

# The Foundation of Enhancing Career Mindsets:

## *Analyzing the Alternative Certification Program Approach to Invest in Long Term Teacher Retention In K-12 Education*

*“It Always Seems **Impossible**, Until It’s **Done**” –Nelson Mandela*



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*VANDERBILT PEABODY COLLEGE, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, May 2021*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

***“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” -Hebrews 12:11 NIV***

To **My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, Thank You for equipping me with the strength and knowledge to travel this extensive journey of scholastic achievement. It has only been through your grace that I have been blessed to complete such a task. It is my prayer that you are continuously glorified in all that I do to add to your Kingdom and bless your people you have entrusted to me.

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**#ForeverAndADAVIS**

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***“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”***  
-Colossians 3:23-25 NIV

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This capstone seeks to investigate the impact of the growth mindset theory within teacher attitudes and emotions acquired in the development stages of teaching as a profession, leading to long-term careers, ultimately resulting in retirement. While there is literature that supports a range of rationale for teacher attrition, very little investigates the teaching profession's initial perception as a long-term career from teachers entering the field.

**For the purpose of this project, the issue to better understand is, what are the key components needed in Alternative Certification Programs to encourage the development of longstanding, career teachers?**

This project examined Urban Teachers DFW, an alternative certification program, and their approach to teacher preparation through their four-year program model to obtain more insight into the above question. Since its inception in 2016, the Urban Teachers DFW location is still growing and developing, exiting its first Alumni class in May of 2020. I sought to answer three definitive questions through this investigation;

**Research Question 1:** What aspects of the Urban Teachers program shape the development of a career mindset in education?

**Research Question 2:** Do members of the Urban Teachers program feel that they can persist long term as a classroom educator, ultimately leading to retirement in the profession?

**Research Question 3:** With a strategic 4-year commitment, how effective is the Urban Teachers design in increasing teacher retention as a measure to close the academic achievement gap?

Throughout the investigation utilizing both surveys and personal interviews and narratives, there derived seven findings;

### **Finding 1: Evidence of Growth Mindset Centered Coaching Cycles**

In alignment to research question 1, there was evidence that aspects of Growth Mindset Theory are included in individual coaching cycles between the teacher and the assigned Urban Teacher instructional coach. However, there is more room for exploring how a growth mindset applied to adjusting into teaching as a career can be implemented within the coaching and development model.

### **Finding 2: Targeted Concentration of Teacher Preparation within the Educational Studies Master's Degree Program**

Also aligned to research question 1, the Urban Teachers partnership with Johns Hopkins to create a specified degree program targeting teacher development within the classroom exists and has been a

mechanism to drive longevity within the classroom. Although effective, there is a need to increase the representation of all content categories as an additional resource for teachers to grow in content mastery.

### **Finding 3: Evidence of Teacher Uncertainty Toward Long-Term Futures in The Classroom**

In alignment with research question 2, over 40% of Urban Teachers surveyed are unsure if they will retire as teachers. The overarching theme of “lack of support” outside instructional coaches was a key lever in this finding. Additionally discovered, the lack of coaches' alignment to support all teachers equitable to ensure growth was a target of concern.

### **Finding 4: Uncontrollable Aspects of Educational Policy Leading To Teacher Attrition**

Similarly, aligned with research question 2, educational policy aspects out of the realm of teachers' control attributed to the uncertainty of persistence. However, a common theme discovered was the absence of teacher's awareness of educational policies aligned to their job description. Further suggesting the implementation of resources to increase the knowledge base of educational policies by state.

### **Finding 5: Lack of Teacher Preparation Navigating Partner Charter Networks and Improvement Required Campuses**

Aligned to research question 3, there was an indication that the partnership campuses that Urban Teachers serves are high-needs campuses. The cohort surveys and interviews uncovered a general lack of initial knowledge of a high-needs campus demographic before entering the classroom. There is a need to further explore the additional preparation and resources for Urban Teachers to teach in high-needs environments to increase retention to decrease the academic achievement gap.

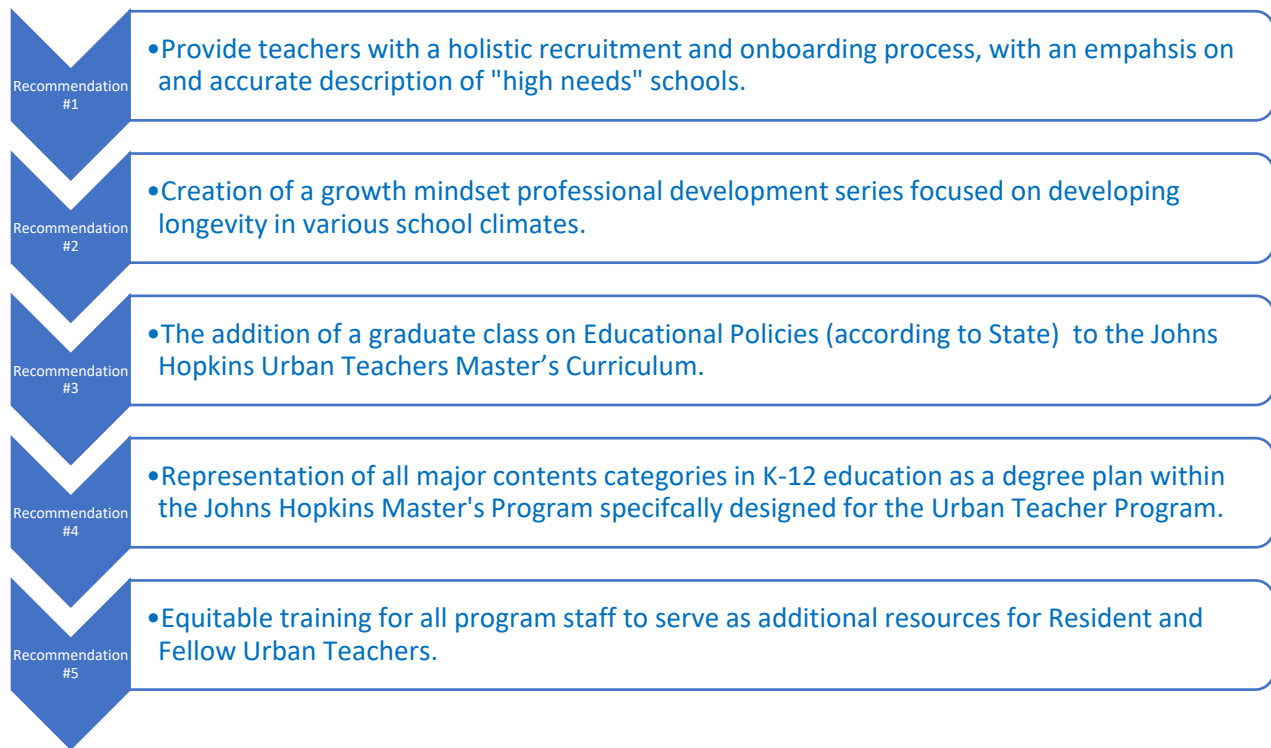
### **Finding 6: Misaligned Teacher Placement within Needs-Based Campuses**

Likewise aligned to research question 3, the research uncovered that the subject Urban Teachers teach are aligned to campus need. Urban teachers reported that they are often placed into content areas with no previous experience or background knowledge. Thus, creating a working environment in which they are learning new content while also learning their assigned campus culture. The results exposed the difficulty in teachers' desire to return to the profession due to not being placed in the appropriate content. Additionally, not being provided with additional resources to grow in the content where placed.

### **Finding 7: Lack of Additional Professional Development and Support for Teachers**

Lastly, associated with research question 3, the data revealed an overall lack of additional professional development facilitated by Urban Teachers outside of the master's program classes. Based on responses, it was also evident that there was no specified cadence of whole group development beyond instructional coaching sessions. This finding is notable when discussed in alignment with the research question. It provides additional rationale in the Urban Teachers overall retention yearly and measures on the academic achievement gap.

Based on these findings, the researcher suggested the following five recommendations to Urban Teachers to increase career mindset foci of education as a long-lasting career, increasing teacher retention while narrowing the achievement gap.



### Recommendation #1:

Data revealed a need to transparently onboard all Urban Teachers with full context surrounding the high-needs environments in K-12 education. There is inconsistency in messaging and development in this aspect, which creates unforeseen barriers for teachers in which they do not have the resources to prepare in advance. To mitigate this, Urban Teachers must clearly define this for teachers as a primary component for hiring and revisit it over the school year to acclimate teachers to this educational setting.

### Recommendation #2:

To encourage teachers to persist in the classroom during and beyond the four years of the program, Urban Teachers should consider developing a professional development series focused on developing career mindsets in various school climates. As Urban Teachers serve high-needs schools, there is a need to equip teachers with additional resources to teach within these environments and be introduced to the literature and framework that can shift the outlook on their trajectory in the long-term classroom.

### Recommendation #3:

While the Urban Teachers partnership with Johns Hopkins School of Education provides a targeted degree in teaching practice, data revealed teachers were unaware of the aspects of educational policy in Texas that have a direct effect on their classroom. To increase teacher awareness and provide additional

transparency to result in higher retention, the program should consider the addition of an educational policy class to provide more exposure for teachers to navigate teaching as a long-term profession.

**Recommendation #4:**

Urban Teachers are placed on campuses based on need. However, the data revealed that there are only three specific concentrations as degree plans, but not all contents taught in K-12 education for promotion or graduation are represented in the program. To become more innovative, it is suggested that Urban Teachers add all contents taught in K-12 be added to the degree plans to choose from (English, Math, Social Studies, Science, Fine Arts-Electives) to ensure that teachers have access to adequate resources to grow in their field of placement.

**Recommendation #5:**

COVID-19 and its effect on the educational system, there is a need for additional support for teachers. Evident from the data, there is a lack of holistic support for teachers within the Urban Teachers network. The Urban Teachers DFW location is still growing and developing, the need to introduce cross-training and multi-skilling for all program staff to increase availability for teachers and instructional coaches.



## II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition rates continue to be one of the largest concerns in K-12 education each year. To date, there is a mass amount of literature that investigates the teacher and school characteristics that lead to attrition. Organizational factors within schools, such as lack of support from administrators, student discipline issues, and lack of input and decision-making power, seem to play a larger role (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014). There are also reports that high-ranked reasons for leaving schools are inappropriate or unmanageable assignments, accountability pressures and paperwork, poor psychosocial working environment, and low pay as the most common reasons for leaving (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014). However, there is very little literature that explores the characteristics of alternative certification and its relation to attrition. How much do we know about prospective and current teachers' teaching views either as a long-term career or as a temporary profession? When a prospective applicant anticipates entering education, are they knowledgeable of all intricate teaching details before deciding to pursue this profession as a career? Has there been an introduction to the “what ifs” before committing a district, school, and community of students? Ultimately, is a career in education still valued as a long-term commitment rather than a short-term resume builder (Marmion, 2018)?

Teacher persistence is a driving factor in either narrowing or widening the achievement gap in education. Whether a campus/ district experiences teacher attrition or migration, it leaves a course vulnerable in which there is a need to “start over” from scratch. Where turnover is considered to have a disruptive organizational influence, all school community members are vulnerable, including staying teachers and their students. In such disruptive accounts of turnover, even when leaving teachers are

equally as effective as those who replace them, turnover can still impact students' achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2013).

