

# **PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS TO DISMISSAL OF POOR-PERFORMING TEACHERS**

**A Dissertation**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine which factors influence items that school principals consider “barriers” to dismissal of “incompetent” or “poor performing” teachers. This study determines if specific characteristics of schools, principals, or a combination of the two can predict the specific barriers cited by principals as the reasons for renewing contracts of poor performing teachers. By identifying causes for the tolerance of poor-performing teachers, school officials and educational institutions may take a more proactive approach to training principals and hopefully prevent the repetition of this problematic administrative behavior.

Data from the 2007-2008 *Schools and Staffing Survey* is used to provide insight into the quantitative study questions. In this survey, principals indicated items that they considered to be barriers to dismissal of poor-performing teachers. Items that principals considered to be barriers to dismissal serve as the outcome variables. Characteristics of schools and school administrators serve as the predicting variables. Questions are answered within the educational and legal context that permits and restrains the ability of a school district to make contract decisions based on teacher performance.

Major findings of this study identify that principals cite “union presence”, “tenure”, “length of time”, and “effort required for documentation” as the most common barriers to dismissal of poor-performing teachers. In order to decrease the presence of these barriers, this study found that principal training and district support are important;

specifically, involvement in professional development for principals and involvement by curriculum specialists. Principals who were enthusiastic and motivated to do their jobs also reported the presence of barriers less frequently. Those who were tired of the work, had dissatisfied staffs, or lacked enthusiasm were more burdened by the challenges of removing low-performing teachers. Of the barriers studied, few characteristics of principals or schools assisted in reducing the principals' reports that union presence created a barrier.

Conclusions of this study suggest that district administrators need to take a proactive approach to ensuring that principals receive support and maintain enthusiasm to do the work. Providing professional development to principals, specifically in the areas of staff evaluation, is a recommendation. Supporting principals with curriculum specialists or other district administrators will also aid in the reduction of barriers to dismissal of poor-performing teachers.

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## **Chapter I**

### **The Problem of Continual Renewal of Contracts for Poor Performing Teachers**

This purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

- 1) Which barriers do principals cite as impeding dismissal of a poor-performing tenured teacher?
- 2) What principal or school characteristics predict the likelihood that a principal says he/she faces certain barriers to dismissal?

These research questions are designed to offer insight into a problem affecting public schools. Results from the 2007-2008 *Schools and Staffing Survey* show that school principals admit both “unsatisfactory” and “fair” teachers continue to practice in American schools. Of the 4,601 school districts completing a 2007-2008 *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*, survey data indicates that 81.94% renewed the past year’s contract of every tenured teacher, regardless of level of performance. It is problematic that four out of five school districts report taking no action to remove poor-performing teachers from the classroom. In a recent study by Weisberg, et al (2009), responses from 15,000 teachers and 1,300 school administrators were analyzed to show that more than 99% of teachers received a rating of “satisfactory” on a binary (satisfactory or unsatisfactory) teacher evaluation tool. In the same study, 81% of school administrators acknowledged that at least one tenured teacher in their building was performing poorly.

Anecdotal writing publicized the topic of poor-performing teachers continuing to



practice due to tenure and non-renewal barriers faced by their evaluators (Brill, 2009). Steven Brill's writing on New York City's now-defunct "Rubber Rooms" describes the consequences for schools when attempting to fire poor-performing teachers. Most studies surrounding this topic are anecdotal in nature and few, if any, systematically attempt to quantify this issue.

In juxtaposition with writing on the challenges of dismissal are studies that suggest how important teachers are to students' lives. A recent study by economists at Harvard and Columbia tells us that the value added by teachers greatly impacts the long-term success of students. Simply defined, "value added" is determined by measuring growth on student assessments. They state: "Replacing a teacher whose: "value added" is in the bottom 5% with an average teacher would increase the present value of students' lifetime income by more than \$250,000 for the average classroom in our sample. We conclude that good teachers create substantial economic value and that test score impacts are helpful in identifying such teachers" (Chetty, et al., 2012). School administrators have the responsibility to ensure that the value added by teachers has a positive effect on students. This task may require that poor-performing teachers be dismissed. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine which factors influence items that school principals consider "barriers" to teacher non-renewal as reported in the *Schools and Staffing Survey*.

A question on the *Schools and Staffing Survey* asks principals which items they consider barriers to dismissal of a "poor-performing" or "incompetent" teacher. Eight barriers are listed in a format where principals indicate whether each is considered a

barrier by simply checking “yes” or “no”. On the survey, this question follows one in which principals indicate how many “fair” and “unsatisfactory” teachers are present in their schools. Although not an exhaustive list, of the eight barriers listed in the survey, principals view “union presence”, “tenure”, “length of time”, and “effort required” as those that stand in the way of dismissal of poor-performing teachers (Table 3).

Hanushek (2009) addresses the problem of poor-performing teachers: “The bottom end of the teaching force is harming students. Allowing ineffective teachers to remain in the classroom is dragging down the nation”. Hanushek puts forth a statistical model in which student achievement is improved by firing the poorest-performing 10% of teachers. Based on research conducted using data from students in Chicago, it was shown that characteristics of quality teachers positively influence students’ attitudes toward school and student achievement (Hallinan, 2008). Additionally, research suggests that the most competent school principals have an overwhelming positive impact on student performance (Robinson, et.al, 2008).

This study attempts to solve the problem of maintaining poor-performing teachers by asserting characteristics that may demonstrate an influence on the barriers of dismissal cited by school administrators. Painter (2000) presents research in which principals cited union presence, procedural challenges, and time as top barriers to dismissal. Even when an administrator is present who has the time, willpower, and organization skill to recommend non-renewal, practicing within the confines of law and the teacher’s contract takes a great deal of knowledge and effort. Additionally, school-level factors (low student

socio-economic status, staff satisfaction) may influence the items that principals consider when deciding to non-renew a contract.

Chapter 2 of this work describes literature related to dismissal of poor performing teachers. Literature is broken into the following topics: legal accountability of schools and student achievement, educator quality and appraisal, contract renewal decisions and due process, barriers to dismissal of poor-performing teachers, and principal and school characteristics.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to answer the research questions. Data from the 2007-2008 *Schools and Staffing Survey* is used to determine which characteristics of principals and schools are positively and negatively correlated with barriers of dismissal. Data from two levels of the survey is used in this study: one completed by district-level personnel and another completed by school principals. Datasets from the district-level and school-level surveys are combined to weigh the relationship between characteristics and barriers of dismissal. Based on each characteristic, we determine the degree to which the independent variables result in an increase or decrease in the likelihood of principals reporting “barriers” to dismissal. Logistical regression with an “odds ratio” factor was used for analysis. This model allows for the researcher to estimate how various predictors (principal characteristics) estimate the likelihood that a certain outcome variable (presence of barriers to dismissal) is present.

Chapter 4 reports the findings of this work. It begins with a summary table showing whether or not each predicting variable increases or decreases the likelihood that a barrier to dismissal is present. In this work, predicting variables are included when resulting in a 15% (or greater) increase or decrease in the likelihood that a barrier be present. A natural break in the data was noticed between predictive barriers that had little or no effect, and those resulting in at least a 15% increase or decrease that the barrier to dismissal is present. Thus, conclusions for each barrier to dismissal are discussed when the relationship between the values is at least 15% across models.

This study identified that principals cited “tenure”, “effort required for documentation”, “union presence”, and “length of time required” as the primary barriers to dismissal of incompetent or poor-performing teachers. It found that principals who worked in districts where collective bargaining and/or “meet and confer” relationships with unions existed were likely to cite the presence of all barriers studied. Principals working in schools that are “on improvement” reported a higher presence of three of the four barriers; all except “tenure”. Generally speaking, the degree to which principals disliked their jobs was positively correlated with the likelihood that they believed barriers to dismissal exist. Principals who had dissatisfied staffs or wanted to transfer schools were more likely to report facing three of the four barriers. Indicating that the principal lacked enthusiasm increased the reporting of all barriers studied. Few principal or school characteristics were shown to decrease the perceived presence of barriers. Only participation in professional development and Curriculum Specialists’ involvement in

teacher evaluation resulted in a decrease of barriers being cited in three of the four barriers studied.

Chapter 5 includes conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future study. It is suggested that barriers to dismissal of incompetent or poor performing teachers might be reduced through a system of district support which includes participation in professional development and support from curriculum specialists. Districts should also consider taking a proactive role in ensuring that principals maintain enthusiasm and passion for the work. Future study should also consider investigating the factors that relate to principal contract renewal decisions and principal performance.

## **Chapter II**

### **Issues Relating to Dismissal of Poor Performing Teachers**

A study of current literature focuses on a number of issues relating to dismissal of poor performing teachers and the barriers encountered by principals. Literature is broken into the following topics:

- a. Legal Accountability of Schools and Student Achievement
- b. Educator Quality and Appraisal
- c. Contract Renewal Decisions and Due Process
- d. Outcome Variables: Barriers to Dismissal
- e. Predicting Variables: Principal and School Characteristics

- a. Legal Accountability of Schools and Student Achievement

The primary interest of this study is to determine which principal and school characteristics predict the presence of barriers to dismissal of poor-performing teachers. To clearly outline the importance of dismissing poor-performing teachers, it is necessary to describe the manner in which schools are legally accountable for student performance. Darling-Hammond (1997) notes that levels of student achievement in a school are contingent on the quality of teachers it employs. Using data from more the 2.5 million students, Chetty, et al. (2012) show that the value added by growth on tests can be used as a demonstrator of teacher quality. They also note that: “When a high value-added (top

5%) teacher enters a school, end-of-school-year test scores in the grade he or she teaches rise immediately... . . .students assigned to such high value-added teachers are more likely to go to college, earn higher incomes, and less likely to be teenage mothers”. However, not all students are fortunate enough to have a teacher performing at high levels. With four out of five districts indicating in the *Schools and Staffing Survey* that all teachers received contract renewals in the previous year, it seems like there is reasonable cause for concern. From the standpoint of student preparedness and federal accountability, schools must ensure that all students receive the best educational experience possible.

Since 2001, the success of schools has been measured by their ability to make “adequate yearly progress” on a state assessment. “No-Child-Left-Behind” was the name given to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 2001. NCLB’s purpose as an act is: “To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind” (NCLB, 2002). Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets are determined by each state with the end mandate being that all students perform at a level of “proficient” by 2014. If schools fail to meet AYP repeatedly, an improvement process ensues and includes potential sanctions at different intervals. As a corrective action, NCLB also calls for the termination of staff members who are “relevant to the failure of a school to make AYP” (NCLB, 2002). Unfortunately, the amount of time it can take an administrator to remove an inadequate tenured teacher from duty can take longer than the time preceding a state takeover or school restructuring. White (1997) reports that a New York School Board Association study

found that teacher dismissal proceedings took an average of 455 days... far longer than it may take for a school to be placed on “improvement” for sub-par student achievement.

