

Seton Hall University

**eRepository @ Seton Hall**

---

Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses  
(ETDs)

Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses

---

Summer 8-15-2020

## Urban Public Middle School Teachers and their Response to High Student Mobility

Maria J. Ortiz

Ortizma1@shu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ortiz, Maria J., "Urban Public Middle School Teachers and their Response to High Student Mobility" (2020). *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*. 2796.

<https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2796>

# **Urban Public Middle School Teachers and their Response to High Student Mobility**

Maria J. Ortiz

2020

A dissertation presented to the College of Education and Human Services of  
Seton Hall University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education  
Department of Education Management Leadership & Policy

Dissertation Committee:  
Dr. Martin Finkelstein, Chair  
Dr. Shakirah Miller Harrington, Member  
Dr. Michelle Knight Manuel, Member  
Dr. David Reid, Member

© 2020 Maria J. Ortiz  
All Rights Reserve



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES  
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

**Maria J. Ortiz** has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ed.D. during this Summer Semester 2020.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE  
(please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor:

Dr. Martin Finkelstein

*[Signature]* 6/24/20  
Date

Committee Member:

Dr. Michelle Knight Manuel

*[Signature]* 6/15/2020  
Date

Committee Member:

Dr. Shakira Miller Harrington

*[Signature]* 6/15/20  
Date

Committee Member:

Dr. David Reid

*[Signature]*

06/24/2020

Date

The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

## Abstract

This study examined the teachers' perspective of student mobility in urban public middle schools in the northeast state of the country. Thirty middle school teachers in an urban public-school system were interviewed about their prior years' classroom experience with student mobility. They included those teaching English as a Second Language, Special Education, Science, Math and Language Arts, and Social Studies. In addition, student achievement data on standardized tests were studied. The research study concluded that teachers reported that they experienced frustration and anxiety, and that student mobility and its classroom consequences were relegated to the "undiscussable" aspects of the profession; with no attention paid in either collegial or administrative training. Attention to the issue was not evident in teacher preparation programs, professional development topics of discussion, or recurring professional learning communities.

The research also found there was a relationship between highly mobile students and highly mobile school leaders and teachers. High student mobility was often associated—and exacerbated—by high teacher mobility. Teachers who taught different subject area and longevity in the district revealed different experiences with student mobility. There is a need to bring the analysis discussion and its' consequences to light in forming and revising school, district, and state policies. Growing levels of economic precariousness result in evidence of more students' mobility which presents layers of complexity. It is recommended that more attention on the subject and its impact teachers informs the support systems for teachers; understand the impact of high student mobility on student achievement and teacher job satisfaction; and create policies that support more stable urban public middle schools.

## DEDICATION

Giving honor to God for blessing me with a host of family and friends that encouraged me through every step of this process. This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Julio and Carmen. I wish to thank them for instilling in me the core values of hard work and persistence. It is also dedicated to the teachers who are committed to helping students reach their greatest potential.

To my children, Judah and Izabella. Team GUS- We did it!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my dear committee chairperson, Dr. Martin Finkelstein, for his direction, and feedback throughout the dissertation process. His willingness to provide timely and invaluable feedback regarding the overall organizational structure, research design considerations, which were central to the development, refinement, and the completion of this dissertation. To Dr. Michelle Knight Manuel for her unyielding support throughout my doctoral program and professional career. From the beginning, she believed that I could obtain the doctoral degree and was instrumental in ensuring that the vision came to pass. Dr. Shakirah Miller Harrington whose encouragement led me to begin, persist, and finish the dissertation. I would also like to acknowledge the support and assistance of my colleague, Ladies of Valor from Cohort 22, and all of the members of the committee: Dr. Martin Finkelstein, Dr. Michelle Knight Manuel, Dr. David Reid and Dr. Shakirah Miller Harrington, collectively and individually contributed to the overall quality of this dissertation, and helped me to improve upon my writing and research skills.

The committee ensured that I adhered to a high standard and refused to accept mediocrity. Their tough love enabled me to craft a quality product that I am proud to call my own. Additionally, I want to thank my family and friends, who, encouraged me to finish my degree. The most important thank you is reserved for my loving childre, Judah and Izabella, who stood by me and supported me throughout the doctoral program and the dissertation process. The attainment of my degree would not have been possible without their love, patience and post it of encouragement, I love you!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement .....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions .....	7
Design and Methodology .....	7
Limitations .....	11
Definition of Terms.....	14
Summary .....	16
Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW .....	17
Student Mobility .....	19
Special Education Mobile Students .....	20
English Language Learners.....	20
Teacher Efficacy Theory.....	21
School Effects Theory.....	24
Maslow’s Theory of Needs.....	26
Summary .....	28
Chapter 3 – METHODOLOGY .....	29
Methodology of the Study .....	30
Sample Selection.....	32
Sample Description .....	33
District and School Background .....	33
Instrumentation .....	38



Data Collection .....	41
Reliability and Validity .....	42
Data Analysis Plan and Coding Scheme.....	43
Ethical Considerations .....	43
Summary .....	44
Chapter IV – DATA ANALYSIS .....	45
Characteristics of the Teacher Sample.....	46
Themes .....	49
Theme 1 .....	50
Theme 2 .....	52
Theme 3 .....	55
Theme 4 .....	57
Theme 5 .....	60
Theme 6 .....	61
Theme 7 .....	64
Research Question 1 .....	65
Research Question 2 .....	65
Research Sub-question 1 .....	66
Research Sub-question 2.....	67
Research Sub-question 3.....	67
Research Sub-question 4.....	68
Summary .....	69
Chapter V- CONCLUSION .....	71

Methodology .....	71
Findings.....	72
Contextualizing the Findings within the Literature .....	74
Recommendations for Policy and Practice .....	79
Implications for Future Research.....	82
Conclusion .....	84
Bibliography .....	85
Appendix A – Interview Protocol.....	91
Appendix B- Informed Consent.....	92
Appendix C- Institutional Review Board Approval Letter.....	96
Appendix D- Institutional Review Board Amendment Letter .....	97

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1	New Jersey Enrollment Trends by Grade .....	10
2	Principals at Research Schools from 2015-20 .....	34
3	School 38 Demographics, Including Special Education, Bilingual, and Total Enrollment from 2016-20 .....	35
4	School 44 Demographics, Including Special Education, Bilingual, and Total Enrollment from 2016-20 .....	36
5	School 48 Demographics, Including Special Education, Bilingual, and Total Enrollment from 2016-20 .....	37
6	PowerSchool Data on Research Schools' Student Enrollment 2018-19 .....	40
7	Total Number of Years Teaching and Content Area .....	46
8	Teacher Sample Description .....	48

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Figure

1	The cycle of how poverty impacts students, teachers, and school outcomes .....	28
2	School mobility data 2018-19 .....	39
4	2019 NJSLA Grades 3-8 ELA and Math proficiency rate compared to mortality rate .....	40

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Urban public schools experience student mobility, a phenomenon that negatively impacts school performance. Schools cannot control student mobility, yet student mobility does influence teacher practice and student achievement. While public schools cannot control the migration or exodus of their students, they have to ensure that students receive a free public education. Urban public-school teachers have to adapt to an ever-changing student body while simultaneously implementing best research instructional practices, monitoring performance data, and adjusting their lessons.

Students change schools for several reasons; among these reasons are: (a) a change of where they live, (b) a desire to want a better school, (c) the need to improve the quality of their educational program, or (d) a problematic circumstance at a previous school. While students move for several reasons, one of the problems that remains is the lack of support for teachers and their preparation for dealing with the students who are mobile throughout the school year.

Policies that impact urban planning should consider how student mobility influences schools, student learning, and teacher practice. Historically, urban school districts are affected by the migration of the low-socioeconomic population, the rise of the housing project, and transportation developments. For example, a city like Newark, New Jersey has experienced an economic downturn since the Newark riots of the 1960s (Collins & Margo, 2007). The Newark Public School District was overwhelmingly impacted, which led the New Jersey State Department of Education (NJDOE) to take over the school district from 1995 to 2018. Since the riots, the city of Newark has had employment levels of 21-23%, 11% higher than the national unemployment level which caused more people to live in poverty. In July of 2020, the district regained local control. Simultaneously, the housing market in the city of Newark became

significantly more constrained with rising rental prices and fewer rental opportunities. As a result, family mobility rose, and students entered and exited schools at a much higher rate.

The 1960s Newark riots also dramatically impacted the landscape of the city, creating pockets of empty lots and destroying housing projects. Since then, the Newark Housing Association has attempted to build housing projects throughout the city in response to the city's lack of homes; however, that housing redevelopment model has only encouraged families to relocate throughout the city. Sixty years later, the city still is working on revitalization plans that include the demolition of the Newark city housing projects, consisting of high-rise building complexes. Unfortunately, Newark public school students reside in these housing projects; those most impacted are students who are the most economically disadvantaged. Many residents have had to relocate across the city to different neighborhoods and enroll in different schools. Consequently, housing policies also promote high student mobility.

While Newark underwent serious changes in the housing landscape and in racial and social demographics, the educational system likewise changed. Federal, state, and local policies have attempted to influence student mobility in schools, and specifically have a ripple effect on the Newark Public Schools. For example, during the last 10 years in the Newark Public School district, Newark has been led by six superintendents. During the period 2011-2015, The One Newark Plan (Newark Public Schools, 2013) replaced the city's tradition of neighborhood schools with a universal enrollment system that assigned students by lottery to traditional as well as charter schools. As a result, several schools that had consistently low levels of student achievement or under-enrollment were closed. While the policy intended to promote student achievement by opening up charter schools, it failed to consider the detrimental effects of high student mobility and consequently mobility in school teachers and administrators.

As federal, state, and district policies impact schools and families become mobile, student achievement and high school performance are compromised. The game changer in this phenomenon is the classroom teacher. The expectation of a classroom teacher is to respond to societal changes, technological advances, and urban school reforms. However, how can expectations be imposed on teachers without their input? Research on the cause and effect of student mobility and the impact of student mobility on schools is available, but only minimal research is available on how teachers feel about or deal with student mobility. Teachers are left to respond to the perpetual student mobility that takes place in their classrooms and to deal with the consequences of students moving between different schools. To attempt to fill this gap, this research focused on teachers in urban public middle schools who deal with high student mobility. Later, the propensity for middle school teachers that are prone to mobility will be discussed.

Specifically, this study focused on learning teachers' perspectives of mobility in their classroom: how they experience it, how they adjust to it, and how they mitigate its adverse effects. Teacher efficacy is essential to consider for this study because teachers are the practitioners who deal most directly with the student mobility phenomenon. Their input is essential in driving policies, allocating resources, and responding to the classroom culture that is impacted by constant student mobility. Thus, this study considered several important questions: How do teachers respond to student mobility in their classrooms? How do teachers feel about disruptions from students entering or exiting their classrooms within the academic year? What practices or policy recommendations do teachers have for schools that have high student mobility in urban areas?

## **Problem Statement**

This study focused on three urban public Title 1 district in a city in the Northeast section of the United States. As of May 2019, the schools identified in this study were determined to be “focus” schools by the NJDOE. During President Obama’s administration and the authority of Secretary of State Arnie Duncan, the school district was the recipient of a School Improvement Grant. At that time, the schools—including the three schools participating in this research—were designated Turnaround schools. The Turnaround Model was one of four strategies available to American local education agencies (LEAs) under the Race to the Top and School Improvement Grant programs of the Obama administration; the other three programs included Restart, Transformation, and School Closures (The Wallace Foundation, 2011). The NJDOE (2012a) utilizes a specific criterion to identify schools in the designated categories, including “subgroup academic performance, measures of student growth, and graduation rate.” It also defines a focus school as a school requiring Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement. The focus school has a summative score in the bottom 5% of Title I schools, with a 4-year graduation rate of 67% or less, identified as requiring Comprehensive Support and Improvement. In addition to the schools labeled below performance because of the low student achievement, the schools have high student mobility.

In August of 2012, New Jersey adopted the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACH NJ) Act. The new adoption has added extra pressure on teachers, particularly those teachers who teach in schools with high student mobility. The New Jersey legislature adopted TEACH NJ Act with the intent to raise student achievement by improving the overall quality of instruction. The Act is the tenure reform law that defines specific requirements and structures for the new evaluation system in New Jersey, and it requires that tenure decisions link to evaluation outcomes. Achieve NJ utilizes the student growth



outcomes (SGOs) of the students' performance on high stakes testing to measure teacher performance and evaluation. The SGOs include the quantification of student progress over time by calculating student test scores and other student assessments and demographic data aggregated at the teacher level to determine effectiveness or, more descriptively, teacher effects. High student mobility disrupts the curriculum scope and sequence delivery, the middle classroom culture, the teacher's efficacy, and the way teachers are impacted by high stakes demands of ACHIEVE NJ and TEACH NJ.

The three schools in this study are below performance since 2016 and have an average annual mobility trend of 23-29% or higher of the population, as evidenced by the school district's Salesforce enrollment database. Salesforce is the public-school district's data bank, where all information on the students *enrolled* in the district is stored. In addition, PowerSchool is the district's *registration* bank, which includes all of the students' personal information in the school. Unfortunately, one of the challenges of the database system that impacts the accuracy of the data is that the Salesforce system and PowerSchool system may not match accurately. For example, students enroll on a Thursday when they come to the district; however, they do not visit the school until the next Monday and so may not register until the following week. The data pulled during that transitional period and the Salesforce data may have a total number of students enrolled, while the receiving school may have a total number of students registered that differs from that Salesforce number. The changes in data may affect what happens in schools and classrooms because the district and the school may not be simultaneously synchronized. The fluidity of these data may be one of the reasons why the NJDOE and the Federal Department of Education stopped collecting mobility data across the state and district. Despite the inaccuracy of student mobility data found in schools across the nations, teachers were nonetheless pressured to

demonstrate student achievement. The problem is that teachers do not receive adequate support and are pressured to demonstrate achievement, given the problem of mobility.

Teachers feel the pressure of ensuring student achievement because teachers are evaluated on how well their students perform on their standardized test scores. The problem with the achievement of students who are mobile is that teachers are unable to control how a mobile student may perform or how a stable student will be impacted, based on the interruptions of their classroom culture. Teachers themselves, then, are under much pressure to perform at a level that ensures students achievement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn how teachers perceive, feel about, and adjust to student mobility; that is, what are teachers' perspectives of student mobility and in what ways can their input influence their teaching practices? The researcher interviewed 30 urban middle school homeroom teachers who had an average school mobility rate of 23%-29% within the 2018-19 academic year. The researcher hoped to capture the teachers' informational data and experiences in order to contribute to the creation of policy related to student enrollment, curriculum decisions, and teacher and school preparation for highly mobile urban school districts.

The district and the field of education will benefit from this research because, first, it will examine how the school mobility phenomenon impacts teachers. The information on the teachers' perspectives will inform the field of education through a better understanding of how teachers are responding to the student mobility phenomenon and, in turn, what the implications of the phenomenon are for both the district and the field of education. Second, the district may benefit from the study by responding to the teachers' needs. Once their needs are identified, teachers may be able to inform policies or district practices that manage revisions of the

curriculum and the scope and sequence that will promote student achievement. Supporting the teachers may also have a ripple effect on building teacher efficacy. The district may become more stable by having teacher sustainability; in turn, parents may also understand the importance and benefits of having students experience a stable educational tenure.

The focus of this study was how teachers respond to changes that occur in the classroom because of student mobility throughout the year. Given that the mobility rate of students may impact a teacher's job, how do teachers see student mobility? How do teachers perceive the factors for students transitioning out of schools? How do teachers respond to the mobility of students in their classroom? The following specific research questions led to this study.

### **Research Questions**

Primary Question: This narrative research study intended to identify how individual teachers in an urban public-school district responded to the mobility experience. Specifically, what was the teachers' experience with student mobility in the 2018-19 academic year?

Sub-questions:

- What is the teachers' perspective of student mobility?
- In what ways does student mobility impact teachers?
- How do teachers perceive and adjust to student mobility?
- What practices or policy recommendations do teachers have for schools that have high student mobility in urban areas?

### **Design and Methodology**

Although the research method was chosen to facilitate learning from the teachers' perspective, it also focused on the collective experience at the building and/or grade level. In order to execute this exploration effectively, the researcher utilized a qualitative design. In this research study, 30 Grade 5-8 homeroom teachers at three urban public, highly mobile, middle

schools were solicited through emails and individually interviewed. The category of high mobility was 23%-29% or higher. The mobility rate divides the total number of students who enter or leave a school within one academic year by the total number of students enrolled as of the October 15th school enrollment count. The school enrollment count identifies the total number of students enrolled and registered in the school. The NJDOE utilizes that methodology to report the total student enrollment in each of its school. The school enrollment is obtained from the New Jersey State database (NJ Measurement and Resource for Teaching [NJ SMART]), which is a comprehensive data warehouse, student-level data-reporting, and unique statewide student identification (SID) system.

The participants in this study were homeroom departmentalized teachers in Grades 5-8. The researcher selected middle school as the focus because the NJDOE state enrollment data have revealed that one of the highest mobile grades in the district for 2018-19 was Grade 7. Middle school homeroom departmentalized teachers experience more mobility than elementary school teachers who are self-contained in Grades Kindergarten through 5. In departmentalized classrooms, two or more teachers specialize in some of the subjects for that grade, and students switch classes to receive instruction in all required subjects (Gibb & Matala, 1962; McGrath & Rust, 2002; Woods, 1959). The teachers may teach several subjects and more than one class, leading to teachers experiencing higher student mobility. A middle school that has a departmentalized teacher schedule may have teachers with a homeroom class of 25 students, and three sections of students in one school day, for a teaching total of 75 students daily within one academic year. The mobility rate of students who transfer in or out of their classroom within the year is 23-29%. At that rate, the data reveals 75 students are registered in the class, 25% transfer in or out within the academic school year and 19 students on average will be new. Thus, the teacher may be responsible for delivering instruction to 94 students within that academic year.

Unfortunately, the data of middle school teachers may differ from the data of self-contained elementary teachers, even in the same urban public middle school. The NJDOE (2019) reported that the middle school population of students in Grades 6-8 is the highest. In New Jersey, the evidence revealed that as of 2019, the Grade 6 student population was 104,551, Grade 7 was 103,545, and Grade 8 was 105,576, while the state reported a slightly higher total student enrollment. The district selected in this research study also demonstrated total district enrollment by grade, reflecting a greater number of students in Grades 6-8.

The New Jersey School Performance report showed the number of public-school students' enrollment trends by grade for the past 3 school years, 2015-2018 (NJDOE, 2019) (see Table 1). As noted earlier, the district's database reported the total number of students registered in Grades 6-8 for the 2018-19 academic year. Data included all students in Grades 6-8, including General Education, Special Education, and English Language Learners in all three schools.