When teachers leave schools, previously held relationships and relational patterns are altered to the degree that turnover disrupts staff cohesion and community format, affecting student achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2013). A keen, underlying issue associated with attrition or migration is students are affected most when there is no practical or long-standing teacher in the classroom, which ultimately leads to widening the achievement gap. Teacher retention is necessary because teacher turnover creates instability and negatively impacts teaching quality—especially in schools that most need stability. When qualified teachers leave in just a few years, they need to be replaced by novice teachers, which incurs an overall cost to student academic well-being. Continuously replacing experienced, effective teachers with novice teachers causes students to be taught by a stream of inexperienced, first-year teachers with little to no experience and improper preparation (Zhang & Zeller, Spring 2016 ).

### **Career Mindsets**

Regardless of how much people analyze their aspirations and opportunities in planning their career, unexpected developments often bring unforeseen changes. For this reason, it is important to build resilience and adaptability toward a career before unplanned events happen. Resilience is a person's ability to continue making progress toward current career goals with resources and strategies already developed to achieve these goals. On the other hand, adaptability involves restructuring your goals and/or strategies to adapt to new work and career realities (Seibert, Kraimer, & Heslin, 2016). A career mindset begins with developing growth mindsets concerning chosen careers. This aspect is critical to thriving in the context of one's career, as those with a growth mindset are likely to see changes in their work, work environment, and career as an opportunity for growth even if it's stressful or challenging (Dweck C. S., 2006, Updated, 2016). Substantial evidence suggests that the development of the growth

mindset can lead to an increased effort, rather than a decrease, in the face of setbacks or unintended shifts within the workplace (Mrazek, et al., 2018).

The development and application of a growth mindset toward a career in education are essential as it can be a factor in determining yearly retention. Teachers' cognitive beliefs, can play a critical role in their daily decision-making, including their perceptions and behavior in the classroom. Moreover, their teaching motivation might act as the sole source to act upon their own beliefs in education (Vermote, et al., 2020). Teachers who are intrinsically motivated to teach, find teaching enjoyable and valuable, and their passion resonates toward their commitment to teaching. Teachers who are motivated based on control put effort into their teaching because that is expected and requested from them. The independent investment toward teaching is essential for a teacher to develop in order to prevent feelings of guilt or to bolster their own self-worth. Lastly, there are cases in which the intention to teach is absent, either because teachers do not feel capable or do not value the teaching. It is possible that teachers with a growth mindset perceive themselves as actors of change, therefore focusing on competence development only, not growth holistically in the profession (Vermote, et al., 2020).

The concept of growth mindsets in adults and teachers often emerges in studies on motivation, job engagement, and job performance (Holdsworth & Maynes, 2017). Much of the literature on growth mindsets has focused on student adaptation to acquire new knowledge or skills previously found difficult. This capstone seeks to illustrate this theory's application toward teacher attitudes and emotions acquired in the development stages of teaching as a profession that can lead to long-term careers, ultimately resulting in retirement.

## Alternative Certification Programs

Alternative certification has emerged as an umbrella term to include all teaching pathways outside traditional teacher education programs. These programs enable expedited entry into the teaching profession without completing a standard four- to five-year university-based program and rely on abbreviated coursework and mentor teachers' support to train teacher candidates as they serve as a teacher of record (Redding & Smith, 2016, p. 1088). Alternative certification also plays a central role in the production of new teachers in many states, yet little is known about an effective program's characteristics. Given that the variation within programs is as significant as the variation between programs, the standard methodology of comparing programs cannot discern the qualities of programs with positive teacher outcomes (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2008). By the 2010s, alternative certification pathways were commonplace in the credentialing of teachers. Corresponding with this expansion, there have been a number of studies that consider elements of the programs, characteristics of the teachers who have been alternatively certified, and how these differences may account for differential levels of student achievement or teacher attrition (Redding & Smith, 2016, p. 1088).

Urban Teachers was founded with the idea that talented, highly-prepared career teachers can open the doors to future success for city school children. Founded in 2009, under the vision of longtime employees of the Baltimore City Public Schools system, Jennifer Green and Christina Hall, the vision was to recruit teachers who mirrored the demographics of the communities they would serve and prepare highly effective career educators. Additionally, Urban Teachers offers more comprehensive coursework in education and personalized support through intense coaching to decrease burnout while maximizing teacher potential.

As an Alternative Certification Program, Urban Teachers seeks to improve children's educational and life outcomes in urban schools by preparing culturally competent, effective career teachers who

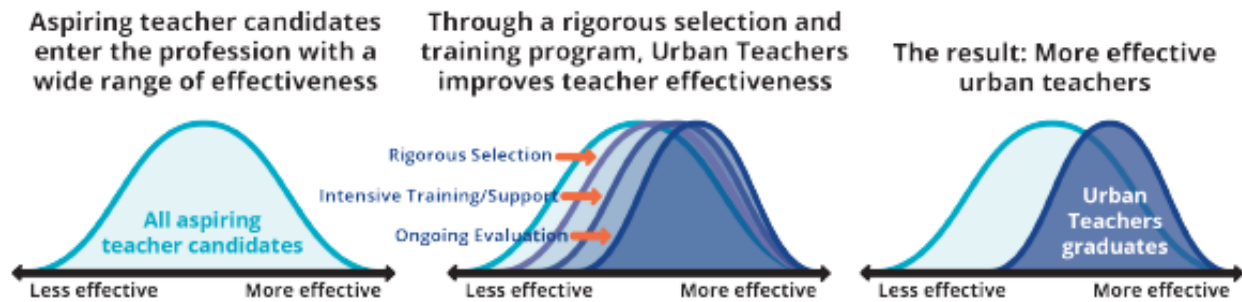
accelerate student achievement and disrupt systems of racial and socioeconomic inequity. To date, the Urban Teachers program's goals are extensive as they seek to prepare, certify, and support new educators to be highly effective so they can provide high-quality education. By offering a master's degree, coaching, mentoring, and job placement, teachers who finish the program, are committed to excellence, equity, and inclusivity and have the skills and confidence to build lasting, fulfilling careers (Urban Teachers, 2021).

This capstone seeks to investigate teachers' mindsets before entering education (career-minded or short-term placement), explore key drivers in selecting education as a career, and the Urban Teachers approach to investing in developing a career mindset to increase long-term teacher retention in education. This project explores these three components, providing context about an overarching question; "Is teaching a sustainable, long-term career."

### III. ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

#### Mission and Program Structure

The mission of Urban Teachers is to prepare highly effective teachers to significantly accelerate student learning in the nation's highest-need schools. Since its inception in 2009, Urban Teachers has designed and built an innovative, research-informed teacher preparation program from the ground up. Urban Teachers' multifaceted theory of change for producing effective teachers combines a rigorous selection process, intensive training and support (*including 1500 hours of clinical experience and three years of instructional coaching*), continual evaluation of performance as the basis for feedback, support, improvement, and accountability.

**Figure 1: Urban Teachers Theory of Change** (Source: *Urban Teachers Publications, 2016*)

### Program Snapshot

- Based in Washington D.C., Dallas/ Ft. Worth, and Baltimore.
- Candidates complete a master's program from Johns Hopkins while earning certification in a specified content area and special education.
- Candidates also spend a full year in an urban school classroom under a host teacher's instruction before becoming a teacher of record.

*\*Note: For this capstone, I am only focusing on the DFW location.*

As **Residents**, time is set aside for advanced training during the first year of the program. Participants are given a full year to work as co-teacher in urban classrooms under expert faculty guidance while also taking coursework relevant to education practice. This aspect of the program is designed to help teachers achieve better results for students when they become a teacher. Residents receive regular feedback by developing their skills, proven effectiveness, and practicing time in anticipation of their career as teachers. In year two, as a **Fellow**, teachers take responsibility for a classroom of their own, moving into full-time, salaried teaching positions with a partner school district. Fellows are supported with a lighter load of courses through the second year of the program, culminating in the Master of Education degree. Teachers receive expert one-on-one coaching from Johns Hopkins clinical faculty. In Year 3, as a

continued Fellow, guidance and support continue as development in teaching practices continue. At the end of the third year, participants are eligible for certification in a specific education area of study and Special Education. In Year 4, Johns Hopkins faculty continue to provide support and guidance upon request to complete the commitment with Urban Teachers (Urban Teachers, 2021).

*\*\*Participants based in Dallas / Fort Worth also receive certification in English as a Second Language. \*\**

Figure 2: Urban Teachers 2019-2020 School Year Demographic Roll up (Source: Urban Teachers Website, 2021)

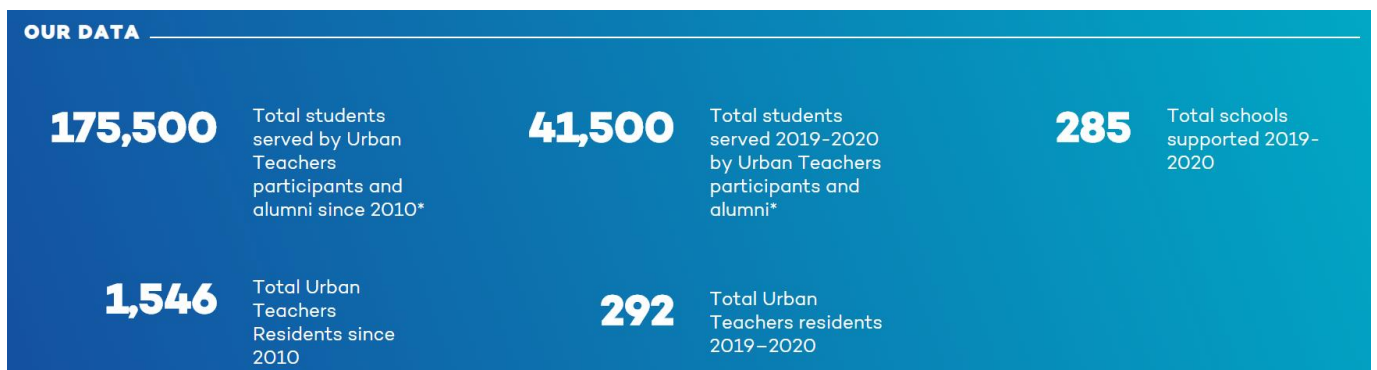


Figure 3: Urban Teachers DFW 2019-2020 School Year Demographic Roll up (Source: Urban Teachers Website, 2021)



#### IV. AREA OF INQUIRY

As stated, teacher attrition rates continue to be one of the largest concerns in K-12 education. For this project's purpose, the issue to better understand is the key components necessary for all Alternative Certification Programs (ACPs) to encourage the development of career teachers.

Considerable effort is expended in traditional programs to help students develop a professional mindset and learn skills to continue to grow as a professional. Professionalism is important because it can motivate students to continue to develop as teachers. There is the danger that some students may come to alternative programs viewing teaching as a temporary job placement for 2-3 years rather than a long term profession. For example, they have majored in an academic discipline (e.g., biology), but when they cannot find a suitable position as a biologist, they decide to become a biology teacher. Emphasis within alternative programs to help students view teaching as a profession to grow and develop, can ultimately lead to narrowing the achievement gap based on teaching experience and years of service (Mulvihill & Martin, 2019).

