulty in retaining more experienced teachers. The reasoning behind this assumption goes as follows: Collectively bargained contracts allow teachers to use their seniority to claim vacant jobs, and experienced teachers use those seniority rights to transfer to more middle-class schools within the district. (For examples of the critics' claims, see box p. 31.)

But in fact, these assumptions, and the recommendations that flow from them, are not informed by data on the actual transfer activity of teachers within and between school districts, including the characteristics of teachers who transfer, what types of schools they leave, and where they move. Most of the research on teacher transfers consists of case studies of contract language in a handful of districts with collective bargaining. Some find that seniority plays a role in transfers, some don't. But the fact is, neither case studies nor reviews of

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Gap: What Is the Remedy?

Cultivate the Right Solution

*It is attracting experienced teachers to high-poverty schools
and strengthening teacher retention*



Schools in the South Bronx section of New York City have struggled for years with low student achievement. Ten years ago, fueled by the discovery that only 17 percent of a local school's students were meeting city and state reading standards, parents and community members decided to take action. They began by focusing on the problems in that one school, but eventually—after many years of struggling with the school system—decided that better organization, broader support, and a more ambitious agenda were the way forward. Along with several local organizations, in 2002 they formed a partnership that is now known as the Community Collaborative to Improve Bronx Schools, or CCB.*

CCB fixed as its first target the high teacher turnover rate in 10 low-performing schools. The turnover kept the schools' staff in constant churn, left too many children learning from brand new teachers, and meant the schools had too few teachers with the wisdom gained from long experience. CCB worked with NYU's Community Involvement Program (which is now part of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University), the city's Department of Education, and the local teachers' union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), to devise a solution. The proposal that emerged from these discussions was the Lead Teacher Project (LTP), designed to attract experienced teachers from around the city—and provide such extraordinary support for the new teachers and such a terrific professional environment for all teachers, that school staff would want to stay.

The LTP is now two years old. A new two-year evaluation describes the program and documents its positive effects—on instruction, retention, and what ultimately matters, student achievement. Here's the story, drawn from the evaluation conducted by the Academy for Educational Development.

—EDITORS

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ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL ZWOLAK

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a limited number of contracts can determine whether collective bargaining is generally to blame for the teacher turnover problem or whether this popular claim is a myth.

To determine if this claim is true, researchers need to compare the effects of teacher transfers on high-poverty schools in states where there is extensive collective bargaining and in high-poverty schools in states where there is no collective bargaining. This is the research that I have undertaken and that is highlighted in this article. For purposes of space, I'm going to limit my comparisons to those involving urban schools. (My full study* also examines non-urban schools.)

My research draws on the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey and the related 2000-2001 Teacher Follow-Up Survey, nationally representative surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. I approached this research expecting to find that collective bargaining was less linked to transfer activity and to relative levels of inexperience in high-poverty schools than union critics had claimed. In fact, I was surprised to see that, if anything, the evidence indicates that *collective bargaining is associated with lower transfer rates out of urban high-poverty schools*. Perhaps more importantly, in urban districts with a collective bargaining agreement, high-poverty schools are no more likely than low-poverty schools to replace transferring teachers with first-year teachers. In stark contrast, in urban districts without a collective bargaining agreement, high-poverty schools hire first-year teachers at three times the rate of low-poverty schools.

Let's start by looking at urban teachers' mobility rates according to whether or not their schools are high or low poverty and whether or not they have collective bargaining. Figure 1 reveals two important findings. First, low-poverty urban schools have much lower percentages of teachers transferring or leaving the profession than high-poverty urban schools. Second, teachers in urban schools (regardless of their poverty level) in states without collective bargaining are much more likely to transfer and slightly more likely to leave teaching than teachers in states with extensive collective bargaining.

So we can clearly see that both high poverty and the *lack* of collective bargaining are associated with more teachers transferring and more teachers leaving the profession.

The vacancies created in these high-poverty urban schools force administrators to spend considerable time searching for new staff and place extra stress on the teachers who often have to temporarily fill the gaps and integrate new colleagues into schoolwide instructional strategies. But, the impact that the vacancies have on student achievement is at least partially mediated by those who fill those vacancies. On average—and regardless of how good they may eventually become—first-year teachers are the least effective, so it's

Figure 1: Without collective bargaining, teachers are much more likely to transfer and slightly more likely to leave teaching.

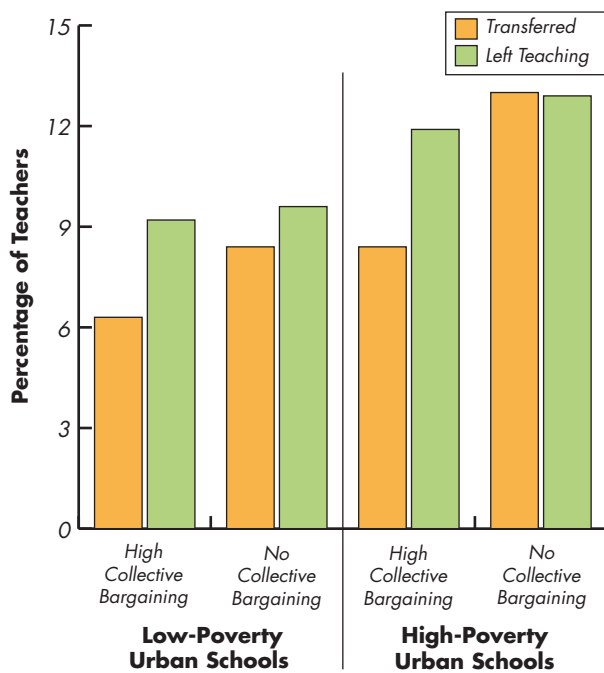
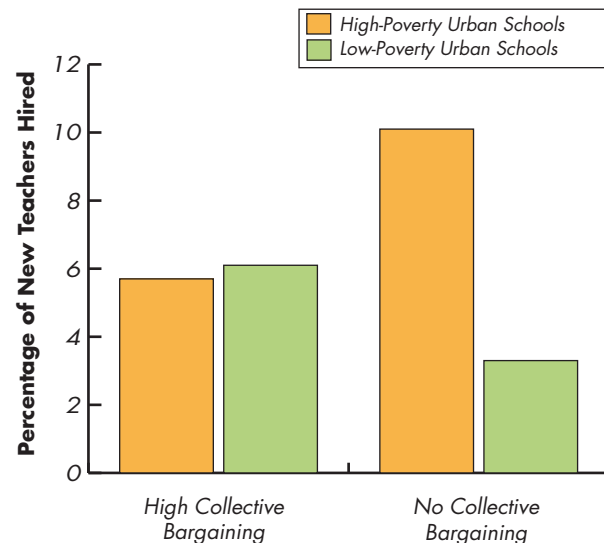