The key variables or indicators of interest for the 2018-19 academic year were provided by the Salesforce data that indicated student mobility in the middle of the year as well as course grades for the students who enrolled for 2018-19 in the three schools. The PowerSchool database banks by schools all of the students who are registered in a public-school district. The researcher asked the homeroom teachers to participate in one-to-one interviews. In addition to the interview questions, the educational records summoned for this research were the three schools' data items on the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) Grade 3-8 results. The NJSLA measures student proficiency with the component of a system of assessments that provide evidence about student learning collected annually by the NJDOE. The NJSLA was formerly known as Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

Table 1. *New Jersey Enrollment Trends by Grade*

Grade	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
PK	69,677	74,391	75,742
KG	94,081	94,011	93,845
1	101,113	98,786	98,193
2	102,696	101,763	98,983
3	104,491	103,568	102,454
4	103,087	105,312	103,930
5	102,157	103,989	105,690
6	104,131	103,029	104,551
7	104,146	105,178	103,545
8	103,434	105,006	105,576
9	107,424	106,784	107,177
10	104,170	104,032	102,849
11	101,130	101,489	101,382
12	102,855	103,494	104,191
Total	1,404,592	1,410,832	1,408,108

Source: NJ DOE <https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/statistics/index.shtml#ENR>

The trends of the student enrollment will be studied in addition to the teacher's perspective.

Through an interview process, teachers will be asked about their history as practitioners and what methods they used to cope with their experience with student mobility in their classrooms.

The researcher developed the interview questions to examine four important aspects. First, it is important to identify how student mobility impacts the teachers personally and as practitioners. Second, it is necessary to study the impact that student mobility has on teachers' emotions and management. Third, it is essential to understand the ways teachers respond and adjust to student mobility in their classroom. Finally, it is necessary to consider policy implications and what teachers can recommend for the field of education.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study was the restricted research available on student mobility. While state and national data on student mobility may have limitations, this study was focused on teacher perceptions, so the limitations of the data were marginally relevant to the findings of this research. In 2011, the NJDOE stopped collecting data and no longer required school districts to collect information on student mobility. While student mobility is a global phenomenon, urban public schools must deal with a higher rate of mobility than their neighboring communities. The NJDOE claimed that collecting mobility data was challenging to manage because the state did not have an accurate method of data collection. Because the researcher had difficulty in reviewing current student mobility data, the NJDOE was contacted with three questions:

1. It is our understanding that the state has not publicly released student mobility data as part of the school performance report since 2010-11. Is there anywhere else we might be able to find these data publicly?
2. If the data are not available publicly, is any process available that is appropriate for requesting these data?
3. We were able to find the previous definition for student mobility that was formerly used as part of the student performance reports. This is the percentage of students who both entered and left during the school year. The calculation was derived from

the sum of students entering and leaving after the October enrollment count, divided by the total enrollment. For clarification, does total enrollment include the total number of students who enrolled at any point of the year? Alternatively, does the total enrollment on the October enrollment count?

The response from the NJDOE on student mobility was as follows:

We last reported student mobility data in the 2010-11 NJ School Report cards. That data was calculated based on aggregate data collected from districts. We stopped collecting many of these aggregate data points from the district after the 2010-11 reports due to a restructuring of our annual reports and concerns around accuracy. Each district needed to calculate their data, and it was not clear if the same methodology was being used. Since we no longer collect that information, it would not be available publicly or by request. Up until 2010-11, we collected the total number of students entering and leaving after the October enrollment, and that was divided by the total October enrollment. We acknowledge that there are issues with using October enrollment, which is again another reason why we stopped collecting and reporting that measure. We have heard requests to add a measure of mobility to our reports, but due to the nature of the way data is collected in NJ SMART mainly with snapshots, we do not believe we would be capturing an accurate measure of mobility. (NJDOE, September 23, 2019)

The problem with the NJDOE's methodology for collecting student mobility data was an inaccurate method of reporting; this thus presented a limitation for this study. For example, any students who were mobile between the last day of school (*on average, the last day of school is considered June 25*) and October 15 were not captured as mobile. As a result, data collection was inaccurate in its misreports of how many new students a school received within the academic year and how many students transferred in or out of the school, district, or state. Schools are only able to report transfers in or out of schools from October 15 until the end of the academic year. The student mobility rate is then calculated by the total percentage of students who enter or leave the school by the total student enrollment. That number is flawed because the student enrollment number may remain the same or slightly change; however, the students who are enrolled may be different. Researchers De la Torre and Gwyne (2009) reported on general trends in student mobility and what definitive consensus on the system would measure student mobility. For



example, the Chicago school district reported:

A number of districts, including CPS, use a formula that sums the number of early exits and late entrances occurring during the academic year and divides this number by a school's fall enrollment. This approach can be problematic for several different reasons. First, it combines two very different phenomena (exiting and entering a school); consequently, schools with the same score might, in fact, experience very different patterns of student mobility. In addition, it ignores the stable population of a school, which can be important for assessing the proportion of students who received the full effect of a school's instructional program. It also ignores mobility that may occur during the summer. (De la Torres & Gwyne, 2009, p. 7)

Like Chicago, the New Jersey district in this research had difficulty capturing the mobility of students because the mobility during the end of the year and throughout the summer was not captured in transiency reports that begin from the beginning to the end of the academic year. Therefore, the actual mobility rate in urban public schools may be misrepresented and not given the attention needed to support classroom teachers.

Another limitation was the experiences of teachers at an urban elementary school in the northeast part of the state. It was also found that the locations of the three selected schools were in the same ward of the city. As a result, the researcher's observations only speak to and represent the ward's experiences of teachers from a single ward in the city. The information does not represent a broader scope, nor does it generalize to a wider population of teachers. Thus, despite the limitations, this study may be considered as planting seeds for future studies in support of important research on teachers' perspectives of student mobility.

Another limitation was an alteration to the data collection process. The researcher initially intended to conduct 30 face-to-face, in-person interviews during the Spring of 2020. A global pandemic of SARS-CoV-2 (novel coronavirus) that emerged in late 2019 was identified by the Centers for Disease Control, and the resulting COVID-19 disease was labeled a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). Given the government mandate for social distancing, the researcher amended the methodology of

this project. Strict orders were also given by the university and the New Jersey state government to “stay home,” thereby suspending the opportunity to conduct in-person and face-to-face research. As a result, the researcher requested conducting the interviews over the telephone as an approved means of communication. A protocol amendment was submitted and approved by the IRBs allowing for 30 over-the-phone interviews. While over-the-phone interviews are justifiable, maximizing the benefits of in-person interviews was not possible in this scenario. The teachers’ emotions, gestures, and presence could not be observed or captured over the phone. The choice of video conferencing was not an option for several reasons, among them being the risk of delaying the research timeline in seeking IRB approval from both the district and the university of the research. Moreover, the teachers might have declined to participate in the study if they did not prefer the video conferencing format, although video conferencing was not an option.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Achievement Gap:** The difference in performance levels between low-income and minority students as measured against their peers.

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** A measure of the progress of public schools based on academic standards.

**Average Class Size:** The average class size for elementary schools (Pre-K-8) based on the enrollment per grade divided by the total number of classrooms for that grade. For elementary grades, the state average is the total statewide enrollment for each grade divided by the total statewide number of classrooms in that grade.

**The Common Core of Data (CCD):** A student dropout is a student who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year; was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year; and has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved educational program (U.S. Department of Education [US DOE], 2013, p. A-3). The

CCD's definition of the dropout rate is "the percentage of students enrolled in any of Grades 9 through 12 at the beginning of a school year who are dropouts as of the beginning of the subsequent school year" (Stillwell & Sable, 2013).

**Enrollment by Grade:** The enrollment from the school districts' NJ SMART state submission. NJ Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART) is a comprehensive data warehouse, student-level data reporting, and unique statewide student identification (SID) system.

**New Jersey Report Card:** A report containing a plethora of data and various pieces of information produced annually by the NJDOE for the state's schools.

**Student Attendance Rate:** Grade-level percentages of students on average who are present at school each day, calculated by dividing the sum of days present in each grade level by the sum of possible days present for all students in each grade. The school and state totals are the sums of days present in all applicable grade levels divided by the total possible days present for all students.

**Student Mobility Rate:** Percentage of students who both entered and left during the school year. The calculation is derived from the sum of students entering and leaving after the October enrollment count divided by the total enrollment.

**Turnaround:** A dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that: (a) produces significant gains in achievement within 2 years, and (b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization.

## **Summary**

Chapter I of this study presented a brief description of student mobility in American education and an overview of the problems associated with the student mobility phenomenon. It also presented an initial description of the qualitative study, its participants, and its methodology. As well, this chapter included: an explanation of why the teachers in urban public middle schools were specifically selected, a clear definition of student mobility, and information on the data related to this research that were collected by the state. In addition, it provides recommendations and implications for how the field of education can act on the issues of student mobility.

Chapter II next presents a review of the literature on student mobility and the theoretical framework that underpinned the rationale of this study. Chapter III explains the design methods and procedures conducted for this study. Chapter IV illuminates the data and findings from the telephone interviews. Chapter V shows the analysis of the results and summary implications for educational policies and practice. The conclusion of the study addresses the research question: How do individual teachers in an urban public-school district respond to the mobility experience?

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides detailed information on current available research and articles related to the subject of high student mobility. The review also includes relevant research on how high student mobility impacts schools and how students perform academically. The causes and effects of student mobility in schools are also discussed to inform how teachers are impacted when they have to deal with students entering or existing schools throughout the year. Qualitative research articles from the last 60 years (1960-2020) informed the methodology and theoretical framework. For the present study, the researcher reviewed a variety of literature, including but not limited to various texts, academic articles obtained from JSTOR or ERIC, the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) website, and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website. The student and teacher data utilized for this research came from the Powerschool Database, Newark Board of Education School Data, and Salesforce from 2018-2019. The New Jersey Report Card data analyzed the state's mobility rate, the research district's school, the percentage of students who are Special Education, the percentage of English Language Learner students, and data on free and reduced-price lunch. Research on the effects and impact of student mobility included peer articles that utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodology.

Students in urban areas from a low-socioeconomic class who are considered “poor” have correlations to high mobility and, therefore, low student achievement. For example, in their research, authors highlighted the prevalence of mobility and its effect on students and schools. The report *Student Mobility in Rural communities: What Are the Implications for Student Achievement?* stated, “Recent reports have found that ‘nearly half a million children in the Rural Midwest are living in poverty, and thousands more are living just above the poverty line,’

leading to the conclusion that ‘the risk of frequent mobility and academic failure is heightened’ ” (Paik and Phillips 2002,p. 6). Students who live in poor rural areas move continuously, and the correlation between poverty and mobility significantly impacts student achievement. In the present study, the selected schools were located in a low-socioeconomic area, specifically in a northeast urban area of the United States, which is rated as one of the poorest economic cities in the country, with a per capita income of \$19,313 annually (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Student mobility has many implications for schools as a result of low socioeconomics. For example, the study “The Impact of Mobility on Student Performance and Teacher Practice” found that “highly mobile students scored lower on criterion-referenced assessments than their non-highly mobile peers” (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011, p. 17). However, the present study did not focus on research related to schools or students; rather, it attempted to shed light on the impact that student mobility has on *teachers*. Student mobility impacts education because highly mobile students influence classroom culture, curriculum, standards execution, attendance rates, and school funding. As stated, “They found that hypermobile children did indeed have elevated odds of ever having repeated a grade in school or having four or more behavioral problems” (Tucker, Marx, and Long, 1998, p. 112). However, only limited research has focused on the human behavioral aspect of those teachers who experience high student mobility.

The United States as a country has historically experienced migration among its citizens. According to the U.S. Census report for 2010, 35.4% of those surveyed moved during the 5 years of 2005-2010 (Ihrke & Faber, 2012, p. 240). The American Dream is a cliché that promotes upward mobility and so encourages families to move for positive reasons, such as the desire for a higher-paying job or to live in a community near extended family members. This type of residential move results in a “purposeful, proactive school change,” which Ream (2003) described as strategic mobility. Although mobility may have an optimistic underpinning, there

are also opposing rationales for moving, which have a detrimental impact on student learning and teachers' instructional practices.

Other reasons such as separation or divorce, unemployment, undocumented immigration, domestic violence, home foreclosure, housing needs, and divorce were highlighted by Ream's (2003) definition of reactive mobility. Swanson and Schneider's (1999) definition of residential mobility suggested that it can result in impacting the child negatively. The data have shown that minorities and low-socioeconomic families have a high mobility rate and tend to move the most within a small area (Schafft & Prins, 2009). In poor urban areas like the district in this research, mobility is reactive as opposed to proactive. For example, the demographic breakdown of the U.S. Census data showed that 42.9% of African Americans and 43.1% of Hispanics indicated a move, while 28.7% and 31.0%, respectively, shared that the move was within the same county. Studies may be found on the rationale for and effects of student mobility; they may include comparison of which class or race of students is more transient than others or what impact student mobility has on schools. However, the present research focused on the teachers' perspective and point of view as practitioners who must respond to high student mobility in their classrooms.

### **Student Mobility**

While researchers have included many types of mobility in their studies (strategic mobility, reactive mobility, residential mobility, and school mobility), the literature is clear about the definition of student mobility as it pertains to schools. One study by Rumberger (2002) presented a universal definition of student mobility as "students moving from one school to another for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level" (p. 1). One cause of student mobility is residential change, whereby students change schools within a district or move from one district to another. Intra-district transfer students frequently move within a school

district during the school year. Other students move to another city or state, requiring a change in school districts (Eckerling, Ingersoll, & Rumberger, 2003; Scamman, 1989). The default of students moving within the academic year results in costly interruptions—not just a financial burden on the district but an impact on teachers who invest their time, emotions, and talent on educating students.

### **Special Education Mobile Students**

Special education students who are highly mobile are more likely to not complete schools, and “students with learning disabilities or emotional or behavioral disorders are consistently found to have the highest dropout incidences among special education students and students in general” (Reschly & Christenson, 2006, p. 277). Smith, Polloway, Patton, and Dowdy (2012) compared the graduation rates of students with disabilities to those without disabilities, utilizing data from a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report in addition to data from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, offering a database of sample sizes of 185,180 and 632,633, respectively. Students with disabilities who are stable in a school more likely have an overall higher rate of graduating than those who are highly mobile throughout their educational tenure. Like classified students in Special Education, students who are English Language Learners also are impacted by mobility.

### **English Language Learners**

Another subgroup with a high mobility rate is English Language Learners (ELLs). Many students reside in a home environment where families do not speak English. Studies have shown that these students move more frequently than their counterparts who are from an English-only background (Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). Utilizing data from the California Basic Educational Data System, Mayer (2004) examined the difference in the dropout rates of Mexican students in cities with 50% or more Hispanic residents. The sample size was 1,228, and in cities



with 50% or more Hispanics, the sample size was 3,795. The data came from the California Basic Educational Data System, where data collected annually by schools are stored. The findings suggested that “there is a significant relationship between dropout rates of Mexican origin students in a city with less than 50% Hispanic population, and a city with more than 50% Hispanic population” (p. 19), and that “attitude and perceptions of the community influence the students’ decision to drop out of school or continue and graduate” (p. 21). The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report also showed that students 100% below the poverty rate moved 52.5% of the time, indicating that students with a low socioeconomic status have a high mobility rate (Ihrke & Faber, 2012). There is a relationship among poverty, immigration, and the frequency of families who move. Approximately 40% of migrant children have changed schools more than three times (U.S. General Accounting Office [U.S. GAO], 1994). This suggests that schools can expect more ELL students to move more frequently.

Another study examined the mobility patterns of a group of Grade 6 students in Chicago Public Schools during 1994-1996 and found that 36% of the students changed schools at least one time during a period of 2 years in school. Also, 13% of the students changed schools three times, and 5% changed four or more times. School changes were mostly within the school system since 87% of the students changed from one school in Chicago to another (Kerbow, 1996).

### **Teacher Efficacy Theory**

Teacher efficacy matters, according to Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004). Collective teacher efficacy refers to the “collective self-perception that teachers in a given school make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of their homes and communities” (p. 190). If mobility is important enough to predict school achievement, then its impact on teachers who also experience mobility is equally important. The present study sought

to learn from the teachers' perspective how they respond to student mobility in their teaching practices. What is their response when students transfer in and out of their classrooms throughout the year?

The literature has made clear that teacher self-efficacy affects student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1977; Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and this is consistent with what educators know about how adults learn (Conway, Kember, Sivan, & Wu, 1994; Slepko, 2008; Terehoff, 2002). Drawing information from teachers who deal with high student mobility may be important data to inform professional development strategies dealing with allocation of resources and policy decisions. With this in mind, the focus of the present study examined how teachers in urban public schools respond to high student mobility and classroom disruptions.

Bandura's (1993) article, "Perceived Self-Efficacy in Cognitive Development and Functioning," first brought self-efficacy to the attention of researchers. He stated that mastery experiences are influential in raising self-efficacy and indicated that student learning is highly dependent upon a teacher's self-efficacy—specifically, the teacher's own beliefs in his or her instructional efficacy. Bandura's article on perceived self-efficacy, which informed the present research study, suggested that what teachers can do in the classrooms relates to what they believe they are capable of accomplishing. Also, Bandura suggested that the concept of teachers perceived self-efficacy and collective school efficacy are crucial to "contribute significantly to schools' level of academic achievement" (p. 117). As a result, it is important to explore teachers' perceived self-efficacy.

Ashton and Webb (1986) expanded on Bandura's view of efficacy: "Teachers' efficacy expectations influence their thoughts and feelings, their choice of activities, the amount of effort they expend and the extent of their persistence in the face of obstacles" (p. 3). They found that

what a teacher believes can positively or negatively impact student learning and can predict levels of performance in mathematics and language arts. Since teachers are closest to their students and deal most with learning disruptions, they must express their efficacy and contribute their knowledge. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) likewise supported Bandura's ideas: "Self-efficacy theory, applied in the educational realm, has sparked a rich line of research into how teachers' self-efficacy beliefs related to their actions and to the outcomes they achieve" (p. 945).

In addition to the impact of student mobility on teacher efficacy, trends in institutional practices, operation protocols, and policies that influence high student mobility and support teachers must be studied. Addressing the mobility phenomenon without addressing the teachers' perspective on mobility may risk teacher efficacy, teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and student achievement in urban public middle schools. Students in middle school experience significant behavioral and character changes. Thus, teachers' experiences with student mobility may inform investments in policies that address student achievement. As Ross (2014) noted:

A study was conducted with Grade 6 students to identify the effect of mobility on achievement. Students identified the number of schools they attended from first to sixth grade. The data revealed that 33% of the students moved more than once and attended three or more schools. The intelligence tests of these students indicate that they were less capable than those who were not as mobile. In their study of high school Black males, identified student mobility as one of the predictors in elementary school of future high school dropouts. (Stroup & Robins, 1972, p. 4)

Mobility disrupts classroom teaching, especially in middle school. Given that middle school teachers are the practitioners in the field who work the most closely with students, it is essential to draw on the teachers' experience. Their experiences will inform the highest-leverage curriculum and fiscal decisions.