Urban Teachers seeks to provide high-need schools with effective teachers through a combination of intensive, multi-year support and ongoing accountability. Every participant is required to commit to working with the program for four years. The initial fourteen months are spent working in classrooms with guidance from host teachers and on-site coaching. At the same time, participants take graduate-level courses that introduce best practices in the field and provide immediate opportunities to try those practices with students. Along the way, participants undergo ongoing evaluation of teaching practice, growth mindset, and professionalism (Jackson & Mackler, *An Evidence Based Approach To Teacher Preparation*, 2016).



**Urban Teachers DFW Retention and Persistence Statistics:**

- **60%** of DFW Cohort 2016 who started as Residents in Summer 2016 (n=81) completed the four-year program in SY2019-20.
- **70%** of DFW Cohort 2016 who started as first-year teachers in SY2017-18 (n=70) completed the four-year program in the 2019-20 school year.
- Of the foundational **49** members of inaugural cohort 2016, 4-year program completers, there is employment data on **39** members (80%) for the 2020-21 school year. Of those 39, 100% (39 of 39) are still working as a teacher or teacher leader, while 79% (31 of 39) are working as a teacher leader in the Dallas area. -**Kirsten Mackler, Executive Director, Performance and Evaluation at Urban Teachers**

**Table 1:** Urban Teachers DFW Retention Data (2016-2020) By Cohort (Source: *Kirsten Mackler, Executive Director, Performance and Evaluation at Urban Teachers*)

	SumA to Res	Res to Y1F	Y1F to Y2F	Y2F to Y3F
<b>2016</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>80%</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>78%</b>	
<b>2019</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>86%</b>		
<b>2020</b>	<b>95%</b>			

*\*Note: The residency counts as the first year. Urban Teachers are only fellows for three years which comprises of four years collectively. Example: For Cohort 2016, the retention rate from program year 3 (Year 2 Fellow) to program year 4 (Year 3 Fellow) is 79%. Cohort 2017, the retention rate from program year 3 (Y2F) to program year 4 (Y3F) is 80%.*

*“SOME ATTRITION IS A NATURAL PART OF THIS PROCESS. WE ARE VERY INTENTIONAL ABOUT MID-PROGRAM ATTRITION, USING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO QUICKLY DETERMINE WHICH TEACHERS ARE NOT ON TRACK TO BECOMING EFFECTIVE AND INVESTING OUR ENERGIES IN THOSE WHO ARE. EACH YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 80% OF RESIDENTS GO*

*ON TO BECOME TEACHERS OF RECORD. OF THOSE WHO LEAVE, MANY DO SO VOLUNTARILY—FOR PERSONAL REASONS OR BECAUSE THEY HAVE DISCOVERED THAT THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ARE NOT WHAT THEY EXPECTED. AS A RESULT OF THIS MULTI-YEAR ASSESSMENT PROCESS, BY THE TIME OUR PARTICIPANTS BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR CERTIFICATION, WE CAN FOCUS ON THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY MET PREVIOUS BENCHMARKS AND HAVE SHOWN TRUE COMMITMENT TO URBAN TEACHING.”* (Jackson & Mackler, Assessing Effectiveness: How Urban Teachers Evaluates Its New Teachers , 2016, p. 9)

## V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this capstone study was designed to investigate teacher attrition as it pertains to alternative certification, aspects of alternative certification programs that can propel long-term retention in teachers, as well as what is known about career mindsets and professional goals of career classroom educators. Although there is no broad base of literature that concretely connects all three together, this project seeks to combine the literature of what is known about all three aspects independently to connect those factors to the theoretical framework into one integrated entity.

### Growth Mindset Theory

Stanford University Researcher Carol Dweck has been credited with developing the Growth Mindset Theory. Dweck’s research was based on prior studies on implicit theories due to the potential positive effects on academic functioning. Developed further by Growth Mindset Theory, other implicit theories explained how some people tend to perceive intelligence as more of a fixed or unchangeable characteristic while others consider intelligence as something which can be developed. Educators have popularized the book since growth mindset has been linked to student achievement (Kreiness, 2020).

Targeting only students, Dweck’s research generalized people primarily possess one of two mindsets, either a growth mindset or a fixed mindset. Studies showed that 40% of students have a mainly growth mindset, 40% have a mainly fixed mindset, and the remaining 20% have a mixed mindset. Mixed

mindsets are individuals who switch back and forth between the two mindsets according to which allows the individual to be most successful given the task or the situation. (Dweck C. S., 2006, Updated, 2016).

### Fixed vs. Growth Mindsets

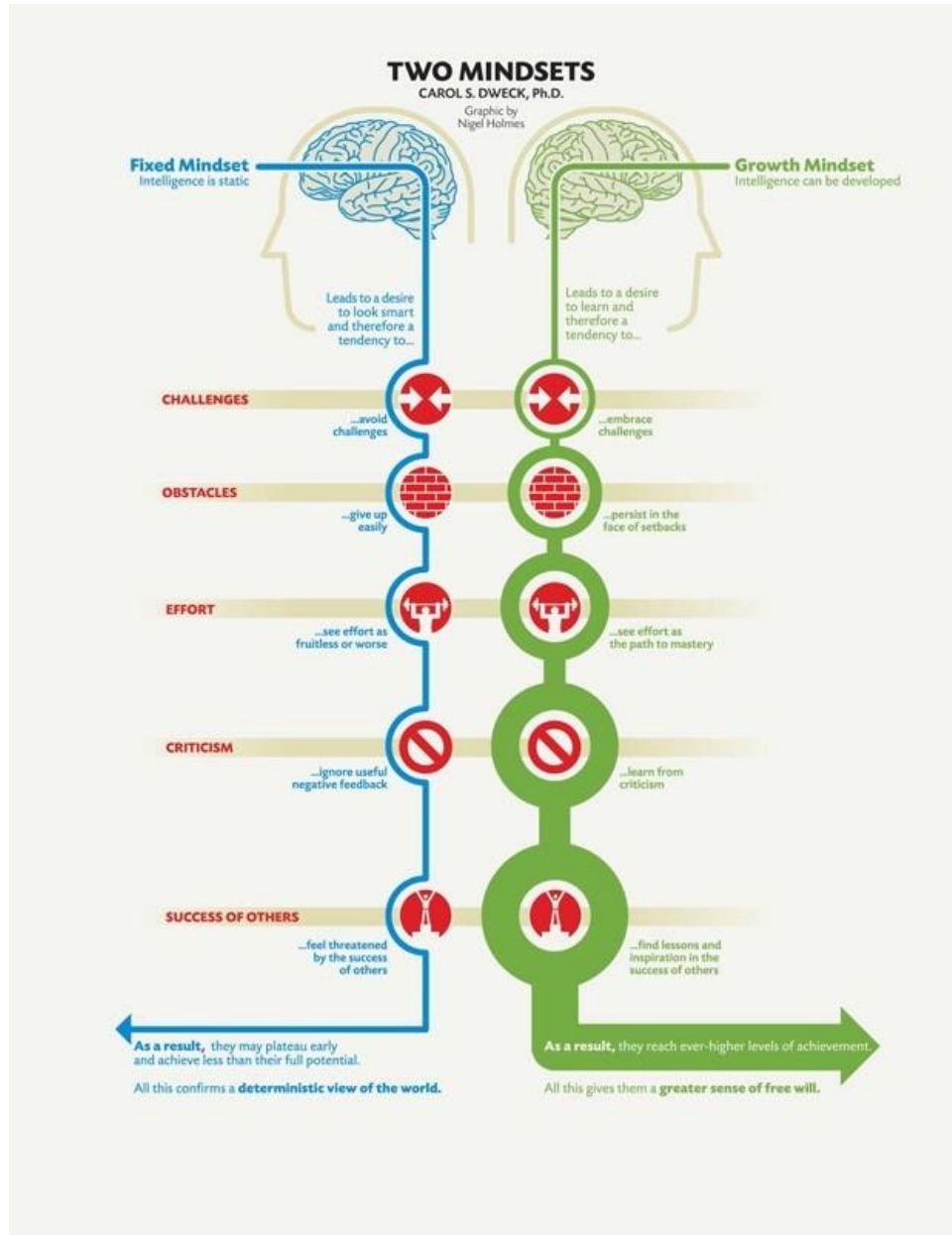
A *growth mindset* describes people who believe that their success depends on time and effort. People with a growth mindset feel their skills and intelligence can be improved with effort and persistence. They embrace challenges, persist through obstacles, learn from criticism, and seek inspiration for others' success. Those who hold a growth mindset believe that they can get better at something by dedication, effort, and energy. Working on one's flaws and the process—not the outcome—are the most critical components. With time and practice, people with a growth mindset believe they can achieve whatever is desired (Dweck C. S., 2006, Updated, 2016). A *fixed mindset* is both the opposite of and the absence of a growth mindset. Individuals who possess a fixed mindset believe intelligence is fixed; they either can or cannot do something. People who have a fixed mindset believe talents and abilities are innate and predetermined and cannot be developed over time. Furthermore, believing if learning does not come naturally, new knowledge likely never will (Kreiness, 2020). The growth mindset allows people to value what they're doing regardless of the outcome, as they learn to navigate tackling problems, plotting new courses, and continuously work to achieve their goals (Dweck C. , 2014).

Teachers' perseverance, commitment, and mindsets have implications for teacher effectiveness, possibly influencing both teachers' and students' perseverance. Perseverance and commitment are described characteristics of “growth” mindsets, defined as the belief that most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work, as opposed to a “fixed” mindset, or the belief that intelligence and talent are fixed traits (Dweck C. S., 2006, Updated, 2016). Dweck's work suggests that teachers with growth mindsets are more likely to persist in the face of setbacks, see effort as the path to

mastery, and learn from criticism. Teachers' mindsets can also influence students as those with fixed mindsets and low expectations lower their students' motivation and expectation (Jackson & Mackler, An Evidence Based Approach To Teacher Preparation , 2016). The growth mindset was intended to help close achievement gaps, not hide them. (Dweck C. S., 2006, Updated, 2016). As any profession, teaching is a skill that can grow and develop over time. The application of a growth mindset, can help teachers to understand the importance of "learning as you go", as opposed to seeking perfection immediately. The mindset a teacher decides to develop can be very influential toward attrition and retention in teaching. If a teacher develops a fixed mindset that struggling within teaching is an indication they are not good at it, there is a chance they will leave. However, if the teacher develops a growth mindset and realizes that struggling is a part of the process of learning and development, there is also a chance they will persist. Overall, intrinsic thoughts of the individual teacher, regardless of the situation, can lead to either outcome.

A long-lasting career mindset begins with developing growth mindsets concerning chosen careers. Education-oriented studies have shown that having a growth mindset is positively related to learning performance and impacts resilience (Caniëls, Semeijn, & Renders, 2017). Employees, who are eager to improve themselves, have positive beliefs of the value of hard work, see setbacks as opportunities for learning, and are dedicated to their work. They are not discouraged when they make mistakes, as they see how these lead to personal improvement. Employees with a growth mindset are likely to enjoy their work because daily work challenges provide opportunities for personal growth (Caniëls, Semeijn, & Renders, 2017). All attributes are necessary to acquire if an innate desire to persist in education long-term leads to retirement.