Figure 2: Without collective bargaining, high-poverty urban schools hire dramatically more first-year teachers than low-poverty urban schools.



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*My full results, as well as an explanation of my methodology, are available at www.aft.org/topics/teacher-quality/downloads/Teacher_Transfer_Rates.pdf.

If anything, the evidence indicates that collective bargaining is associated with lower transfer rates out of urban high-poverty schools.

important that all schools fill their vacancies with a mix of new and more experienced teachers; high-poverty schools should not be saddled with a disproportionate share of these new teachers. On this score, high-poverty urban schools without collective bargaining are at a severe disadvantage. As Figure 2 shows, collective bargaining is associated with both high- and low-poverty urban schools hiring roughly the same low percentage of first-year teachers. But in areas without collective bargaining, high-poverty schools hire three times as many first-year teachers as low-poverty schools.

Who Stays? Who Goes?

So, it appears that collective bargaining is not to blame for teachers transferring out of high-poverty urban schools. Indeed, collective bargaining seems to help keep teachers in such schools. But, is it keeping the “right” teachers? With the dataset I used, I was able to examine teachers’ years of experience and whether or not they were certified. In Figure 3, it’s clear that among high-poverty urban schools, those with collective bargaining are holding on to slightly more experienced teachers and are losing slightly less experienced teachers than high-poverty urban schools without collective bargaining.

Likewise, in Figure 4, the evidence suggests that collective bargaining is not associated with the flight of qualified teachers from high-poverty urban schools. In states with extensive collective bargaining, 75 percent of the teachers who transferred from high-poverty urban schools were certified, compared to 81 percent of the teachers who transferred from such schools in states without collective bargaining.

If Collective Bargaining Is Not to Blame, What Is?

As Figure 1 made clear, there is greater teacher mobility in high-poverty than in low-poverty urban schools. But it doesn’t seem that transfer provisions in collective bargaining contracts are to blame because teacher mobility is much high-

Figure 3: With collective bargaining, high-poverty urban schools hold on to slightly more experienced teachers, and lose slightly less experienced ones.

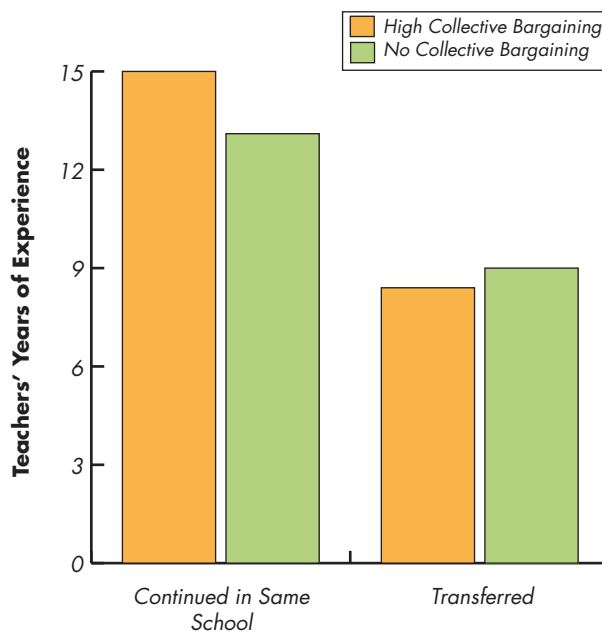
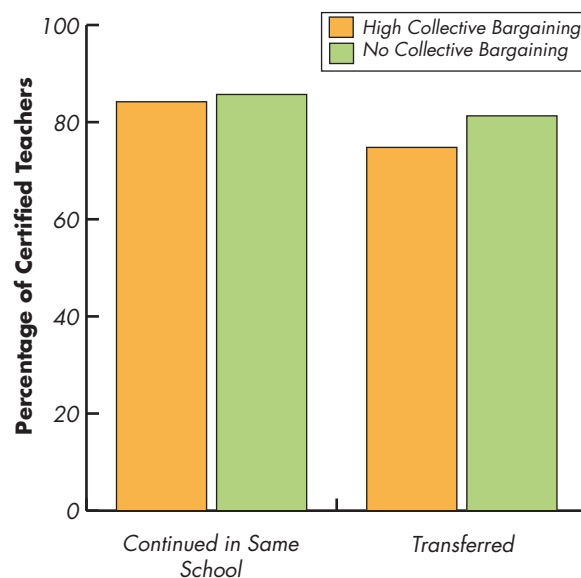


Figure 4: With collective bargaining, high-poverty urban schools hold on to virtually the same percentage of certified teachers, and fewer of those who transfer are certified.



er without collective bargaining. So what is to blame? Teachers who transfer cite a lack of administrative support, dissatisfaction with workplace conditions, and an opportunity to

As in virtually all occupations, teachers who are unhappy can leave teaching altogether; they can transfer elsewhere in the same district; or they can move to a different district. And they can do so whether or not there is collective bargaining.