### **School Effects Theory**

School effects include different attributes of schools that range from culture, policies, economic factors, geography, and socioeconomic class. According to Crosnoe and Lopez-Gonzalez (2005), “The school likely matters in two general ways: (a) as a point of access to institutional resources, such as the money, programs, and services transferred from the state to individual through schools; and (b) as contexts of social relations with unique norms, values, and cultures” (p. 20). This research also studied the main effect of *who* is in the students’ school but did not focus on *how* the school operations functioned. For example, “School composition effects constitute the aggregate influence of school peers on a student’s school experience, above and beyond the effects of the individual student’s particular peers” (Portes & Hao, 2004, p. 11920). Schools do impact students, both individually and corporately. School culture, school operations, and school composition influence how students develop individually and with their peers. School mobility as a phenomenon has an effect on schools, classrooms, and students. The students are impacted by their peers and are unavoidably reactive to the culture that is in the school.

A normative perception of the school or “positive” attributes affect the expectations of students in a positive way. For example, Alexander, Fennessey, McDill, and D’Amico (1979) highlighted three several factors. The first factor of the theory of school effect is that students may experience a socio-culture that changes students based on the academic culture of the school (e.g., Michael, 1961; Wilson, 1959), which can also be related to the school’s charter (Meyer, 1970a). In other words, students who enter a school may socialize and display their academic ability by the influence of their peers and the school culture. Furthermore, if a school has academically competitive students, the transfer students would have to adjust to the network of peers around them. If the students are college-bound and academically strong, then the trajectory

will be that the transfer students will either adjust to the academic culture or will drop out if they do not engage in the school.

The second factor of the theory of school effect is the comparative factor. This encourages the viewpoint that high-performing schools may produce a more competitive school culture. The environment encourages a higher level of academic competition among students. However, if a student who transfers into the school is unable to fit into the highly competitive school culture, the student may fail, develop lower self-concept and self-esteem, or lower expectations (Meyer, 1970b, p. 63). Overall, the theory suggests that the socioeconomic status of the student body could have a positive or normative impact on students who transfer into a school. However, the antithesis of the comparative impact occurs when a student transfers into a school and is unable to compete, thereby lowering opportunities for the student's academic achievement. The teachers' views of student transfer and its impact on classroom culture are essential.

Highly mobile students often attend schools with high poverty rates and limited resources. In a different context, students may experience a "different rationality" that causes other aspirations and/or expectations for both the students and, hence, the teachers (Little, 1978). As a result, learning the school dynamics of mobility and what happens from a teacher's perspective when a student enters the school within the academic year was the theoretical frame of this research.

Finn (1989) suggested that disengagement or lack of participation in school-related activities may also impede a student's ability to connect or identify with the school. Some highly mobile students may experience a lack of engagement that results in instability, which has other ripple effects. If a student is always changing schools, he or she may have a more difficult time connecting with the school at large. The institutional perspective focuses on the students'

community—their home and school. The students' community, including their home and school, is closely connected to socioeconomic status. Studies have found that the lower the socioeconomic status, the more likely a student is to change or drop out of school (Rumberger, 2011). The theory of school effect is important because it brings to light the importance of school dynamics and how students and teachers are impacted when a school dynamic like student mobility occurs. As the theory of school effect does, it is crucial to recognize the humanistic perspective of the teaching profession. Teaching is a profession that requires an interrelation dynamic with colleagues, students, and the community at large. Teachers require making connections, feeling needed, and establishing healthy relationships, which are highlighted in Maslow's theory of needs, as discussed in the next section.

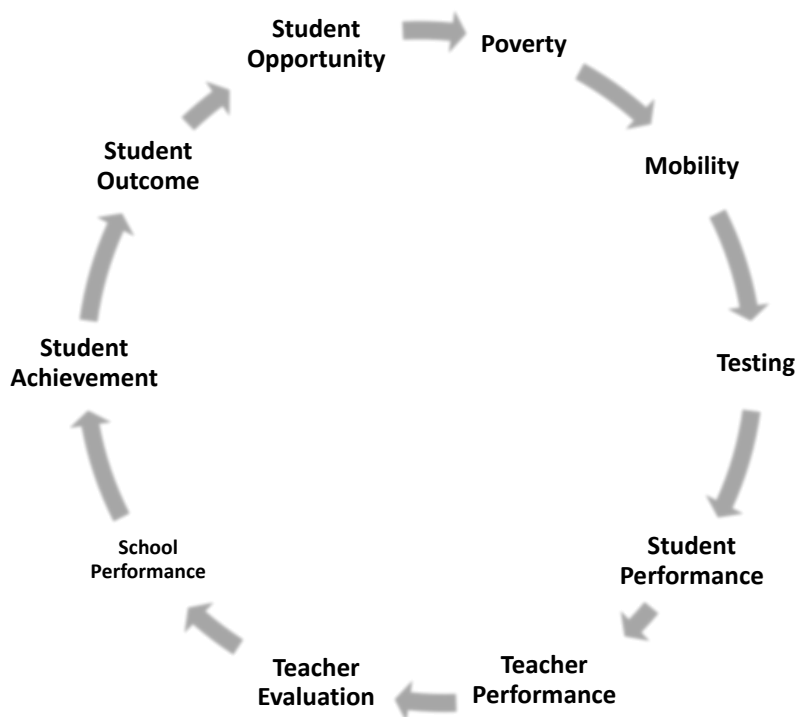
### **Maslow's Theory of Needs**

Abraham Maslow's theory identified the essential needs that inspire human behavior. For example, physiological needs include the basic needs for physical survival—food, shelter, sleep, and air. Safety needs are associated with feeling secure. "Children need a predictable world and prefer consistency, fairness, and a certain amount of routine. When these elements are absent, he or she becomes anxious and insecure" (Goble, 1970, p. 54).

The nature of human beings is to feel a sense of connection to others, to be loved, and to have loving relationships with people; this includes trusting people. Maslow referred to the human need for trust and the desire to be loved and belonging, which also includes a need for confidence and acknowledgment, acceptance, attention, and appreciation from others. Self-actualization needs include the psychological need for growth, development, and utilization of potential (Goble, 1970). Mobile students' needs are often compromised because they rarely are established in a place long enough to build the relationships which Maslow considered necessities. As a result, the achievement of mobile students in school is affected.

Much like their students, teachers who try to build relationships with students also face challenges. According to Maslow, human beings have needs to connect to others, build trusting relationships, and belong to a community. In scenarios like classrooms with high student mobility, students' and teachers' needs are compromised if they are unable to build relationships or feel connected to a school or classroom community. Teachers in urban public schools must deal with students who move in and out of their trusted space. Poverty impacts health-related issues that affect home, family, and community life (Rebell & Wolff, 2008). Paralleling their students as well, teachers in schools with high mobility may also feel a disconnect to a community and building camaraderie may be difficult. Teachers invest their time in caring for their classroom by building relationships with families, in the hope of meeting their own individual needs. Aside from Maslow's theory of needs, other resources informed this inquiry.

Figure 1 explains the cycle of poverty and its impact on schools. Urban public schools with low socioeconomics include schools with highly mobile students. The effect of students who are mobile for reactive reasons perform low academically. Subsequently, teachers are challenged with performing and meeting state mandates like Achieve NJ, which follows teachers' evaluations. These evaluations rate schools, which then attracts a clientele to the community. When the school is rated as low-performing, community investors and urban planning consider the poor families living in those communities and thus develop housing projects that cater to low-income residents. The cycle then impacts the opportunities that students and teachers have in that community. The teachers may even be unaware of the impact that the cycle has, which encourages the school's perpetual performance.



*Figure 1.* The cycle of how poverty impacts students, teachers, and school outcomes

### Summary

In conclusion, poverty, student achievement, classroom/school culture, and teacher performance have many connections with each other. The three theories informing this project are the teacher efficacy theory, the school effect theory, and Maslow's theory of needs. The theories acknowledge the teachers' experiences and voice. One can conclude from the literature that teachers need to be involved in decisions that inform the field of education. The effects of student mobility on classrooms, schools, and human needs should be part of a community that is impacted when students move in and out of schools. Student mobility is one aspect of schools that influences how teachers and students perform, yet minimal focus has been placed on it, which ultimately ensures perpetual school failure.



## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

Building on the theoretical framework and literature review presented in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 elaborates on the methodology used in this study. Through a qualitative research design involving 30 telephone interviews, the study utilized narrative research methods to investigate a social phenomenon. The use of a narrative study provides the ability to investigate the lived experiences of practicing teachers who have high student mobility. As derived from their personal experiences, their participation can help document how student mobility impacts learning. This chapter describes the sample, the setting, and the methodology for gathering and analyzing the data. Lastly, a discussion of the limitations of this study concludes the chapter.

This research took place in the Spring of 2020, and interviews were conducted throughout a 6-week period with 30 middle school teachers from New Jersey urban public schools. Teachers explored their perspectives by answering in-depth, semi-structured interview questions used to uncover the answer to the fundamental research question: How do individual teachers in an urban public-school district respond to the mobility experience?

This qualitative study was intended to learn about teachers' responses to student mobility in their urban middle school classrooms. It was the researcher's hope that the data will assist policymakers, schools, and school districts in placing attention on the need to listen to teachers and provide resources and programs that will support their work with mobile students. The literature contains research on how the phenomenon of student mobility presents a challenge to education. At the same time, the literature revealed the causes and effects of student mobility and the impact that student mobility has on the school's or district's performance. However, only minimal research has captured the teachers' perspective of how they cope with the mobility phenomenon.

Inductive reasoning was used to analyze the information gathered from all the participants. The intent was not to find data to prove or disprove how teachers responded to student mobility. Instead, it was to learn the teachers' perspective. In addition, teacher efficacy is important because teachers are the closest to student outcomes. The purpose of interviewing teachers was to find out the ways that teachers feel about and respond to mobility, and whether it matters to the teachers, either individually or corporately. Teacher efficacy as well as policies to support teachers and counter academic gaps support the purpose of the research. The average teacher in New Jersey does not experience student mobility that is higher than 5% within one academic year. However, the state's average mobility rate excludes the importance of identifying a high mobility rate (23-29%) in low-income urban areas. For this study, a cohort of teachers was selected and interviewed because they have dealt with the phenomenon of high student mobility.

In conclusion, studying in-depth qualitative interviews allowed for the recognition of recurring patterns/themes that can address questions about how teachers are impacted by the challenge of high student mobility.

### **Methodology of the Study**

Thirty-four middle school teachers from three selected public schools in New Jersey were invited via email to participate the study. The email explained the researcher's intent in conducting this research and asked respondents to reply directly to the researcher should they be interested in participating. To respect the privacy of participants, the identities of the respondents were not made known. All parties willing to participate in the research study received an informed consent form.

Descriptive interview questions were drawn from Spradley (1979). Each teacher was interviewed on how he or she responded to the changes that happened in the classroom because

of mobile students. The study sought to understand whether the mobility rate of students impacted their job as teachers and their responses to student mobility in their classroom.

The interview process required approximately 1 hour at the convenience of the participants. With their permission, the researcher audio-recorded the interviews. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identities. To protect the participants' confidentiality, the researcher electronically stored the audio files as well as the interview transcripts on a USB memory drive and locked it in a secure site. Each interview was assigned a pseudonym (e.g., "Teacher 1 04-10-20"), which was maintained on a separate folder labeled with an interview code. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the teachers' audio with the software Rev. Atlas.ti, which also assisted in data management by processing the digital data stored on a password-protected MacBook, to which the researcher had sole access. Once the transcripts were completed, the researcher analyzed the data and identified the common themes that emerged. Utilizing Litchman's (2012) six-step process, "Three C's of Data Analysis," the compartmentalized data provided meaningful concepts. The six steps are as follows:

Step 1: Initial coding. Going from responses to summary ideas of the responses

Step 2: Revisiting initial coding

Step 3: Developing an initial list of categories

Step 4: Modifying the initial list based on additional rereading

Step 5: Revisiting your categories and subcategories

Step 6: Moving from categories to concepts

The researcher also maintained a journal to record topics for further discussion.

All of the information, including any copies of transcripts that resided in system backups or storage media, will be deleted once the research has been completed and the dissertation

deposited. All transcribed documents will be shredded using a crosscutter shredder, and the USB storage will be destroyed, and all audiotapes deleted.

### **Sample Selection**

Staff recruitment was conducted after IRB approval from Seton Hall University and the district of this research was granted in April of 2020, followed by a selection of the teacher sample for the study. The overall criteria for sample selection included teachers in Grades 5-8 who indicated a willingness to participate in the study, as well as available teachers in the selected school district who had at least 1 year of experience working with middle school students. The participation of the teachers was voluntary, and they provided written and verbal consent prior to participation by signing the consent form. Initially, the teachers were identified by their principals as teachers who taught in middle schools. The invitation to participation was offered exclusively to middle school teachers.

Middle school teachers were selected to establish a population of teachers who received the highest student mobility. The selection criteria of the teachers were based on an average school mobility rate of 23%-29% or higher. Middle school teachers teach different classes, resulting in more students. More students increase the potential of more students entering or leaving the classroom throughout the year. Teachers in middle school are departmentalized and experience more mobility than elementary school teachers who are self-contained in Grades Kindergarten through 5. Middle school teachers service Grades 5-8 departmentalized classrooms. In those classrooms, two or more teachers specialize in certain subjects for that grade, and students switch classes to receive instruction in all required subjects (Gibb & Matala, 1962; McGrath & Rust, 2002; Wood, 1959). Teachers may teach several subjects, hence seeing more than one class, and thus experience higher mobility.

The teachers considered for the study represented diverse profiles and levels of experience in the district. Although 34 teachers received an email, 31 teachers responded to participate; one teacher stated that she no longer wanted to be in the study because she was going on maternity leave. Thus, 30 teachers committed to participate in the study. The teachers taught General Education (18), Bilingual Education (5), and Special Education (7). In order to ensure confidentiality, each teacher was assigned a number in place of their name, e.g., Teacher 1, 04-10-20, Teacher 2, 04-11-20, and so on. The number represents the order of the interview. As teacher interviews were scheduled, interviews were also being simultaneously conducted; they were not consecutively interviewed by school location. Convenience in being interviewed was an important consideration.

### **Sample Description**

#### **District and School Background**

The urban public-school district in this study has the following student demographics: 80% of the students are in traditional public education and 20% of the schools are considered charter schools (NJDOE, 2020). Under President Obama's administration and the guidance of Secretary of State Arnie Duncan, the Board of Education received a School Improvement Grant, designating Turnaround schools—a commonality shared by all three schools participating in this study. As a result, all three schools also changed their leadership. Table 3 reveals those changes.

The district has 58 elementary/middle schools, 14 high schools, and seven specialized schools—five early childhood centers and two new schools serving the K-2 population and adding a grade every year. The district has a student mobility range of 1.4% to 32.60%.

Table 2. *Principals at Research Schools from 2015-20*

School	SY 2015- 2016	SY 2016- 2017	SY 2017- 2018	SY 2018- 2019	SY 2019- 2020
38	G.P.	G.P.	G.P.	P.N.	P.N.
44	M.G.	M.G.	D.K.	D.K.	M.H.
48	M.J.	M.J.	M.J.	M.J.	M.H.

Source: District Website

The initials in Table 3 are used as pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of the school leaders. Table 3 documents the changes in school leadership. All of the schools were given a number from 1-60 to maintain their anonymity. Schools 38 and 48 had two different school leaders in 5 years, while School 44 had three different school leaders in 5 years. It is important to show this finding as it may have had impact on the teachers' perspectives. Principal as well as teacher mobility is associated with student mobility.

The schools from this research were all elementary schools that included middle schools (starting in Grade 5). The information below documents the total enrollment of students categorized by the status of special education students and bilingual students. All three schools service the special education and bilingual student population. The data revealed that over the years, special education students and bilingual students have increased (see Tables 4, 5, and 6 for school demographics, including special education and bilingual students, as well as total enrollment for 2016-20).

Table 3. *School 38 Demographics Including Special Education, Bilingual, and Total Enrollment from 2016-20*

	SpEd					Bilingual/ELL					Total Enrollment				
Grade	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	140	146	165	167	197	58	69	53	56	78	718	753	792	762	772
PreK3		5	4	1	6							30	14	13	30
PreK4	11	1	8	12	11						24	5	25	22	36
K		3	3	6	10	4				6	45	49	42	41	41
1	5		4	7	8		3	1			50	48	49	38	46
2	11	8	1	2	7	4	2	1			56	47	46	50	38
3	8	15	10	5	9	3	7	1	1		55	63	49	43	48
4	7	14	16	15	7	3	4	3	1	3	52	60	68	60	48
5	26	28	39	33	19	7	12	13	20		93	120	158	131	59
6	23	29	29	34	31	10	10	7	13	15	110	99	115	149	134
7	22	23	27	28	35	8	18	7	13	26	114	120	99	119	151
8	27	20	24	24	33	19	13	20	8	24	119	112	127	96	141

Source: PowerSchool Database

School 38 is located in the same ward of the city as the other schools in this research. It has a total population of 772 students, with a total number of 197 special education and 78 English Language Learners (ELLs). In 2014, the school was designated as a turnaround school; as usual, a turnaround school is designated by the NJDOE Chapter 33 School Turnaround and Improvement model, and such schools were assigned a new principal leader who had the autonomy to replace up to 50% of the teaching staff. The data revealed that the special education student population has increased by 41% and the bilingual student population has increased by 34% from 2016-2020; the total student enrollment has increased by 8%.

Table 4. *School 44 Demographics Including Special Education, Bilingual, and Total Enrollment from 2016-20*

	SpEd					Bilingual/ELL					Total Enrollment				
Grade	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	79	78	130	147	153	156	158	213	202	260	816	736	742	736	779
K	2	14		2	2	13	7	29	5	17	66	59	53	43	52
1	7	2	11	4	8	21	21	23	28	19	93	80	62	59	57
2	5	7	7	10	13	17	25	23	25	31	82	84	81	59	79
3	9	5	10	7	21	25	23	24	19	32	99	83	84	81	81
4	8	4	7	15	10	9	19	27	26	27	93	80	80	91	88
5	8	9	18	16	25	20	10	35	27	31	96	97	102	91	104
6	8	7	30	21	21	10	20	21	36	36	84	75	110	112	94
7	17	12	35	33	20	20	13	15	18	38	105	79	96	103	108
8	15	18	12	39	33	21	20	16	18	29	98	99	74	97	116

Source: PowerSchool Database

School 44 is located in the same ward of the city. It has a total population of 779 students, with a total number of 153 special education and 260 ELLs. In 2014, the school was designated a turnaround school; in other words, it was designated as such by the NJDOE Chapter 33 School Turnaround and Improvement model, and the school was assigned a new principal leader who had the autonomy to replace up to 50% of the teaching staff. The data also revealed that special education student enrollment and bilingual student enrollment have increased or dropped, which demonstrates mobility by those particular subgroups of students. For example, in School 44, from 2016-20, the school bilingual student population increased by 67% and the number of special education student population increased by 52%. The numbers of total student enrollment have decreased by an average of 37 students.