Figure 4. Fixed Vs. Growth Mindset *Source* (Dweck C. S., 2006, Updated, 2016)



Many studies have investigated the factors that initially motivate people to become teachers. Most notably, the *interpersonal theme* (the desire to work with children and youth), the *service theme* (the idea of contributing in a profession of moral worth) the desire for *continuation in a specific subject or school setting*. Additionally, material benefits such as *salary, prestige, and job security*. While also noting

the desire to *make a difference* in children's lives, *giving back to society*, and a *love of learning* (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999) . However, much less is known about changes to those motivations over time.

Significantly, there is a lack of empirical research that helps to understand how motivations are framed, shaped, and constrained by experiences during teacher education (Rots & Kelchtermans, 2011).

Historically, teachers have been expected to look upon teaching more as a vocation than as strictly a job, but over recent decades, there have been significant changes to the labor market (teacher compensation packages, projected time of service needed to advance ) which impact how those undertaking teacher education programs look upon teaching as a career, as it is reasonable to expect that prospective teachers would have different career trajectories in mind, even at the outset (Watt & Richardson, 2008) (Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2017).

### **Alternative Certification Programs and Teacher Attrition**

Negative representations of teachers' work in the mass media, changes in political ideology, and shifts in public opinion all impact the popularity and reputation of teaching as a career choice (Watt & Richardson, 2008). In response to mounting public pressure and strong incentives from the federal government, state legislatures across the country have enacted laws to increase accountability for public school teachers. Many of these efforts have focused on implementing high-stakes teacher evaluation systems and repealing teacher tenure. Studies have also shown that the increased dismissal threat under new high-stakes evaluation has led to more significant voluntary attrition of lower-performing teachers (Kraft, Brunner, Dougherty, & Schwegman, 2018). The discrepancy between stated expectations of the role during a training program and the reality of the job lead to shock and abrupt departure. Early career teachers who leave the profession are lost permanently prior to the development of teaching expertise, which is when teachers become the most effective (Ryan, et al., 2017). Of particular concern are alternative certification programs that reduce the amount of preparation teachers have before taking full-

time classroom responsibilities. Research continues to document that the less preparation a teacher has, the less students achieve (Linek, Sampson, Haas, Moore, & Nylan, 2012).

One of the first interactions upon embarking on teaching experience as potential employment is through Alternative Certification Programs (ACP) or teacher preparation programs throughout undergraduate coursework. The teacher preparation programs in undergraduate programs take longer to complete; however, with the demand for teachers increasing, the need for fast-track alternative certification programs is becoming necessary to prevent long-term teacher vacancies. A typical practical aim of alternative certification programs is to concentrate teacher preparation in a smaller amount of time, facilitate teacher training, and help tackle teacher shortages. Research on the effectiveness of alternative certification programs is gradually growing. However, it is still limited. It is difficult to draw conclusions about alternative certification because differences between programs that range from short summer emergency certification programs to two-year programs with ongoing support, integrated coursework, close mentoring, and supervision (Consuegra, Engels, & Struyven, 2014). Alternative Certification Programs are far from being a significant alternative to traditional programs; however, Scriber and Heinen's research suggests that efforts to define and implement effective ACP programming are significantly influenced by the context in which the program operates (Scribner & Heinen, 2009).

Attracting teachers to the profession and meeting the demand for recruitment constitutes only part of the equation for building a thriving teaching profession, as the core of the teacher quality debate is not limited to the preparation and recruitment of candidates into teacher education programs. Research suggests that alternative programs do not necessarily increase teacher retention rates; they may even propel the cycle of high teacher turnover rates. Rates of retention and attrition were directly related to those driven to the program's mission and goals, specifically, programs that recruited lifelong educators with higher retention (Heineke, Mazza, & Tichnor-Wagner, 2014). Most teachers who enter the

profession through nontraditional routes tend to leave the classroom within three years, while dropout rates among teachers who complete traditional four-year preparation programs are significantly lower. Specifically, the five-year retention rate is 76% for teachers from traditional teacher education training and only 68% for teachers from alternative certification (Linek, Sampson, Haas, Moore, & Nylan, 2012).

It is not alternative certification programs that succeed or fail in producing quality teacher preparation; instead, it is specific contexts and aspects of programs that facilitate or obstruct professional development. Putting well-meaning people into classrooms with minimal training and supervision is like allowing someone with a bachelor's degree in literature to practice medicine if they take a three-hour seminar each week, have a mentor down the hall, and have a supervisor visit them once a month. Trusting medical care to someone with similar credentials and professional development is unthinkable, yet we trust the futures of many inner-city children to just such people (Linek, Sampson, Haas, Moore, & Nylan, 2012). Research is needed to untangle the interaction between different features of programs, school contexts, and teacher candidates to identify the essential ingredients needed to produce desired learning outcomes in teaching certification programs (Consuegra, Engels, & Struyven, 2014).

## VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

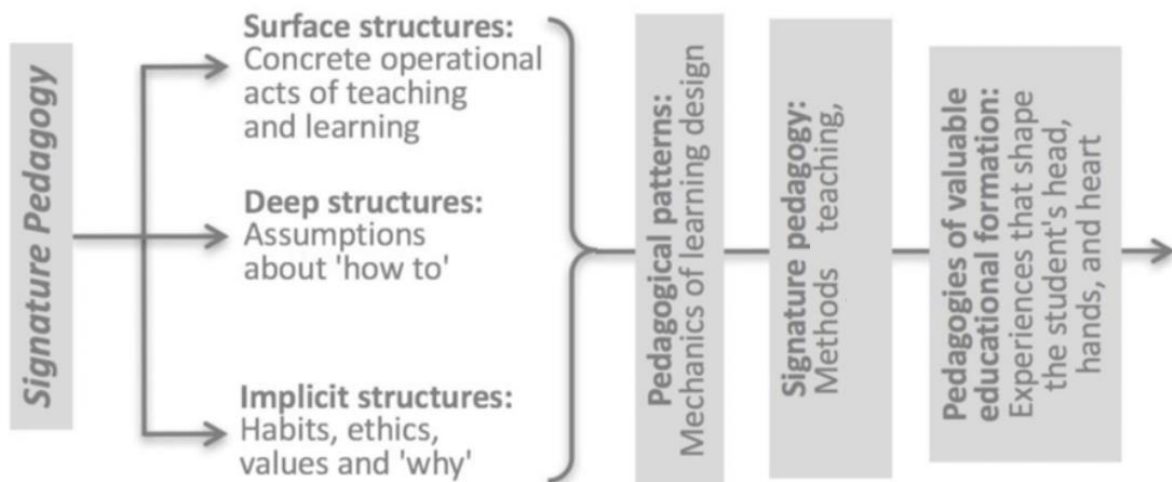
As a measure of investigation, this project will incorporate the Signature Pedagogies framework. Signature pedagogies explore the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions (Schulman L. , 2005). The framework is divided into three ideas:

- The *surface structure* consists of operational acts of:
  - teaching and learning,
  - showing and demonstrating,



- questioning and answering,
  - interacting and withholding,
  - approaching and withdrawing.
- The **deep structure**, a set of assumptions about how best to implement a particular body of knowledge and know-how to the profession.
  - The **implicit structure**, comprised of a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values, and dispositions.

Figure 5: Signature Pedagogies *Source* (Murray, Norgard Toft, & Morgan, 2017)



Signature pedagogies prefigure the cultures of professional work and provide the early socialization into the practices and values of a field. The comparative study of signature pedagogies across professions can offer alternative approaches for improving professional education that might otherwise not be considered when entering a new career (Schulman L. , 2005). **Specifically, this capstone seeks to explore how the Signature Pedagogies framework's implicit structure forms the foundation of developing a career mindset in education.**

The first two structures (surface and deep) serve as the building blocks to understanding what is necessary to be successful in the chosen field. These structures are shaped on receiving, applying, and executing knowledge need for performance in the profession, while the implicit structure dwells on the individual's mindset in respect to their personal outlook of their profession (Schulman L. , 2005). The implicit defines how knowledge is criticized, accepted, or discarded while also exploring how teachers apply morality and values to the profession.

This distinction between legal reasoning and moral judgment emerged from the pedagogy as a tacit principle (Schulman L. , 2005). This structure can provide an anchor of reasoning for how teachers view their longevity and persistence in education initially, presently, and in the future. If examined, this structure can help shape, develop or create internal drivers that lead to retention in education. Together, these pedagogies create atmospheres of risk-taking, as well as occasions for excitement. Incorporating the presence of emotional investment, the emotional content of learning is well sustained, creating possible experiences of teaching and learning that can influence the values, dispositions, and characters of those who learn, offering more opportunity for character formation (Schulman L. , 2005).

The implicit structure can be applied to a specific teacher's beliefs about their professional attitudes, values, and outlook on their education careers. A teacher's ability to continue to adopt and maintain a growth mindset throughout their academic tenure plays is a crucial component of their retention. As noted previously, there is value in teaching as a profession (serving the community, investing in young people's lives, etc.) (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999); however, it takes time to realize the joy factor in education because of the negativity that surrounds the field. There is also a need for intensive coaching to develop a positive outlook, through growth mindset modeling, to shape belief that longevity in education is not only possible, can be maintained to retirement.

Although there is a minimal amount of literature available regarding career mindset components in ACP’s, this capstone focuses on investigating three research questions to guide the study.

**Table 2: Research Questions with Conceptual Framework and Data Collection Method**

Research Question	Conceptual Framework	Data Collection Method
1) What aspects of the Urban Teachers program shape the development of a career mindset in education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth Mindset Theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative Survey</li> <li>• Qualitative Interview</li> </ul>
2) Do members of the Urban Teachers program feel that they can persist long term as a classroom educator, ultimately leading to retirement in the profession?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth Mindset Theory</li> <li>• Signature Pedagogies in The Profession Theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative Survey</li> <li>• Qualitative Interview</li> </ul>
3) With a strategic 4-year commitment, how effective is the Urban Teachers' design in increasing teacher retention as a measure to close the academic achievement gap?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signature Pedagogies in The Profession Theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative Survey</li> <li>• Qualitative Interview</li> </ul>

## VII. PROJECT DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher attrition as it pertains to holistic preparation in alternative certification programs that can propel long-term retention in teachers. The review of existing literature and the lack of direct literature available revealed a need for a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative methodologies toward the research questions. These mixed methods approach results in two phases to the research in which the quantitative approach is followed by the qualitative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative (text) data are collected and analyzed second in the sequence and help explain the first phase's quantitative results. The qualitative phase builds on the quantitative phase, as they are connected in the study's intermediate stage. Moreover, the quantitative data and analysis provide a general understanding of the research

problem. The qualitative data and analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants’ views in more depth (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006).

In this capstone, the quantitative data was collected first through the researcher’s self-designed survey for cohort members of Urban Teachers and program staff using Survey Monkey, followed by the qualitative study in the interviews with select cohort members and program staff.

Consistent with Program Theory Evaluation (PTE) because of its strength in examining program processes, structures, and outcomes, this capstone used this method to investigate Urban Teachers’ program logics throughout initial training to monitored practice. Overall, this evaluation sought to provide an opportunity, if necessary, to improve Urban Teachers’ alternative certification program by exposing areas that threaten successful program outcome and hinder the foundation of building career mindsets in its cohort members (Scribner & Heinen, 2009).