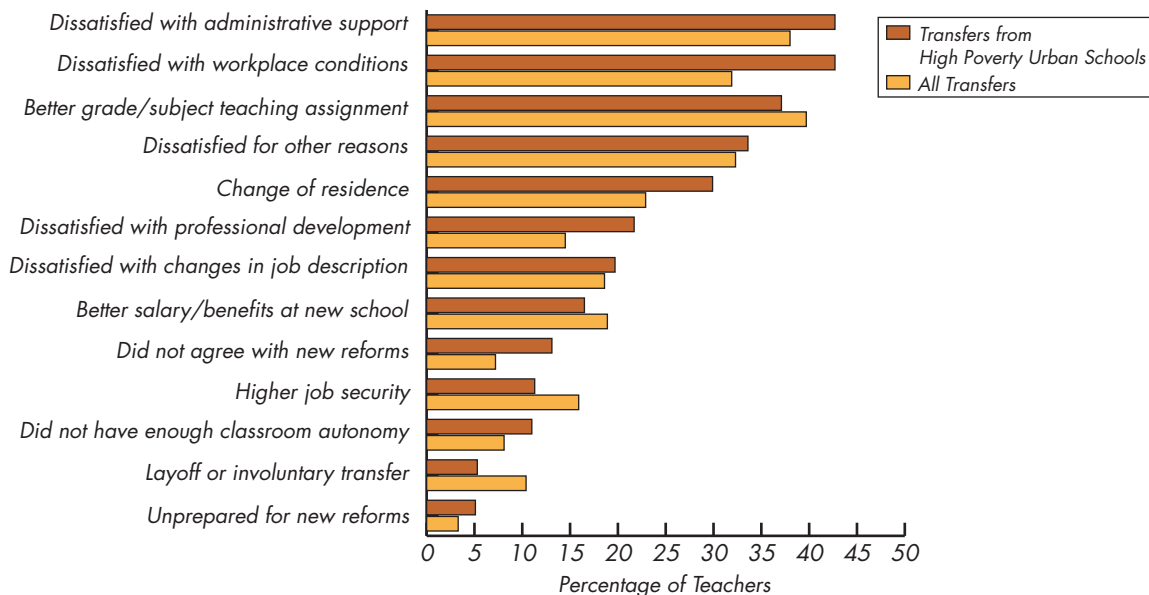
teach a preferred grade or subject level. In fact, Figure 5 shows that these are the top three reasons cited by both all teachers who transferred and those who transferred out of a high-poverty urban school. The only difference is in their relative emphasis, with all teachers ranking an opportunity to teach a preferred grade or subject level as the number one reason, and teachers from high-poverty urban schools saying problems with support and conditions tie for first.

In contrast to the assumptions often made, the evidence indicates that collective bargaining is associated with 1) lower transfer rates out of urban high-poverty schools, and 2) a more equitable distribution of first-year teachers among schools of different poverty levels. Unfortunately, all the attention on, as well as assumptions about, collective bargaining have prevented policymakers from focusing on the real problem: attracting and retaining

teachers who are prepared to teach successfully in high-poverty urban schools.

As in virtually all occupations, teachers who are unhappy with their circumstances have options. They can leave teaching altogether; they can seek a voluntary transfer from a difficult situation in one school for a better situation elsewhere in the same district; or they can move to a different district, which for many urban teachers can mean switching to a district with a less challenging student population and/or higher salaries and greater school and parental resources. And they can do so whether or not there is collective bargaining. Despite the positive impact of collective bargaining on reducing teacher mobility, we can also see in the data presented here that teachers in poor, urban schools exercise this option to move to other occupations, other schools, or other districts more often than teachers in schools with little poverty. Why? For the reasons just listed. Teaching in a high-poverty, urban school is very challenging work even under the best of circumstances. If the school is not well run and decently resourced, the teaching challenge is often overwhelming. If we want a stable, strong teaching force in these schools, we need incentives to attract teachers to these schools and retain them. The primary incentive is teaching conditions that make it possible for teachers to achieve their primary goal—success with their students. We should focus on improving school and neighborhood safety, establishing and maintaining orderly schools, providing teachers—especially new teachers—with professional and administrative support, giving teachers reasonable workloads and class sizes, ensuring that all classrooms are well stocked with the appropriate instructional materials, and keeping school facilities in good repair. But, in addition, as in other industries, if we want to attract qualified employees to more difficult, challenging jobs, we need to use market incentives as well, including higher pay. □

Figure 5: Collective bargaining doesn't impact teachers' decision to transfer—but seeking more supportive administrators and better assignments and conditions does.



Claims That Bargaining Is the Culprit Are Based on Assumptions, Anecdotes, and a Handful of Case Studies



It has become popular to claim that where there is an experience gap, the fault is collective bargaining. But a look at these claims demonstrates that they are not based on serious evidence and, as “Recognize the Real Cause” (see page 26) shows, the actual data refute the claims. A leading proponent of the claim that collective bargaining agreements are to blame for teachers transferring out of high-poverty urban schools is the Hoover Institution’s Terry Moe. For example, in a recent essay, he asserts that “hard evidence or no, there are compelling reasons for thinking that transfer rights should have profoundly negative effects on the schools.... transfer rights give senior teachers much more latitude in choosing where to teach, and they can be expected to use it to leave ... schools filled with disadvantaged kids.... In districts with transfer rules, then, disadvantaged schools should find themselves burdened with even more inexperienced teachers than they otherwise would.”¹

Based on anecdotal evidence, but calling it “easy to see,” Paul Hill, the director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, describes a scenario in which senior teachers, on their own or at the behest of a principal, have first claim on vacant jobs that become available, preventing principals from making their own hires.² Further, he claims that when senior teachers are displaced by school closings or enrollment shifts, they invoke seniority to dislocate less senior teachers, who in turn “bump” even less experienced teachers. Hill argues that this cycle of displacement is especially harmful in urban districts because new teachers cannot be hired until the rounds of displacements end. According to Hill, seniority rights mean that principals in even the most attractive schools in a district must oversee staffs they do not hire and cannot fire. Like Moe, Hill

asserts that teachers always prefer to work in more attractive schools and neighborhoods, and that they use their seniority to pick those jobs. Moreover, they claim, after one or two years at a “bottom-of-the-barrel school,” relatively new teachers use their seniority to move to slightly more attractive schools in the district.