In addition to the primary mandate of ensuring schools make AYP, NCLB requires that “highly-qualified” teachers be present in every school classroom. Tucker and Stronge (2005) argue for the inclusion of performance characteristics being added to the “credentialing” portion of what it means to be “highly qualified”: “According to the legislation, “highly-qualified” teachers are defined as those who hold at least a bachelor’s degree, are fully licensed or certified by the state in the subjects they teach, and can demonstrate competence in the subjects they teach. While licensure or certification is a significant indicator of teacher quality, these factors alone are insufficient for teacher effectiveness. [Teacher effectiveness] includes dispositions and an array of planning, organizational, instructional, and assessment skills... A “highly qualified” teacher is certainly a good starting point, but most of us would want our child to have a highly effective teacher whose teaching effort yields high rates of student learning.” No-Child-Left-Behind makes no provision as to how a school is to go about removing teachers that are failing to improve student outcomes. In fact, No-Child-Left-Behind (NCLB) specifically states that no part of NCLB should be construed “to alter or otherwise affect the rights, remedies, and procedures afforded schools or school district employees under Federal, State, or local laws ... or under the terms of collective bargaining agreements, memoranda of understanding, or other agreements between such employees and their employers.” (NCLB 1116(d) and USDOE, 2002).



There are indications that some characteristics of current law will be amended with re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In September, 2011, the United States Department of Education began accepting waiver requests for states seeking flexibility from the targets of Adequate Yearly Progress. In early February, 2012, ten of the eleven waivers submitted had been granted. Although state tenure laws are not directly linked to the reauthorization of ESEA, consistent, growth-oriented data systems that measure student growth disaggregated by teacher and principal are cited as priority in the waivers and revisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In 2012, the state of Kansas re-submitted a waiver to be granted flexibility in the accountability outcomes required by NCLB. This waiver consisted of school improvement outcomes attached to three principles: (1) College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students, (2) State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support, and (3) Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership. Principle 3 focused on evaluation systems for principals and teachers, which includes student growth outcomes as measurable objectives.

Although preliminary, these changes bring us back to the key issue of this work. When the topics of school accountability and student achievement are prevalent in the school community, why do so few principals attempt to remove teachers that research (Weisberg, et al, 2009) indicates they acknowledge are “incompetent” or “poor performing”?

## b. Educator Quality and Appraisal

Educator quality and appraisal are important elements to understand when considering contract decisions for teachers. Darling-Hammond (1997) cites large-sample research by Ferguson (1991) in which she “found that teacher’s experiences – as measured by scores on a licensing examination, master’s degrees, and experience – accounted for about 40% of the measured variance in student’s reading and mathematics achievement at grades 1 through 11, more than any other single factor”. Using large-scale NAEP data, Wenglinsky (2000) finds that the classroom practices of teachers are most largely responsible for variations in student achievement. Wright et al., (1997) notes: “if the teacher is ineffective, students under that teacher’s tutelage will achieve inadequate progress academically...”. Furthermore, “students assigned to ineffective teachers continue to show the effects of such teachers even when these students are assigned to very effective teachers in subsequent years” (Sanders and Horn, 1998).

Simply put, on one end of the spectrum, we have good teachers who do good things for kids. On the other, we have poor-performing or incompetent teachers. Alexander and Alexander (2009) define teacher incompetence in the context of “fitness to teach”: “fitness to teach is essential and contains a broad range of factors...lack of knowledge of subject matter, lack of discipline, unreasonable discipline, unprofessional conduct, and willful neglect of duty”. McCarthy and Cambron-McCabe (1987) define

incompetency as: "lack of ability, legal qualifications, or fitness to discharge the required duty."

Bridges (1992), Lavelly, Berger, and Follman (1992), and Tucker (2001) have noted that the percentage of "incompetent" teachers, in comparison to the population, is between 5-15%. At the same time, teachers are non-renewed at a rate of less than 1%, annually (Painter, 2000). If barely 1% of tenured teachers are released from contracts, it cannot be reasonably asserted that the 98-99% of remaining teachers are high performing (Bridges, 1994). Additionally, most states' tenure statute(s) currently lack the inclusive use of student data and prevent the termination of any teacher who is simply "average".

Educator quality is most directly evaluated using a local personnel appraisal process. Some states include elements of this process in statutory language. Other states allow local school boards to define the method in which administrators will appraise staff members. In Kansas, local chapters of the National Education Association collectively bargain with school boards to define the parameters of the evaluation process. A recent emphasis has been placed on attaching teacher evaluation to compensation or other benefits. Jacob (2010) found that districts with "pay for performance" policies also take a more direct path to non-renewing poor-performing teachers. Figlio and Kenny (2007) note that in addition to pay incentives encouraging teachers to do a "good job", the threat of dismissal may also be a powerful incentive. Hanushek, et.al (1999) suggests that the connection between traditional teacher pay and quality is thin. However, teacher

evaluation in most districts is not related to compensation, or even the likelihood that poor-performing teachers are dismissed (Weisberg, 2009).

A recent dissertation by Megan Hollingsworth Ferchen (2011) is focused on determining what teacher characteristics constitute an “incompetent” teacher. In order to do this, she analyzed performance-based teacher evaluation documents from fourteen school districts each within thirty miles of Kansas City, Missouri as well as case law on the topic. All of the evaluation systems considered “student success” as the primary purpose of teacher evaluation. She found that most followed a model provided by the state in which they exist. For example, she cites the Missouri state evaluation philosophy that states:

“A performance-based teacher evaluation system is critical to improving student knowledge and performance. Performance-based teacher evaluation is intended to assist administrators and teachers in creating a learning environment in which students acquire and apply knowledge and skills” (Missouri Performance-based Teacher Evaluation Guide).

In general, she found that the evaluation standards used to measure teacher quality were often similar but also considered by the researcher to be largely subjective. The common standards for performance were: (1) Planning and Preparation, (2) Instruction Processes, (3) Assessment, (4) Classroom Environment and Management, (5) Professional Responsibilities, (6) Interpersonal Relationships, and (7) Professional Development. Her research identifies an interesting point; each of the evaluation protocols reviewed

discussed the positive traits districts want to see in teachers. However, in cases where teachers are dismissed for “incompetence”, the burden of proof falls on districts to show actual acts of “incompetence”; not necessarily just the fact that the teacher wasn’t able to demonstrate competency on an evaluation tool. Dr. Ferchen’s review of the literature found very little research specifically on the topic of teacher incompetence. Her review of case law indicated that: “competency in all of the above areas isn’t necessarily required. Teachers may fail to meet the expectations in one or more of the areas discussed, but he or she isn’t incompetent until they’ve been given warnings, been placed on assistance plans, worked alongside a mentor, and still not made improvements within the 90-day remediation period. Teachers dismissed for reasons of incompetency must be repeat offenders – they must consistently fail to meet expectations.”

Typically, teachers are supervised and evaluated by a building-level administrator, or principal. Although other groups, such as boards of education, parents, and district administrators may influence a teacher’s evaluation, *Schools and Staffing Survey* (2007-2008) data shows that principals believe they have a stronger influence on evaluation than any other group. On a scale of 1-4, 1 representing “No influence” and 4 representing “Major Influence”, principals rated themselves at a 3.94:

Influence of Various Groups on Teacher Evaluation						
State Board of Education	Local Board of Education	District Staff	Principal	Teachers	Curriculum Specialist	Parent Groups
2.4206	2.5848	2.6983	3.939	2.6283	2.2576	1.7946

**Table 1: Schools and Staffing Survey, 2007**

Two types of evaluation occur; formative and summative. Scriven (1967) generated these terms as contrasting forms of evaluation or assessment. Formative evaluation is designed to gather information from which decisions regarding improvement can be made. An evaluator observes practice and provides feedback in order for the teacher to learn and grow. Fullan (2001) notes that the purpose of formative teacher evaluation is to produce shared knowledge through interaction, so that teachers can solve real-world problems. Summative feedback provides a final judgment that is used to formally fulfill the evaluation process. As summative evaluation is most directly related to contract decisions, it is also related to the barriers discussed within this work. Formal summative evaluation should capture the totality of a teacher's work and be used for improvement purposes.

Charlotte Danielson (2002) divided teaching into four domains: 1) planning and preparation, 2) classroom environment, 3) instruction, and 4) professional responsibilities. She asserts that each of these should be considered when designing a model for summative teacher evaluation. Many school districts, like the Chicago Public Schools, have adopted Danielson's framework as the basis for their teacher evaluation program. Published by the American Federation of Teachers, Harvard professor Susan Johnson writes in support of having a consistent, performance-based evaluation model like Danielson's: "Principals have too many responsibilities. Evaluation procedures are too detailed and daunting. Administrators are reluctant to confront poor teachers. The effort is wasted since unions will protect teachers facing dismissal with costly arbitrations

or court cases. Such explanations, often untested, become weak excuses for not taking action. Inevitably, however, underlying this low dismissal rate is a poor—or poorly used—evaluation system. Teachers who repeatedly fail to do a good job should be given detailed feedback and advice about how to improve. If they don't make rapid and steady progress, they should be dismissed”.

Identification of marginal-performing educators is an essential consideration when considering a proactive approach to contract decisions. This identification also triggers a formal improvement process that is necessary when seeking non-renewal for cause. In a comprehensive study of 20,000 teachers, Bridges (1992) cites research by Digilio (1984) in which only .003 percent of the teaching body was classified as being less than “satisfactory” on formal observations while 44.6 percent were classified as “outstanding”. He goes on to note that “supervisor ratings and observations” are the most frequently reported tool that school districts use to identify incompetent teachers. As research has reported that the actual percentage of incompetent teachers is between 5-15 percent, if only .003 percent of teachers are classified as being less than satisfactory, this measure doesn't suggest much hope for removal of poor performing teachers (Bridges, 1992, Lavelly, Berger, and Follman, 1992, and Tucker, 2001).

Jacob and Lefgren (2008) assert that “...if principals had greater autonomy with regard to hiring and promotion decisions, there is some evidence that they would be able to distinguish between the most and least effective teachers in their buildings. They found that school administrators are successful in evaluating teachers who are considered low

performing using typical criteria, such as observation results, number of parent complaints, and frequency of parent requests for that teacher. Additionally, they determined that the positive or negative perception held by the principal correlated to the likelihood that a particular teacher produces positive or negative trends in student achievement when using a value-added method (Jacob & Lefgren, 2008). However, in 2010, Jacob wrote that “...few studies have examined how principals hire or fire teachers, or how changes in personnel policies might influence teacher quality.”

### c. Contract Renewal Decisions and Due Process

As the barriers to dismissal cited by principals deal with “time” and “effort”, this section addresses factors relating to contract renewal decisions and the context in which they are made. In essence, this section outlines the most “time” and “effort” laden steps in the dismissal process.

Following the evaluation process, if an administrator identifies a teacher as “poor-performing”, he/she must make a decision about that person’s job renewal or placement within the school system. Doing essentially nothing with evaluation results is one option. Acting on those that are poor is another. Research suggests that the struggle in non-renewing tenured teachers causes many schools to simply choose to move these individuals to non-tested or less desirable placements (Toch, 1996). Bridges (1994) considers this practice to be an “escape hatch” for incompetence. Transfers between



schools, placement in a roving substitute pool, or re-assignments to non-teaching positions are all considered to be passive ways of tolerating incompetence. If an administrator decides to deal with incompetence by recommending dismissal, a series of processes must ensue. Within these processes, the barriers to dismissal cited by principals become apparent. Of the barriers to dismissal posed in the *Schools and Staffing Survey*, most are ultimately characteristics or byproducts of due process. When looking at the specific legal requirements of due process, “union presence”, “tenure”, “length of time”, and “effort required” are each present.