Table 5. *School 48 Demographics Including Special Education, Bilingual, and Total Enrollment from 2016-20*

	SpEd					Bilingual/ELL					Total Enrollment				
Grade	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	191	199	133	106	143	151	159	124	124	128	935	988	907	848	834
PreK3		2	1	2	2							30	31	34	37
PreK4			1	2	6						31	28	41	38	51
K	2	2		3	8	22	17	8		4	80	78	55	58	58
1	8	4	8	2	3	14	22	14	12	6	78	83	85	70	63
2	7	7	9	11	14	20	13	24	17	20	71	77	87	89	75
3	11	8	12	12	13	18	16	10	25	17	78	76	76	86	84
4	13	17	13	9	17	22	16	9	11	25	88	82	77	75	85
5	46	30	19	17	11	18	19	10	12	13	136	123	94	90	84
6	33	51	11	18	26	11	22	18	12	11	129	139	110	95	94
7	40	46	15	13	26	14	12	16	13	15	128	141	109	100	99
8	31	32	44	17	17	12	22	15	22	17	116	131	142	113	104

Source: PowerSchool Database

School 48 is located in the same ward of the city. It has a total population of 834 students, with a total number of 143 special education and 128 ELLs. In 2014, the school was designated a turnaround school; it was designated by the NJDOE Chapter 33 School Turnaround and Improvement model and assigned a new principal leader who had the autonomy to replace up to 50% of the teaching staff. From 2016 to 2020, the total number of Special Education has decreased by 25% and the Bilingual Student population has decreased by 15%. In five academic years, School 48 has decrease enrollment by 100 students.

All three schools are schools were designated a “turnaround school,” which meant that they all had ongoing changes from the transitions of building principals, teachers, and ultimately students. The data revealed that in all three schools, the annual student enrollment fluctuated, and it has not been stable in all three categories—General Education, Special Education, and Bilingual/English Language Learners. All three schools also have more middle school students than in the primary grades.

### **Instrumentation**

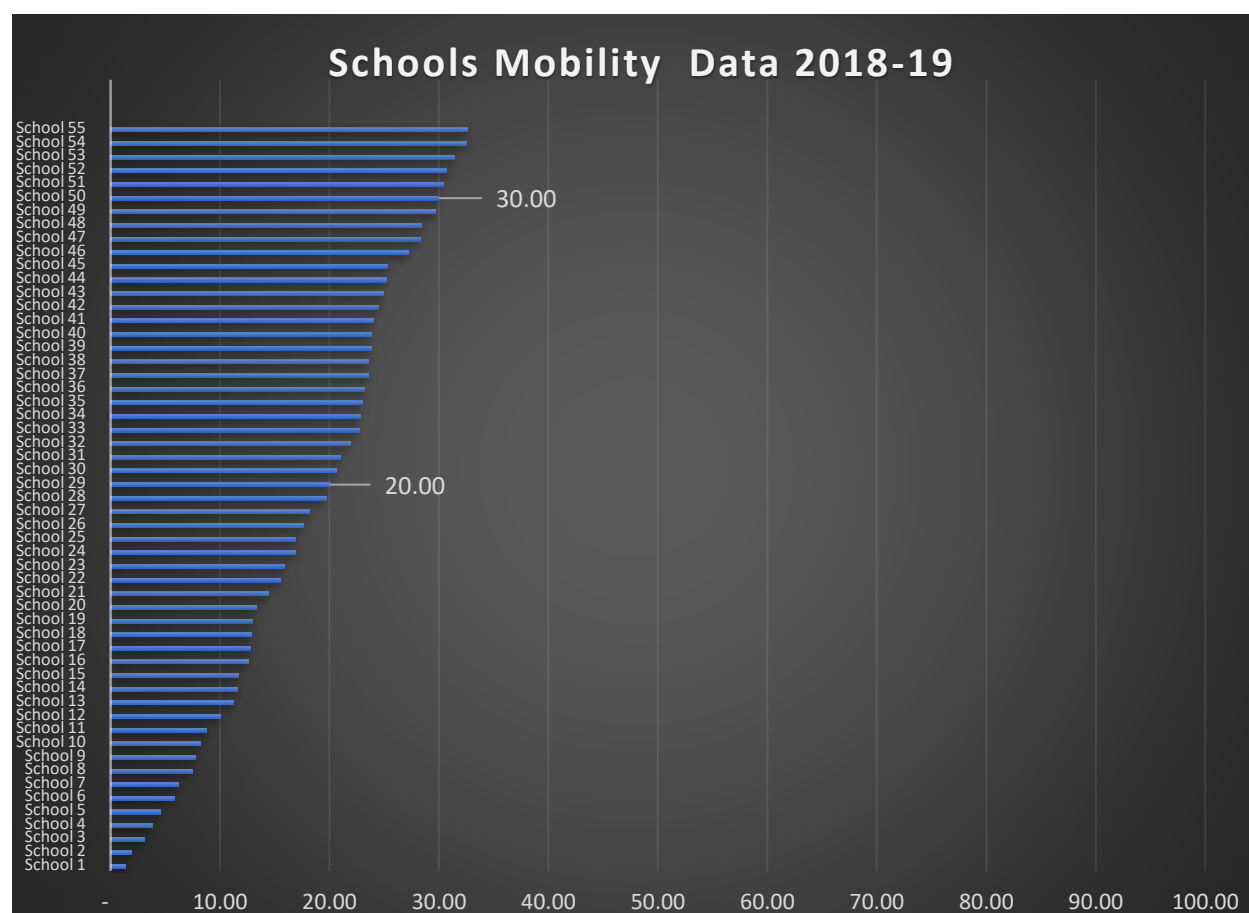
In order to complete this research, the researcher utilized two instruments: one for teachers (interview protocol) and one for school data. The interview protocol included an email to the principals of the participating schools and the written consent of the participants. The interview questions probed for information about the teachers, their experiences as teachers, their professional development, the amount of time they have been teaching, and the content area subjects they taught. It also included questions about the support they felt they received from their school and the professional development department as it pertains to dealing with student mobility and school culture. Finally, the questions explored the impact that student mobility has had on the teachers' instructional practices. See Appendix A for interview protocol.

The second instrument was a comparison done by taking the total number of students enrolled and registered from the district's information systems PowerSchool and Salesforce. Then the middle school students' performance on the NJSLA 2018-2019 was utilized to analyze how middle school students who were in highly mobile schools compared to middle school students in stable schools. The comparison informed the research by indicating how teachers in a highly mobile school may have additional pressures from high-stakes testing.

Figure 2 outlines the school number and the school's mobility percentage. Student mobility ranged from 0 to 100% mobility, with 31% being the highest. The schools sampled for this research were School 38 (9 participants), School 44 (11 participants), and School 48 (10 participants). Some research on student mobility has focused on the causes and effects of student mobility. For example, "Several student-related factors have also been identified in these studies. Low school performance (GPA), behavior problems, absenteeism, and low educational expectations all predicted school changes during high school after controlling for family factors" (Lee & Burkam, 1992; Rumberger). While student mobility research includes its impact on

student achievement, mobility also has an impact on teachers, but only minimal research is available on that aspect. The data presented earlier in Table 2 revealed that teachers are responsible for teaching more students than those enrolled in their class. They are responsible for teaching students who remain in the class, new students who enter the class, as well as students who leave the class.

*Figure 2. School's mobility data 2018-19*



Source: District Salesforce School Data

Schools that are considered higher-performing within an urban public school have less mobility than lower-performing urban public schools. Performance on the NJSLA determines the performance of the school, which is calculated by how many students were able to meet or exceed the benchmark on the NJSLA performance.

Table 6 represents the students who were most mobile impacted the school's state performance on the NJSLA state exam. Those results are shown in Figure 3, where the 2018-2019 academic year school mobility rate is presented in comparison to the overall performance of students in the English Language Arts and Math performance on the NJSLA.

Table 6. *PowerSchool Data on Research Schools' Student Enrollment 2018-19*

Schools	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Total Students Enrolled	% of Student Mobility	Total Students + Teacher(s)	Annual Total Students
38	154	127	194	381	23.65	381+ (90)	471
44	105	112	203	312	25.2	312+ (79)	391
48	99	107	268	319	28.4	319+ (91)	410

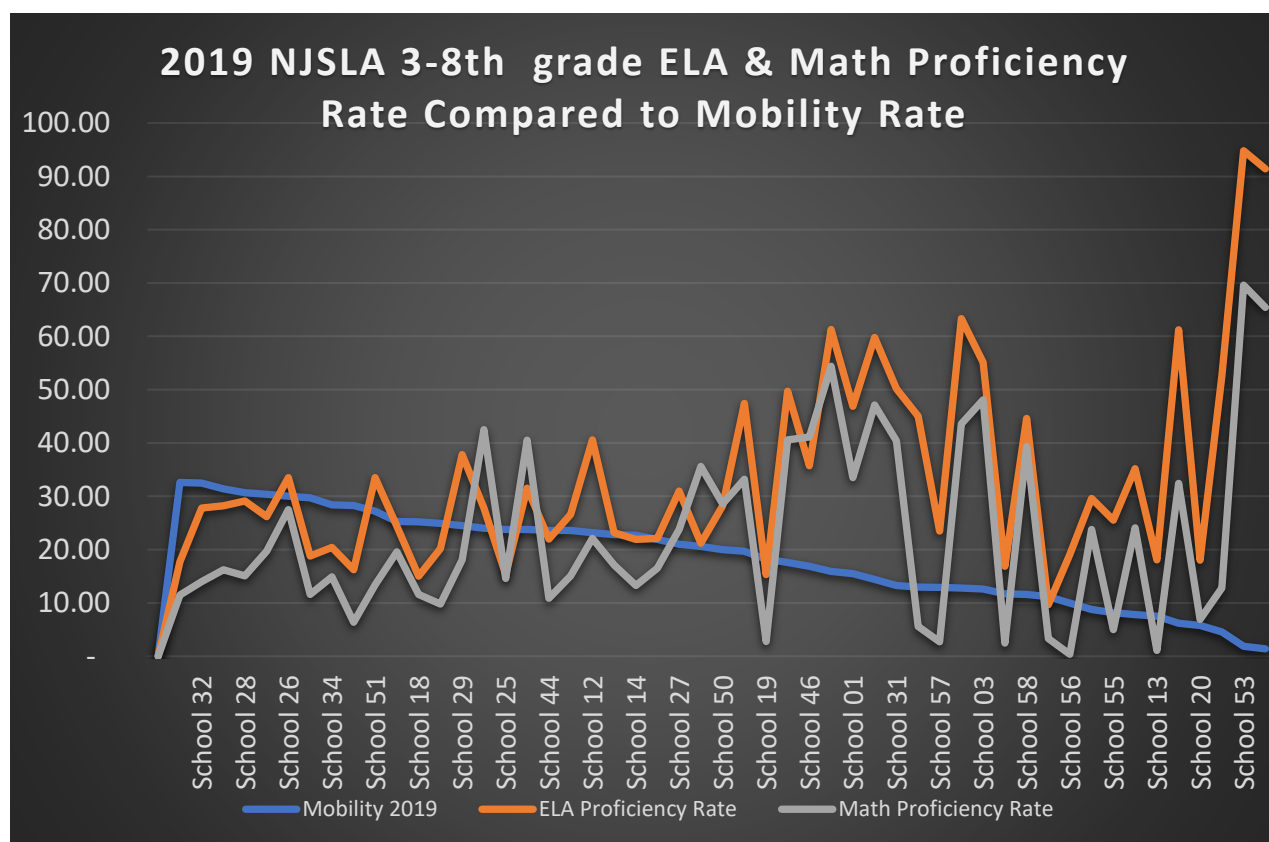


Figure 3. 2019 NJSLA Grades 3-8 ELA and Math proficiency rate compared to mobility rate

Source: NJ DOE New Jersey Statewide Assessment Reports

<https://www.nj.gov/education/schools/achievement/19/njsla/spring/index.htm>

After researching the schools in the district of this study, the researcher found that schools with higher-performing students had less mobility than schools with lower-performing students. Moves for other reasons such as home foreclosure, housing needs, divorce, and lack of employment were described in Ream's (2003) definition of reactive mobility and in Swanson and Schneider's (1999) definition of residential mobility, all of which can negatively impact the child. The data also confirmed that minorities and low socioeconomic families have a high mobility rate, with families tending to move the most within small areas (Schafft & Prins, 2009). Student mobility impacts many aspects of school life: the culture in the classroom and the school, teacher curriculum implementation, student achievement, teacher efficacy, and teacher's personal and professional development. Given the impact that mobility has on teachers, a performance gap has developed. Consequently, light has to be shed specifically on the teachers' perspective in order to affect both the teaching profession and student academic experience.

### **Data Collection**

The data collected included school mobility, school history, and school demographics. The researcher collected several forms of data to inform this study: personal interviews, the PowerSchool student information system, the Salesforce Data for 2018-19, and the 2018-19 NJSLA results. The Salesforce database stores the district's student enrollment data for the 2018-19 academic year for the three schools of this study. PowerSchool is the district's database system that reports student information for all students in Grades 6-8, including general education, special education, and English Language Learners in all three selected schools.

In addition to collecting data on student performance, the research conducted teacher interviews. The interviews were completed over the phone at the time arranged as most

convenient to each participant. During the interviews, the researcher asked clarifying questions as needed but did not interrupt the participant. The researcher was the only interviewer conducting this research. To conduct the data analysis, the researcher uploaded literary articles related to the responses into the Atlas ti software program. Information gathered from interviews was merged into broader themes as the researcher moved from the specific to the general. These themes have the potential to inform the field of education and the district of the study. In an effort to ensure that the data were triangulated, the researcher also compartmentalized some of the codes from the articles that were uploaded. In addition, the researcher had to reflect on the meaning of the participants' responses after the research was conducted. Careful transcriptions of the interviews assured the validity and authenticity of this case study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

In an effort to ensure the reliability and validity of this research, the researcher conducted two mock interviews. These interview questions were organized to extrapolate the teachers' responses about how they deal with student mobility. The mock interviews helped shape the interview questions and organized the time and structure for transcribing the information from the participants. Two teacher colleagues participated in the mock interviews to provide critique on the types of questions prior to the researcher conducting the actual teacher interviews. Questions were revised with the colleagues' input so that the types of questions directly linked back to the research questions. This practice allowed for revisions of the interview protocol, including the teacher's written permission.

Interview questions were separated into three parts. The first section identified how student mobility impacts the teacher personally and as a practitioner. The second section examined the impact of student mobility on teachers' emotions, management, and adjustments to student mobility. The third section addressed the ways teachers responded to student mobility in

their classroom. Teachers were asked to sign the consent forms and scan them back to the researcher's email address.

### **Data Analysis Plan and Coding Scheme**

Before the interviews, the researcher conducted a thorough analysis of the research school's data. The findings from the interviews were categorized according to commonalities. After the audio recordings were collected and transcribed, the researcher conducted data analysis to extrapolate and tally a summary of the responses and transfer them into codes. For example, when one of the teachers stated, "I just focus on how the class dynamic is going to change when the new kid comes in," the code created was "class dynamic." After the participants' responses were coded, over 200 gist words and phrases became categories. The Atlas ti program tallied the codes and presented them in number order from least to greatest. The top five categories were:

1. Classroom dynamics (208)
2. Student transfers (192)
3. Teachers' feelings (120)
4. Frustrations (106)
5. Staff development (102)

After that initial coding process, the five most common themes/concepts were identified:

1. Classroom Dynamic (Classroom Dynamics, Student Transfers)
2. Teachers' Feelings/Morale (Teachers' Feelings, Frustrations)
3. Administrative Support (Staff Development, Professional Training)
4. School and District Policies
5. School Operations

### **Ethical Considerations**

The Seton Hall University Institution Review Board (IRB) includes an extensive process for approval to conduct research with human subjects. The process includes an application that needed to be submitted for approval by the research district, along with a proposal defense qualifying the study before the two IRBs at the school district and Seton Hall. The IRBs require a thorough and clear explanation of the intent of the study and the methodology ensuring that human subjects are protected. In alignment with IRB requirements, all participants were informed that the researcher would assign pseudonyms to ensure their confidentiality. No participant encountered any potential risks linked to this study.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 described the methodology for this research, including the sample selected and a rationale for selecting the schools. While state and national data on student mobility may have limitations, this study is focused on the teachers' perceptions, so the limitations of the data are marginally relevant to what this research expects to find. The intention was to focus on middle school teachers and schools with high mobility specifically. In addition, this chapter described instrumentation and data collection and analysis procedures to demonstrate correlations between high mobility and low student achievement, as evidenced by the students' performance on the 2019 NJSLA assessment. The next chapter presents the product of the analytical process and responses to the study's research questions.



## Chapter 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

The problem in this study emerged from the absence of the perspective of teachers who deal with high student mobility in urban public middle schools. Their perspective is usually not included when determining what support systems, they need to respond to high student mobility. In addition, high student mobility adds pressure to teachers because their evaluations are influenced by their students' achievement. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore how teachers in urban public middle schools understand and respond to student mobility. The timeframe included student mobility within a single academic year, 2018-19. This study sought to provide research-based evidence related to the teachers' perspective of student mobility. Since teachers cannot control who enters or exits their classrooms, it was important to understand how student mobility impacts teachers' emotions, their classroom management, and what they might recommend for policy and practice. The interview data are organized by teachers' responses on how student mobility impacts a teacher, both personally and as a practitioner.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

Primary Question: How do individual teachers in an urban public-school district respond to student mobility in the classroom? Specifically, what was the teachers' experience with student mobility in the 2018-19 academic year?

Sub-questions:

- What is the teachers' perspective of student mobility?
- In what ways does student mobility impact teachers?
- How do teachers perceive and adjust to student mobility?

- What practices or policy recommendations do teachers have for schools that have high student mobility in urban areas?

### Characteristics of the Teacher Sample

This section describes the sample of teachers who participated in this research. Their characteristics provide a deeper understanding of the teachers' practices and the contextual background, which impacted their performance as middle school teachers in urban public schools. The teachers in the research included general, special education, and bilingual teachers ( $n = 30$ ) who responded to the interviews. All three schools had a total of 34 teachers who were invited by the researcher. The teachers varied widely in teaching experience and tenure at the three participating schools.