**Participants and Sampling Procedures**

Data collection began at the end of the 2020 fall semester, focusing on gathering quantitative information received through surveys using Survey Monkey and qualitative data from a series of stakeholder interviews. I designed a combination of two surveys, as the goal was to investigate the Urban Teachers program's viewpoints from both the cohort members (Residents, Years 2-4 and Alumni) and program staff.

**Table 3: Stakeholder Target Groups for Survey Distribution**

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Residents (Year 1)	Cohort Members Year 2, 3 and 4	Alumni	Program Staff

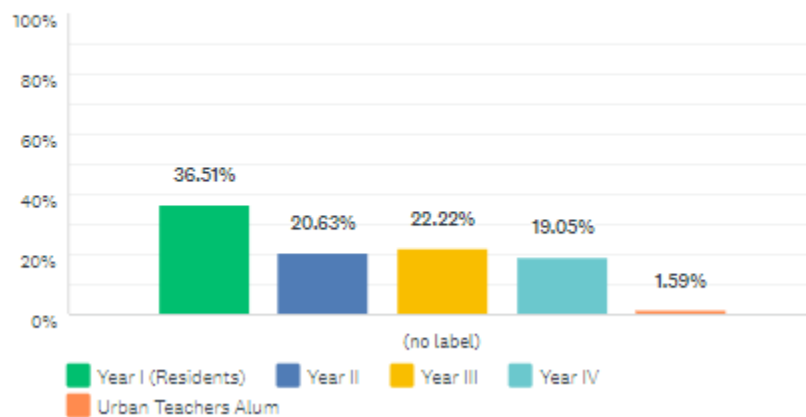
Urban Teachers Cohort Survey

The Urban Teachers Director of Program & Partnerships initially assisted with this process by placing the cohort survey in the Wednesday weekly newsletter to ensure all teachers could attain access. It was reported that the entirety of Urban Teachers and Alumni are sent the weekly newsletter which would account for 322 recipients. Based on the amount of participation, the Director of Talent and Pipeline Partnerships for Uplift Education provided additional assistance after proof of approval of this project through the Urban Teachers program. All 89 current Urban Teachers' work emails, within the educational network were provided to allow the surveys to be sent out to individual emails to increase awareness and participation. As the survey was confidential, the participants were not asked to indicate their employment district, nor specific name unless participating in follow up interviews. The survey consisted of 10 open and closed-ended questions (found in Appendix B<sup>1</sup>) in which all parts of the survey required a response from participants.

**Figure 6: Data Representation of Cohort Survey Participants**

What year of the Urban Teachers Program are you in?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 0



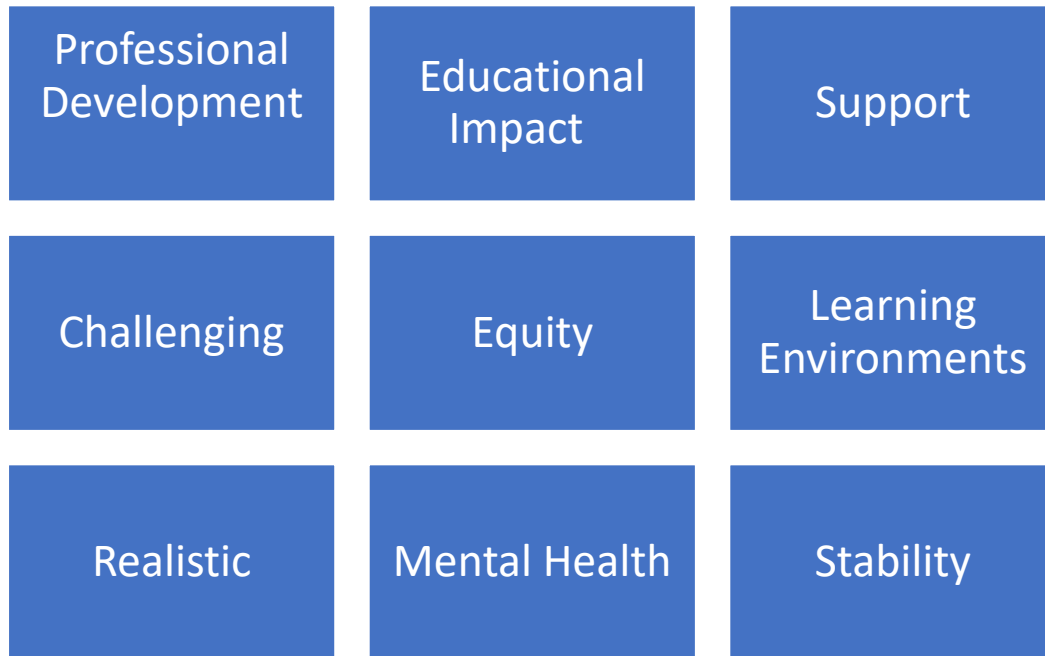
Within the data collection phase, 63 respondents had a 53.3% participation rate of the 118 cohort members that were initially contacted. The 63 respondents

included Residents, Cohort Members in years 2, 3, and 4 of the programs, and DFW Alum that completed

<sup>1</sup> Urban Teachers Career Readiness Survey

the entirety of the program in 2020. Using the filtering, word cloud and cross-tabulate features on Survey Monkey, developed frequency of key words used to draw preliminary conclusions. After analyzing the data from the surveys, thematic coding was used to identify themes from the research questions' responses.

Figure 7: Thematic Codes from Open-Ended Questions (Cohort Responses)

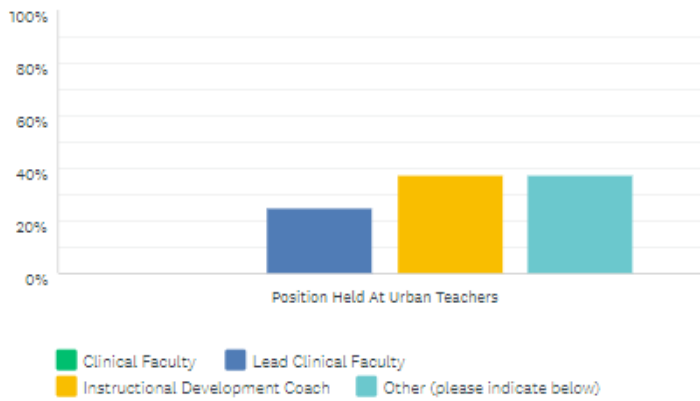


Urban Teachers Staff Survey

**Figure 8: Data Representation of Staff Survey Participants**

In what capacity do you serve at Urban Teachers? ( Please select all that may apply)

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



The Urban Teachers Director of Program & Partnerships initially assisted with this process by placing the staff survey in the Urban Teacher internal Slack Channel to ensure all staff could attain access. Due to the amount

of initial participation, the Executive Director of Urban Teachers DFW aided with additional messaging to program staff. The staff survey consisted of twelve open and closed-ended questions (found in Appendix C<sup>2</sup>) in which all parts of the survey required a response from participants. Within the data collection phase, there were eight respondents with a 40% participation rate of 20 staff initially contacted. Represented in respondents are; Lead Clinical Faculty and Instructional Development Coaches. The Executive Director, Site Team Leadership Director of Program & Partnerships, and an Adjunct Professor and Clinical Faculty's dual role are included in the "Other" category. It is imperative to note that the DFW location is still a growing location for the Urban Teachers network and expands with the number of clinical faculty, additional staff, and teachers. Following the same procedure as the cohort survey, filtering, word cloud and cross-tabulate features on Survey Monkey were used to develop frequency of key words used to draw preliminary conclusions.

<sup>2</sup> Urban Teachers Program Staff Career Readiness Survey

Figure 9: Thematic Codes from Open-Ended Questions (Program Staff Responses)



After analyzing the data from Staff, thematic coding was used to identify themes from the responses aligned to the research questions. These themes served as the foci of the follow-up interviews to receive more detail. Initial concern was the reluctance to introduce cohorts and program staff to additional tasks outside of the program commitment in addition to the overwhelming strain of COVID-19 in the educational environment. The possibility of time constraints with the proposed addition of participation in focus groups would add to already tightly booked schedules as cohort members are full-time teachers and students in a rigorous master's program. At the client's request, the initially planned focused groups were adjusted to volunteer to follow-up interviews.

Using the convenience sampling method, stakeholders relevant to the ascertained data were identified to provide more context on emerging themes. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet specific practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate, are included for the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2015). Considering that participation was voluntary, an additional email was sent to those originally surveyed to request to interview if willing and able to participate in moving to the next phase of data collection.



## Stakeholder Interviews

As the education profession continues to operate amid a pandemic, follow-up interviews were conducted on Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft TEAMS. With prior permission, each anonymous interview session was recorded between 30 and 45 minutes, depending on the additional context stakeholders chose to share to provide additional information. Before each interview session, the participant was assured that their participation was voluntary, and the interview could be stopped at any point. Also, a small portion of relationship building for comfortability was established as well.

### Figure 10: Conversation Dialogue Used for Interview Opening

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*“Good Evening/ Good Morning Good Afternoon. How was your day today? Aside from that, how are you? Thank You so much for agreeing to meet with me today. I know your schedule is busy, as teaching in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented its challenges. In advance, I appreciate you for creating time to touch point with me to receive additional information as a follow up to the survey you already completed. As a reminder, this research is separate of Urban Teachers and your participation is completely voluntary. Your identity will remain anonymous and we can stop this interview at any time you would no longer like to proceed. Are there any additional questions before we begin?”*

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Just as with the surveys, there were two different sets of interview questions (Appendix D). One set for cohort members/Alumni and the other for program staff. I interviewed six cohort members and four program staff. Cohort members ranged from residency year to Alumni as all program placements were represented (*Resident, Fellow Years 1-3*). The purpose of the interviews with cohort members/ Alumni was to gain more context on data trends uncovered from the original survey. Interviews also created an opportunity for participants to share their personal experiences and vantage points toward the program. The program staff interviews presented an additional opportunity to understand program structure, goals for Urban Teachers DFW, additional support models, and any other context provided to corroborate collected data from both cohort members and program staff surveys.

Moreover, the interviews helped create a narrative to accompany the data to propel recommendations in the correct direction to meet the needs of the end-users of the program. As interviews were recorded, transcripts were created as an additional mechanism to identify trends within the responses and to find commonalities throughout the data. The interview transcripts were analyzed and uncovered a variance of opinions, in which not all teachers shared the same views, as well as program staff. These differences were key in creating a vast view in the end users interpretation of effectiveness within the Urban Teachers program.

Participants preferred to remain anonymous regarding their positions within the program as their participation, however, they provided a mass amount of honest and transparent feedback in their approaches to answering the interview questions aligned to the conceptual framework (See Appendix E<sup>3</sup>).

## VIII. FINDINGS

### Research Question 1: What aspects of the Urban Teachers program shape a career mindset in education?

For this Capstone's purpose, an investigation into teachers' mindsets before entering education, key drivers in the selection of education as a career, and the Urban Teachers approach to investing in developing a career mindset to increase long-term teacher retention in education were explored. Through this investigation, two significant findings emerged from the data collected concerning this research question: **growth mindset-oriented coaching cycles** and the **specific coursework** cohort members complete during the master's program during the first two years of Urban Teachers.