Although this work focuses on barriers related to dismissal of tenured teachers, it is important to point out the distinction between contract renewal practices for non-tenured versus tenured teachers. Due process is constitutionally required for tenured teachers since an expectation to employment exists and is thus protected by the Fourteenth amendment. Two widely cited U.S. Supreme Court cases, *Perry v. Sindermann (1972)*, and *Board of Regents v. Roth (1972)*, deal with constitutional ramifications of due process rights afforded to teachers. In *Roth*, it was affirmed that non-tenured individuals are not generally entitled to due process since there is no liberty or property interest in continued employment. In *Sindermann*, the Supreme Court yielded a different finding as a pattern of issuing a new one-year contract had occurred each year. Although he was not “tenured”, his University had a policy and practiced the continued renewal of contracts as long as the employee’s performance was satisfactory. When Sindermann’s contract was not renewed, the University issued a press release describing

incidents of insubordination that could have posed a threat to Sindermann's "liberty" when searching for a new job. Thus, the Supreme Court determined that due process was required.

For non-tenured or "probationary" teachers, contracts can be non-renewed for any constitutionally permissible reason. In Kansas, non-tenured teachers must simply be notified in writing of the board's decision to non-renew by May 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year (Kansas Statute 72-5437). If the new teacher is not notified of a decision to non-renew his/her contract, tenure is given upon issuance of the fourth continued contract by the school district in which the person has been employed during previous contract years. If a teacher moves districts, in Kansas, statute offers tenure protection after two additional years of employment. As noted above, if the school fails to notify the teacher of non-renewal before the date listed in statute, in some situations, tenure has been issued even before the fourth contract has been signed.

A tenured teacher can only be terminated for cause. In general, states consider some specific areas of performance to be considered "just cause" for termination. Commission of a crime, negligence, insubordination, and incompetence typically arise as general terms to describe grounds for termination. It is the demonstration and measurement of these terms that is the basis for argument in due process proceedings.

Once a recommendation for termination is made to the board, due process is executed. It includes very detailed and often lengthy steps, thus involving large amount of time and effort. Due process includes the requirement of notice, a fair hearing, and the

opportunity for appeal. In Kansas, due process specifications are clearly outlined in state statute. The teacher must receive written notice including a statement of reason for the termination. Once notice is received, the teacher has a right to be heard by a hearing officer and can exercise that right by filing a notice with the board within 15 days of the original notice. Only the reasons (i.e.: incompetence) included in the notice can be used as evidence by the Board. Notice is a required component of the process so that the teacher can have ample opportunity to prepare a defense.

Once a teacher files notice to request a hearing, the commissioner of education (or other state-appointed official) is charged with providing the teacher with a list of qualified hearing officers. Kansas statute even goes so far as to describe the method to be used for determining who the hearing officer is; both the teacher and the school board essentially eliminate names from the original list until an officer is selected. In place of this, both parties can agree that the American Arbitration Association be charged with appointing an arbitrator to serve as a hearing officer. Once a hearing officer is selected, the actual hearing must take place within 45 calendar days.

In *Gillett v. U.S.D. No. 276* (1980), the court summarizes the theory of statutory language surrounding the hearing process: "The purpose of the due process hearing granted to a teacher by statute is to develop the grounds that have induced the board to give the teacher notice of its desire to discontinue her services, and to afford the teacher an opportunity to test the good faith and sufficiency of the notice. The hearing must be fair and just, conducted in good faith, and dominated throughout by a sincere effort to

ascertain whether good cause exists for the notice given. If it does not, or if the hearing was a mere sham, then justification for the board of education's action is lacking."

During the hearing, the following six components fulfill the requirements of due process: (1) each party has the right to be represented by counsel of their choosing; (2) each side may cross-examine the other; (3) each side may present witnesses; (4) the teacher may testify on his/her own behalf; (5) the hearing is held in an orderly fashion; (6) the result is one that is fair, unbiased, and based on evidence presented during the hearing (KS Statute 72-5439). *U.S.D. No. 434 v. Hubbard* (1994) outlines the due process hearing as a fact finding meeting where the committee is charged with: "... deciding if: (1) the committee's decision was within the scope of its authority; (2) the committee's decision was supported by substantial evidence; and (3) the committee did not act fraudulently, arbitrarily, or capriciously".

As an agent of the board, a school administrator assumes the responsibility of demonstrating the cause for which a teacher was non-renewed. In order for an administrator to demonstrate "cause", documentation is often provided in form of letters to the teacher, copies of evaluations, or testimony by witnesses. In addition to examples of the teacher's failure to perform, documentation of the teacher's opportunity to remediate his/her performance is required. Following the decision of the school board or hearing panel, the teacher (or the Board) has the right to appeal either to a state educational agency or some other administrative panel. Other appeals are heard by a court of law.

*U.S.D. No. 500 v. Robinson* (1996) describes the attempt by an elementary teacher to be reinstated following dismissal for failure to plan and conduct lessons and maintain an orderly environment conducive to learning. Following an intensive intervention period mandated by the district in hopes to improve the teacher's performance, the decision was made to non-renew the contract. The initial hearing officer found that the district did not have the substantial evidence to support its claim that the teacher failed to plan for and implement lessons and maintain an orderly environment conducive to learning. Instead, the district's testimony was framed with general terms to describe the teacher's performance, such as "substandard" and "mediocre" and "incompetent". These general terms did not support the burden of proof placed on the district, resulting in a finding for re-instatement of the teacher. The hearing officer's decision was supported by the district court, overruled by the court of appeals, and finally supported once again by the Supreme Court of Kansas finding that the officer acted within the scope of his duty and considered only facts appropriate to the case.

Due process is a fundamental constitutional right essential to life in the United States. It ensures that a school administrator may not act in an arbitrary and capricious manner when dismissing a tenured teacher. However, it clearly can take a great deal of time and effort, thus resulting as a barrier to dismissal of poor-performing teachers.

#### d. Outcome Variables: Barriers to Dismissal

Outcome variables in this category relate to the presence of tenure, time required to dismiss a teacher, effort required for documentation when dismissing a teacher, and the presence of unions/collective bargaining. Of the barriers available to principals on the *Schools and Staffing Survey*, these were the most commonly cited as being present. This category of variables is essential in offering the most direct answers to the question of which principal and school characteristics predict the barriers cited.

Research cited in this work expressed that principals actually have historically non-renewed very few teachers while suggesting that the number of poor-performers was actually much higher than the number terminated (Bridges, 1994). Tucker (1997) notes factors that describe principals' reluctance to non-renew including: discomfort with confrontation, lack of skills, role conflict between assistance and summative judgment, inadequate time, lack of central office support, and lack of financial resources. Others may be hesitant due to the cost involved. Dawson & Billingsley (2000) write of a district where costs to dismiss a tenured teacher were in excess of \$300,000. Bridges (1992) interviewed district administrators in the 1980s and found, even then, that districts expected to pay \$50,000 for a single dismissal, with some proceedings costing upwards of \$200,000. In a study for the New York School Boards Association, White (1997) updated these costs noting that dismissals cost an average of \$177,000 in 1994. If the case was appealed, the cost jumped to \$317,000.

In addition to the time, effort, and financial burden, some principals may simply avoid dismissal because they lack the competence or assertiveness to undertake the process. Bridges (1994) suggests that principals are simply not confrontational enough to instigate the process. Mitiello, et al. (2009) states: “Beyond the personnel and financial investment necessary to whether legal challenges, lawsuits are also on the minds of public school administrators as they make changes to both school and district policy as well as their daily practice”. They also address a concerning body of research that needs to resolve the issue of Principal’s lacking legal knowledge. Mitiello, et. al. (2009) notes that additional research is necessary to determine why many principals are uninformed or misinformed about student and teacher rights.

*Schools and Staffing Survey* data includes a measure of whether union presence is a factor in the given district. Both teacher unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), were part of the movement toward tenure laws as collective bargaining became widespread in the 1960’s (Carini, 2008). In many cases, these labor unions negotiate with school districts to define the due process requirements outlined in state statute. Labor unions also represent members in the case of a potential firing. Considerable evidence suggests that union contracts constrain principals’ autonomy to manage their corps of teachers (Johnson, 1984). In particular, it is difficult for principals to remove incompetent teachers under union contracts. The procedural hurdles to remove a teacher can be extensive (Carini, 2008). Of the barriers to

dismissal cited by principals when completing *Schools and Staffing Surveys*, “union presence” was the second most frequently identified, after “tenure” (Table 3).

e. Predictive Variables: Principal and School Characteristics

Predictive variables in this study indicate the likelihood that principals identified a barrier to dismissal. Principals and school characteristics were selected for inclusion based on one of two reasons: 1) past research has anecdotally cited certain characteristics as related to teacher termination decisions; 2) based on experience in the field, the researcher believed that some barriers to dismissal may have an inherent relationship to certain principal characteristics. For example, a principal who finds the “effort required” involved in dismissal proceedings to be a barrier likely will report low job satisfaction levels. This proved to be the case. On the whole, there is remarkably little research connecting characteristics of principals to their behaviors when making contract decisions. *Schools and Staffing Survey* data includes variables that can be combined into common groups. Groups include: principal and school characteristics, principal job satisfaction elements, and influence on evaluation by various stakeholders. In this work, each group of variables is given a base in relevant literature prior to further examination through data analysis.



### *Principal and School Characteristics*

Variables in this category address a variety of principal-specific characteristics as well as characteristics specific to school sites. They express a relationship between items such as principals participating in professional development, presence of collective bargaining, and degree to which “academic excellence is a top priority” in the respective school. Essentially, they define some of the characteristics that came up in literature as being related to the personnel decisions. Little empirical research exists on the characteristics selected and their impact on non-renewal barriers.

Data points are included that measure the length of contracts and salary ranges for principals. A review of the literature did not generate any supporting documentation of a relationship between contract length and contract decisions. In fact, multiple searches of Wilson Omnifile, Academic Search Premier, Project MUSE, and Google Scholar were completed using the search terms “school+principal+compensation” and “school+principal+pay”. Not only was there an absence of literature related to principal compensation and barriers to dismissal, but a simple absence of literature related to principal pay. Other than the occasional narrative arguing for better pay in order to reduce principal turn over, the relevant literature is sparse. It is clear that principals are typically issued pay based on an approach more aligned to market demands and less aligned to a traditional teacher “salary schedule”.

Other principal characteristics included measured the amount of time a principal has been practicing as well as whether he/she participated in a training program for new

principals. Research expressed concerning data on the amount of time spent training principals in topics relevant to their ability to remove poor-performing teachers. In a large scale study of principal training programs, Hess and Kelly (2007) note that: “Of 360 course weeks devoted to personnel management, just 12 weeks mentioned teacher dismissal and nine mentioned teacher compensation.” “Just 2 percent of 2,424 course weeks addressed accountability in the context of school management or school improvement, and less than 5 percent included instruction on managing school improvement via data, technology, or empirical research.” It might be assumed that principals with more experience or previous managerial experience would be more likely to avoid barriers of dismissal. However, Jacob (2010) notes that older principals are less likely than younger principals to dismiss teachers.