Similarly, Marguerite Roza, Larry Miller, and Paul Hill, in a paper they wrote for the Center on Reinventing Public Education, argue that “it has long been acknowledged that teacher preferences dictate the assignment of teachers across schools within a district because teacher preferences are usually honored according to seniority, frequently backed up by labor contracts.”³

Roza, Miller, and Hill also argue that the most experienced (and highest-paid) teachers are assigned to schools with the fewest teaching challenges, while the “greenest” (and lowest-paid) teachers are generally assigned to struggling schools. (They cite as evidence of these patterns average salary differentials of about \$2,000 per teacher, or \$80 per pupil for a class of 25 students, between low-poverty and high-poverty schools within a school district. This amount approximates the difference between a teacher with 13.7 years of experience and one with 15.4 years of experience, which is the difference in experience between teachers, on average, in high- and low-poverty schools according to the 1999–2000 Schools and Staffing Survey.)

Andrew Leigh and Sara Mead, in a report published by the Progressive Policy Institute, relied in part on a paper by Roza and Hill to claim that seniority-based collective bargaining provisions encourage senior teachers to choose placements in less challenging schools, rather than letting administrators assign them where their skills are most needed.⁴

After studying two large school districts, the Harvard Civil Rights Project claims that teacher distribution is determined by seniority rules, teacher preferences, and principal discretion.⁵ Citing Eric Hanushek, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, and others⁶ in a study of Texas—a state which prohibits collective bargaining—the Project concludes there is evidence that teachers favor higher-achieving, non-minority, non-low-income students, a preference which extends across districts (i.e., teachers prefer suburban over urban districts), as well as to schools within a district, resulting in teachers moving to more middle-class schools when the opportunity arises.

The New Teacher Project’s reviews⁷ of teacher transfers have been cited by some as showing that seniority provisions in collectively bargained agreements contribute to disparities in staff qualifications among high- and low-poverty schools—even though TNTP reviewed just a handful of unnamed districts and TNTP itself did not reach such a conclusion. For example, in a Brookings Institution report, Robert Gordon, Thomas Kane, and Douglas Staiger cite TNTP as a source for this statement: “Understandably, once teachers accumulate sufficient seniority, they frequently exercise contractual rights and transfer into wealthier schools.”⁸

—F.H.N.

Endnotes

¹Terry Moe (2006). “Union Powers and the Education of Children” in *Collective Bargaining in Education* (eds. Jane Hanaway and Andrew Rotherham), Harvard Education Press, p. 238.

²Paul Hill (2006). “The Cost of Collective Bargaining Agreements and Related District Policies” in *Collective Bargaining in Education* (eds. Jane Hanaway and Andrew Rotherham), Harvard Education Press.

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Cultivate the Right Solution

(Continued from page 27)

By Lynn W. Gregory, Nancy Nevarez, and
Alexandra T. Weinbaum

The Lead Teacher Project (LTP) is a unique partnership of CCB, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and its Region 1 Superintendency, and the local teachers' union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT).

In the 2004-2005 school year, 36 lead teachers provided support to approximately 124 teachers in 10 schools—eight elementary schools, one middle school, and one K-8 school. In the 2005-2006 school year, 37 lead teachers provided support to approximately 93 teachers in 11 schools—the original 10 plus another middle school. Although lead teachers are more frequently asked to work with new or less experienced teachers, they also work with experienced teachers.

The initial LTP design called for assigning two lead teachers to one classroom, allowing each to work half-time providing professional development to other teachers and half-time teaching in his or her own classroom, which could serve as a lab for trying out instructional strategies and a place for others to observe expert teaching. This worked well in elementary schools; however, in the middle schools (where teachers specialize instead of teaching all subjects), lead teachers were not paired with one another, but instead were each paired with a regular teacher who taught the same subject. Since the lead teacher was still only teaching half-time, this was a workable model.

In exchange for the extra work lead teachers take on, they are paid an extra \$10,000. This is just as much a part of CCB's teacher retention strategy as the support for inexperienced and struggling teachers. By offering a leadership role to teachers, the LTP aims to keep expert teachers in South Bronx classrooms.

To oversee the LTP and ensure smooth implementation, a Lead Teacher Coordinating Committee was established, which consisted of CCB parent and community group representatives, representatives from the UFT, principals of the LTP schools, and regional administrators. Representatives from the UFT's Teacher Center took the lead in developing the process and criteria for one of the committee's primary tasks: helping schools select lead teachers. The committee reviewed resumes, conducted interviews and reference checks, and then compiled a list of recommended candi-

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When asked to distinguish lead teachers from other professional development providers in their schools, teachers inevitably described the legitimacy that comes from working with a colleague who is also teaching in the school.

dates for the LTP schools. Final selection and hiring has been done at the schools; they have their own hiring committees that consist of parents, teachers, and administrators.

