

Title: Research on teacher morale

Date: June 2016

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Request: Could you provide research that explores which factors are most important for teacher morale?

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### Response:

We have prepared the following memo with references on the factors associated with teacher morale. Citations include a link to a free online version. All citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the document. We have not done an evaluation of the methodological rigor of these resources, but provide them for your information only.

### References

Charlotte Advocates for Education. (2004). *Role of principal leadership in increasing teacher retention: Creating a supportive environment*. Charlotte, NC: Author. Retrieved on May 19, 2016, from <http://www.educationjustice.org/assets/files/pdf/Resources/Policy/Teaching%20and%20Leadership/Role%20of%20principal%20leadership%20in%20increasing%20teacher%20retention.pdf>

*Excerpt:* In searching the national, state, and local literature, Charlotte Advocates for Education (CAE) found consistently [that] teachers cite working conditions as a major factor in determining whether they stay at a school. Principal leadership was often given as the key component in creating this positive working environment...Charlotte Advocates for Education sought to understand this relationship between principals, culture, and retention of teachers. Relying extensively upon work completed by the West Mecklenburg Collaborating for Educational Reform Initiative and Governor Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative, we designed a study to discover:

- What specific skills, training, experiences, and characteristics affect a principal's ability to be an effective leader who creates a supportive environment?
- What specific strategies principals have implemented to impact the shaping of the working and learning environment in their schools?
- What support can be provided to principals in becoming more effective — including training and continual professional development?

Lumsden, L. (1998). *Teacher morale*. Eugene OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. Retrieved on May 19, 2016, from <https://www.vtaide.com/png/ERIC/Teacher-Morale.htm>

*Excerpt:* This Digest examines factors that may influence teacher morale and offers suggestions for preserving or restoring morale.

Protheroe, N. (2005). *Maintaining high teacher morale*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals. Retrieved on May 19, 2016, from <https://www.naesp.org/resources/2/Principal/2006/I-Fp46.pdf>

*Abstract:* Several studies of teacher morale show that by listening to teachers and supporting their work with recognition and resources, principals can build and maintain a learning environment in which teachers feel appreciated.

Sabin, J. T. (2015). Teacher morale, student engagement, and student achievement growth in reading: A correlational study. *Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership*, 1(1), Article 5. Retrieved on May 19, 2016, from <http://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=joel>

*Abstract:* This research study explored the current state of teacher morale in fourth and fifth grade classrooms in three low socio-economic schools in North Carolina. Additional research questions address correlational relationships among the variables of teacher morale, student engagement, and student achievement growth as measured by the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey, Van Amburg Active Learning Inventory Tool, and the NC End of Grade reading tests, respectively. This study found no significant relationships among the primary variables of teacher morale, student engagement, and student achievement growth. However, significant relationships were found between increasing student engagement and an increase in the number of adults present during reading instruction, as well as an increase in student engagement with small group instruction. A final positive relationship discovered in this study was between the teacher morale construct of teacher leadership and student achievement growth.

Sheppard, B., Hurley, N., & Dibbon, D. (2010). *Distributed leadership, teacher morale, and teacher enthusiasm: Unravelling the leadership pathways to school success*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Denver, CO. Retrieved on May 19, 2016, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509954.pdf>

*Abstract:* The study reported in this paper advances the understanding of distributed leadership in schools, the role of the school principal in the facilitation of distributed leadership and its impact upon teachers' morale and enthusiasm for their work. While both the empirical base and practical application of distributed leadership has grown phenomenally in recent years, the evidence related to its effect upon improved school performance reveals continued uncertainty. The authors accept claims that much of the research on educational leadership has been disconnected from the core purpose of schooling (the education of children). They argue, however, that only when there are improved understandings of the leadership processes that occur in schools, particularly as it relates to the distribution of leadership and how it impacts upon those that work directly with students (their teachers), can there be legitimate and meaningful study of the connection between school leadership and student learning. It is toward contributing to the empirical evidence in respect to this somewhat unexplored area that this study is directed. Through path analysis, they develop a best-fitting nested model to examine the relations among formal school leaders, teacher collaborative leadership, teachers' professional learning, shared decision-making, shared vision, teacher morale, and teacher enthusiasm. They conclude with a discussion of the pathways in a "best fitting model" as they explore in detail the direct and indirect effects of the various formal and distributed leadership variables upon Teacher Morale and Teacher Enthusiasm. Evidence from this

study highlights an existing approach to distributed leadership that builds teacher leadership capacity through their engagement in school leadership while enhancing their morale and enthusiasm, thereby challenging findings by some who have reported negative effects of distributed leadership upon teachers and their work performance.

Willis, M., & Varner, L. W. (2010). Factors that affect teacher morale. *Academic Leadership*, 8(4), 45.  
Retrieved on May 19, 2016.

*Abstract:* The article focuses on the variety of factors that affect the morale and job satisfaction of teachers. It mentions that the leadership behaviors of school principals is a major stimulus for teacher morale. It also notes that teacher morale directly affects the academic achievement of students and school success.

## Methods

### Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search

("Teacher morale") AND factors OR components

### Search of Databases

EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, Google, and Google Scholar

### Criteria for Inclusion

When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).
- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the West Region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0002, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government