In addition to the range of quality in principal-preparation programs, school districts approach the topic of in-house professional development for principals in varied manners. Interestingly, 98% of the principals completing a *Schools and Staffing Survey* indicated that they participated in professional development in the previous year (*Schools and Staffing Survey*, 2008). Marzano and Waters (2009) describe the essential relationship between district and building-level administration. The high percentage of principals who participated suggests that districts are aware of the importance of new learning for administrators. The University Council for Education Administration published work by Peterson, (2002) who writes of the importance of professional development for principals. Like much of the other research, Peterson summarizes

recommended professional development models put forth by the National Center for Staff Development among other leading organizations. Little attention is given to topics frequently used when teaching principals. Future research might take a look at the topics chosen by districts for principal professional development and the degree of their alignment to items principals consider weaknesses or barriers to their work. SASS data will show a promising connection between the principals who participated in professional development and their view on barriers to dismissal.

Two variables are included which rate the relative focus on student-achievement. School “improvement” status was measured to indicate whether a school with poor student performance on NCLB-required assessments relates to barriers to dismissal. Additionally, we included a weighted data point expressing the degree to which a principal named “encouraging academic excellence” as his or her top goal. Given the emphasis placed on school personnel to document student achievement, the job of the school administrator has clearly moved from a management position to one that requires “instructional leadership”. For Principals to enact real change and improve the quality of schooling, one would hope that the majority of Principals would suggest that “encouraging academic excellence” is a top priority.

### *Job Satisfaction Variables*

Research shows that school principals with high job efficacy have a great impact on student performance (Robinson, et.al., 2008). However, data will show that some

principals do not like their job in general, or at least dislike specific parts of it. In these instances, principals who lacked job satisfaction also faced more barriers to removing poor performing teachers in their buildings. Variables in this category measure the degree to which the principalship is perceived to be stressful, the staff dissatisfied, district management poor, and the principal generally displeased and too tired to do the job well. In essence, they rate job satisfaction.

There is a definite pattern in the data showing a strong relationship between principals lacking enthusiasm to do the job and an increase in the presence of non-renewal barriers. Whether those with high levels of enthusiasm confidently deal with issues of low performance, thus reducing barriers, or those who simply happen not to have any barriers also happen to be more enthusiastic, a clear relationship exists. Variables in this category are coded as (0=No, 1=Yes) to identify when a principal has a negative outlook on a characteristic of their job. This set of variables yielded some of the strongest empirical conclusions of this work. At the same time, there is remarkably little research available on the topic of principal job satisfaction and struggle with dismissal barriers. This area will be one in which future research should focus.

#### *Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation*

This group of predictive variables measures the effect of various groups' influence on teacher evaluation. Principals responded to questions regarding these groups by indicating whether they had "no influence" up to "major influence" on teacher evaluation

in each respective school. Of the outcome variables, “tenure, union presence, effort required, and length of time required” all exist due to the influence of groups and/or issues typically outside of the principal’s office. One might assume that the “length of time” or “effort” required is a direct result of procedures or obstacles posed by district, state, or political bodies. As teacher evaluation is closely related to the steps necessary to remove a poor performing teacher, it is important to look at factors related to appraisal.

Conclusions in this area will be interesting; across all four dependent variables, involvement in evaluation by teachers decreased the presence of barriers. This supports the notion that teachers, although a highly unionized group, know very well that poor-performers negatively impact the ability of schools to make the level of progress potentially attainable.

### Chapter III Methods

*Schools and Staffing Survey* data is collected by the National Center for Education Statistics. Data is collected from district administrators, individual schools, principals, and teachers. This is done every four years so that longitudinal trends can be investigated. In this work, specific data from both the School district survey and the Principal survey is analyzed. Datasets from the School and Principal surveys were combined using school ID. *Stata 10* was used to run analyses. Table 9 following this paper lists each variable, code name, variable type, and explanation of the purpose for inclusion. Sample sizes and response rates provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics are offered below:

Schools and Staffing Survey Sample Sizes and Response Rates		
<u>Survey</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>	<u>Response Rate</u>
Public School District	5,250	87.8
Public School	9,800	80.4
Public School Principal	9,800	79.4

**Table 2: Schools and Staffing Survey, 2007**

As noted, the principal questioner included a list of “barriers to dismissal” each principal faced when considering non-renewal of a poor performing teacher. Of the barriers listed on the *Schools and Staffing Survey*, the following percentages of principals

viewed each as an issue when attempting to terminate contracts of poor performing teachers:

Items Viewed as Barriers to Dismissal of Poor-performing Teachers			
		<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Personnel policies	Yes	3,743	50.18
	No	3,716	49.82
Termination decisions not upheld	Yes	1,463	19.61
	No	5,996	80.39
Length of time required for termination process	Yes	4,527	60.69
	No	2,932	39.31
Effort required for documentation	Yes	5,001	67.05
	No	2,458	32.95
Tight deadlines for completing documentation	Yes	2,667	35.76
	No	4,792	64.24
Tenure	Yes	5,280	70.79
	No	2,179	29.21
Teacher associations or unions	Yes	4,675	62.68
	No	2,784	37.32
Dismissal is too stressful and/or uncomfortable for you	Yes	1,089	14.6
	No	6,370	85.4
Difficulty in obtaining suitable replacements	Yes	1,656	22.2
	No	5,803	77.8
Resistance from parents	Yes	353	4.73
	No	7,106	95.27

**Table 3: Schools and Staffing Survey, 2007**

Of these, the majority of Principals viewed “length of time”, “effort required for documentation”, “tenure”, and “teacher unions” to be the primary barriers to dismissal. These barriers are used to complete an analysis of the relationship between barriers and principal/school characteristics. It is important to note that these variables are each considered as independent factors principals subjectively cited as barriers to dismissal of poor-performing or incompetent teachers. A factor analysis of these variables is not included in this study. Barriers cited may have interrelated effects; for instance, the presence of tenure may inherently involve increased time and effort on behalf of a principal. Again, this work views each of the barriers as independent factors.

We began by correlating principal characteristics with each of these barriers in an attempt to identify characteristics that predict the presence of each “barrier”. Based on each characteristic, we determine the degree to which the independent variables result in an increase or decrease in the likelihood of “barriers” to dismissal. Logistical regression with an “odds ratio” factor was used for analysis. This model allows for the researcher to estimate how various predictors (principal characteristics) estimate the likelihood that a certain outcome variable (presence of barriers to dismissal). The “odds ratio” suggests that a one-unit increase in the measure of an independent variable results in a certain likelihood (represented here as percentages) that the unit increase results in the barrier being present. A hypothetical odds ratio of 1 would indicate that no difference exists between the groups. For example, Table 5 indicates that males (Variable: Is the subject male? Yes=1, No=0) are 6% (Odds ratio of 1.06) more likely to view “tenure” as a



barrier to dismissal than females, the other group measured in this variable. An odds ratio model was used in order to offer the ability to identify that certain characteristics actually predict the likelihood that a principal demonstrating particular characteristic would view a certain variable as a barrier.

As the primary interest of this work was to determine which characteristics of principals impacted their perception of barriers to dismissal, three models were run for each dependent variable. Model 1 includes only principal/school characteristics; model 2 includes principal/school characteristics and principal job satisfaction variables; model 3 includes principal/school characteristics, principal job satisfaction characteristics, and variables representing the influence of various groups on teacher evaluation. By running three separate models, we are able to determine whether certain principal characteristics are present in the presence (or absence) of other variables such as the job satisfaction or evaluation influence variables. Even with the inclusion of multiple models, results were very similar overall. Discrepancies between models which may be of interest to school administrators are disaggregated in the “findings” section.

Significance levels were tested at three levels,  $p < 0.010$ ,  $p < 0.050$ , and  $p < 0.1$ . These are represented in the data tables and only data presented at the  $p < 0.05$  level will be considered in the “findings”, and “conclusions” section.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

Data is presented in four sections; one for each outcome variable. In each section, the principal/school characteristics of interest are evaluated. Given the non-linear nature of some of the included variables, logistic regression using an “odds ratio” is used here to generalize the likelihood (or “odds”) that one value predicts presence of the outcome variable. In this dataset, predicting variables are included when resulting in a 15% (or greater) increase or decrease in the likelihood that a barrier be present. A natural break in the data was noticed between predictive barriers that had little or no effect, and those resulting in at least a 15% increase or decrease that the barrier to dismissal is present. Thus, conclusions are discussed when the relationship between the values is at least 15% across models. As few of the predicting variables were significantly more and less predictive of a barrier to dismissal being present across each model, odds ratios presented in the analysis below are computed while including all predicting variables. For variables that showed significance in one or two of the models, discussion is offered.

In this section, each barrier to dismissal of “poor performing or incompetent” teachers is analyzed separately. A summary table offering trends across each of the barriers to dismissal is offered in Chapter 5.