While lead teachers are selected because they are successful, experienced teachers, they do not generally enter the program with much experience as mentors. Responsibility for professional development—which has been provided throughout the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years—is divided equally between the UFT Teacher Center and the Region 1 Learning Support Center. The UFT focuses on increasing the lead teachers' coaching and mentoring skills;

* The original name was the Community Collaborative to Improve District 9 Schools, or CC9. At the time, New York City schools were divided into 32 community school districts, and CC9 focused on 10 low-performing schools in District 9. Not long after CC9 was formed, the mayor and chancellor announced that the 32 districts would be replaced with 10 regions, each of which would create networks of 10 to 12 schools. The schools that CC9 was involved with fell into Region 1, and CC9 convinced the Region 1 superintendent and the chancellor to make its 10 schools into a network.

Region 1 focuses on New York's state standards and the city's math and literacy curricula. In addition, the UFT Teacher Center has developed a number of tools to support and structure the lead teachers' work in their schools. These tools include the *Lead Teacher Project Manual*; weekly schedules that are submitted to the principal; interactive planning logs, which include goals, objectives and professional work plans and are developed collaboratively with the supported teachers; daily work logs, in which the lead teachers describe the "who, what, when, and where" of their activities; and personal portfolios that enable lead teachers to reflect on their work with colleagues.

Lead Teachers Are Regarded as Credible, Knowledgeable, and Trustworthy

To better understand the kind of the support offered by the lead teachers, the Academy for Education Development (AED) developed 12 case studies of lead teacher-supported teacher interaction. The case studies were based on interviews, observations, and reviews of lead teacher portfolios.

These analyses revealed some common characteristics of the lead teacher role and its effects on the instructional practice of the teachers they support. In brief, lead teachers proved themselves quite skilled at identifying problems and offering solutions in a way that earned the trust of supported teachers.

Lead teachers are highly skilled at unpacking and diagnosing the needs of the supported teachers with whom they work.

In almost every case study, AED found that the supported teacher asked for help with issues that were ultimately diagnosed differently by the lead teacher. It is notable that in most cases, the supported teacher wanted help with time management and specific procedures relating to the workshop model of instruction that is mandated by the Department of Education (DOE).

The lead teacher often recognized that the supported teacher's difficulty with fitting aspects of the required instruction into the schedule resulted from larger issues. For example, some supported teachers struggled to keep the attention of students who had learning challenges and were diverted from the initial mini-lesson by students who either did not pay attention or were disruptive to the rest of the group. These same students made it difficult for the independent work segment of the lesson to succeed as well. Consequently, it was not unusual for the supported teacher to fall behind and not have time to complete the lesson or for student reflection. The case studies show that once they

By offering a leadership role to teachers, the Lead Teacher Project aims to keep expert teachers in South Bronx classrooms.



observed the supported teacher's class, lead teachers often redefined the goals of their work and began by modeling approaches to classroom behavior management, differentiated instruction, and creating a classroom environment that was appropriate for the students' academic level.

Lead teachers are very good at helping supported teachers make instruction more comprehensible and engaging for students.

As noted above, in many cases AED saw supported teachers who were new to teaching who felt overwhelmed by the extent to which the workshop model "overstructured" their lessons. Time pressures, which were exacerbated by difficulties with classroom management, sometimes resulted in supported teachers ending a section of the lesson before it had been completed, talking too fast, being distracted, or skipping parts. In such cases, lead teachers made suggestions, modeled instructional techniques, and provided supported teachers with instructional materials to help

them slow down and be more confident that the students were learning.

In one case, a kindergarten teacher observed a lead teacher who conducted a lesson to model not only the way she interacted with students who were reading books to her, but also the way she placed herself physically so that she would always be attending to the entire class as well as the individual student. This way of positioning herself provided the class with a feeling of order and general control. In another case, a supported teacher who was new to the grade level had “decorated” the room with posters and other learning materials that were much too advanced for the students. The lead teacher noticed immediately that the students were not attending to the classroom’s physical environment and helped the supported teacher replace the

materials with others that were more age-appropriate.

Lead teachers are skilled at providing support without being authoritative or prescriptive.

When asked to distinguish lead teachers from other professional development providers in their schools, teachers inevitably described the legitimacy that comes from working with a colleague who is also teaching in the school. Lead teachers are trained and their roles and responsibilities are defined in ways that encourage them to be helpful and provide critical friends’ feedback. They do not play a supervisory role within the school’s administrative structure, and their records with teachers are not shared with principals.

As noted above, lead teachers often found that the problems presented by supported teachers were symptomatic

How We Brought Experience to the South Bronx

By Ocyntia Williams

After 30 years of having to deal with as many as 25 different area superintendents, corrupt school board members, and an unstable teaching force, parents and community groups in the South Bronx decided it was time for real change. Five years ago, we formed CC9 (the Community Collaborative to Improve District Nine Schools*), a parent-led community group made up of parent leaders, six community-based organizations—ACORN, Citizens Advice Bureau, Highbridge Community Life Center, Mid Bronx Council, New Settlement Apartments, and the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition—and New York University’s Institute for Education and Social Policy.** Our focus was 10 schools that had been at the bottom of the totem pole in academics, parent involvement, and resource distribution for far too long.

Ocyntia Williams is a parent leader with the Community Collaborative to Improve Bronx Schools. This article is adapted from “A Community-Led Reform: Improving Schools in the South Bronx.” Voices in Urban Education, Fall 2004. Reprinted with permission from Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Together, we convened numerous meetings, held retreats, and came up with a three-point plan calling for: a highly skilled and well-trained teaching force, effective principals to lead the school-change process, and real family and community partnerships. Using this plan, we further reached out to New York City Department of Education (DOE) representatives, the teachers’ union, administrators, local political leaders, and other school reform organizations, like New Visions for Public Schools, Lehman College, and NYU’s School of Education. We then held a public rally to demonstrate the public support for our cause.

The part of the plan we decided to tackle first was our call for a highly skilled and well-trained teaching force. The lower-performing schools in the South Bronx on which CC9’s efforts were focused all had something in common: a big teacher retention problem and, as a result, a lot of teachers with only one or two years’ experience. The retention issue had to be dealt with on two levels—among the new teachers who were overwhelmed and among the existing staff who could apply for other jobs

within the district—or leave for a nearby suburban district, where they would likely get higher pay and a less challenging assignment.