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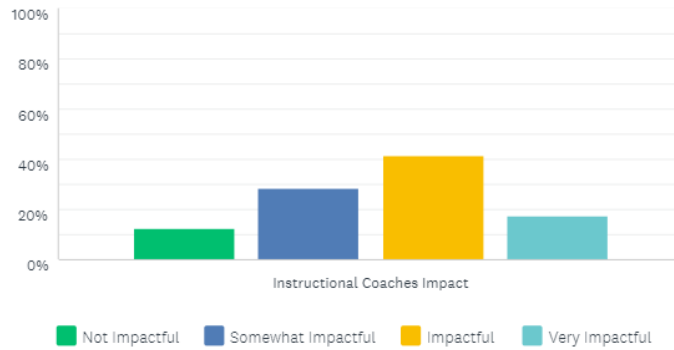
<sup>3</sup> Cohort and Program Staff Interview Questions Aligned to Conceptual Framework

Finding 1: Evidence of Growth Mindset Centered Coaching Cycles

**Figure 11: Cohort Teachers Response to Survey Question #6**

How impactful is/was the relationship with your Urban Teachers development coach on your future as teacher?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 0



Of the surveyed population, less than 13% advised that their relationship with their Urban Teachers development coach did not have an impact on

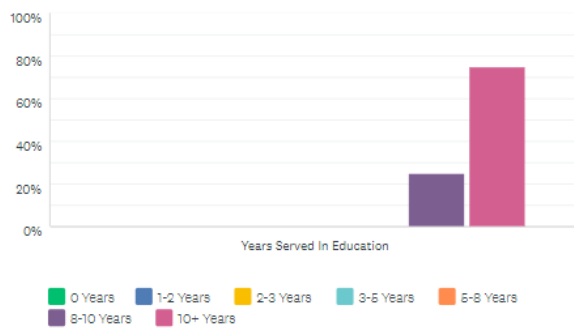
their future as a teacher, while over 28% advised that the relationship had somewhat of an impact. Also, over 40% concluded the relationship had a definite impact, with over 17% surveying that their relationship with their Urban Teachers development coach was very impactful in their future as a teacher. “Each meeting with my Urban Teacher Coach was an opportunity to rebuild my confidence. Not only did she allow me to vent about all of my frustrations, but she was also there to tell me the truth about the things I have the power to change within my classroom that will help the job not only be doable right now but coping skills to understand that I can commit to this work until retirement.”, said Cohort interviewee #5. Another cohort interviewee reported, "I think it depends on your coach. I had several great coaches, but I know of plenty of absolutely awful coaches. If anything, their coaching was discouraging as it was not personal and was more focused on what should be happening in the classroom rather than asking what barriers possibly exist as to why there seems to be a lack of evidence of growth in target areas? The type of coach you have and their approach to understanding that each teacher can't be coached the same is a key factor in rather teachers persist long term." said Cohort Interviewee #3. In an interview with Cohort Interviewee #4, it was reported; “I don't have a relationship with any of my Urban

Teachers coaches. My most recent one reaches out every now and then, but transparently, I didn't particularly enjoy most of the coaches I had. If the coaches were more consistent and we didn't get a new one often, maybe my answer would be different. I probably had 6-8 coaches and liked 2-3 of them. With that said, it's not a factor for me, but I know for some people in my cohort, it is/was a factor.”

**Figure 12: Program Staff Response to Survey Question #3**

Before transitioning to Urban Teachers, how many years did you serve in K-12 education?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



As indicated on the graph to the left, there is evidence of years of teaching experience before transitioning to Urban Teachers. This experience can create

an opportunity to develop teachers based on their own experience while in practice and based on narratives collected through others' lens those coaches have interacted. “I think the most important priority for any teacher development coach is to have a true understanding that applying a growth mindset to all parts of the job as an Educator is essential. The job is tough, and not for the faint at heart; however, if a teacher can develop to understand the “why” the work is so vital, then there is a chance that longevity in the profession can be actually be attained.”, said Program Staff Interviewee #2.

Although a formal evaluation measure, growth mindset, and professionalism have been removed from the Urban Teachers evaluation model, they are now phased into the coaching cycle to help teachers process and respond to feedback. “In reviewing data, Urban Teachers had to take a step back in this area for evaluation, as those that scored below average were mainly people of color. The best thing they could have done was remove this and add it to the coaching cycle to be equitable to teachers. Developing

growth mindsets are important to shape authentically, when there is coaching and extended resources available, not on a specified rubric that was once based on personality and how one may perceive it.”, said Program Staff Interviewee #4. Cohort members had varying opinions toward the coaching cycles being helpful in their outlook on longevity in the profession.

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*How instructional coaches interact with others is as important as what they do. An Instructional Coach that sees themselves as an expert and believes teachers simply need to buy into their good advice on what they did right or wrong is likely to encounter some resistance. Effective Instructional Coaches see teachers as professionals as the ultimate decision-makers about what and how they learn. Moreover, leading as a partner (Knight, 2017, p. 15).*

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According to Shulman (2005), uncertainty, visibility, and accountability inevitably raise the emotional stakes of the pedagogical encounters. Uncertainty produces both excitement and anxiety and creates an atmosphere of risk-taking and occasions for exhilaration and excitement. Teachers [Instructional Coaches] must manage anxiety levels to produce learning rather than paralyzing them with terror. When the emotional content of learning is well sustained, we have the real possibility of pedagogies of formation—experiences of teaching and learning that can influence the values, dispositions, and characters of those who learn (Schulman L. , 2005). This literature further concludes that the Instructional Coach relationship is vital to the teacher's healthy development. This relationship has the power to shift mindsets (either positively or negatively) and shift influence on how the teacher views education as a career.

Strategies in coaching and development of Urban Teachers are inconsistent, however there is slight evidence that depending on the coach, the development of growth mindsets targeting long term retention are implemented within the coaching cycle. As this is an aspect that Urban Teachers has stated is included within each coach-in, stakeholders report that it is more person based than full organizational

follow through. There is a need for consistency and from each coach and staff member in this category to ensure that all teachers are grounded in the same experience and coached in areas to help shape their mindsets to long term careers in education regardless of hindrances experienced.

### **Finding 2: Targeted Concentration of Teacher Preparation within the Educational Studies Master's Degree Program**

Urban Teachers and the Johns Hopkins School of Education have collaborated on a curriculum specifically designed to give teachers the skills they need to empower students in urban schools. Graduates are prepared to teach special needs children, develop research-based curricula to close the achievement gap, and address students and families' social and emotional needs. Urban Teachers participants receive a Master of Science in Education degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Education in which the coursework is taught by School of Education faculty and is a clinically based curriculum with a focus on real-world classroom experience (Urban Teachers, 2021).

The program concentration consists of three specified tracks (Elementary Education, Secondary Literacy, and Secondary Maths). Also, the DFW location provides additional coursework in English as a Second Language. "I chose the Secondary Literacy track for my program of choice. Once I was engaged in the coursework, I quickly realized that this degree was designed specifically to get better at teaching within the classroom. Some of the information could be transferred; however, I think it's geared at exposing teachers to a number of skills to incorporate inside of their own classrooms." said Cohort Interviewee #1.

Figure 13: Urban Teachers Masters Program Outline (Source: Urban Teachers Recruitment Brochure)

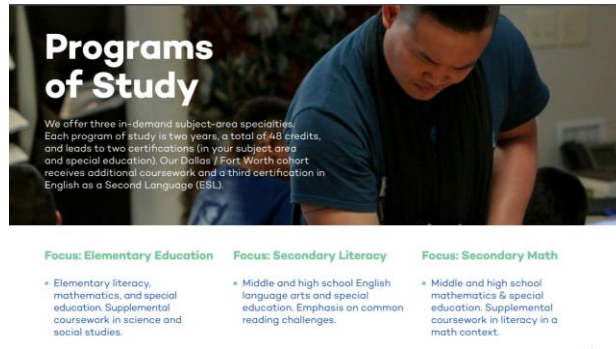
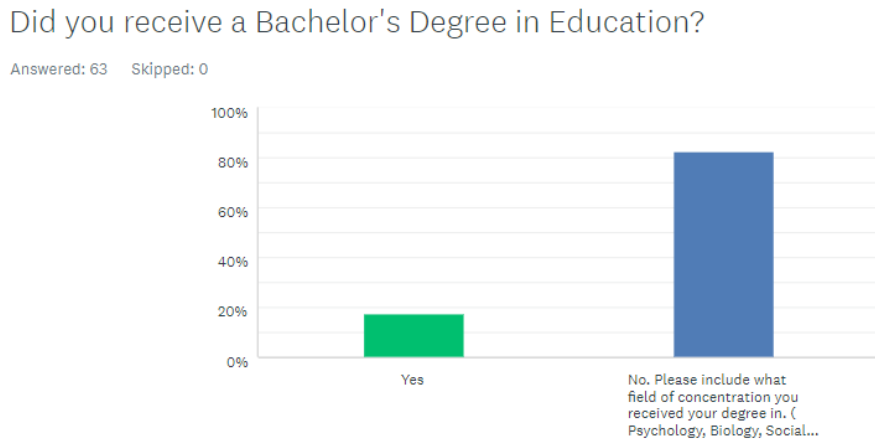


Figure 14: Survey Respondents with or without a bachelor’s degree in Education



Cohort members expressed how helpful the targeted concentration of the Master's program was/is helpful to their work within the classroom. Of the 63

cohort members, 82.54% of the surveyed population showed no Bachelor's Degree in Education, while only 17.46% did have a Bachelor’s Degree in Education. “If Urban Teachers relied only on the coaching model and not offered the additional coursework, I probably would have left the program within the first year. The Masters really does help with learning and putting skills into practice to help us get better as we move along in the program and our teaching career.”, said Cohort Interviewee #5.

On question 9 of the initial survey (*Is there any additional professional development that needs to be added to Urban Teachers to encourage long term persistence as a classroom teacher?*), Respondent 23 concluded, “While I already had a Bachelors in Education, I can admit, the additional foci of the Masters has allowed me to perfect my craft as a teacher. In a way, the classes feel like an extension of professional




development. I grew up knowing I wanted to teach, but sadly, the undergraduate preparation is not enough for realistically what is really needed in classrooms. It is helpful to have an extension of learning so that I really can say with confidence I have the skills I need actually to teach well.” Lastly, Cohort Member #3 shared, “ I do feel that having a Masters in actual teaching practices will be helpful as there are not many other avenues in which you can use the Masters. Urban Teachers does want teachers to stay in the classroom, and I think with the intentionality in this program, they have a shot at actually seeing cohort members retire after 20 plus years of service in the classroom.”

Interviewed program staff also agreed with these sentiments, “The collaboration of the development of a specified master’s program to keep teachers teaching was essential for the program. Not only do we want to be sure they are equipped with the skills to teach, but also, the curriculum knowledge to do so in different environments. This is mainly why there was a need for the DFW location to add ESL to the certifications. In order to prepare to meet the need of the demographic we serve in throughout the Dallas Metroplex, we must have adequate tools in place to do so effectively.” Said Program Staff Interviewee #2.

The Masters degree is one of the most important aspects in this program. Not only are cohort members able to receive a professional degree, it is in areas of concentration specifically designed for classroom teaching long term. The teacher’s investment in their choice of any of these plans create an opportunity to receive more training and guidance that can help develop more confidence in their teaching, thus, can lead to assurance that teaching can be a long term career. Based on the data, cohort members not only value the Masters , but it creates an opportunity for them to learn advanced skills to be used while still in the program to improve their technique as practinoners in the fiel d of education.