a. Tenure

Tenure	1.2876	0.0022											
		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3					
	Mean	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Beta	O.R.			
Principal/school characteristics													
Subject is Male	0.4728	0.0441	0.1605 ***	1.174	0.039	0.1741 ***	1.19	0.0399188	0.06	1.0632			
Presence of collective bargaining or meet and confer relationship	1.3085	0.0368	0.4908 ***	1.634	0.039	0.4662 ***	1.59	0.0399633	0.42 ***	1.5168			
Number of years principal spent teaching	13.1003	0.0027	0.0063 **	1.006	0.003	0.0133 ***	1.01	0.0029375	0.01 ***	1.0132			
Principal participated in training for aspiring Principals	0.6787	0.0415	-0.074 *	0.928	0.43	-0.1095 **	0.9	0.0439073	-0.1 *	0.9248			
Principal participated in Professional Development	0.9847	0.2287	0.9922 ***	0.371	0.234	-0.8538 ***	0.43	0.2360487	-1 ***	0.3769			
Years as Principal - Total	7.6904	0.0034	0.0211 ***	1.021	0.004	0.0227 ***	1.02	0.0035184	0.02 ***	1.0234			
Years as Principal - This school	4.1389	0.0053	-0.025 ***	0.976	0.006	-0.0399 ***	0.96	0.0057228	-0 ***	0.9603			
Previous management experience	0.4341	0.036	-0.025	0.976	0.037	0.0383	0.96	0.0386721	0.05	1.0485			
Highest degree earned by Principal	4.4181	0.0251	-0.108 ***	0.898	0.026	-0.1243 ***	0.88	0.0270555	-0.2 ***	0.831			
Master's degree or higher in Ed Admin?	0.8386	0.0519	-0.328 ***	0.72	0.054	-0.1544 ***	0.86	0.0561184	-0.1	0.9169			
Principal stated that encouraging academic excellence is top priority	0.7	0.038	0.4061 ***	1.501	0.093	0.4745 ***	1.61	0.0400718	0.47 ***	1.5982			
School is "on improvement"	1.3045	0.0389	0.0309	1.031	0.041	0.0245	1.03	0.0419133	0.08 *	1.0796			
Number of total suspensions during the past year	127.3481	0	0 **	1	0	0.0001 **	1	0.0000481	0 *	1.0796			
Total number of weekly hours worked by Principal	61.3568	0.0013	0.0084 ***	1.008	0.001	0.0104 ***	1.01	0.0013974	0.01 ***	1.0001			
Percent of students receiving a free/reduced meal	0.43	0.0636	-0.067	0.936	0.065	-0.0682	0.93	0.0667559	-0.1 *	1.0098			
Job satisfaction variables													
Principalship is stressful	0.208				0.049	-0.2293 ***	0.8	0.0510109	-0.2 ***	0.7826			
Staff is dissatisfied	0.0948				0.057	-0.125 **	0.88	0.058778	-0.2 ***	0.839			
Do not like way district is run	0.288				0.039	-0.0995 **	0.91	0.0402751	-0.1 ***	0.8844			
Wants to leave education	0.2276				0.048	0.178 ***	1.19	0.0499604	0.28 ***	1.3297			
Lacks enthusiasm	0.2853				0.048	0.903 ***	2.47	0.04954	0.89 ***	2.4246			
Wants to transfer schools	0.1909				0.054	0.5068 ***	1.66	0.0558031	0.53 ***	1.6971			
Too tired to work	0.1295				0.06	0.0024	1	0.0611942	-0	0.9618			
Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation													
State Department	2.4206							0.0218899	0.08 ***	1.0885			
School Board	2.5848							0.01912	0.19 ***	1.2149			
District staff	2.6983							0.0213629	0.06 ***	1.0579			
Principals	3.939							0.071943	0.47 ***	1.5937			
Teachers	2.6283							0.0184152	-0.2 ***	0.8549			
Curriculum Specialist	2.2576							0.019438	0.07 ***	1.068			
Parent groups	1.7946							0.0190863	-0.3 ***	0.7284			
(cons)		0.2757	1.5368		0.282	0.8855		0.4102701	-0.5				
	*** p<0.010												
	** p<0.050												
	* p<0.100												

Table 5: Tenure

“Tenure” represents a barrier that principals cited being present when dismissing “poor performing or incompetent teachers”. Of the barriers listed on the survey, it was the most commonly cited barrier to dismissal of poor-performing teachers. Affirmative

responses to the following predictive variables was most directly related to an increase in “tenure” being a barrier:

- Presence of collective bargaining (52% increase)
- Encouraging academic excellence is a top priority (60% increase)
- Principal wants to leave education (32% increase)
- Principal lacks enthusiasm (142% increase)
- Principal wants to transfer schools (70% increase)
- School board influences teacher evaluation (21% increase)
- Principal influences teacher evaluation (59% increase)

Affirmative responses to the following predictive variables was most directly related to a decrease in “tenure” being a barrier:

- Principal participated in professional development (64% decrease)
- Principalship is stressful (22% decrease)
- Teachers influence teacher evaluation (15% decrease)
- Parent groups influence teacher evaluation (27% decrease)

It is likely common sense to believe that the Principals who lack enthusiasm, want to leave education, or leave a particular school are most likely to deal with barriers to doing the job well. Dismissal of poor-performing teachers is probably no exception. It is hard work and exacerbated by the presence of tenure. That said, principals acknowledging that the job is stressful were less likely to see tenure as a barrier. This makes sense; even Principals who actively dismiss poor-performing teachers would likely say the process is stressful. It might also be noted that Principals who have successfully combated the barrier of tenure experienced stress by engaging in the process.

School boards and principals influencing the evaluation process cause tenure to be viewed as more of a barrier. It was common for school boards' influence to be related to the presence of other barriers analyzed in this project. However, an increase in principals' influence on teacher evaluation was only related to an increase in presence of the "tenure" variable. One possible explanation might be that the principals who found tenure to be a barrier happened to be those who successfully non-renewed poor performers and thus know the importance of proper evaluation procedures. Principals were less likely to see tenure as a barrier when teachers and parent groups influenced evaluation. Perhaps the involvement of teacher and parent groups in the evaluation process is greater in regions where tenure is less prevalent.

Of all the independent variables, participation in professional development leads to the greatest decrease of the dependent variables being seen as barriers to dismissal. In the case of tenure, Principals who participated in professional learning were 64% less likely to see tenure as a barrier. There are a number of plausible explanations for this as we have no knowledge as to the type of professional development principals participated in; we only know that they report participating. In some cases, districts that are savvy enough to have a comprehensive professional development program are also likely to have other barrier-reducing supports in place. This shows the importance of ensuring that principals are regularly exposed to training in practical areas that affect their work.

Predictive variables above were significant across all three runs of the data. However, other variables showed significance in only one or two of the models. The

variable “male” showed a near 19% increase in “tenure” being a barrier across models including principal/school characteristics and principal/school characteristics plus job satisfaction variables. However, tenure was viewed as less of a barrier when including the evaluation influence variables.

If only including the variables related to principal/school characteristics, “tenure” was 18% less likely to be considered a barrier to dismissal when the principal had a master’s degree. However, having a master’s degree wasn’t significantly advantageous to decreasing presence of the barrier when the job satisfaction and evaluation influence variables were introduced.

## b. Union Presence

Union presence	1.2544	0.0022								
		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Mean	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Beta	O.R.
Principal/school characteristics										
Subject is Male	0.4728	0.04303	0.02976	1.0302	0.04352	0.05869	1.0605	0.04477	0.05338	1.0548
Presence of collective bargaining or meet and confer relationship	1.3085	0.04180	0.62604 ***	1.8702	0.04292	0.57290 ***	1.7734	0.04412	0.48941 ***	1.6314
Number of years principal spent teaching	13.1003	0.0032	0.0058 *	1.0058	0.0032	0.0051	1.0051	0.0033	0.0057 *	1.0057
Principal participated in training for aspiring Principals	0.6787	0.0458	0.2770 ***	1.3192	0.0465	0.2809 ***	1.3243	0.0478	0.2362 ***	1.2664
Principal participated in Professional Development	0.9847	0.1665	0.5471 ***	1.7282	0.1675	0.5342 ***	1.7061	0.1725	0.4858 ***	1.6254
Years as Principal - Total	7.6904	0.0038	0.0152 ***	1.0153	0.0038	0.0122 ***	1.0123	0.0038	0.0118 ***	1.0119
Years as Principal - This school	4.1389	0.0062	0.0071	1.0072	0.0062	0.0043	1.0043	0.0064	-0.0016	0.9984
Previous management experience	0.4341	0.0416	0.2419 ***	1.2736	0.0422	0.2204 ***	1.2465	0.0437	0.2792 ***	1.3221
Highest degree earned by Principal	4.4181	0.0289	-0.1514 ***	0.8595	0.0294	-0.1397 ***	0.8696	0.0304	-0.1398 ***	0.8695
Master's degree or higher in Ed Admin?	0.8386	0.0645	-0.5502 ***	0.5768	0.0660	-0.4301 ***	0.6505	0.0675	-0.3535 ***	0.7023
Principal stated that encouraging academic excellence is top priority	0.7000	0.0440	0.3127 ***	1.3672	0.0444	0.3214 ***	1.3790	0.0454	0.4125 ***	1.5106
School is "on improvement"	1.3045	0.0424	0.7740 ***	2.1684	0.0432	0.7111 ***	2.0363	0.0442	0.6751 ***	1.9643
Number of total suspensions during the past year	127.3481	0.0001	-0.0010 ***	0.9990	0.0001	-0.0010 ***	0.9990	0.0000	-0.0009 ***	0.9991
Total number of weekly hours worked by Principal	61.3568	0.0016	0.0165 ***	1.0167	0.0016	0.0148 ***	1.0149	0.0017	0.0166 ***	1.0167
Percent of students receiving a free/reduced meal	0.4300	0.0735	-0.0646	0.9374	0.0743	-0.1272 *	0.8805	0.0756	-0.1170	0.8896
Job satisfaction variables										
Principalship is stressful	0.2080				0.0578	0.0837	1.0873	0.0598	0.0316	1.0321
Staff is dissatisfied	0.0948				0.0792	0.5641 ***	1.7579	0.0800	0.6333 ***	1.8838
Do not like way district is run	0.2880				0.0466	0.3892 ***	1.4758	0.0475	0.3104 ***	1.3640
Wants to leave education	0.2276				0.0530	-0.1963 ***	0.8218	0.0549	-0.0889	0.9149
Lacks enthusiasm	0.2853				0.0536	0.3657 ***	1.4415	0.0545	0.2959 ***	1.3444
Wants to transfer schools	0.1909				0.0594	-0.0014	0.9986	0.0612	0.0029	1.0029
Too tired to work	0.1295				0.0659	-0.1173 *	0.8893	0.0669	-0.1224 *	0.8848
Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation										
State Department	2.4206							0.0255	0.0256	1.0259
School Board	2.5848							0.0243	0.2247 ***	1.2519
District staff	2.6983							0.0255	-0.1341 ***	0.8745
Principals	3.939							0.0932	-0.2501 ***	0.7787
Teachers	2.6283							0.0212	-0.0415 *	0.9593
Curriculum Specialist	2.2576							0.0213	-0.3542 ***	0.7017
Parent groups	1.7946							0.0215	0.1529 ***	1.1652
( cons)		0.2441	-0.3310		0.2456	-0.4916		0.4491	0.8327	
	*** p<0.010									
	** p<0.050									
	* p<0.100									

Table 6: Union Presence

“Union Presence” represents the degree to which a teacher union is involved with the school district. Perhaps because so many elements of teacher evaluation and due process are related to union presence, principals reported that unions are the third most commonly cited barriers to non-renewal. Most of the independent variables are associated with an increase in union presence being seen as a barrier. Affirmative responses to the

following predictive variables were most directly related to an increase in “union presence” being a barrier:

- Presence of collective bargaining (63% increase)
- Principal participated in training for aspiring Principals (26% increase)
- Participated in Professional Development (63% increase)
- Principal had previous managerial experience (32% increase)
- Encouraging academic excellence is a top priority (51% increase)
- School is “on improvement” (96% increase)
- Staff is dissatisfied (88% increase)
- Principal does not like the way the district is run (36% increase)
- Principal lacks enthusiasm (34% increase)
- School board influences teacher evaluation (25% increase)
- Parent groups influence teacher evaluation (16% increase)

Affirmative responses to the following independent variables were most directly related to a decrease in “union presence” being a barrier to dismissal:

- Principal has Master’s Degree or higher (30% decrease)
- Principal influences teacher evaluation (22% decrease)
- Curriculum Specialist influences teacher evaluation (30% decrease)

Unfortunately, the data doesn’t offer much hope for proactive action when it comes to ridding union presence as a barrier. Of the many variables that increase the presence of this barrier, the school being “on improvement” and having a dissatisfied staff are especially troublesome. A school “on improvement” may have issues present in addition to teacher quality that affect the presence of union pressure when administration considers non-renewal. Also, by the time a school is identified as being “on



improvement”, there is likely a low rate of satisfaction. Subsequently, a dissatisfied staff may be more likely to solicit support from unions when trouble is perceived.