To design and implement the program, we needed expert advice. We soon saw that there was no better expert advice than that of teachers. With the commitment of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), Michelle Bodden, UFT’s vice-president of elementary schools, and Herb Katz, the district UFT representative, joined our team. We were off and running.

Over the course of the next four months, Michelle and Herb worked tirelessly with us in ironing out all the kinks to make sure we had a smooth strategy for implementation of the program. They also accompanied CC9 to the Chancellor’s office to shop our proposal. Working with the teachers’ union proved to be a very rewarding experience. It opened the lines of communication with parents and was the start of what has become a very rewarding and ongoing relationship between parents, the community, and the UFT.

By the end of April 2003, we had designed a proposal for lead teachers

* CC9 has since expanded to work with other Bronx schools; our name is now CCB, the Community Collaborative to Improve Bronx Schools.

** This is now part of the Community Involvement Program of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

of larger issues that needed attention, but during our observations, lead teachers were never observed to jump in and say that a supported teacher was wrong. Instead, lead teachers integrated the supported teachers' perceived needs into their support process. It is also apparent that by "walking the walk," lead teachers spent much time both team teaching and modeling instruction in supported teachers' classrooms. Supported teachers were grateful for the help and especially enjoyed having the assistance of another professional when they taught classes and worked together with students.

Targeted Support, Schoolwide Results

In both the first and second years of implementation, we surveyed lead teachers, supported teachers, and the other

teachers in the LTP schools to find out whether or not they judged the lead teacher program helpful. As expected, supported teachers found the lead teacher program very helpful in many aspects of their teaching. A less expected finding was that over half of the other teachers, those not supported by the program, described it as helpful to the school. These benefits to the broader school community likely derived from the professional development sessions and study groups run by lead teachers that were open to all teachers. The table on page 38 summarizes the relevant survey results.

Teachers who responded to the question "If you could change one aspect of LTP, what would you change and why?" most often called for increasing the availability of the pro-

(Continued)

that could meet the needs of both new and experienced teachers. We proposed that each school employ a highly skilled "lead" teacher who would serve half-time in the classroom and half-time providing coaching, leadership support, and professional development to new teachers. The CC9 proposal called for a citywide posting to attract the best candidates, a salary adjustment of \$10,000 to reflect the differentiated responsibilities of the position and to attract highly skilled teachers from other parts of New York City, and a budget of \$2.2 million for the full implementation of the proposal.

CC9 formally launched the Lead Teacher Campaign in January 2004 at a reception hosted by the UFT and attended by the principals from each of the 10 targeted schools, along with parents, teachers, and a DOE representative.

Over the course of the next several months, we spent countless hours meeting with grant-making foundations—and received a \$400,000 grant from the Booth Ferris Foundation. Then, we knocked on doors, held house meetings, and met in schoolyards and subway stations to

CC9 formally launched the Lead Teacher Campaign in January 2004 at a reception hosted by UFT, the teachers' union.



collect signatures that we could use as leverage with the leader of the city school system, Chancellor Klein. Armed with 10,000 signatures, letters of support from our elected officials, and the secured funding from the Booth Ferris Foundation, CC9 met with the

chancellor on April 2, 2004. CC9 was stunned at how quickly the chancellor embraced our proposal. Historically in our community, chancellors have almost never met with parent groups, let alone awarded them money for programs that they had developed. It was even more shocking that he agreed that a salary adjustment should be paid to reflect the differentiated responsibilities of the lead teachers.

That brought us to the final step: the DOE's negotiations with the UFT over the salary differential. In an unprecedented move, the UFT president invited members of CC9 to attend *and participate in* the negotiation session with the DOE. We left the meeting without an agreement, but we followed up by pushing both parties as hard as we could. At one point, CC9 delivered a large roll of red tape and scissors to key DOE staff—a symbolic action urging them to cut through the red tape.

All the pushing paid off. By mid-June the contract language had been agreed to. The final step was for the UFT to present the contract to its executive board for approval at an emergency session. In another historic event, CC9 was invited to attend the meeting, which ended with a nearly unanimous vote in favor of the contract. Our Lead Teacher Campaign was over—and the search for 36 lead teachers was on.

gram (n = 52), mainly through reducing lead teachers' other responsibilities so that they could be more consistently available to the teachers they were supporting. Similarly, in response to another survey item, 56 percent of other teachers agreed that they would like to work with a lead teacher in the future, providing further evidence of the perceived success of the program.

Given these results, it should come as no surprise that from 2004-2005 to 2005-2006, the turnover rate among supported teachers in seven of the 10 LTP schools for which data were available decreased: 9 percent in 2005-2006 versus 19 percent in 2004-2005. The overall staff turnover rate in these schools was also lower, although this cannot be attributed to lead teacher support. It is notable, however, that supported

teachers and other teachers both perceived improvement in overall school conditions, which affect retention of teachers, especially administrative support and encouragement and collaboration among teachers. Although it is too early to tell whether these effects will endure and can be spread to other parts of the schools, the early data are promising.

Early student achievement data are also promising. Student outcomes in English language arts for third grade, the grade in which most lead teachers worked with supported teachers, were very positive. From spring 2004 (just before the LTP began) to spring 2006, their gains exceeded gains made by students in all New York City schools and by all District 9 schools. Other grades did not post gains as great or compare as favorably with city and District 9 averages. When

Cultivating Solutions at the Bargaining Table

Closing the Teacher Experience Gap

Attracting more experienced teachers to high-poverty schools that lack them is vital—but it is not easy. Policymakers have sometimes called for mandatory transfers, believing that this could eliminate the experience gap. But, since teachers, like other employees, are free to change jobs if dissatisfied, such an approach would likely lead to an exodus of teachers from the district, leaving high-poverty schools with fewer experienced teachers. Other commentators (see box p. 31) have blamed negotiated transfer rules for the inequity. But the data show that collective bargaining is not associated with the experience gap. To the contrary, where there is bargaining, the proportion of teachers who leave high poverty schools is lower than where there is no bargaining!