Table 4: Master of Science Specified Degree Plans (Source (Urban Teachers, 2021) )

Degree Concentration: Elementary Education and Special Education	Degree Concentration: Secondary English Language and Special Education	Degree Concentration: Secondary Math and Special Education																																																																																																																																																																																																																					
<p><b>Master of Science in Education: Educational Studies</b> Elementary Education and Special Education</p>	<p><b>Master of Science in Education: Educational Studies</b> Secondary English Language Arts and Special Education</p>	<p><b>Master of Science in Education: Educational Studies</b> Secondary Mathematics and Special Education</p>																																																																																																																																																																																																																					
<p style="text-align: center;">Adviser: Eric Rice   (410) 516-4528   ericrice@jhu.edu</p>																																																																																																																																																																																																																							
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*Among the resulting innovations are teacher education models that allow more extensive study of specific disciplines, along with more intensive clinical training in schools. Some new models are one or two-year graduate programs that serve recent graduates or mid-career recruits. Because the graduate year in these models allows students to focus exclusively on the task of preparing to teach, such programs make possible yearlong school-based internships that are tightly integrated with coursework on teaching. Many of these programs have joined with school districts to create professional development schools, which — like teaching hospitals in medicine — provide sites for state-of-the-art practice and training novices, offering professional development to veteran teachers. Research has shown that many of these schools have improved teaching practice and student achievement while building professional knowledge (Darling-Hammond, *Teaching as a Profession: Lessons in Teacher Preparation and Professional Development*, 2005, p. 1).*

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**Research Question 2: Do members of the Urban Teachers program feel that they can persist long term as a classroom educator, ultimately leading to retirement in the profession?**

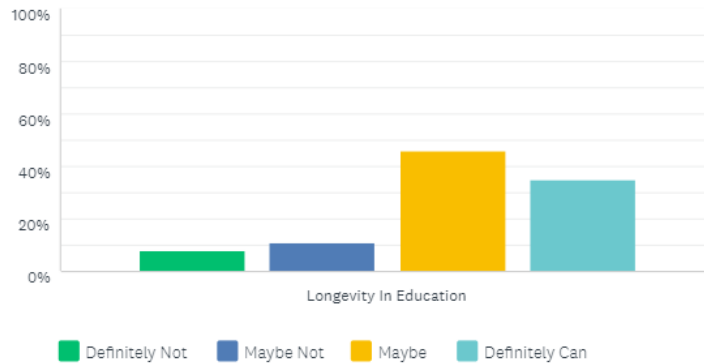
Through a further investigation into the mindsets of teachers before entering education, critical drivers in the selection of education as a career, as well as the Urban Teachers approach to investing in developing a career mindset to increase long term teacher retention, two significant findings emerged from the data collected concerning this research question: Despite the four-year commitment and additional resources provided, there is still **uncertainty toward long term futures in education** and uncontrollable **shifts in educational policies and organizational factors** as drivers of teacher retention.

### Finding 3: Evidence of Teacher Uncertainty Toward Long-Term Future in The Classroom

**Figure 15: Cohorts Members Response to Teacher Retirement**

Do you view teaching as a long term career in which you will retire?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 0



In response to the question on the left, there were a varied amount of opinions indicated by

cohort members in their supplemental explanations. Of the surveyed population, only 35% confidently view teaching as a long-term career leading to retirement. Survey Respondent 19 explained, "Education is my passion. I will be in the education field for the rest of my life." Respondent 58 stated "It is where my heart is. I feel like I can make a difference and help open doors for my students. I am lead by a passion to make the world a better place and take action against the inequities that plague our public school system. The money makes it difficult to see myself comfortably retiring, but I do see myself having the passion to teach as long as I can." Respondent 5 shared, "Like I mentioned I want to continue to teach by eventually moving up in levels and rigor. Moreover, education is a path that demands that one remain invested in the craft and its peripheries, which is why I am in it for the long run, so to speak."

On the contrary, over 45% of those surveyed indicated they were unsure if teaching is a career they can retire. Survey Respondent 1 shared "I love my profession; however, the bureaucracy of it all is overwhelming at times. There is a disconnect with our leaders at the top (Betsy DeVos) and then it cripples down. During my first year of teaching, my lead teacher would always remind me how different teaching was compared to when she started. There was a time where teachers felt the freedom to teach in their own styles and decide what practices were best for their students' growth. Now, everything feels micromanaged and stressful." Survey Respondent 55 noted, "I came into this program dedicated to teaching and the field of education. There have been several times that I wanted to give up everything and return to corporate America. Urban Teachers did nothing to help support me. In fact, if not for many family and supporters outside the organization, I would have given up before completing my degree requirements. I probably won't stay with the organization for the fourth and final year. While I may try to teach in another state, I definitely do not any further involvement with the Urban Teachers organization. It is a sham and does more harm than good for potential teachers in DFW, in my opinion."

	SumA to Res	Res to Y1F	Y1F to Y2F	Y2F to Y3F
2016	98%	89%	89%	79%
2017	90%	80%	87%	80%
2018	95%	83%	78%	
2019	92%	86%		
2020	95%			

Survey Respondent 15 reported "Be more clear that becoming a teacher should only be for people who see themselves as

career teachers. Recruiting other majors to come teach is enticing them to do something they are not prepared for or really see themselves doing for long. Once you find yourself dealing with the reality of teaching, which is that it is 90% classroom management and 10% teaching your subject, you will see many teachers leave. Also, the amount of work we have to do does not align with the pay." In response to interview question #2 (Does the Urban Teachers, preparation model for cohort members encourage the possibility of retirement as a classroom instructor?) Cohort Interviewee #5 shared, "Absolutely not.

They like to pretend that's the goal. The program describes itself as promoting long-term teachers with its four years of service, but the reality is most participants don't make it through earning their certification after their third year, much less consider retirement from classroom instruction.”

Moreover, Cohort Interviewee #1 shared the following context when asked question #1 (Did you enter this program to teach more than five years?); “My original intention was to teach for at least five years and then evaluate where I was at personally and determine what my long-term goals are at that time. I am still considering either applying for Med School at that time or working towards becoming a Collegiate Coach.” while Interviewee #4 noted: “I entered the program with the intention of teaching for the duration of my career.” There is the question if the term “career trajectory” is relevant in the study of teachers’ work lives and that re-conceptualizing the term” trajectory” to reflect the complexity of career patterns. However, there seems to be a division among the teachers of those who view and live teaching as a long-term profession and those who see and live it in a more exploratory manner (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014).

As Urban Teachers is not to blame for all issues regarding attrition, this data accounts that there is a lack of support and transparency in the program that would help encourage persistence despite setbacks. As indicated in the table, there is evidence of attrition within each cohort. Using the explanations as a guide, it is possible that Urban Teachers consider their specific role in the attrition and retention of teachers in the DFW area.

**Figure 16: Additional Cohort Members Response to Survey Question 10** (Source: Survey Monkey)

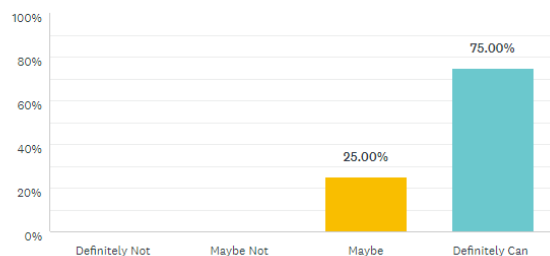
*“I like teaching and want to stay for a while but it is frustrating to be a part of so many systems and not have a lot of support around changing them. I think joining a union would change this but many charter schools do not have them.” -Survey Respondent 49*

*“I am looking to stay a teacher, however, I am not sure that I want to remain in the same type of school as I am in now.”  
-Survey Respondent 36*

*“I see it this way because it is a calling for me. It is very personal and while a lot of things don't make sense at this point in history, to me, being a teacher does. I do however see myself facing a lot of anxiety from being a teacher long term as well as potential disrespect from administration and politicians.” -Survey Respondent 38*

**Figure 17: Program Staff Response Teacher Retirement**

Do you view teaching as a sustainable, long term career in which a person can retire?



On the contrary, 75 % of

Program Staff believe

teaching is a sustainable career leading to retirement.

Survey Respondent #3 stated,

“This depends on your

placement, how much you're supported, and how much time you can give of yourself outside of standard

work hours.”, while Respondent #5 noted, “Pay for performance and increasing teacher-leadership

opportunities make a long term career in education more desirable now than it has been in the past.” The

viewpoints expressed here uncover a need for not only structured onboarding for program staff, but also,

a need for transparency with regarding their eligibility for pay increases and teacher leadership. This information can have a direct affect on a teacher's decision to stay in teaching long term and shift to a postivie mindset, or persuade a teacher to leave the profession, leading to the widening the achievement gap for students.

#### **Finding 4: Uncontrollable Aspects of Educational Policy Leading To Teacher Attrition**

One of the significant shifts in recent American education policy post No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 was a shift in accountability and improvement efforts from the school to individual teacher level via rigorous performance evaluation (Rodriguez, Swain, & Springer, 2012). This shift was primarily prompted by the federal Race to the Top initiative, which incentivized states and local education agencies to introduce various evaluation systems that rely on some mix of student test scores and rubric-based direct observation ratings by certified, trained observers. As part of these reforms, states and local education agencies assign varying levels of consequences (i.e.-, loss of tenure protections or even termination) and rewards (i.e.-, bonuses, salary increases, and leadership opportunities) based on a teacher's overall performance rating (Rodriguez, Swain, & Springer, 2012). Survey Repondent 3 alluded to these measures when answering question 10 (do you view teaching as a long term career in which you can retire) "Until the system designed is broken, the idea of teaching in a system that only cares about test scores and keeping students in school for the sole purpose of funding instead of carrying about whether these students are literate, I cannot partake. We can all agree that minority scholars underperform on tests and are underserved, and they leave school to get low-paying jobs or attend schools with limited prestige, and yet, we exacerbate the problem by not ensuring our students are literate. Until we do, I cannot and will not retire in this career."

Additionally, over the years, the devaluing of teaching as a career in the U.S. and the decline of teacher earnings has begun to push many people away from the teaching profession (Walcott, 2019).

Cohort Interviewee #5 shared more context when answering question #1 (Did you enter this program with the intention of teaching for more than five years?); “Originally I did because I thought I would have a similar experience as the teachers I had growing up. I remember my teachers being so respected by students and teaching being a notable profession to seek more information to enter. My experience has been the complete opposite. I am not perpetuating that my teachers worked less; however, it seems that the workload has increased due to standardized testing becoming a mandate as a factor of student achievement.”