Data does support the notion that advanced education and training somewhat alleviates the burden placed by union presence. Additionally, Principals and Curriculum Specialists who have control over teacher evaluation also view unions as less of a barrier; perhaps the extra support of having a Curriculum Specialist allows administration to show additional steps taken to remediate a poor-performing teacher prior to dismissal.

### c. Length of Time Required

Time required	1.261	0.0021											
		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3					
	Mean	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Beta		O.R.		
Principal/school characteristics													
Subject is Male	0.4728	0.0415	-0.0559	0.9457	0.0430	-0.0666	0.9355	0.0442	-0.1089	**	0.8968		
Presence of collective bargaining or meet and confer relationship	1.3085	0.0402	0.6304	***	1.8785	0.0425	0.6199	***	1.8588	0.0440	0.6119	***	1.8440
Number of years principal spent teaching	13.1003	0.0031	0.0169	***	1.0170	0.0032	0.0216	***	1.0218	0.0033	0.0272	***	1.0276
Principal participated in training for aspiring Principals	0.6787	0.0455	0.0405		1.0413	0.0473	0.0023		1.0023	0.0482	-0.0526		0.9488
Principal participated in Professional Development	0.9847	0.2186	-0.6680	***	0.5128	0.2278	-0.5399	**	0.5828	0.2321	-0.6477	***	0.5233
Years as Principal - Total	7.6904	0.0038	0.0277	***	1.0281	0.0039	0.0231	***	1.0234	0.0039	0.0262	***	1.0266
Years as Principal - This school	4.1389	0.0060	-0.0090		0.9910	0.0062	-0.0211	***	0.9791	0.0064	-0.0268	***	0.9735
Previous management experience	0.4341	0.0398	-0.1549	***	0.8565	0.0415	-0.1833	***	0.8325	0.0431	-0.1208	***	0.8862
Highest degree earned by Principal	4.4181	0.0291	0.1099	***	1.1161	0.0302	0.1234	***	1.1314	0.0310	0.0756	**	1.0785
Master's degree or higher in Ed Admin?	0.8386	0.0569	-0.0793		0.9238	0.0608	0.2264	***	1.2541	0.0624	0.2771	***	1.3193
Principal stated that encouraging academic excellence is top priority	0.7000	0.0411	-0.0463		0.9548	0.0424	-0.0013		0.9987	0.0435	0.0582		1.0599
School is "on improvement"	1.3045	0.0410	0.5525	***	1.7376	0.0429	0.4988	***	1.6467	0.0442	0.4997	***	1.6482
Number of total suspensions during the past year	127.3481	0.0000	-0.0001	***	0.9999	0.0000	-0.0002	***	0.9998	0.0000	-0.0002	***	0.9998
Total number of weekly hours worked by Principal	61.3568	0.0016	0.0203	***	1.0205	0.0017	0.0215	***	1.0217	0.0017	0.0220	***	1.0223
Percent of students receiving a free/reduced meal	0.4300	0.0707	0.3707	***	1.4487	0.0729	0.2329	***	1.4917	0.0745	0.3329	***	1.3950
Job satisfaction variables													
Principalship is stressful	0.2080					0.0590	0.1785	***	1.1954	0.0613	0.1059		1.1117
Staff is dissatisfied	0.0948					0.0800	0.9332	***	2.5426	0.0805	0.9543	***	2.5969
Do not like way district is run	0.2880					0.0444	-0.2342	***	0.7912	0.0453	-0.2757	***	0.7590
Wants to leave education	0.2276					0.0525	-0.3709	***	0.6901	0.0541	-0.2722	***	0.7617
Lacks enthusiasm	0.2853					0.0588	1.2870	***	3.6220	0.0598	1.2361	***	3.4420
Wants to transfer schools	0.1909					0.0609	0.2684	***	1.3078	0.0625	0.3164	***	1.3721
Too tired to work	0.1295					0.0653	-0.4366	***	0.6462	0.0663	-0.4183	***	0.6582
Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation													
State Department	2.4206									0.0253	0.3132	***	1.3678
School Board	2.5848									0.0218	-0.1087	***	0.8970
District staff	2.6983									0.0243	-0.1087	***	0.8970
Principals	3.9390									0.0934	-0.0423		0.9585
Teachers	2.6283									0.0211	-0.1433	***	0.8665
Curriculum Specialist	2.2576									0.0208	-0.2410	***	0.7859
Parent groups	1.7946									0.0209	0.0337		1.0343
(cons)			0.2818	-0.9341			0.2932	0.2439			0.4783	-0.5551	
		***	p<0.010										
		**	p<0.050										
		*	p<0.100										

Table 7: Amount of Time Required

“Length of time required” represents the fact that principals view the lengthy process as a barrier to non-renewal. As was shown in the research, teacher dismissal proceedings took an average of 455 working days (White 1997). Few educators would likely believe that running a school is an easy task, or at least one that is not extremely busy. Adding to this the state or local remediation and due process requirements, the time

it takes to non-renew a poor-performing teacher can make the task seem daunting.

Affirmative responses to the following predictive variables resulted in an increase of

Principals identifying that the “length of time required” was a barrier:

- Presence of collective bargaining (84% increase)
- Master’s degree or higher in Ed Admin (32% increase)
- School is “on improvement” (65% increase)
- Percent of students receiving a free/reduced meal (39% increase)
- Staff is dissatisfied (160% increase)
- Principal lacks enthusiasm (244% increase)
- Principal wants to transfer schools (37% increase)
- State Department influences teacher evaluation (37% increase)

Affirmative responses to the following independent variables was most directly related to a decrease in “time required” being a barrier:

- Principal participated in Professional Development (52% decrease)
- Principal does not like the way district is run (24% decrease)
- Principal wants to leave education (24% decrease)
- Principal is too tired to work (34% decrease)
- Curriculum Specialist influence teacher evaluation (21% decrease)

Clearly, an unenthused principal and dissatisfied staff creates the largest likelihood that the amount of time required is a substantial barrier to dismissal. This is the third time we have seen lack of principal “enthusiasm” as a significant detriment to the non-renewal process. Although this work doesn’t address the elements of principal enthusiasm, this is an area where research should be conducted.

This is the second time we have seen participation in professional development and Curriculum Specialist influence arise as characteristics which decrease the presence

of barriers. A couple of inferential explanations might be that districts with professional development programs for principals are more likely to have other supports in place to make the process more efficient, thus reducing the time involved. Also, the support of a Curriculum Specialist who takes on evaluation duties may allow each administrator within a site to focus on timelines and workload, also reducing the time involved. However, “time required” is often dictated by specific due process checkpoints, many of which are statutory in nature and thus unable to be deviated from.

One variable surfaced as being a significant predictor across two of the three runs. If a principal had “previous managerial experience”, the length of time required for dismissal was less of a barrier across the principal/school characteristics and job satisfaction variables. Thus, without the consideration of various groups’ influence on evaluation, principals with previous managerial experience show promise.

d. Effort Required

Effort required	1.2304	0.002											
		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3					
	Mean	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.	Std. Err.	Coeff.	O.R.
Principal/school characteristics													
Subject is Male	0.4728	0.0430	-0.3179 ***	0.7277	0.0445	-0.3377 ***	0.7134	0.0461	-0.4023 ***				0.6688
Presence of collective bargaining or meet and confer relationship	1.3085	0.0419	0.3909 ***	1.4783	0.0440	0.3293 ***	1.3899	0.0459	0.2393 ***				1.2703
Number of years principal spent teaching	13.1003	0.0032	0.0240 ***	1.0242	0.0034	0.0266 ***	1.0270	0.0035	0.0310 ***				1.0314
Principal participated in training for aspiring Principals	0.6787	0.0488	-0.1752 ***	0.8393	0.0504	-0.1757 ***	0.8389	0.0520	-0.2346 ***				0.7909
Principal participated in Professional Development	0.9847	0.2106	-0.3707 ***	0.6903	0.2157	-0.3150 ***	0.7298	0.2217	-0.4305 *				0.6502
Years as Principal - Total	7.6904	0.0040	0.0314 ***	1.0319	0.0040	0.0270 ***	1.0274	0.0041	0.0311 ***				1.0315
Years as Principal - This school	4.1389	0.0062	-0.0166 ***	0.9836	0.0064	-0.0239 ***	0.9764	0.0067	-0.0325 ***				0.9680
Previous management experience	0.4341	0.0412	-0.3034 ***	0.7383	0.0430	-0.3977 ***	0.6719	0.0450	-0.3157 ***				0.7293
Highest degree earned by Principal	4.4181	0.0294	-0.0113 ***	0.9888	0.0305	0.0313 ***	1.0318	0.0318	0.0042 ***				1.0042
Master's degree or higher in Ed Admin?	0.8386	0.0606	-0.1468 **	0.8634	0.0643	0.1241 *	1.1322	0.0662	0.2497 ***				1.2836
Principal stated that encouraging academic excellence is top priority	0.7000	0.0424	-0.0898 **	0.9141	0.0438	-0.0515 **	0.9498	0.0452	0.0333 **				1.0339
School is "on improvement"	1.3045	0.0428	0.4452 ***	1.5608	0.0447	0.4168 ***	1.5171	0.0464	0.3694 ***				1.4468
Number of total suspensions during the past year	127.3481	0.0000	-0.0001 **	0.9999	0.0000	-0.0001 **	0.9999	0.0001	0.0000 **				1.0000
Total number of weekly hours worked by Principal	61.3568	0.0016	0.0240 ***	1.0243	0.0017	0.0225 ***	1.0227	0.0018	0.0238 ***				1.0241
Percent of students receiving a free/reduced meal	0.4300	0.0732	-0.1382 **	0.8709	0.0754	-0.1598 **	0.8523	0.0775	-0.1999 **				0.8188
Job satisfaction variables													
Principalship is stressful	0.2080				0.0677	0.7582 ***	2.1344	0.0709	0.7535 ***				2.1245
Staff is dissatisfied	0.0948				0.0826	0.8283 ***	2.2895	0.0847	0.9768 ***				2.6560
Do not like way district is run	0.2880				0.0466	0.0358 **	1.0364	0.0480	-0.0339 **				0.9666
Wants to leave education	0.2276				0.0545	-0.3578 ***	0.6992	0.0568	-0.2617 ***				0.7698
Lacks enthusiasm	0.2853				0.0590	0.9527 ***	2.5927	0.0602	0.8439 ***				2.3255
Wants to transfer schools	0.1909				0.0652	0.3552 ***	1.4265	0.0677	0.4101 ***				1.5069
Too tired to work	0.1295				0.0694	-0.3290 ***	0.7197	0.0709	-0.3368 ***				0.7141
Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation													
State Department	2.4206							0.0261	0.1686 ***				1.1837
School Board	2.5848							0.0242	0.1215 ***				1.1292
District staff	2.6983							0.0258	-0.0686 ***				0.9337
Principals	3.9390							0.1014	0.0081 **				1.0081
Teachers	2.6283							0.0217	-0.0355 **				0.9651
Curriculum Specialist	2.2576							0.0215	-0.4373 ***				0.6458
Parent groups	1.7946							0.0220	0.0945 ***				1.0991
( cons)		0.2773	0.0448		0.2833	-0.6260		0.4982	-0.1487				
	*** p<0.010												
	** p<0.050												
	* p<0.100												