What to do? Understand the problem's real causes and devise relevant solutions. The reality is: 1) turnover is, on average, higher than the norm at high-poverty schools (though the problem is less serious in areas where there is extensive collective bargaining), and 2) school principals generally have the authority to offer positions to the teaching applicants they prefer—and teachers choose which offer to accept by considering such factors as proximity to home

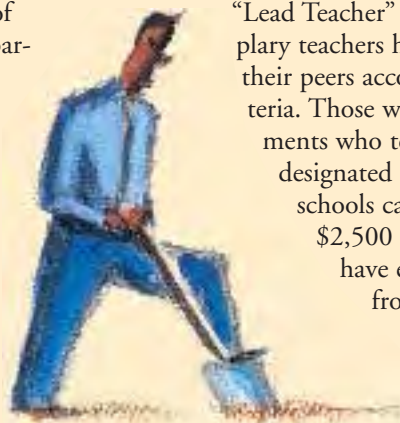
and, importantly, their perception of the school as a place where conditions enable effective teaching.

Districts and unions together can do much to encourage teachers to remain in, or transfer to, high-poverty schools by assuring the conditions that make effective teaching possible, such as supportive principals, smaller class sizes, adequate access to vital interventions (in reading, for example), a professional atmosphere that includes safe, orderly schools and excellent professional development—and acknowledging of these extra demands of reassignment with such incentives as premium pay.

Since the specific conditions and incentives that matter most to teachers may differ among districts (for example, in some districts the concern may not be an experience gap but a shortage of certain kinds of teachers), collective bargaining is the perfect vehicle for cultivating the right solution. It creates a conversation with district teachers, who are ultimately in the best position to know what pushes teachers out of a district's high-

poverty schools and, conversely, what would attract them to such schools for the long haul. In some places, more effective principals may be the greatest draw, in others, it may be safer parking, access to terrific professional development, the chance to earn a larger salary, or to teach with respected colleagues. The example of CCB (see p. 27) provides a perfect example of an inventive solution to a tough problem. Here are additional examples of solutions negotiated to meet specific challenges.

Rochester, New York: As in the South Bronx schools that CCB targeted, the challenge in Rochester is not just to stabilize the teaching force, but to bolster it with exceptional expertise. The Rochester Teachers Association and the school district negotiated for a "Lead Teacher" category. These exemplary teachers have been selected by their peers according to rigorous criteria. Those without other assignments who teach in district-designated "low-performing" schools can earn an additional \$2,500 annually. Teachers who have earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and agree to teach at a



compared with schools matched demographically and by size and grade levels, LTP schools were on a par with their peers. Although their overall scores were even lower than those in comparison schools (which is not surprising since LTP schools were selected because of their low achievement), the gains of LTP schools were comparable to those in comparison schools, with LTP schools making slightly larger gains in third- and fourth-grade ELA, and slightly smaller gains (or no gains) in third- and fourth-grade math.

Citywide Replication Raises Big Concerns

After the first year of implementation, the LTP was deemed such a success that the UFT and school system decided to extend it to other low-performing schools throughout the

city—they even included the lead teacher program in the UFT/DOE contract. The contract committed DOE to maintain the basic LTP model as part of the replication: Lead teachers would be paid an additional \$10,000 annually and would work one-half of their time in a shared classroom and the other half supporting other teachers.

In late 2005 and into early 2006, the Lead Teacher Coordinating Committee devoted considerable time to discussing its recommendations for DOE's replication of the program. After the DOE cancelled meetings with the committee, the committee was disappointed to learn that DOE had decided that the committee's input was not needed.

The citywide replication was announced in a press release

(Continued)

district-selected low-performing school can earn up to \$10,000 in premium pay. Also, most teachers who leave high-poverty schools leave for other districts or jobs—not other schools in the district. Therefore, the contract includes a unique benchmarking formula that keeps district teachers' salaries among the county's top five—at the entry-level as well as at five other points along the salary schedule.

Dade County, Florida: Operating on the premise that our most challenged children need the best and the most that we can provide—from teacher experience and skill, to professional development for teachers, to extra time beyond the school day—the United Teachers of Dade and the Dade public schools agreed to designate a group of struggling schools as School Improvement Zone schools, where the best and most would be provided. These schools get extra reading and math coaches and help from special support

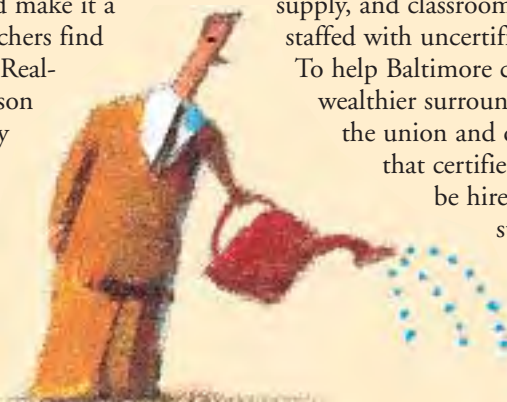
teams; and students have a longer day and year, including a daily period for tutoring or enrichment. Especially in the elementary grades, these tutoring classes can be as small as 7-10 kids. For working a longer day and year, teachers (who both choose to be in these schools and are selected by the schools) receive premium pay of 20 percent. These changes have improved teacher retention—and student achievement has increased dramatically. (A similar program in New York City made possible substantial student achievement increases in that district's Chancellor's District, see "Using Well-Qualified Teachers Well," *American Educator*, Winter 2002, www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/winter2002/UsingTeachers.html.)