Table 7 explains the teachers' total number of years teaching and content area. The composition of the groups included 10/30 (33.3%) of the teachers who taught for 5 years or less and 20/30 (66.7%) of the teachers who taught for 6 years or more; only 5/30 (16.7%) of the teachers have been at their current school for their entire career. The data also revealed that 11/30 (36.7%) of the teachers taught English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies; 4/30 (13.3%) taught Bilingual classes; 9/30 (30%) taught Math and Science; and 6/30 (20%) taught Special Education.

Table 7. *Total Number of Years Teaching and Content Area*

Number of Years Teaching	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	10	33.3
More than 5 years	20	66.7
Content Area		
ELA and Social Studies	11	36.7
Bilingual	4	13.3
Math and Science	9	30.0
Special Education	6	20.0

*Note:* n = 30

After analyzing the sample of teachers who participated in this study, the researcher found many interesting discoveries about their longevity. Table 8 describes the teacher sample. Only 3/9 (33%) of the Math and Science teachers have been at their schools throughout their entire tenure; 6/9 (66%) teachers have taught Math and Science in other schools. Eleven of 11 (100%) of the ELA teachers had experience teaching at other schools. Bilingual teachers were the most stable in the schools, as evidenced by how long they have been at the school compared to their colleagues. All of the Special Education teachers (6/6, 100%) experienced more mobility. Twenty-four out of the 30 (80%) teachers interviewed felt that their classrooms were highly mobile meaning that in 1 year, they saw an average of 36 students, not the 25-28 who were listed on their classroom roster. Teachers expressed how academic difficulties can face highly mobile students. Table 8 indicates total years of teaching and subject taught under the teacher's license.

As previously stated in Chapter 3, Atlas.ti was used to organize the research after the transcription of the interviews. For example, when one of the teachers stated, "The focus on how the class dynamic is going to change when the new kid comes in," the code the researcher created was "class dynamic." The codes were based on the key words or concepts that related to the research questions. After the participants' responses were coded, over 200 gist words and phrases became categories. Atlas.ti tallied the codes and presented them in number order from least to greatest. The top five categories were:

1. Classroom dynamics (208)
2. Teacher Feelings (192)
3. Staff Support (120)
4. Policies (106)
5. Operations (102)

Table 8. *Teacher Sample Description*

Teacher #	2018-19 Class	Total Years of Teaching	Years at School 2019-20	Subject Taught 2018-19
1	3rd	14 years	1 year	ELA/SS
2	3rd/4th	22 years	20 years	Bilingual S/C
3	4th	7 years	3 years	ELA/SS
4	5th	11 years	4 years	ELA/SS
5	5th	14 years	2 years	ELA/SS
6	5th	14 years	6 years	Bilingual S/C
7	5th	17 years	2 years	ELA/SS
8	5th	11 years	6 years	Math/Science
9	5th	7 years	5 years	Math/Science
10	5th/6th	21 years	21 years	Special Education
11	6th	5 years	4 years	Math/Science
12	6th	15+ years	6 years	Special Education
13	6th	5 years	3 years	ELA/SS
14	6th	15 years	2 years	ELA/SS
15	6th/7th	15+ years	5 years	Bilingual S/C
16	6th-8th	9 years	4 years	Special Education
17	6th-8th	28 years	4 years	Special Education
18	7th	15+ years	2 years	ELA/SS
19	7th	15+ years	4 years	ELA/SS
20	7th	15+ years	2 years	Special Education
21	7th	3 years	2 years	Math/Science
22	7th	6 years	2 years	Math/Science
23	7th	4 year	4 years	Math/Science
24	8th	5 years	5 years	Math/Science
25	8th	4 years	4 years	Bilingual S/C
26	8th	15+ years	3 years	Special Education
27	8th	5 years	5 years	Math/Science
28	8th	4 years	2 years	Math/Science
29	8th	4 years	2 years	ELA/SS
30	8th	4 years	2 years	ELA/SS

After that initial coding process, the five most common themes/concepts were identified:

1. Classroom Dynamic (Classroom Dynamics, Student Transfers)
2. Teachers' Feelings/Morale (Teachers' Feelings, Frustrations)
3. Administrative Support (Staff Development, Professional Training)
4. School and District Policies
5. School Operations

In this chapter, several themes which emerged from the 30 interviews are identified and discussed in more detail. The themes are first supported by the participants' statements and conclude with an examination of how the themes and findings illuminate the research questions. A summary highlights the results from the themes, which then will inform the discussion of Chapter 5.

### **Themes**

Several themes emerged in this study as follows:

1. Teachers revealed the impact that student mobility has on classroom management, and the interruptions that cause a misalignment in the lesson and unit plans.
2. Teachers expressed their emotional experience and feelings of frustration and anxiety. They expressed strong emotions about their practices being interrupted by constant student mobility during their lessons and units of study. Working conditions created a feeling of perpetual failure.
3. The teachers did not receive professional development in the area of classroom culture as it pertains to student mobility and felt insecure about addressing when students leave or enter their classroom.
4. The elephant in the room was student mobility, which was not being discussed either among teachers or with school leadership. The teachers felt their voices should be

included in school operation and strategic planning decisions involving students who are highly mobile.

5. There was an interaction between highly mobile students and highly mobile school leaders and teachers; that is, both components are “in motion” concurrently.
6. Different cohorts of teachers had different experiences with student mobility.
7. The teachers were unfamiliar with school, district, and state policies pertaining to student mobility, transfer, registration, enrollment, or student attendance, and how those policies impact schools.

**Theme 1. Teachers revealed the impact that student mobility has on classroom management, and the interruptions that cause a misalignment in the lesson and unit plans. The findings revealed that teachers expect mobile students to impact the classroom negatively.**

All 30 teachers expressed concern about their work performance and students’ academic progress. They felt their lessons and units of study were impacted from constant student mobility. For example, several teachers commented, a Grade 7 teacher stated:

It’s hard. Last year only 34% of my students passed. This year with COVID-19, we will not be tested but truthfully, I can’t tell you that many more than 34% of my students were going to pass. Before COVID, this year alone I had four new students and three who left me, and we left in March. My groups were all over the place. (Grade 7 ELA/SS teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Another teacher stated:

Managing my class is hard. It’s middle school and I teach Math and Science. The kids already have a hard time. This one is having a problem with that one. The students have their own culture and it takes time to establish a culture. I usually start the year very strong and stern. By the time they return from Winter Break, I have to do reset all over again, not only because of the winter break but because of all of the students that left or are new. In January I had a few students who joined my class. I have to manage the lessons, the students, the afterschool program. It’s a lot. (Grade 6 Math/Science teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The teachers felt a sense of desperation and being unsuccessful because of the impact on student learning and believe they will be unable to accomplish higher success. Teachers did not expect for the circumstances to improve for several reasons, which heightened their emotional state of frustration. Here, is Grade 6 Math Teacher's viewpoint on the impact that student mobility has on the classroom:

I know things are always changing. It's just frustrating. We are changing so much all the time. We have the assessments that change all the time. We have the curriculum that changes all the time. Our leadership changes all the time then our students change all their time. How are we supposed to be successful? We are masters at change. I remember growing up, it was not like this. I had the same principal and the same teachers forever. I can't see myself being great at my job. While everything is changing, the student mobility problem will remain the same. (Grade 6 Math Teacher, 2020, April 10, Personal interview)

Twenty-one of the 30 teachers expressed the difficulty of being in a position where they know that the dynamics impacting student learning and teacher achievement will remain. Several teachers expressed themselves as follows:

The impact that student mobility has on my classroom will remain. It's not like students moving in and out of our neighborhoods will change. Our families are poor, and they are moving because they are looking for a better home situation, I get it. The truth is that nothing has been done about it but, yet my classroom has to manage every time a student comes in or out. (Special Education Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Another teacher shared:

I say, if no one has ever addressed student mobility and its impact on student learning, how would we think that things will change. (Bilingual Teacher, 6 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The teachers' experiences with student mobility led to the expression of the challenges they face from having to manage their classroom culture several times throughout the year because of high student mobility. The teachers expressed their expectations that the student mobility dynamic will remain the same.

**Theme 2. Teachers expressed their emotional experience and feelings of frustration and anxiety. They expressed strong emotions about their practices being interrupted by**

**constant student mobility during their lessons and units of study. Working conditions created a feeling of perpetual failure.**

The teachers expressed that they felt frustrated and anxious and believed their progress was difficult due to classroom disruptions. A Grade 6 ELA /SS teacher echoed the sentiments of 18 of the 30 teachers who shared their feelings of frustration when a student would enter or leave their classroom in the middle of the academic year. The other 12 of the 30 teachers expressed more resilience when dealing with the changes in their classroom and school due to student mobility. While they recognized that they had to provide students with lessons, they did not realize how they had preconceived notions about student mobility and the students who were entering their classroom mid-year. Some of these notions revealed that teachers felt frustrated and anxious. Teachers commented on the impact that new students have on their practice. The Grade 7 Math teacher shared her anxiety:

In one case, a student may come to my sixth-grade math class in January. He already learned the unit that I will be covering, ratio, and percentages and then for him it will be a review. However, he was not present for the previous unit on number sense, which will then create a learning gap. How am I supposed to manage that, now, multiply that by five kids in one year? (Grade 6 Math Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Teachers expected mobile students to impact the classroom negatively by interrupting their lessons, disrupting student culture, expending their instructional time, and influencing student ability grouping. Teachers expressed that when a new student enters their classroom, they are responsible for revisiting the classroom norms and reviewing classroom expectations. If the student who enter requires more attention, it may impact other students' learning. On one occasion, a Grade 7 Special Ed teacher responded as follows:

It's frustrating when a new student comes. They can throw the entire class off. I've had students who come in the middle of the year and come in as a safety transfer from another school. They come in with an incident that the entire middle school knows about, so the kids are distracted with middle school gossip and my entire classroom has to constantly be re-engaged. (Grade 7 Special Education Teacher, 2 April 2020, Personal Interview)



Twenty-one of the 30 teachers in schools with a high mobile population of students stressed that the constant movement of these students required them to spend more time on tasks not related to instruction, classroom management, and classroom culture, leaving very little to no time for the teacher to identify gaps in curriculum knowledge. Mobile students may miss the teaching of key concepts and skills that are needed later in their educational careers. Furthermore, curriculum pacing differs between schools with high mobility and low mobility. The teachers confirmed the finding from Chapter 3 in Figure 3. 2019 NJSLA Grades 3-8 ELA and Math proficiency rate compared to mobility rate. The findings revealed that the schools with a higher student mobility rate performed lower than schools with a lesser student mobility rate.

The teachers believed that it was difficult to sustain a classroom culture that promotes high student achievement. The results revealed that teachers did not express optimism or positive effect when students enter or leave their class in the middle of the year. One Grade 7 Math teacher said:

I get angry with it. I see kids that are not getting what they need to get, and I just have to keep on going. I know one particular kid; he has been in six different schools and they are in my seventh grade. I feel like I constantly have to help him speed up. Sometimes I wonder if I am doing that for his sake or for mine, but I don't feel effective at times.  
(Grade 7 Math Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

While the teachers responded to student mobility with frustration, anxiety, and anger, they internalized those emotions without actively addressing them. When the researcher asked, "How do you handle the frustration?" one teacher representing a group of 16 teachers responded:

It's funny, I know it's frustrating for all of us, but I guess that we deal with it by putting it away and keep it moving. We have to keep going. I guess we never really deal with it.  
(Grade 7 Math Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

While some teachers expressed resilience and expectation for change, the other 18 teachers expressed feeling other emotions. These feelings of frustration, anxiety, and nervousness were common emotions, as evidenced by 12 teachers using the words "nervous," "thrown off," and "a

little anxiety.” When teachers were asked to elaborate, a General Education teacher captured the sample’s collective response:

Believe it or not, it’s nerve-wrecking, you have to hold it together. The students can’t see teachers sweat, but I get nervous because I don’t know how this new student is going to impact my class, whether they are going to challenge me, whether they are going to start influencing the other students. Especially if they transfer in mid-year. January is the worst month. We have many students who leave and many new students that join our class. (General Education Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The teachers experienced frustration, anger, and lack of job satisfaction because they felt they did not have the support or tools to deal with high student mobility. A Special Education teacher stated:

We have students coming in and out of the classroom all year long. We get them from other classrooms and other schools because students are classified with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) all throughout the year. We have higher mobility than anyone else. (Grade 6 Special Education Teacher, 2 April 2020, Personal Interview)

While the literature has highlighted and exposed the impact of high mobility, very few supports, or accommodations have been made for teachers who are impacted by highly mobile students. Twenty-seven of the 30 teachers feel that their opportunity to be successful practitioners is minimized by having an organization that does not promote changes for dealing with student mobility. In short, teachers’ self-efficacy was compromised. One teacher said, “It’s what we deal with, no matter what, we just come to work give it all we have, it doesn’t matter how we feel. Even if we feel bad.”

The teachers also mentioned that while they dealt with the high demands of teaching, “especially middle school,” they did not have a system to address their emotions deliberately during professional development meetings or professional learning communities. Teachers responded to the questions as an acknowledgement that they did have these feelings which impacted how they felt about their job. A middle school ELA teacher shared:

The truth is that while I know my colleagues and I do feel frustrated, every job is frustrating, so I just think of it as this is what comes with teaching. (Grade 7 ELA/SS Teacher, 10 April 2020, Personal Interview)

In conclusion, teachers expressed their emotional experiences while implementing their instructional roles and fulfilling their duties as educators. They shared how their emotions impacted their job satisfaction and expected their circumstances to remain the same.

**Theme 3. The teachers did not receive professional development in the area of classroom culture as it pertains to student mobility and felt insecure about addressing when students leave or enter their classroom.**

All 30 teachers interviewed in this research confirmed that they are not prepared to respond to high student mobility. Although the teachers receive a preparatory period for teacher planning and professional development workshops, the focus of the meetings did not include data analysis on student mobility, strategies for supporting highly mobile classrooms and schools, and strategic plans that specifically focused on student mobility. While teachers were not being prepared to deal with student mobility, the topic of student mobility was also not being addressed. Teachers felt that their progress was difficult because they felt unprepared to deal with changes in classroom dynamics. One of the teachers who shared their professional development training indicated they were not prepared to work with highly mobile classrooms.

The teacher stated:

I graduated from college with a degree in English and certification in Elementary education. I had to complete a practicum in an urban school district. I did mine in Paterson, New Jersey. I don't remember any of classes, or my experience in my practicum or any of the professional development so far that I received in the last three years ever talking about student mobility, so I just don't feel like I know what to do when student enter or leave my class. (Grade 7 ELA/SS Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Bilingual teachers expressed training in bilingual curriculum and assessment without any training on student culture or managing high student mobility. Teachers expressed that their

training was more on high stakes testing and district and state mandates, but it was not focused on the factors that influence student achievement, like high student mobility. Three of the four bilingual teachers reported they had been trained to work with migrant children; however, they were specifically trained in assessment.

My experience with the training which the Bilingual Department provided was strictly on WIDA [acronym for World-class Instructional Design and Assessment; a consortium of states dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable educational opportunities for English language learners; WIDA English language proficiency assessment for students in Grades 1-12 training] and Bilingual Needs Assessment Training (BNAT), but nothing on culture or nothing on how to welcome and merge students into our schools. (Bilingual Teacher, 10 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Another Grade 6 teacher shared about not feeling prepared to deal with the constant student mobility that takes place during the academic year:

You know, I have never had any professional development on school culture that deals with students transferring into my class. It's almost like normal, usually when a student enters my classroom, in the middle of the year, in the middle of a lesson, they simply come in and I have to find somewhere for them to sit. (Grade 6 Teacher, 3 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Teachers consistently expressed that they were unable to control which students they taught. This finding is important because other urban middle schools who select their students through a criteria-based lottery system may be able to control school stability if they present school choice to families. For example, charter schools are able to select students in the urban neighborhoods, which may result in more stable middle schools for the charter schools but more instability in traditional public schools. Further research on comparing how traditional public and non-traditional public-school systems like charter schools may impact teachers who have to deal with high student mobility needs to be conducted.

One middle school ELA teacher pointed out the training they received during the student teaching experience. The teacher was assigned to a high school where he recognized much

student mobility. He stated that although he noticed this mobility, student mobility was not addressed:

I have never been trained to deal with students who transfer in and out, unless you call training being at a school that had high mobility. My student teacher training at an urban high school was interesting, especially because I had to learn about so many students. What I do remember is that I would see the students sporadically, sometimes once in a semester, and then I will not see them again. I would ask their friends and they would respond, “Yeah, he doesn’t go to school anymore.” (ELA Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

All 30 teachers who were interviewed expressed that they had not received any formal training on how to deal with high student mobility. Teachers were apprehensive about addressing changes in classroom culture as it pertained to student mobility.

**Theme 4. The elephant in the room was student mobility, which was not being discussed either among teachers or with school leadership. The teachers felt their voices should be included in school operation and strategic planning decisions involving students who are highly mobile.**

The teachers experienced silence on the topic of student mobility. They could not explain why the student mobility topic was unmentionable in professional development communities or teaching preparation programs. Twenty of the 30 teachers who were interviewed felt their voices should be included in school operation and strategic planning decisions involving students who are highly mobile. One of the 20 teachers stated:

Yes. I believe teachers should always be heard. I am usually the outspoken one, so I guess everyone always expects me to say something. I believe that is the only way we are going to fix anything. We just have to talk about it. This student mobility is an issue and it needs to be addressed. I bet you now that light is shed on it, a lot of people are going to have a lot to say. (Grade 6 Special Education Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The other 10 teachers felt that that the topic of student mobility was not expected to change for the better. For example, one of the 10 teachers who expressed reservation over talking about student mobility stated:

Talking about the student mobility is not going to matter. First of all, they just want to see results. If we were to talk about it, they can't change how families are going to decide whether to move or not. It's a topic that regardless if we bring it up, school leaders will probably think there is nothing we can do about it. (Grade 7 ELA Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

In Chapter 3, the state and district data on student mobility were exposed. To reiterate, the state and district eventually stopped collecting student mobility data. It is important to recognize that the data on student mobility are not prioritized. Perhaps that can also inform why teachers in this study expressed silence on the topic. They did not feel they were supported to deal with student mobility because it was not addressed in professional development spaces and grade-level meetings. A Grade 7 ELA/ SS teacher stated:

We never talk about it. I am surprised that you are even asking these questions. As far as I can remember, and I have been here over fifteen years, I have never talked about student mobility. We don't talk about it during PLCs or grade-level meetings. We just talk about how students perform on the test. (Grade 7 Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

This research study found that minimal attention, if any, is given to student mobility by educational practitioners. The teachers in this research confirmed that the topic was not being discussed by teachers, and they did not feel they had the support they needed to respond to high student mobility. A group of 12 teachers inclusive of Bilingual/ ELL, Special Ed, and General Ed responded by making similar statements:

To be honest, I really don't say much. I don't even know why we don't talk about it among each other. I guess we just expect it. It's one of those things that just is. I never really stopped to ask myself why students transfer in and out. It's not like they have a choice. I guess I don't either. It's not their fault that they keep having to move and I don't think is my fault. I guess there is no point of talking about, if there is really no one to blame. (Grade 8 ELA Teacher, 7 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The teachers in this study experienced silence when discussing student mobility. In addition, they felt detached from their schools. Moreover, the teachers felt reservations about student mobility being discussed in schools; some researchers have pointed out the impact that teachers who experience challenges with minority students have on their practice and their

attachment to their jobs. The teachers felt their voices should be included in school operation and strategic planning decisions involving students who are highly mobile.