Table 8: Effort Required for Documentation

“Effort Required for Documentation” represents the degree to which Principals viewed the effort involved in documenting non-renewal as a barrier. Affirmative responses to the following independent variables was most directly related to an increase in “effort required” being a barrier:

- Presence of collective bargaining (27% increase)
- Principal participated in training for aspiring Principals (26% increase)
- Principal has Master's degree or higher in Ed Admin (28% increase)
- School is "on improvement" (45% increase)
- Principalship is stressful (112% increase)
- Staff is dissatisfied (165% increase)
- Principal lacks enthusiasm (132% increase)
- Principal wants to transfer schools (51% increase)
- State Department influences teacher evaluation (18% increase)

Affirmative responses to the following independent variables was most directly related to a decrease in "effort required" being a barrier:

- Subject is male (33% decrease)
- Principal participated in professional development (35% decrease)
- Principal has previous managerial experience (27% decrease)
- Percent of students receiving free/reduced meal (18% decrease)
- Principal wants to leave education (23% decrease)
- Principal is too tired to work (29% decrease)
- Curriculum Specialist influence teacher evaluation (35% decrease)

Principal "job satisfaction" characteristics (stress, dissatisfaction, lack of enthusiasm) all show a marked increase in the presence of "effort" being a barrier. Said plainly, principals who don't claim to like their jobs or have the desire to do the work find the effort to be too much. Unfortunately, citing that "effort" is a barrier only perpetuates the presence of teachers whom the principal has indicated are poor-performing but simply doesn't have the energy or willingness to put forth effort to dismiss. Over time, the continued presence of poor-performers is surely going to cause

the principal (and other staff members) even more dissatisfaction, lack of enthusiasm, and desire to just move to another school. This fact presents a clear message to the educators responsible for hiring and maintaining principals: ensuring enthusiastic, hard-working principals who enjoy their work is the most important factor in lessening the perception that there is too much effort required in a human resources plan that removes the worst teachers.

Regarding characteristics leading to a decrease, again, participation in professional development and influence on evaluation by a Curriculum Specialist result in a decrease in presence of a barrier. There are two surprising characteristics which results in a decrease in effort being a variable. Principals who are too tired to work and those indicating that they wish to leave education both showed a decrease in effort being a barrier. It is hard to suggest why these two variables showed up in this way when the other “job satisfaction” variables all led to a very strong rise in effort being a variable when principals indicated that they have negative feelings about their work.

There was consistency between the variable groups across all models. However, principals with a Master’s degree or higher were 14% less likely to identify effort as a barrier when the “job satisfaction” and “evaluation influence” barriers were not included. With “job satisfaction” variables included, principals with advanced degrees became 13% more likely to see effort as a barrier (a 27% increase). When adding in the “influence on evaluation” variables, effort as a barrier increased another 14%.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications for Future study**

#### a. Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to determine which factors influence items that school principals consider “barriers” to dismissal of “incompetent” or “poor performing” teachers. This study determines if specific characteristics of schools, principals, or the job itself can predict the specific barriers cited by principals as the reasons for renewing contracts of poor performing teachers. Using data from the 2007-2008 *Schools and Staffing Survey*, this study answers the following questions: 1) Which barriers do principals cite as impeding dismissal of a poor-performing tenured teacher? 2) What principal or school characteristics predict the likelihood that a principal says he/she faces certain barriers to dismissal?

A summary table demonstrating the correlation of each predicting variable across each outcome variable is presented in order to answer these questions. Table 4 demonstrates the effect of each predictive variable on the group of barriers to dismissal. A “+” indicates that the predictive variable increased the odds that principals cited a particular barrier to dismissal by at least 15%. A “-” indicates that the predictive variable decreased the odds that principals cited a particular barrier by at least 15%.



**Relationship Between Principal/School Characteristics and Perceived Barriers to Dismissal**

<b>Principal/school characteristics</b>	<u>Tenure</u>	<u>Union Presence</u>	<u>Length of Time</u>	<u>Effort Required for Documentation</u>
Subject is Male				-
Presence of collective bargaining or meet and confer relationship	+	+	+	+
Number of years principal spent teaching				
Principal participated in training for aspiring Principals		+		+
Principal participated in Professional Development	-	+	-	-
Years as Principal - Total				
Years as Principal - This school				
Previous management experience		+		-
Highest degree earned by Principal				
Master's degree or higher in Ed Admin?		-	+	+
Principal stated that encouraging academic excellence is top priority	+	+		
School is "on improvement"		+	+	+
Number of total suspensions during the past year				
Total number of weekly hours worked by Principal				
Percent of students receiving a free/reduced meal			+	-
<b>Job satisfaction variables</b>				
Principalship is stressful	-			+
Staff is dissatisfied		+	+	+
Do not like way district is run		+	-	
Wants to leave education	+		-	-
Lacks enthusiasm	+	+	+	+
Wants to transfer schools	+		+	+
Too tired to work			-	-
<b>Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation</b>				
State Department			+	+
School Board	+	+		
District staff				
Principals	+	-		
Teachers	-			
Curriculum Specialist		-	-	-
Parent groups	-	+		

"+" = 15% or greater increase  
 Blank = No significant correlation  
 "-" = 15% or greater decrease

Table 4: Relationship Between Principal/School Characteristics and Perceived Barriers to Dismissal

In response to question 1, this study identified that principals cited “tenure”, “effort required for documentation”, “union presence”, and “length of time required” as the primary barriers to dismissal of incompetent or poor performing teachers. Survey responses were closed-ended. No additional barriers could be offered other than the eight responses available on the survey.

In response to question 2, principals who worked in districts where collective bargaining and/or “meet and confer” relationships with unions existed were likely to cite the presence of all barriers studied. Given that the primary barriers to dismissal are all somewhat related to elements of due process, it is not surprising that the presence of the primary group responsible for defending poor-performing or incompetent teachers would increase the likelihood that barriers are encountered. There may be other implications as well. Teachers working in states that require mandatory union negotiations may, by design, be more supportive of unions than teachers who work in less unionized areas. This could confound the barriers that principals cite encountering. In addition to the time and effort, principals may simply not want the hassle of dealing with union proceedings for dismissal.

Principals working in schools that are “on improvement” reported a higher presence of three of the four barriers; all except “tenure”. Working in a low-performing school often brings a set of challenges separate from dismissal of poor-performing teachers. These schools may have a higher population of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. They may be located in urban areas and have varied degrees of

parental support. Thus, the principal may be so occupied with quickly correcting the school's deficiencies that he/she simply doesn't have the time, effort, or emotional energy to take on lengthy non-renewal proceedings.

Generally speaking, the degree to which principals disliked their jobs was positively correlated with the likelihood that they believed barriers to dismissal exist. Principals who had dissatisfied staffs or wanted to transfer schools were more likely to report facing three of the four barriers. Indicating that the principal lacked enthusiasm increased the reporting of all barriers studied. It is not surprising that principals who self-report that they are somehow dissatisfied also report encountering barriers to dismissal of poor-performing teachers. Individuals who simply don't want to come to work are probably going to encounter barriers to everything they do regardless of other factors.

Unfortunately, the data does not show many variables that universally predict a decrease in the likelihood that barriers to dismissal exist. Only participation in professional development and Curriculum Specialists' involvement in teacher evaluation resulted in a decrease of barriers being cited in three of the four studied. As mentioned, we don't have specific information as to the type of professional development offered. Perhaps districts that are more likely to extend professional learning to principals are also likely to have other supports in place that may mitigate the effects of barriers to non-renewal. Types of specific support from Curriculum Specialists is also an unknown in this work, however, the reality is the simple likelihood that having another administrator who is an expert in curriculum decreases the workload for the principal. Sharing in the

evaluation process surely reduces the sheer number of evaluations, allowing principals more time and effort to address deficiencies as needed.

This study offers answers to the aforementioned research questions so that educational leaders can make informed decisions about the individuals they choose to serve as school principals. This is essential in order to ensure high levels of performance from our students as well as appropriate opportunity to meet state and federal accountability measures. Both proponents and critics of No-Child-Left-Behind would agree that many changes to our educational model have occurred due to this legislation. Education Secretary Arne Duncan recently commented to a group of school Superintendents: “I’ll always give credit to NCLB for exposing achievement gaps and advancing standards-based reform. But better than anyone, you know [the law’s] shortcomings. NCLB allows, even encourages states to lower their standards. In too many classrooms, it encourages teachers to narrow the curriculum. It relies too much on bubble tests in a couple of subjects. It mislabels schools, even when they are showing progress on important measures. NCLB requires you to intervene in schools in a prescribed way, and the accountability system didn’t measure growth. It didn’t differentiate between a school in a little bit of trouble with a handful of students and a school that was in educational meltdown.”

Research has outlined the fact that good teachers positively impact students. As the people primarily responsible for the evaluation of teachers, principals hold a great deal of power when impacting the achievement students demonstrate. Thus, when faced

with determining whether or not to renew the contract of a poor performing or incompetent teacher, principals must make difficult decisions. Although they may encounter barriers, they must work to decrease or overcome these barriers. By considering the predicting variables in this work, school districts may be more successful at selecting and retaining principals who are less likely to view barriers to dismissal.

Although few characteristics were associated with a decrease in the perceived presence of barriers, there are still important policy implications to be considered. Barriers to dismissal of incompetent or poor performing teachers might be reduced through a system of district support that includes participation in professional development and support from curriculum specialists. Most importantly, it was found that principals who were tired, un-motivated, or wanted to leave education were most likely to report encountering barriers to dismissal. Districts should consider policy which reduces the presence of those characteristics which increase the likelihood that principals report barriers.

Ultimately, to address the problems caused by tolerating poor-performing and incompetent teachers, district leaders must work to hire and support principals who can affect classroom instruction by maintaining the highest-quality teaching staff possible. Educational accomplishment cannot be had while perpetuating a cycle of sacrificing outcomes for students due to tolerance of poor performance. By identifying causes for this tolerance and analyzing the characteristics that relate to non-renewal barriers, school

officials can take a more proactive approach to training principals and hopefully preventing the repetition of this behavior.

## b. Limitations and Need for Future Study

As of early December 2011, a new round of *Schools and Staffing Surveys* has been circulated to school administrators. Although the survey questionnaires are not yet available on the National Center for Educational Statistics website, it will be interesting to see whether questions are included relating to principal's perceptions of teacher quality and the rate at which teacher contracts are renewed. Probably the greatest limitation of this work is that it was not able to account for the actual number of poor-performing teachers who were non-renewed due to their administrator's belief that they were, in fact, "poor-performing" or "incompetent".