Cincinnati, Ohio: Working in a high-poverty school is challenging, but with the right conditions and recognition, it can be, in the best sense of the word, the challenge of a lifetime. What would make it a challenge that teachers find worth taking on? Realizing that one reason teachers might shy away from transferring to a high-poverty school is because they would have to abandon their teaching colleagues of

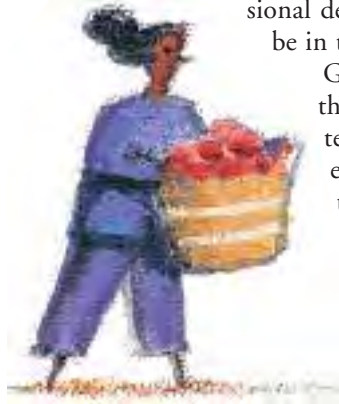
many years and start anew to build those important professional relationships, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers and the school district came up with an intriguing incentive: Take your colleagues with you. In Cincinnati, teachers who agree to teach in a high-poverty school can move together with a group of selected colleagues. Furthermore, throughout the district, school-based staffing committees make the hiring decisions, assuring that schools are able to choose teachers who "fit" the school.

Baltimore, Maryland: In Baltimore, as in many urban districts, staffing high-poverty schools with well-qualified teachers can't be addressed by attracting teachers from one school and channeling them to another: Virtually all the schools in the district are high-poverty. Despite the requirements of No Child Left Behind, the demand for certified teachers in Baltimore exceeded the supply, and classrooms were being staffed with uncertified teachers. To help Baltimore compete with wealthier surrounding counties, the union and district agreed that certified teachers would be hired on the fourth step of the salary schedule, the equivalent of a \$4,700 raise.

—EDITOR



The turnover rate among supported teachers in the seven LTP schools for which data were available decreased: 9 percent in 2005-2006 versus 19 percent in 2004-2005.



dated March 9, 2006. According to the announcement, 100 low-performing schools could apply to have one pair of lead teachers, one of whom would be paid for by DOE and the other by the school itself. Some committee members expressed concern that the program was being “watered down” as it was replicated throughout the city such that it would lose its intended impact. In interviews, committee members expressed disappointment that DOE was relegating the role played by the committee to individual school principals. In the first two years of implementation, the

committee met frequently to discuss how lead teachers were being used and to make sure that their role stayed true to CCB’s original vision. Through the committee, parents, community members, UFT leaders, district and school level administrators, and lead teachers all had a voice in lead teacher selection and program implementation. Unfortunately, the expanded version of the LTP does not include a Lead Teacher Coordinating Committee, leaving its monitoring and problem-solving roles to individual principals.

The second year of the LTP ended with a combined sense of accomplishment regarding the good work that had been done, and uncertainty regarding the direction the program would take in the future. However, there was assurance that there would be a year three in the participating schools with the same configuration of lead teachers. Decisions regarding the administration, support structure (including professional development), and assessment of the LTP would be in the hands of DOE.

Given the current highly centralized nature of the NYC public school system and the insular tendency of its leadership, CCB’s power to influence how its own initiative would be expanded to other parts of the city was limited. While CCB could proclaim that its organizing had produced a significant change in systemwide policy regarding teacher support and recruitment in low-performing schools, it also had to conclude that it lacked the power to ensure appropriate implementation across the city. Among CCB leaders, this experience crystallized the need to work with other parents and groups to build a citywide parent collaborative with the requisite power to impact citywide education policy. Toward that end, CCB leaders have joined with leaders from the Brooklyn Education Collaborative and the Brooklyn-Queens for Education Collaborative to form the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice. The UFT is a close collaborator on this new initiative, which aims to unite parents, community residents, and teachers behind educational excellence and equity. □

2005 and 2006 Teacher Survey Respondents						
Percentage of lead teachers, supported teachers, and other teachers indicating that the lead teacher program is “somewhat helpful,” “helpful,” or “very helpful” ...	Lead teachers		Supported teachers		Other teachers	
	2005 n=21	2006 n=31	2005 n=124	2006 n=81	2005 n=158	2006 n=150
... in their school	100%	97%	81%	100%	56%	74%
... with their teaching	100%	100%	82%	97%	42%	53%
... with their own classroom organization	95%	97%	77%	92%	34%	39%
... with their classroom management	94%	97%	66%	83%	31%	35%

These results exclude teachers who reported that they were “not at all familiar” with the program. Between 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, the percentage of other teachers who were at least somewhat familiar with the LTP increased from 60 percent to 87 percent.



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Critics' Claims

(Continued from page 31)

³Marguerite Roza with Larry Miller and Paul Hill (2005). *Strengthening Title I to Help High-Poverty Schools*, Center on Reinventing Public Education, Evans School of Public Affairs.

⁴Andrew Leigh and Sara Mead (2005). *Lifting Teacher Performance*. Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute. www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?contentid=253286&knlgAreaID=110&subsecid=135.

⁵Gail Sunderman and Jimmy Kim (2005). *Teacher Quality: Equalizing Educational Opportunities and Outcomes*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.

⁶Eric Hanushek, John Kain, and Steven Rivkin (2004). "Why Public Schools Lose Teachers," *Journal of Human Resources* 39(2). <http://edpro.stanford.edu/Hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/lose%20teachers.jhr.pdf>.

⁷See for example, Jessica Levin, Jennifer Mulhern, and Joan Schunck (2005). "Unintended Consequences: The Case for Reforming the Staffing Rules in Urban Teachers Contracts," The New Teacher Project.

⁸Gordon, R., Kane, T., and Staiger, D. (2006). *Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job*, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution. See Levin, J. and Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms*. New York: The New Teacher Project.

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