Twenty-one of the 30 teachers expressed a desire to address challenges like student mobility and school culture. One Grade 6 teacher said, “Even though I want to. I don’t say anything because I don’t want to complain. If I say something, I don’t want to be Sad Sally and the millennial who can’t handle it.” All of the middle school teachers in this study expected an interruption in classroom culture from high student mobility. High mobility impacts students, yet it is not discussed in meetings nor is it highlighted in district and state reports. High mobility disengages students who are mobile as well as students who are stable, which in turn leads them to dropping out. Another Grade 6 ELA teacher’s perspective revealed:

Imagine how you would feel? You work so hard, you prepare lessons, give it all you have, and finally you see a breakthrough with a student who initially was broken down, and then they leave you. You then find out; they are having a baby and have not been in school. It’s devastating, it’s almost like what’s the point? Why stay in the game?  
(Grade 6 ELA Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Students who move more frequently happen to be Black adolescents and from low-income households. This then impacts the teachers who are unable to select the students they teach by having to respond to more challenges than their colleagues who do not teach under the same student mobility circumstances. Topics like student mobility can inform other topics in education, yet it has not been a popular item for discussion.

**Theme 5. There was an interaction between highly mobile students and highly mobile school leaders and teachers; that is, both components are “in motion” concurrently.**

Student mobility impacted teachers by discouraging their interest in their profession. One impact of high student mobility in schools, according to 18 out of 30 teachers who were interviewed for the present study, was the threat of not being invested in the school or district. They shared a sense of disconnect and remoteness that came from the disengagement of students,

which they believed encouraged high teacher mobility. For example, when asked, “What do you believe a teacher can decide when dealing with high student mobility?” a Grade 8 Math teacher responded:

Many people criticize those Teach for America millennials who come to teach for a few years and then abandon us, but I don’t blame them. Why stay? It used to be that the teaching was a life-time profession. Now teaching is more and more mobile. Students leave, teachers leave, administrators leave, it’s just not the same anymore. (Grade 8 Math Teacher, 3 April 2020. Personal Interview)

In addition, a Grade 7 ELA/SS teacher responded:

I don’t know if I want to teach. There are some days that I am feel like I’m in the right place and there are other days that I question if I want to be here. Teaching is hard, and you can get attached, but I’s rather not. I feel like is best that I just do my job and that’s it. (Grade 7 ELA/SS Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The instability caused by mobility places a risk on the school for sustaining the desired effect of educational initiatives and funding. Because teachers have to deal with student mobility, teacher attrition is causing higher teacher turnover and a disinterest in the teaching profession. The Math teachers expressed the difficulty of maintaining a stable Math team, as evidenced by the high Math teacher turnover, which may be exacerbated by the school culture which includes a high student turnover. One Grade 7 Math teacher expressed frustration at not being able to voice how such dynamics made it more difficult to teach:

It is difficult to adhere to a lesson’s or unit’s scope and sequence of instruction when students enter the class. The first time a student comes in, we have to adjust, but what about when we are constantly revising our lessons because the students enter or leave the classroom? I have to make changes. We are not just talking about all the students that come in and out of my class all year, but let’s talk about the year prior to those students coming to me. The 2017 sixth grade class had two Math teachers who quit and substitute the rest of that year. Then the students show up in my class. We never even spoke about it during PLC meetings. (Grade 7 Math Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The research found a relationship among schools with a high rate of student mobility and a high rate of mobile school leaders and teachers. This critical theme addresses the possibility



that urban public middle schools who have high student mobility also may have high teacher turnaround, which challenge the success of both teachers and schools.

**Theme 6. Different cohorts of teachers had different experiences with student mobility.**

Student mobility impacts teachers in several ways. The findings revealed Bilingual teachers were more stable in their schools than their colleagues; however, they experienced higher student mobility. The middle school Math teachers were the most transient among all the teachers. The findings from the teacher sample (see Table 7, *Teacher Sample Description*) showed that 4 of the 30 teachers taught Bilingual/ELL. One of the teachers has been at the school for over 20 years. The Math teachers in this research represented 9 out of 30 teachers, and of those nine teachers, the one with the longest time teaching has only taught for 6 years. The other 8 teachers have taught Math for a range of 2-5 years.

Further research needs to be conducted to explore the validity of this finding. It is important to recognize the teachers' perspectives on addressing specific student cohorts. Teachers who have high student mobility find many challenges to the achievement and success of their students. The Bilingual teachers in this study expressed higher student mobility than the General Education and Special Education teachers, as evidenced by one teacher's statement:

I assume that the bilingual students are more mobile because they move more frequently than general education and special education students. For example, when the students come to our district, they are placed at schools and then we find out that they are bilingual. They are supposed to complete a Home Language survey for us to determine what Bilingual placement they receive, but first they have to register and then they have to take the assessment. That alone may require for the students to switch classes or even schools. Not every school in the district has a Bilingual/ELL program, which means that the student(s) may have to be transferred again to another class or another school. I am being optimistic and hoping the bilingual student does not fall in the cracks for whatever reason and winds up sitting in the wrong class. (Bilingual Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Bilingual students are almost two times more mobile than their Special Education peers and three times as mobile than their General Education peers. All teachers, and particularly Bilingual teachers, require professional development training on how to prepare for student mobility.

General Education teachers were more mobile themselves, as evidenced by the changes in the middle school organization every year. One teacher expressed that their colleague left teaching because he “couldn’t take it anymore”:

It’s hard to find math teachers, especially in middle school. When we have them, we should do everything, we can to support one another. As a Math teacher myself, I’ve only been in this school a few years. At first, I had a partner and he was very smart. We would plan together and have our students compete each other. He winded up leaving because he could not take the middle school students’ attitude, the constant movement of students. Every time a new student would come in, we have to start all over again. I wish we didn’t have so much chaos. (Grade 7 Math Teacher, 19 April 2020, Personal Interview)

Middle school math teachers in particular acknowledged the highest turnaround, which may be triggered by high student mobility and interruptions in the school culture. For example, there were a total of 12 positions in all three schools in this study. Only 9 Math and Science teachers participated out of the potential 12 because two schools had Math/Science middle school vacancies. One school had one Math and Science middle school vacancy and another school had two Math and Science middle school vacancies. Of all the teachers in this study, one Grade 6 Math teacher commented on the challenge and difficulty that the urban public middle schools have in filling their vacancies:

Teaching middle school is hard. Teaching Math is hard, teaching middle school Math is the hardest. I have seen many Math teachers come and go since I have been here. Establishing a good Math program is difficult, but we first have to start with a team. (Grade 6 Math Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The experience of Special Education teachers with mobile students was different from the experiences of both the General Education and Bilingual teachers. While all of the teachers interviewed felt apprehensive about new students coming in the classroom in the middle of the

year, the Special education teachers felt that it was most challenging because Special Education students need consistency and routine. Special Education students need support to focus and remain engaged in their classes. Teachers have to struggle with providing consistent support because of the interruptions caused by highly mobile students. As one Special Education teacher expressed:

The students are thrown off every time that a new a student comes in; I have to spend days re-focusing them. They are distracted easily and start teasing each other. I have to re-direct them constantly. (Grade 6 Special Ed Teacher, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The Special Education teachers reported higher mobility than the General Education teachers but less mobility than the Bilingual ELL teachers. The teachers have to deal constantly with adjusting their classrooms, which impacts the curriculum they are required to implement. While the teachers struggled to manage all of the demands of the Standards, they are also overwhelmed when they have to deal with constant interruptions from their highly mobile classrooms. Interestingly, the Bilingual/ELL teachers were found to be more stable in the schools than the Special Education and General education teachers; however, in this study, more Bilingual students were mobile than any other cohort.

Of the four Bilingual teachers who were interviewed, all (100%) had been at their school from 4 to 20 years. As a specific group of teachers, the Bilingual teachers were more stable at the schools than the other teachers. Five out six (20%) Special Education teachers were teaching for 6 years or less, while only one (17%) teachers has taught for 21 years. These findings suggested that urban public middle schools with high student mobility may also have high teacher mobility, as evidenced by the teachers sampled in this study.

**Theme 7. The teachers were unfamiliar with school, district, and state policies pertaining to student mobility, transfer, registration, enrollment, or student attendance, and how those policies impact schools.**

Twenty-six of the 30 teachers in this research recommended schools to have practices and policies that specifically respond to student mobility. The other four teachers who answered felt that student mobility cannot be prevented. The findings revealed that the teachers felt that the school did not have operations guidelines for responding to high student mobility. Moreover, the teachers did not know how school, district, and state policies pertaining to student mobility, transfer, registration, and enrollment impact schools. In addition, the teachers felt schools did not have school operations guidelines for responding to high student mobility. They expressed a lack of familiarity with school, district, and state policies pertaining to student mobility.

The responses of the teachers in this study supported the idea that policymakers have tried to improve teaching quality in all settings with various strategies, including (a) incentives to attract and retain teachers in these schools, and (b) altering school culture in some way. For example, this research found that the district offers a merit pay policy, where teachers who are rated highly effective earn extra stipends. However, teachers shared that they were not in the profession for the money or financial incentive. While some teachers believed they should get paid more, other teachers believed that merit pay, or incentives did not encourage them to perform well. One Grade 7 ELA teacher who has been teaching for over 15 years and has been at the school for 4 years stated:

Teachers don't work for the money. Teachers work because they love the students and we care about them. We build relationships with them. Our greatest reward is the students whose life we impact, those whose we change and ultimately the students become better people. That's our pay. (Grade 7 ELA Teacher, 9 April 2020, Personal Interview)

The themes mentioned in this study align with the theoretical framework that underpins teacher efficacy, the theory of school effects, and Maslow's theory of needs. The themes shed

light on categories of teachers' emotional experiences, classroom culture and management, curriculum alignment, teacher support, teacher efficacy, student teacher and administrator mobility, school operations, and school policies. Overall findings revealed that the teachers perceived classroom culture to be interrupted when students entered their classroom in the middle of the year.

The following sections explicitly examine how the themes and findings address each of the study's research questions.

### **Research Question 1**

*How do individual teachers in an urban public-school district respond to the mobility experience?*

This research found that teachers in an urban public-school district responded to student mobility in several ways. They responded by struggling with their emotions. Often the teachers felt anxious and frustrated about having to cope with the interruptions in their practice that came from high student mobility. In addition, the teachers recognized that they were unprepared to deal with high student mobility, and their attention on high student mobility was limited in professional development sessions and/or district and state reporting. The teachers acknowledged that there was a silent response to the topic of high student mobility among teachers and school leaders. The teachers who participated in this research recognized that they were not prepared to cope with high student mobility and often did not address high student mobility as a factor that impacts their lessons and unit plans.

### **Research Question 2**

*What was the teacher's experience with student mobility in the 2018-2019 academic year?*

In 2018-2019, the teachers expressed that they experienced high anxiety because they believed their progress was compromised by high student mobility. In their experience of high student mobility, they acknowledged that there was high teacher and school leader mobility in their school, which may have contributed to the teachers' emotions and anxiety. The teachers also experienced high student-teacher attrition and instability, as evidenced by how many students and teachers left or entered their schools. The teachers also shared that while they had professional development and professional learning communities consistently in their schools, the topics for the training did not include how to manage high student mobility in their classrooms.

### **Research Sub Question 1**

*What is the teachers' perspective of student mobility?*

The teachers' perspective of student mobility is that high student mobility negatively impacts their classroom and there is a disadvantage to the students learning. The teachers expressed that mobile students present an interruption in their learning and the learning of the stable students. The teachers believed that when a mobile student comes into the classroom, they have to reorganize their class, reengage students, review the learning groups, and readjust their lesson and unit plans. The teachers believed that the topic of student mobility should be addressed, and more attention should be given to this topic during professional development sessions. The teachers' perspective of the progress of their practice is highlighted in the teachers' responses. It was found that teachers believed their progress to manage their classroom, maintain a lesson and unit plan, and create a culture supporting effective student achievement are all difficult because of the students who enter and leave their classroom throughout the course of the year. The research also found that teachers associated student mobility with being a challenge when they had to establish a new culture in their classroom that is caused by student mobility or

when they had to address student engagement or alter their lessons based on constant interruptions. As one Grade 7 ELA/SS teacher stated:

When I receive a student, I do not usually receive the student who is at or exceeds grade level. The students that enter our schools are two to three grade levels behind in reading. The students have difficulty with trying to catch up and keep up with the pacing. (Grade 7 ELA/SS, 8 April 2020, Personal Interview)

In short, the research highlighted the teachers' concerns with specific challenges to student learning and the teachers' success as practitioners. According to the teachers in this study, high student mobility negatively impacts the classrooms.

### **Research Sub-question 2**

*In what ways does student mobility impact teachers?*

Very little attention has been given to student mobility among teachers, school leaders, and the Department of Education. The teachers in the research highlighted that one of their concerns with student mobility is the lack of preparation by professional teaching programs in dealing with high student mobility. One of the themes that arose was that teachers feel frustrated and anxious because they believed their opportunity for success was compromised by student mobility. The majority of teachers (24/30) expressed these emotions about students entering their classroom in the middle of the year. In the future, it may be interesting to study the timing of student mobility throughout the year to determine the frequency of student mobility. Teachers' professional success and student achievement were difficult to achieve under circumstances of high student mobility. Teachers did not expect the circumstances to improve for several reasons. They shared strong emotions because they believed the situation at their job led them not to be successful, and they were aware that not addressing the matter would ensure the situation would not improve. Working under conditions that create feelings of perpetual job failure caused the teachers to feel negative emotions. Similarly, another parallel theme that emerged was the difficulty of teachers' progress caused by student mobility.

### **Research Sub-question 3**

*How do teachers adjust to student mobility?*

In addition to a lack of preparation, school and district leaders do not focus professional development topics around high student mobility or classroom culture, particularly in relation to high student mobility. Teachers expressed their concerns that high student mobility was not discussed during grade-level meetings or professional development meetings. This research highlighted the absence of the topic of high student mobility and also illuminated how different teachers respond to student mobility. Teachers adjust by managing their classrooms, readjusting their lessons, and coping with interruptions. Situations in the workplace leads to teachers remaining at work feeling stagnant in their professional practices, advancing for a promotion to get out of the classroom or deciding to leave teaching and pursue alternate professions.

Different teachers experienced student mobility differently. However, all the teachers also shared similarities in which they experienced similar emotions about the interruptions caused by high student mobility. They experienced frustration and anger and lack of job satisfaction because they felt they did not have the support or tools to deal with high student mobility.

### **Research Sub-question 4**

*What practices or policy recommendations do teachers have for school that have high student mobility in urban areas?*

According to teachers in this research, schools did not have school operations guidelines for responding to high student mobility. The findings revealed that the teachers were unfamiliar with school, district, and state policies pertaining to student mobility, transfer, registration, enrollment, or student attendance and how those policies impact schools. Most teachers



expressed a need to include their input in the standard operating procedures of policies and regulations pertaining to student mobility.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, findings from the teachers' interviews were presented to indicate their perspectives on high student mobility in their classrooms. The learning from this research focused on the teachers' perspective of student mobility, the impact that student mobility had on the teachers, how the teachers had to adjust to student mobility, and recommendations they had for future policies.

The findings revealed that teachers' responses were focused on their feelings and morale, and the impact that student mobility had on classroom dynamics and school operations. The findings also revealed the need for attention and support by the administration on preparing teachers in the area of student mobility. It was also important for teachers to revisit and explore school and district policies in order to reduce and respond effectively to student mobility. It was clear that teachers' voices provided an array of information that can inform future research. Critical results emerged promoting the need for teachers' voices to be heard on the impact of mobility on their self-efficacy. The findings revealed that the teachers expressed frustration, insecurities, and unpreparedness when dealing with student mobility. While those findings revealed teachers' emotions, Chapter 5 offers recommendations that will influence teachers' job satisfaction, hopefulness, security, and preparation for professional success. In addition, teachers felt that their classroom cultures were unsustainable because of the constant interruptions caused by student mobility. However, Chapter 5 explores the implications of this for the field and for research, policy, and practice that can encourage a sustainable and positive classroom culture, despite the student mobility dynamic.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the experiences of middle school urban teachers who teach in settings with high student mobility. While the high student mobility in urban middle school is a phenomenon that has not been frequently studied in the field, the teachers' perspective of mobility should be. Schools in America need to respond to the unavoidable student mobility issue that impacts how teachers perform their jobs and how students achieve academic success. This chapter discussed the implications for educational policies and practice as derived from the findings. The conclusion addresses the research questions: How do individual teachers in an urban public-school district respond to the mobility experience? and What implications for policies can be extrapolated from this research study?

The generalizability and transferability of the findings are based on the experiences of the three urban middle schools who may have limited generalizability, they are however, likely quite transferable to other urban, middle schools with transient student populations. Other urban public middle schools and their teachers may experience similarities and may be impacted like the schools and teachers in this study.

In this chapter, I respond specifically to the fourth sub-question, what practices or policy recommendations do teachers have for schools that have high student mobility in urban areas? This chapter begins with a brief overview of the research design, followed by an examination of the key findings and implications for school practices, policies, and programs, particularly in schools with high student mobility.

### **Methodology**

This research studied the perspective of teachers in three urban public middle schools that have high student mobility. Three schools were identified with an average rate of 23-29%

student mobility within one academic year. In order to have a diverse perspective of the population of students, all three schools selected not only had a high rate of student mobility, but all three schools included a Bilingual/ELL and Special Education population of students and teachers. After selecting three urban public middle schools, the researcher examined student academic performance on the state NJSLA assessment and analyzed teacher and administrator mobility in all three schools. After these data were studied, the researcher invited 34 urban public middle school teachers to participate in this research. A total of 30 out of 34 teachers responded. The teachers were interviewed for about an hour with 28 questions to learn about their perspectives of high student mobility in their schools. Their responses were transcribed from audio recordings, and the researcher then identified certain themes. The findings confirmed the literature supporting the idea that different cohorts of students experience higher mobility. As stated, “Students with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders as well as Mexican students appear to have higher levels of school dropout” (Lutz, 2007; Reschly & Christenson, 2006). Students who live in poverty also have high dropout rates (Crowder & South, 2003; Harding, 2003). Because there is a strong relationship between teachers who are mobile and with students who are mobile, it is safe to state that students who are mobile are at higher risk of dropping out. Such a situation unavoidably impacts students as well as teachers.