Through the course of this project, it was hoped to collect data on principal perception of the number of teachers in each school who fall into one of four performance categories (Outstanding, Good, Fair, Unsatisfactory). In fact, this data was collected as part of the 2007-2008 *Schools and Staffing Survey*. However, when beginning first runs with the SASS datasets, variables measuring the numbers of teachers in each performance category were left out of the tables by NCES. Finding this to be unusual, we called the NCES and were told that following survey collection, they select principals to participate in an interview process referred to as "cognitive testing". Essentially, principals are asked about their thought process used when answering different questions on the survey. If principals indicate that the questions seemed biased, or other factors contributed to their responses, NCES must determine if the questions

remain valid components of the data set. In the case of the teacher quality questions, they were deemed not valid.

Interestingly, during the cognitive testing phase, principals indicated that responses to the teacher performance questions were easy to give, but would differ with the documentation which actually exists in each teacher's personnel file. Thus, they acknowledged that providing honest data on a survey would be easy but would show bias if compared with the daily practice of teacher evaluation. Due to this realization, the National Center for Education Statistics reportedly decided not to release data on these survey items. This very issue drives the concerning fact that poor-performing teachers continue to work with students while principals do not always respond constructively to the incompetence. Hopefully, future iterations of the *Schools and Staffing Survey* will reflect data on the performance levels of teachers and frequency of non-renewal. This could then be combined to determine which barriers most impact principals who admittedly continue the contracts of poor-performing teachers.

Because the data was not able to indicate the frequency of non-renewal of poor performing teachers, we do not know which barriers were cited by those who non-renew contracts more or less frequently. When a Principal or District Administrator completes a *Schools and Staffing Survey*, he or she must determine which barriers were issues when considering non-renewal of teachers who were "poor performing". Given the admitted inconsistencies with the way in which principals responded and the infrequency of accurate evaluations, it is clear that the survey data does not always represent reality.



Another limitation is the fact that there were surely instances in the data where a teacher was considered “poor performing” but may have caused the principal to face few barriers to dismissal. For example, if a teacher is non-renewed for “insubordination” or “negligence” (typically resulting from an isolated incident), that non-renewal may have been barrier-free. Thus, principal reports on the barriers to dismissal may or may not be reflective of whether or not any teachers were successfully non-renewed for reasons of poor performance.

Although the *Schools and Staffing Survey* includes a very wide scope of data available for analysis, the depth of some variables may beg for additional research. For example, the question that asks principals to cite barriers of dismissal allows for respondents to only select given answers. Principals may have specific, personal reasons for tolerating low-performance that do not fit into one of the given responses. Thus, additional customized surveying could be used to investigate reasons more deeply. This survey could also address the barriers principals faced but overcame when successfully non-renewing teachers for poor-performance.

Future research should be conducted focusing on individual principal characteristics and the barriers they suggest to be present outside of a given list. Creating a survey, or building a qualitative interview protocol that will yield individual data would more accurately answer some questions on the school-level. Principals should be asked which barriers they face, and how each of the barriers actually impact the process of non-

renewal. Means for decreasing the barriers cited should be discussed. Data could be collected qualitatively from a subset of principals represented here.

A qualitative study surveying district leaders should ask leaders about supports put into place in order to reduce the presence of barriers for principals. This study should focus on the presence of items shown here to reduce or increase presence of barriers; specifically, involvement in professional development, presence of curriculum specialists, and means of increasing principal job satisfaction. Collecting narrative on the methods used to support principals may give specific instances of district actions that reduce the presence of barriers to dismissal of poor-performing or incompetent teachers. Future research should also consider the characteristics of district leaders that make them more likely to tolerate poor-performing principals. As a largely non-tenured group who are deemed to be directly responsible for the success or failure of students measured as a school unit, many administrators may have been non-renewed due to chronic low student achievement or other instances of poor performance. In many circumstances, principals clearly responded to the *Schools and Staffing* Survey by stating that they were dissatisfied with their jobs, schools, and districts and were generally unenthusiastic about doing the work. In these cases, the biggest problem isn't the willingness to non-renew but the fact that there are principals practicing who clearly are not interested in doing what is best for kids. It seems intuitive to assume that the same district expectation of a relationship between student achievement and teacher contract decisions would extend even more strongly to school administrators. Additional inquiry should be given to the processes

used to terminate administrators who have yielded low-performance in the ways described above.

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**Table 9: Variable names and purpose**

Dependent variable: Barriers to dismissal of poor performing teachers			
Code (s-School, a-Principal)	Variable description, Name	Format	Purpose as predicting variable
a0208	Time required	Y(1)/N(0)	Length of time required for termination process
a0209	Effort required	Y(1)/N(0)	Effort required for documentation
a0211	Tenure	Y(1)/N(0)	Specifies unsatisfactory "Tenured" teachers
a0212	Union presence	Y(1)/N(0)	Teacher associations or unions
School/demographic variables			
Code	Variable description, Name	Format	Purpose as predicting variable
	School ID (sc_ncsid)	#	
9003	State (StID)	Varies	
s0217	Free/reduced meal status (mealstat)	#	Number of K-12 "free/reduced" lunch students.
s0217/s0039	Free/reduced meal status (perc_mealstat)	%	Percent of K-12 "free/reduced" lunch students.
Independent (predicting) variables			
Code	Variable description, Name	Format	Purpose as predicting variable
a228	Presence of collective bargaining or meet and confer relationship (collectbarg_meetconfer)	Y(1)/N(0)	This variable may indicate the strength and type of relationship between the local teacher's union and the school district. Vander Weele (1994) notes that principals would non-renew more than 20% of teachers if it were not for the stress and cost of hearings. Another recent study by Jacob (2010) shares a practical change in the CPS where non-tenured teachers are able to be non-renewed without restriction by a collective-bargaining agreement.
a0030	Participate in training for aspiring Principals? (prin_training)	Y(1)/N(0)	Question asks: Before you became a principal, did you participate in any district or school training or development program for ASPIRING school principals? Marzano and Waters (2009) describe the essential relationship between district and building-level administration. Perceptions of principal competence are positively correlated with district training.
a0034	Participate in pd - past 12 months? (prin_pd)	Y(1)/N(0)	Question asks: In the past 12 months, have you participated in any professional development activities?
a0027	Number of years principal spent teaching (prinrsteach)	#	Number of years each principal taught may imply a level of instructional competence or at least, knowledge. So, are principals with many years of classroom experience more or less likely to non-renew poor performing teachers?
a0025	Years as Principal - Total (yearsasprin_tot)	#	Explains whether the most experienced principals are more or less likely to tolerate poor-performing teachers. Jacob (2010) notes that older principals are less likely than younger principals to dismiss teachers.
a0026	Years as Principal - This school (yearsasprin_school)	#	Does the amount of time a principal spends at a particular school influence non-renewal rates the same or differently as overall tenure?
a0031	Before you became a principal, did you have any management experience outside of the field of education? (manage_exp)	Y(1)/N(0)	Principals with previous managerial experience may be more apt to non-renew poor performing teachers.
a0032	Highest degree earned by Principal (highestdegree)	1,2,3,4,5,6	Explains a relationship between high degree and likelihood to non-renew. Would be measured at the district-level. Mitiello, et. al. (2009) notes that additional research is necessary to determine why many principals are uninformed or misinformed about student and teacher rights. Education is likely the most direct path to increased knowledge in these areas. Other

			research notes that Principals from more competitive colleges are less likely to dismiss teachers (Jacob, 2010).
a0033	Master's degree or higher in Ed Admin? (degree_edadmin)	Y(1)/N(0)	Those with advanced training may be less likely to deal with non-renewal barriers due to academic preparation.
a0216	School AYP status (aypstatus)	Y(1)/N(0)	Determines whether or not school met performance target.
a0217	School "on improvement" status (schloni)	Y(1)/N(0)	Determines if sanctions are potentially in place due to failure to meet performance targets. Although non-renewal frequencies will be calculated at the district level, data will show the number of poor performing teachers in schools that both made and didn't make AYP. This will test the well-researched "power of the classroom teacher" (Hallinan, 2008). Jacob (2010) notes that teacher demographics showed statistical variation particularly in low-performing schools. For example, male teachers were non-renewed at a higher frequency in low-performing elementary schools.
a0126	Number of total suspensions during the past year (stu_suspensions)	#	Represents school demographics and may speak to principal behaviors as well.
a0225	Total number of weekly hours worked by Principal (hrsworked)	#	Number of hours each Principal reports working in an average week. Suggests overall job effort.
a229	The stress and disappointments involved in serving as principal at this school aren't really worth it (stress)	Likert scale recoded as binary (Strongly agree:1 - Strongly disagree:0)	Explains a number of predicting variables related to the job efficacy of each principal
a230	The faculty and staff at this school like being here; I would describe them as a satisfied group (staff_satis)	Likert scale recoded as binary (Strongly agree:1 - Strongly disagree:0)	
a231	I like the way things are run in this district (like_dist)	Likert scale recoded as binary (Strongly agree:1 - Strongly disagree:0)	
a232	If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave education as soon as possible (leave_ed)	Likert scale recoded as binary (Strongly agree:1 - Strongly disagree:0)	
a234	I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began my career as a principal (prin_enthu)	Likert scale recoded as binary (Strongly agree:1 - Strongly disagree:0)	
a233	I think about transferring to another school (trans_schl)	Likert scale recoded as binary (Strongly agree:1 - Strongly disagree:0)	
a235	I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go (prin_tired)	Likert scale recoded as binary (Strongly agree:1 - Strongly disagree:0)	
a0065	Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation - State Department (evalinflu_stateboard)	Likert scale (No influence:1 -Major influence:4)	This variable may give an indication of the autonomy a principal has to evaluate a teacher. Bridges (1994) notes that "supervisor ratings and observations" is the most frequently reported tool that school districts use to identify incompetent teachers. Other research suggests "...if principals had greater autonomy with regard to hiring and promotion decisions, there is some evidence that they would be able to distinguish between the most and least effective teachers in their buildings (Jacob and Lefgren 2008). Fullan (2001) notes that the purpose of teacher evaluation is to produced shared knowledge through interaction, so that teachers can solve real-world problems.
a0066	Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation - School Board (evalinflu_schoolboard)	Likert scale (No influence:1 -Major influence:4)	This variable may give an indication of the autonomy a principal has to evaluate a teacher.

a0067	Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation - District staff (evalinflu_districtstaff)	Likert scale (No influence:1 -Major influence:4)	This variable may give an indication of the autonomy a principal has to evaluate a teacher.
a0068	Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation - Principals (evalinflu_principal)	Likert scale (No influence:1 -Major influence:4)	This variable may give an indication of the autonomy a principal has to evaluate a teacher.
a0069	Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation - Teachers (evalinflu_teachers)	Likert scale (No influence:1 -Major influence:4)	This variable may give an indication of the autonomy a principal has to evaluate a teacher.
a0070	Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation - Curriculum Specialist (evalinflu_currspecial)	Likert scale (No influence:1 -Major influence:4)	This variable may give an indication of the autonomy a principal has to evaluate a teacher.
a0071	Various groups' influence on teacher evaluation - Parent groups (evalinflu_parents)	Likert scale (No influence:1 -Major influence:4)	This variable may give an indication of the autonomy a principal has to evaluate a teacher.
			Principal and School variables
			Principal job satisfaction
			Influence on Evaluation