### **Findings**

In this section, a summary of the themes that were highlighted in this research are summarized as follows.

- Teachers’ progress was difficult due to interruptions of their lessons and unit plans because of mobility.
- Teachers felt frustrated and anxious.
- Teachers’ working conditions created a feeling of perpetual failure.

- Teachers felt insecure and did not feel prepared to respond to students with high mobility because they did not have professional development in that area.
- Student mobility, which was the elephant in the room, was not being discussed among teachers and school leaders.,
- There is an interaction between highly mobile students and highly mobile school leaders and teachers—that is, both components are “in motion” concurrently.
- Different cohorts of teachers had different experiences with student mobility and the teachers were unfamiliar with school, district, and state policies pertaining to student mobility, transfer, registration, enrollment, or student attendance and how those policies impact schools.

The themes informed the research questions which can be summarized by the teachers' responses as negative experiences at their jobs impacting teacher efficacy. The teachers expressed feeling a need to give attention to their preparation of dealing with high student mobility in urban public middle school classrooms and coping with the emotional weight that is caused from working conditions that encourage perpetual failure.

The findings revealed that all middle school teachers expected classroom culture to be interrupted and unsustainable because of student mobility. Mobility leads to disengagement of students who are mobile, and it has a secondary effect on stable students which in turn leads to students dropping out. The likelihood of adolescents in low socioeconomic status neighborhoods dropping out of school has “increased substantially among Black adolescents” (Crowder & South, 2003, p. 693). Urban public schools such as those in the district studied have a higher concentration of Black students than other districts. Students who move more frequently happen to be Black adolescents and come from low-income households. This then impacts the teachers

who are unable to select the students they teach by having to respond to more challenges than their colleagues who do not teach under the same student mobility circumstances.

A literature review of the link between teacher preparation and student performance has been published, but more research is needed to provide data linking teacher preparation programs to K-12 learning in urban public middle schools that have high student mobility (Guyton & Dangel, 1991).

In addition, teacher and student mobility impact the school as an organization by creating a situation that negatively affects student achievement since the school may encounter difficulty in improving student learning (Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). Mobility is customary in those who are beginning their teaching careers. According to the USDOE (2010), 13.7% of the teachers with 1-3 years of experience moved, and 49% left the profession totally in 2008-09. A study found “that teachers who began their teaching careers in low-performing schools, schools with low socioeconomic status, or schools with a high proportion of minority students had a greater probability of shifting schools” (Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007). In this research, a strong relationship was found that schools with high student mobility also have high teacher mobility.

The findings are not generalizable to all middle schools; however, they are transferable. Based on the experience of three urban middle schools which may have limited generalizability, they are likely transferable to other urban public middle schools with transient student populations. The findings informed practices that can benefit teachers and classrooms experiencing high student mobility.

### **Contextualizing the Findings within the Literature**

Bandura’s (1997) teacher efficacy theory supports

the belief that one can achieve what one sets out to do—are healthier, more effective, and generally more successful than those with low self-efficacy expectancies. The belief

in one's capabilities affects development and psychosocial functioning during the course of life, underscoring provocative applications of this work to issues in education.

The teachers' responses to the impact of highly mobile students on academic achievement were confirmed with nationwide research. According to the U.S. GAO (1994), of all mobile third graders, 41% were below grade level in Reading and 33% were below grade level in Math; 31% were more likely to repeat a grade in addition to having health and nutrition problems. As a result, the unavoidable consequences of student mobility impact how successful teachers feel about their job, lowering their job satisfaction because teachers measure their success based on how successfully the students perform.

Paralleling the teachers interviewed in this research, another study found similar responses from teachers who experienced high student mobility. "Teachers and staff who we interviewed in receiving schools told us they have not received the resources they need to effectively respond to the academic and emotional needs of transferred students" (Lipman & Pearson, 2007, p. 16). While the present study paralleled Lipman and Pearson's research, much can be said about how the findings indicate minimal focus on preparation of teachers who deal with high student mobility.

Maslow's theory of needs is intended for human development, for both students and teachers alike. Teacher's perceptions of the success of their students' impact teachers' job satisfaction and attrition. The findings revealed that teachers did not receive professional development in the area of classroom culture as it pertained to student mobility. Teachers believed student mobility compromises a classroom culture that promotes student achievement and academic success. Rhodes (2008) conducted a qualitative study of mobile students to present their perspective of moving from one school to another. The findings revealed social concerns as the number one focus of these mobile students. All of the participants "identified the need to develop friendships and workable peer relationships as their first priority" (p. 123); the loss of

long-term friendship was another concern. These social and emotional concerns amounted to 38% of the data. From her research, Rhodes suggested that students need to feel as if they are a part of the community. Characteristics of mobile student research have shown that mobile students are Black and Hispanic students with a low socioeconomic status (Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989; Kerbow, 1996). These students live in urban areas or the inner city. Because these areas are so densely populated, as the family moves from one apartment to another, for example, change in schools inevitably follows. Conversely, the opposite is the result of a similar situation happening in suburban areas, where a move may not necessitate a change in schools (Temple & Reynolds, 1999 U.S. GAO, 1994). In a 1994 survey, 30% of third graders whose family income was below \$10,000 changed schools. The students who had difficulty being part of a community responded in an inappropriate manner, impacting the teachers' responsibility to ensure a safe communal space in order to engage all students in their classroom. Policies that impact urban planning have to consider how student mobility influences schools, student learning, and teacher practice. Historically, urban school districts are affected by the migration of the low socioeconomic families, the rise of the housing project, and transportation developments. As a result, the setting in which students are the most mobile matters, particularly if there is a distinction that the highest student mobility is greatest in urban public, predominantly Black and Brown communities. Teachers who teach in such communities need to respond to the inequalities and challenges presented in those working dynamics.

Alexander and Eckland's (1975) school effect theory reminds us of the ripple effects when a student transfers into a school. If a student who transfers is unable to fit into the highly competitive school culture, the student may fail, develop lower self-concept and lower self-esteem, or decrease expectations (Meyer, 1970b, p. 63). Like students, teachers also are impacted; a study revealed that "Teachers often find themselves having to devote more time and

energy to classroom management than to actual teaching. In such a situation, everybody loses” (Benham Tye & O’Brien, YEAR, p. 30). The teachers in the present research found that they must deal with more challenges than do teachers in classrooms that are more stable. Mobility leads to the disengagement of mobile students, which in turn leads to dropping out. Student disengagement leads to teacher disengagement. To this end, a research study sampled 15 schools from a large urban district, in which five schools agreeing to participate. Using Pearson correlation ( $n = 324$ ), Guin (2004) discovered a “positive correlation between teacher turnover rates and the percentage of minority students within a school” (p. 2). As Crowder and South (2003) stated, “the likelihood of adolescents in low socioeconomic status neighborhoods dropping out of school has “increased substantially among Black adolescents” (p. 693). Urban public schools such as those in the district studied have a higher concentration of Black students than other districts. Students who move more frequently happen to be Black adolescents and come from low-income households. As studies have indicated, teachers are also being impacted by high student mobility, thus leading to higher teacher turnover in schools. The present researcher does not necessarily support how teachers can tolerate such dynamics; even more deeply, the researcher questions whether this is a systematic racial conspiracy against urban public students and teachers’ academic success.

To extend the discussion further, teacher and student mobility impacts the school as an organization by creating a situation that negatively affects student achievement, given that the school may encounter difficulty in improving student learning (Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). Mobility is customary in those beginning their teaching careers. According to the USDOE (2010), 13.7% of the teachers with 1-3 years of experience moved, and 49% left the profession entirely in 2008-09. Another study found that teachers who began their teaching careers in low-performing schools, schools with low socioeconomic status, or schools with a high proportion of



minority students had a greater probability of shifting schools (Scafidi et al., 2007). Another study examined “how turnover impacts the organizational capacity of schools that face high rates of teacher turnover every year” (Guin, 2004, p. 2).

In the present study of the teachers’ perspective of student mobility, there was a significant negative relationship between teacher turnover and student academic achievement. School climate and teacher turnover also had a negative relationship. In Chapter 4, the teacher sample of longevity at the schools is a reminder that schools with high student mobility also have high teacher mobility. For future research, it will be beneficial to conduct an in-depth study on that relationship and determine how high teacher and student turnover impacts schools. Several research studies have already shown that schools with high student mobility as a characteristic tend to have higher teacher mobility rates than others, and teachers with distinguished credentials tend not to teach in schools with high student mobility. “Highly qualified teachers, who work in low-performing schools or schools with a majority of minority students, more commonly transfer to another school or quit” (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). National Board-Certified Teachers (NCBTs) work in high-performing schools with low poverty and few if any minority students (Goldhaber, Choi, & Cramer, 2007).

As well, student turnover impacts the organizational capacity of schools that face high rates of teacher turnover every year. A mixed quantitative/qualitative study based on a statewide database exposed an interesting finding. First, consistent professional development was nonexistent due to schools receiving new teachers annually, which impeded the ability to receive targeted professional development. This may also be a reason why teachers do or do not receive specific professional development on student mobility. Second, teacher turnover caused disruptions in the instructional program. It is important to recognize that if a school is highly impacted not only by the rate of teachers who are mobile but also by the high number of students

who are mobile, then what can the school expect? Third, Guin (2004) revealed that teacher turnover impacted the instructional program and consistency of the curriculum.

Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) conducted a mixed research study to examine the effects of high mobility on highly mobile students, non-mobile students, teachers, and schools, with a particular focus on academic achievement. They found that highly mobile students scored lower on criterion-referenced tests than highly mobile students did. “Indeed, some research reports testify that an achievement gap between mobile and non-mobile students is irreparable” (Texas Education Agency, 1997). Forty-one percent of highly mobile students are low achievers, compared with 26% of non-highly mobile students (Paik & Phillips, 2002).

Although there is much movement by both students and teachers in highly mobile schools, there is a ripple effect on classrooms that have high student mobility. Teachers in schools with a high mobile population of students have stressed that the constant movement of these students required them to spend more time on tasks not related to instruction, classroom management, and the social-emotional status of students, leaving very little to no time for the teachers to identify gaps in curriculum knowledge. These students may miss the teaching of key concepts and skills that are needed later in their educational careers (Kerbow, 1996). Furthermore, curriculum pacing differs between schools with high mobility and low mobility. The teachers in the present research expressed that minimal support or accommodations have been made for teachers who are impacted by highly mobile students.

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

This research study sought to foreground the voices of urban public middle school teachers. The intention of this research included an understanding of the teachers’ perspective, experiences, and beliefs about being teachers in a school that has constant student movement.

From this study, several recommendations were made to address the teachers who deal with high student mobility in their classrooms.

First, school administrators do not have control over student mobility because the causes of student mobility are not related to schooling, according to a study that reported that “58% of the parent-reported school changes were due to moving” (Rumberger, 2003, p. 12). The causes are symptomatic of broader societal issues. Another cause of student mobility relates to the student who may struggle with academics or behaviors. This student may change schools hoping to start over with a clean slate (Swanson & Schneider, 1999). While schools may not be able to control the causes of student mobility, federal, state, and local school districts should collaborate with federal, state, and local housing departments to inform policies that support the stabilization of urban housing so that urban public school students are more stable. The objective would be to make it a strategic goal to prevent frequent transfers for students by (a) investing in making all neighborhoods great, and (b) making all neighborhood schools great. Studies of school mobility have generally found that children make more school moves than residential moves, and students who change schools frequently fall behind students who stay in place (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004; Reynolds, Chen, & Herbers, 2009). Such disparities are of significant policy concern because attending schools with students who perform well has been shown to contribute to positive educational outcomes for all students. The default of students moving within the academic year results in a costly interruption, not just a financial burden on the district but an impact on teachers who invest their time, emotions, and talent in educating students.

Since academic performance on standardized test is at the forefront of the priority list that draws attention to school leaders, the district, and state departments, perhaps attention can also be given to student mobility data by exposing student mobility along with classroom and school

performance. The exposure will inform policymakers of the negative consequences for teachers and student academic achievement as a largely unexamined issue with important implications for urban school leaders.

Second, if high student mobility remains high, it may behoove school leaders to implement a system for students who transfer to have an exit interview not only about the school and their experience, but also about their own academic progress during the student's tenure at the school. The information should be logged in a database to support the student and the receiving school—hence the teacher. In this way, the teacher who receives the student will have a comprehensive assessment record of the student's social-emotional and academic progress before the student even arrives to the new classroom and meets the new teacher and classmates.

Another recommendation if high student mobility remains as high is to implement a federal policy in which a national database provides nationwide access to students' historical records. Teachers expressed interest in having a more universal, broader system in place that tracks student mobility across the nation. Having a universal system will allow schools and teachers to prepare for students by helping them plan for their academic and social-emotional needs. In this digital era, the national database will access students' academic history, reading levels, math proficiency, social-emotional history, and peer interactions. The information in the database will help teachers best prepare for the students and create a support system for both the student and the family.

Some practices that schools can implement are inexpensive and easily adaptable in every school. For example, schools can have a system in place whereby incoming students receive a "welcome buddy" who will assist them in adjusting to their new school and new classrooms. The buddy will support the students by providing information about the classroom culture, academic

practices, behavior expectations, athletics, and extracurricular programs offered. Students will learn from their peers.

Another transferable technique drawn from the findings includes a recommendation for teachers to form a teacher support group that will discuss and highlight student information data during their professional learning communities. The data will include student academic and behavior analyses along with the student's entry date to the school. The teachers will have an opportunity to analyze the data and draw implications to inform their decisions.

An additional recommendation extrapolated from this study was to provide professional development and training to teachers to deal with classroom culture and redesigning lessons in classrooms with high student mobility. There were several strategies for integrating newcomers into the curriculum and for managing the classroom in order to preserve a continuity of instruction for both the individual and the class. In addition, districts should consider having a linear curriculum so that as students transfer from school to school within the district, there is minimal interruption in the scope and sequence of the curriculum that the teachers are delivering and the students are studying.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In this section, new implications for future research are presented. In this study, the Bilingual teachers appeared more stable than other teachers; however, Bilingual students demonstrated the highest transiency, as evidenced by the school data reported. Based on the themes found in this research, a comparison should be made of how teachers who teach different subjects may respond to highly mobile students. Further research should be conducted on teachers who teach General Education, Bilingual/ELL Education, or Special Education. Moreover, more attention should be given to investigating the relationship between students who are mobile and teachers who are mobile concurrently. It will be interesting to examine whether

any relationship impacts urban public middle schools with high student mobility. Researchers should conduct more studies for sub-populations of teachers on many outcomes to obtain a complete picture about what affects success for teachers who must respond to high student mobility.

A more in-depth study about why the federal and state departments of education stopped collecting student mobility data should be conducted to determine if the school system will benefit from the data that would be exposed. On this same topic, school systems need to investigate the discrepancies that arise when a student enrolls in a district and when a student registers at a school. Although it is important to recognize the accuracy of the student mobility data, it is also important to recognize how others acknowledge the effects of the data on student mobility on school status. “The analysis suggests that although the effects of school status tend to cancel each other out and the net effect on aspirations is still small, the theoretical importance of school status cannot be discounted” (Nelson, 1972, p. 143). To rectify the ambiguity of the data that are collected, future research should be conducted to investigate not only why data were no longer collected, but also how and why experts recommend that urban public middle school teachers respond to high student mobility.

Additional research needs to be conducted on how urban public middle schools can deal with high student mobility as it pertains to policies for *traditional* urban public middle schools, compared with non-traditional public schools such as charter schools in urban areas. The field of education can benefit from a comparison of student mobility rates in public traditional schools and public charter schools. It would be interesting to study both the ways student mobility rates compare in similar urban settings as well as differ. Learning the factors that impact student mobility in both settings may inform the advantages and disadvantages that traditional and charter schools may derive from policies that promote or prevent high student mobility.

Finally, student mobility has several layers of complexity which may justify the lack of interest by school leaders and state Departments of Education. However, while the issue is complex, superintendents do need to recognize it. One way to draw attention to the issue is to expose the trends of students' performance over time and identify any relationships that can be attributed to student mobility. If the issue is not addressed, the cycle of failure may remain. The opportunity for a workshop on how student performance changes teacher efficacy over time may draw the interest of district leaders who are invested in exceeding the district's academic and social emotional expectations for both students and teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this study highlighted the teachers' perspective of how they respond to high student mobility in urban public middle schools. The research study found that teachers responded emotionally by displaying frustration and anxiety. Moreover, it was found that teachers' classroom practices were impacted by disruptions in their classroom culture, lessons, and unit plans. The teachers also felt there were reservations from the silence on this topic of student mobility, which was not evident in teacher preparation programs, professional development workshops, or recurring professional learning communities. The teachers found that the topic of high student mobility was not only not discussed by administrators, but it was also not discussed among teachers. The research also found a relationship between highly mobile students and highly mobile school leaders and teachers. Different cohorts of teachers had different experiences with student mobility and other teachers. The study also reinforced the need to bring to light school, district, and state policies pertaining to student mobility, transfer, registration, enrollment, or student attendance and how those policies impact schools.

While this topic of student mobility is deeply complex, more attention to how student mobility impacts teachers should be given in order to support teachers, understand the impact of

high student mobility on student achievement and teacher job satisfaction, and create policies that support more stable urban public middle schools. Recommendations for future studies included investing in making all neighborhoods great and making all neighborhood schools great. School leaders should implement a system for students who transfer to have an exit interview not only about the school and their experience, but also about their own academic progress during the student's tenure at the school. Other recommendations included implementing a national database to provide nationwide access to students' historical records; having a linear curriculum so that as students transfer from school to school; there is minimal interruption in the scope and sequence of the curriculum that the students are studying; providing professional development and training to teachers to deal with classroom culture; and redesigning lessons in classrooms with high student mobility.

As we better understand the perspective of teachers who deal with high student mobility, in part through continued research, we can reform urban public-school systems by looking at factors that impact teacher performance and student achievement. This research and future studies on the topic of high student mobility and its impact on teachers will nurture the need for further studies on this topic. It was this researcher's intent to promote equitable access for teachers in urban public middle schools to reach their highest potential in servicing students.



## Bibliography

- Alexander, K. L., & Eckland, B. K. (1975). Contextual effects in the high school attainment process. *American Sociological Review*, 40, 402-416.
- Alexander, K. L., Fennessey, J., McDill, E. L., & D'Amico, R. J. (1979). School SES influences—composition or context? *Sociology of Education*, 52, 222-237.
- Ashton, P. T., & Webb, R. B. (1986). *Making a difference: Teachers' sense of efficacy and student achievement*. Longman.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28, 117-148.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman/Times Books/Henry Holt & Co.
- Benham Tye,, & O'Brien, L. (2002). *Why are experience teachers leaving the profession? an*, v84 n1 p24-32 Sept 2002 Phi Delta Kapp.
- Berman, P., McLaughlin, M., Bass, G., Pauly, E., & Zellman, G. (1977). *Federal programs supporting educational change: Factors affecting implementation and continuation* (Vol. 7). The Rand Foundation.
- Bobbett, J. J., Dellinger, A. B., Ellettf, C. D., & Olivier, D. F. (2008). Measuring teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Development and use of the TEBS-Self. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 751-766.
- Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005). The draw of home: How teachers' preferences for proximity disadvantage urban schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 24(1), 113-132.
- Clark, W., & Maas, R. (2012). Schools, Neighborhoods and Selection: Outcomes Across Metropolitan Los Angeles. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 31(3), 339-360. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/41487425](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41487425)
- Collins, W., & Margo, R. (2007). The economic aftermath of the 1960s riots in American cities: Evidence from property values. *The Journal of Economic History*, 67(4), 849-883. Retrieved April 23, 2020.
- Conway, R., Kember, D., Sivan, A. et al. (1994). Making departmental changes through action research, based on adult learning principles. *Higher Education*, 28, 265-282.

- Crosnoe, R., & Lopez-Gonzalez, L. (2005). Immigration from Mexico, school composition, and adolescent functioning. *Sociological Perspectives*, 48, 1-24.
- Crowder, K., & South J. (2003). Neighborhood distress and school dropout: The variable significance of community context. *Social Science Research*, 32(4), 659-698.
- De la Torre, T. M., Gwynne, J., & Consortium on Chicago School Research. (2009). *Changing schools: A look at student mobility trends in Chicago Public Schools since 1995*. ERIC Clearinghouse.
- Dellinger, Amy & Bobbett, Jacqueline & Olivier, Dianne & Ellett, Chad. (2008). Measuring teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Development and use of the TEBS-Self. Teaching and Teacher Education. 24. 751-766. 10.1016/j.tate.2007.02.010.
- Dembo, M. H., & Gibson, S. (1984, August 1). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(4), 569-582.
- Eckerlin, W., Ingersoll, G., & Scamman, J. (1989). Geographic mobility and student achievement in an urban setting. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(2), 143-149.
- Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research*, 59(2), 117 142.
- Gibb, E. G., & Matala, D. C. (1962, November 1). Study on the use of special teachers of science and mathematics in Grades 5 and 6: Final report. *School Science and Mathematics*, 62(8), 565-585.
- Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984, January 1). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(4).
- Goble, F. (1970). *The third force: The psychology of Abraham Maslow*. Pocket Books.
- Goldhaber, D., Choi, H.-J., & Cramer, L. (2007, April 1). A descriptive analysis of the distribution of NBPTS-certified teachers in North Carolina. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(2), 160-172.
- Guin, K. (2004). Chronic teacher turnover in urban elementary schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12(42), 1-25.
- Hanushek E., Kain, J., & Rivkin, S. (2004) Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/3598793](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3598793)
- Harding, D. J. (2003). Counterfactual models of neighborhood effects: The effect of neighborhood poverty on dropping out and teenage pregnancy. *American Journal of Sociology* 109, 676-719.

- Ihrke, D. K., Faber, C. S., United States., (2012). *Geographical mobility: 2005 to 2010*. U.S. Department. of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001, January 1). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.
- Isernhagen, J. C., & Bulkin, N. (2011, January 1). The impact of mobility on student performance and teacher practice. *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, 16(1), 17-24.
- Kerbow, D. (1996). Patterns of urban student mobility and local school reform. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 1, 147-169.
- Lee, V. E., & Burkam, D. T. (1992, August 1). Transferring high schools: An alternative to dropping out? *American Journal of Education*, 100(4), 420-453.
- Lipman, P., & Person, A. S. (2007). Students as collateral damage? A preliminary study of Renaissance 2010 school closings in the midsouth. *Educational Policy*, 21, 471-502.
- Litchman, M. V. (2012). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Little, A. (1978). *The occupational and educational expectations of students in developed and developing countries* (Education Report No. 3.) Institute for Development Studies.
- Lutz, A. (2007). Barriers to high school completion among immigrant and later-generation Latinos in the USA: Language, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. *Ethnicities*, 7, 323-342.
- McGrath, C. J., & Rust, J. O. (2002, January 01). Academic achievement and between-class transition time for self-contained and departmental upper-elementary classes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 29, 40-43.
- Mehana, Majida & Reynolds, Arthur. (2004). School Mobility and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis. Children and Youth Services Review. 26. 93-119.  
10.1016/j.childyouth.2003.11.004
- Meyer, J. W. (1970a). The charter: Conditions of diffuse socialization in schools. In W. R. Scott (Ed.), *Social processes and social structures: An introduction to sociology* (pp. 564-578). Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Meyer, J. W. (1970b). High school effects on college intentions. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 76(1), 59-70.
- Michael, J. A. (1961). High school climates and plans for entering college. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25(4), 585-595.

Nelson, J. I. (1972). High school context and college plans: The impact of social structure on aspirations. *American Sociological Review*, 37, 143-148.

Newark Public Schools. (2013). *One Newark Plan*.  
<http://onewark.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Building-a-System-One-Newark-Plan.pdf>

New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). (2019). New Jersey School Performance Report. <https://www.nj.gov/education/schools/achievement/19/njsla/spring/index.htm>

New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). (2019). New Jersey School Performance Report. Retrieved from Office of Research and Accountability Student Unit Record (SURE) <https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/statistics/index.shtml#ENR>

Paik, S., & Phillips, R. (2002). *Student mobility in rural communities: What are the implications for student achievement?* North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2004, August 17). The schooling of children of immigrants: Contextual effects on the educational attainment of the second generation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 101(33), 11920-11927.

Ream, R. (2003). Counterfeit social capital and Mexican American underachievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(3), 237-262. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/3699494](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3699494)

Rebell, M., & Wolff, J. (2008). Meaningful educational opportunity: A vital and viable mission for NCLB. *Educational Horizons*, 86(4), 203-225.

Reschly, A. L., & Christenson, S. L. (2006). Prediction of dropout among students with mild disabilities: A case for the inclusion of student engagement variables. *Remedial and Special Education*, 27(5), 276-292.

Reynolds, Arthur & Chen, Chin-Chih & Herbers, Janette. (2009). School Mobility and Educational Success: A Research Synthesis and Evidence on Prevention.

Rhodes, V.L. Learning on the go: voices of highly mobile urban students. *Learning* 2, 113–125 (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11519-008-0029-1>

Ross, L. S. (2014). *The influence of the student mobility rate on the graduation rate in the State of New Jersey*. Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs).

Rumberger, R. (2002). The causes and consequences of student mobility. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 72(1), 6-21. doi:10.2307/3211287

Rumberger, R. (2011). *Dropping out*. Harvard University Press. Retrieved June 8, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbwp4](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbwp4)

- Rumberger, R. W., & Larson, K. A. (1998, November). Student mobility and the increased risk of high school dropout. *American Journal of Education*, 107(1), 1-35.
- Scafidi, B., Sjoquist, D., & Stinebrickner, T. (2007). Race, poverty, and teacher mobility. *Economics of Education Review*, 26, 145-159.
- Schafft, K. A., & Prins, E. S. (2009, June 6). Poverty, residential mobility, and persistence across urban and rural family literacy programs in Pennsylvania. *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, 3(1), 3-12.
- Slepkov, H. (2008, September 1). Teacher professional growth in an authentic learning environment. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 41(1), 85-111.
- Smith, T. E., Polloway, E. A., Patton, J. R., & Dowdy, C. A. (2012). *Teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings*. Pearson.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Steinberg, L., Blinde, P., & Chan, K. (1984). Dropping out among Language Minority Youth. *Review of Educational Research*, 54(1), 113-132.
- Stillwell, R., & Sable, J. (2013). *Public school graduates and dropouts from the common core of data: School year 2009-10*. First book (provisional data) (NCES 2013-209)
- Stroup, A., & Robins, L. (1972). Elementary School Predictors of High School Dropout among Black Males. *Sociology of Education*, 45(2), 212-222. doi:10.2307/2112008
- Swanson, C., & Schneider, B. (1999). Students on the move: Residential and educational mobility in America's schools. *Sociology of Education*, 72(1), 54-67.
- Temple, J., & Reynolds, A. J. (1999). School mobility and achievement: Longitudinal findings from an urban cohort. *Journal of School Psychology*, 37, 355-377.
- Terehoff, I. I. (2002). Elements of adult learning in teacher professional development. *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(632), 65-77.
- Texas Education Agency. (1997). A study of student mobility in Texas public schools: Statewide Texas Educational Progress Study Report No 3. (Report No. RE- 601-03). Retrieved from Texas Education Agency Publications Distribution. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 424664)
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Barr, M. (2004). Fostering student learning: The relationship of collective teacher efficacy and student achievement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 3(3), 189-209.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2001, January 1). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17.

- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2007, January 1). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(6), 944-956.
- Tucker, C., Marx, J., & Long, L. (1998). "Moving on": Residential mobility and children's school lives. *Sociology of Education*, 71(2), 111-129.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). QuickFacts Newark City, New Jersey. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newarkcitynewjersey/INC910218#INC910218>
- U.S. Government Accounting Office (U.S. GAO). (1994). *Elementary school children: Many change schools frequently, harming their education*. (GAO/HEHS Publication No. 94-95). Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office
- Wallace Foundation. (2011). Federal funding and the four turnaround models—The school turnaround field guide. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/Pages/federal-funding-school-turnaround-field-guide.aspx>. Web. 22 Oct 2011.
- Wilson, A. B. (1959). Residential segregation of social classes and aspirations of high school boys. *American Sociological Review*, 24, 836-845.
- Woods, R. (1959). Relative merits of departmental and non-departmental elementary schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 37(3), 164-169.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2020). COVID-19: Operational guidance for maintaining essential health services during an outbreak. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/covid-19-operational-guidance-for-maintaining-essential-health-services-during-an-outbreak>

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol

1. Can you tell me about your experience with mobility this past year?
2. In what ways does student mobility impact your practice as a teacher?
3. How do you respond to a new student in your classroom?
4. Can you tell me a story about one of your students as it relates to student mobility, a case where it worked, and a case where it didn't?
5. How many students did you start within your homeroom?
6. In a typical month, last year, on average, how many students were mobile in your classroom?
7. Which month of the academic year had the highest mobility in your classroom?
8. How do you feel when you are told that you are getting a new student in your class?
9. When a student leaves your class throughout the year, how do you feel?
10. Describe how the school staff, teachers support you when you gain or lose a student within the year?
11. How many students join your class after the first day of school, September 4, 2018?
12. How do you feel about new students transferring in/ out of your classroom? Has there been a time when new students created a challenge for you in the classroom?
13. Can you discuss the process when you receive a new student?
14. In what month was your class disruptive the most how did you respond?
15. The impact that student mobility has on how teachers manage their practice
16. In what ways did a new student impact the curriculum that you delivered to the students?
17. How did having a new student in your classroom impact the scope and sequence of your unit plan/ lesson plan?
18. How do you feel about the academic performance of your classrooms?
19. What attributes do you believe impact the academic performance of your students?
20. In what ways do teachers who experience high mobility adjust in their classrooms?
21. Describe how you believe the students feel when their classroom friends leave their classrooms?
22. What do the new students need to know when they come into your classroom?
23. How long (what period of time) do students, on average, remain in your classroom? (meaning does the average student in your class stay in your classroom for the entire year, four months? Six months?)
24. What happens with the students in your classroom, when a new student joins the class?
25. How do you integrate the new student into your daily routine?
26. Describe a time when you felt like the classroom changed because a student entered or exited your classroom.
27. What practices or policy recommendations do teachers have for schools that have high student mobility in urban areas?

## Appendix B



## INFORMED CONSENT

---

**TITLE OF STUDY:** Urban Public Middle School Teachers and their Response to High Student Mobility

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER:** Maria Ortiz, Student in the Executive Educational Leadership Management and Policy (Ed.D.) Program

**FACULTY ADVISOR:** Dr. Martin Finkelstein, Ph.D.

---

Purpose of the Study

S. Sparks, a researcher from Edweekly, defines mobility, “In K-12 education, “student mobility,” also called “churn” or “transience,” can include any time a student changes schools for reasons other than grade promotion, but in general it refers to students changing schools during a school year.” Student mobility is defined by the students who come into and out of the classroom over the course of the school year.

This qualitative study intends to learn how do teachers feel and how do they adjust to student mobility and to learn how teachers respond to the changes that happen in their classroom due to students who transfer in and out within one academic year.

High mobility rates may have an impact on the teacher, the classroom culture, the other students in the classroom, and the school. While research has been conducted on student mobility, minimal research has been done on the teachers who experience high student mobility. Learning from the teachers who deal with the phenomenon of high student mobility will inform the field of education by highlighting the teachers’ perspective.

Procedures

Subjects will participate in one in-depth over the phone interview and one follow-up interview. If permission is given to be audio recorded, the researcher will audio record the interviews. The interviews will take no more than one hour and will take place at the participants’ current site of employment. At the start of the interview, the researcher will explain the reason for her research.

The interview protocol will start as follows: the participant will be assigned a pseudonym, which will be used during the transcription of the audio recording. The researcher will ask participants to describe a brief history of their career background in education. The researcher will then move to ask questions related to the research questions:



This narrative research study intends to identify, what are the perspectives of urban public school who deal with high student mobility?

#### Sub Questions:

1. What is the teacher's perspective on student mobility?
2. In what ways does student mobility impact teachers?
3. How do teachers perceive and adjust to student mobility?

#### Instruments

The over the phone interview protocol includes semi-structured, open-ended questions. The interview protocol questions are designed to inform how teachers perceive the impact that students who come into and out of the classroom over the course of a school year.

Interview questions will focus on the following areas: each individuals' career background in education and their lived experiences relating to their experience with students who enter or leave their classroom over the course of the school year.

#### Voluntary Nature

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from study participation at any time without any penalty or prejudice. Participants do not have to answer any of the questions they do not want to.

#### Anonymity

When the interview is scheduled, each participant will be asked to call in to a toll-free number and assigned a pseudonym, for example, "Ms. Green April 20, 2020." All data collection, analysis, and reporting will utilize coding to preserve anonymity.

#### Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential. No reference shall be made in written or oral materials that could connect participants to this study.

#### Records

All records shall be stored in a secured facility for a minimum of three years after the conclusion of the study. After three years the data collected will be shredded and audiotapes destroyed. A digital copy of the data will be stored electronically on a USB memory key in the principal investigator's office in a secured and locked cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to identifying information and coding schema.

#### Potential Risks and/or Discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research study.

### Benefits to Participants

There are no direct benefits associated with participation. The participation in this study will significantly contribute to the field of education by highlighting their perceptions of the support provided when dealing with student mobility, changes in policies that impact student mobility, and the teachers' role in informing best practices when dealing with student mobility. The school district and field of education will benefit from this study as it intends to understand how teachers are impacted by high student mobility. The research could influence school districts contemplating how best to support, design, develop programs for students who are mobile. In addition, the research can support teachers who experience high student mobility, policies that inform the student mobility phenomena, school culture and student achievement.

### Remuneration

There is no remuneration of any kind for participating in this study.

### Compensation

No compensation is associated with participation.

### Alternative Procedures

The researcher is not aware of any alternative procedures that may be advantageous to the subject.

### Agree to be Audio-Recorded or Not:

Please check your preference for audio recording:

- ☐ I agree to be recorded
- ☐ I do not agree to be recorded

If permission is given to be audio recorded, the researcher will audio record the interviews. However, audio recording is optional. The information collected from the interview will be transcribed. Upon conclusion of the study, the researcher plans to contact participants to ensure that analyses accurately depict their perspectives.

### Contact Information

If the participant has any questions as to their rights as a human subject, he or she can contact Seton Hall University IRB at telephone (973) 313-6314.

If the participant has any questions about the research, he or she can contact the Primary Investigator/Doctoral Student, Maria Ortiz at telephone: or email [maria.ortiz1@shu.edu](mailto:maria.ortiz1@shu.edu) or her Faculty Advisor, Dr. Martin Finkelstein at telephone (973) 275-2324 or email [martin.finkelstein@shu.edu](mailto:martin.finkelstein@shu.edu).

**Participant Consent**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. A copy of this signed and dated Informed Consent form will be provided to you.

---

Participant Name  
(Please Print)

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

College of Education and Human Services  
Executive Ed.D. Program  
400 South Orange Avenue, South Orange, NJ 07079  
t 973.275.2306 f 973.275.2484

**What great minds can do.**

## Appendix C



April 3, 2020

Maria Ortiz

Re: Study ID#

Dear Ms. Ortiz,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the amendment to your research proposal entitled “In what ways do urban public middle school teachers respond to student mobility?” as submitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study’s approval.

Approval of this amendment does not change the previous expiration date from your one-year approval period. You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to the original expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research to close the study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mara Podvey'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

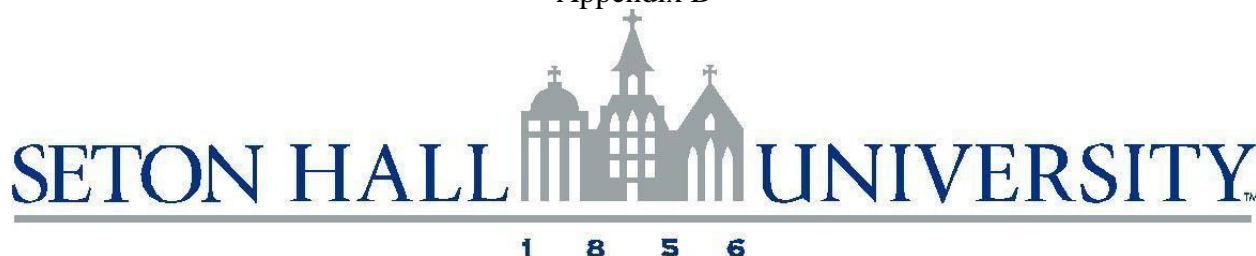
Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR  
Associate Professor  
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

**Office of the Institutional Review Board**

Presidents Hall · 400 South Orange Avenue · South Orange, New Jersey 07079 · Tel:  
973.275.4654 · Fax 973.275.2978 · [www.shu.edu](http://www.shu.edu)

WHAT GREAT MINDS CAN DO

## Appendix D



March 26, 2020

Maria Ortiz

Re: Study ID#

Dear Ms. Ortiz,

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled “In what ways do urban public middle school teachers respond to student mobility?” as resubmitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study’s approval as exempt. Enclosed for your records are the stamped original Consent Form and recruitment flyer. You can make copies of these forms for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR  
Associate Professor  
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

**Office of the Institutional Review Board**

Presidents Hall · 400 South Orange Avenue · South Orange, New Jersey 07079 · Tel:  
973.275.4654 · Fax 973.275.2978 · [www.shu.edu](http://www.shu.edu)

W H A T   G R E A T   M I N D S   C A N   D O