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*There is some evidence that pay matters in teachers’ decisions to stay or leave but it does not make the entire difference. Organizational factors within schools, such as lack of support from administrators, student discipline issues and lack of input and decision-making power seem to be playing a larger role as well as unmanageable assignments, accountability pressures and paperwork (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014).*

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The combination of uncontrollable educational policies such as standardized testing and teacher evaluations, coupled with charter school vs. public school measures, state accountability ratings, and campus report cards, can be a factor in retaining teachers. When asked about retirement in teaching (survey question #10), Survey Respondent #32 shared, “I like teaching and want to stay for a while, but it is frustrating to be a part of so many systems and not have a lot of support around changing them. I think joining a union would change this, but many charter schools do not have them.” Cohort Interviewee #2 stated, “Take this year, for example, COVID has completely changed everything for our kids and my job. I can’t control whether a kid gets up to come to school virtually, but I am evaluated like it is my fault and still have network goals to reach to be considered for either a 3% or 6% bonus. There are teachers that I know that are phenomenal, but if kids aren't attending class or putting in any effort, how good of an educator they are does not matter.” Interviewee #6 stated; “The fact that the State of Texas is waiving accountability ratings this year but still are insistent on having STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of



Academic Readiness) exams for students was a huge slap in the face when we are still navigating and learning the best way to teach in the pandemic. This is a prime example of our kids not being viewed as humans but numbers to make money off of. I didn't sign up for this, as it gets worse and worse as the years pass. COVID taught me that this job might not be sustainable, and I have probably been living in a fairy tale as my campus, district, and state give little grace before it is back to regularly scheduled programming."

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*Further research should examine the effectiveness of policies and practices that might mitigate potential harm from the instability introduced by increases in turnover and policies that focus on the supply of sustainable and effective teachers to fill new vacancies. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners should pay careful attention to crafting feedback systems that promote the development and retention of teachers who meet the broad range of needs of an increasingly diverse student population across discrete communities and educational systems (Rodriguez, Swain, & Springer, 2012).*

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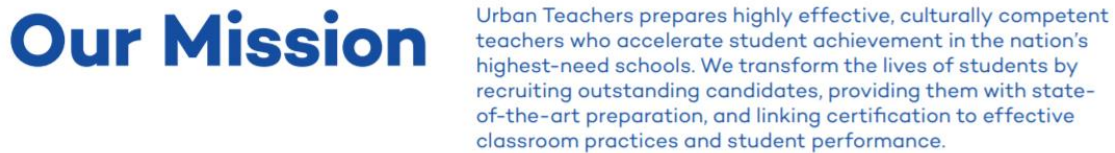
**Research Question 3: With a strategic 4-year commitment, how effective is the Urban Teachers' design in increasing teacher retention as a measure to close the academic achievement gap?**

To further the investigation into the mindsets of teachers before entering education, critical drivers in the selection of education as a career and the Urban Teachers approach to investing in developing a career mindset to increase long-term teacher retention. Three significant findings emerged from the data collected concerning this research question: Urban Teacher partnerships with **high needs campuses** (Improvement Required -Tier III and IV) schools **contribute to teacher attrition** which continues to widen the achievement gap, **misaligned teacher content** placement based on campus needs, and despite the targeted Master's Program, there is a **lack of additional professional development** and support to help teachers navigate campus culture and educational environment.

## Finding 5: Lack of Teacher Preparation Navigating Partner Charter Networks and Improvement Required

### Campuses

Figure 18: Urban Teachers Mission (Source: (Urban Teachers, 2021) Recruitment Brochure)



As stated above and earlier in this Capstone, Urban Teachers' mission is to prepare teachers to teach in high needs schools. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines a high-needs school as “within the top quartile of elementary and secondary schools statewide, as ranked by the number of unfilled, available teacher positions; or is located in an area where at least 30 percent of students come from families with incomes below the poverty line; or an area with a high percentage of out-of-field-teachers, high teacher turnover rate, or a high percentage of teachers who are not certified or licensed” (Incorporated, 2021). Urban Teachers DFW serves both Dallas Independent School District and Uplift Education (Charter Schools).

Residents are assigned to a specific location based on the number of vacancies available and the school year's campus need. It is important to note that a Resident Urban Teacher may be assigned to one campus during their first year; however, there is no guarantee that the same campus will make an official offer for the next school year. Interviewee #6 stated, “I was at one Uplift campus the entire school year. I worked tirelessly to ensure I learned the culture of the campus, the kids I would be serving and acclimate myself as much as I could. In the end, I was sent to another campus in the same network. Although it was the same district, each school within a charter operates very differently than the other; at times, it doesn't seem like we're all in the same network. The following school year, I was stuck learning a new

culture, new systems, and new kids, which took a toll on my teaching. I knew my content very well, but the culture of the campus was a nightmare which caused more turmoil for me that year.”

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*The demands of teaching in high-needs schools can be intimidating, and it requires passion, dedication and perseverance. These schools often have stigmas attached to them that intimidate teachers. Overcrowding, higher frequencies of crime, limited resources, it takes a great teacher to face these difficulties with a determination to overcome them (Incorporated, 2021).*

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Cohort Interviewee #1 stated; “When I was reading over the recruitment information before I joined and specifically saw the two words high needs, I knew the demographics I would be serving in having spent a year working at a Title I school with kids that were specifically identified as at risk for dropping out. However, this is information I acquired before and came separate from Urban Teachers. The program’s transparency was limited at best. Many in my cohort had no idea what all high needs entailed as it can also differ from campus to campus. If I were a new teacher that had no idea what high needs were, I would be livid at Urban Teachers for placing me into these environments with no prior knowledge or full explanation. It reminds me a lot of the phrase, bringing a knife to a gunfight.”

Suppose teachers have a general unawareness of the campus demographic they are entering and cannot anticipate their work environment to prepare adequately. In that case, it could lead to the decision to leave the profession. If that teacher does make a choice, it leaves yet another classroom and content abandoned, and the achievement gap fails to narrow. In the case of specific campuses, if waiting on another Urban Teacher to fill the vacancy, and there is still a gap in full transparency, there is also a risk of this becoming a repetitive cycle, and students are left underserved.

Cohort Interviewee #5 shared, “They make it a point to tell you that you will be working in "urban" schools. I remember them telling me that the school I was placed in had the most struggles from a socioeconomic standpoint and that approaches to teaching needed to be different because they were

all probably hungry. It reminded me of those commercials with the celebrities trying to influence you to donate money to feed starving kids in Africa. What they didn't give me were intricate details I needed to know before entering my school. Looking back, I could have prepared myself better as I didn't know that teaching was so much more than content knowledge." Although there is transparency on where the teachers will be working, what must be addressed is the lack of detail provided for teachers create an awareness of the environment they will be entering.

#### **Finding 6: Misaligned Teacher Placement within Needs-Based Campuses**

At the end of the program's first year, residents wait to be placed with a campus of need. Because there are no broad categories of interdisciplinary studies (Fine Arts, Science, Humanities, etc.) and only three exist within the program (refer to table 9), there is a small chance that a teacher is placed into a subject on a campus in which they have background knowledge. When asked about the need for more professional development, Survey Respondent 24 answered, "I had no math background but was tracked into the math group because I majored in Biology. I needed a lot of help with making Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, etc. It was more real-world applicable, project-based, or inquiry-based because I was never taught the concept of Math this deeply as my background is in science. Learning new content on top of being a brand-new teacher provided a recipe to quit. I tried to be moved to science several times; however, I was told I have to teach whatever the campus needs to meet the expectation of the program."

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*As teaching is a learned profession, the teacher must understand the structures of subject matter, the principles of conceptual organization and inquiry that help answer two kinds of questions: What are the important ideas and skills in this domain? How are new ideas added and deficient ones dropped by those who produce knowledge in this area? (Schulman L. S., 1987).*

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Cohort Interviewee #6 revealed, “My campus is relatively small, so when we had to decrease our staff by from last school year, to keep me, I had to now teach a double prep with another subject I knew nothing about. The subject added to my caseload is also a STAAR-tested subject in which I am learning content, but the exam structure as I know there is extra pressure for STAAR-tested classes. Transparently, I feel like I’m drowning this year with the lack of resources, as well as Urban Teachers providing me with no additional resources to help me learn this content more cohesively so that I don’t disservice my kids and teach them wrong.” Additionally, noted is content from Cohort Respondent #12: “I view myself as being a very average teacher. I put in a lot of time to be average. (I don't view this as a bad or good thing, just an objective evaluation. I constantly try to improve, but my current subject just isn't my primary field, and I am working on transferring subjects within the next 1-3 years.) I’m really trying my best to get better at the content, but outside of what I find to teach myself, there aren’t any resources Urban Teachers provides to me to grow in this area.”

In a Program Staff interview, Interviewee #3 stated, “Sadly, I coach lots of teachers in which they are in a content that they either do not love, feel passion for or have any background. This causes some inequity amongst the teachers. Some have an advantage that others do not and can progress a bit easier throughout the program. In my own coaching, I try to use the growth mindset toward this issue as much as possible; however, it’s difficult as there are many of our cohort members that fall into this situation.”

Teachers cannot be adequately assessed by observing their teaching performance without reference to the content being taught. The conception of pedagogical reasoning emphasizes the intellectual basis for teaching performance rather than on behavior alone. If this conception is to be taken seriously, both the organization and content of teacher education programs and the definition of the educational foundations of education will require revision. Teacher education programs would no longer confine their activity to the content-free domains of pedagogy and supervision. An emphasis on pedagogical content knowledge would permeate the teacher preparation curriculum (Schulman L. S.,

1987). The approach to narrowing the achievement gap will continue to be unsuccessful if teachers lack the background and content knowledge to teach their students. This skill takes time to learn and is necessary to be addressed before a teacher enters a classroom.

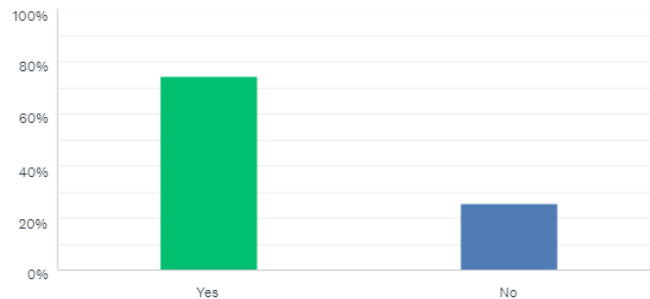
**Finding 7: Lack of Additional Professional Development and Support for Teachers**

As stated, Urban Teachers offers a very comprehensive master’s degree program. However, the program’s ability to provide additional resources for teachers outside of the partnership with Johns Hopkins was investigated. Of those surveyed, over 70% agreed, based on their experience, additional professional development needs to be added to Urban Teachers to encourage long-term persistence as a classroom teacher. In comparison, less than 25% disagreed that no changes needed to be made.

**Figure 19: Cohort Members Response to Survey Question #9** (Source: Survey Monkey)

Based on your experience, is there any additional professional development that needs to be added to Urban Teachers to encourage long term persistence as a classroom teacher?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 0



Survey Respondent 48 shared “In my opinion the entire curriculum used and administered within the DFW area needs to be redesigned to meet the needs of the city’s school age population. Outside of the coursework required to meet the graduation requirements for John’s Hopkins University, Urban Teachers offer little to no professional development to its participants. Participants can use more development on integrating technology into the classroom, teaching reading to students significantly below grade level, teaching ESL students effectively, dealing with overbearing and oppressive school

administrators and other stakeholders, interpreting cross-curricular learning into the classroom, providing community and health based resources and guidance to at-risk students, as well as effective research based practices when differentiation instruction for higher achieving student. "

Additionally, Survey Respondent 46 noted, "The most development I've received outside of my Dean on my campus is the coursework. It almost seems that Urban Teachers seeks to use the Masters as the main piece of development. While true, I do learn lots in the classes, as I did not have a background in education and it is helpful, I think there is additional professional development the program can commit to giving us to ensure we are well rounded teachers."

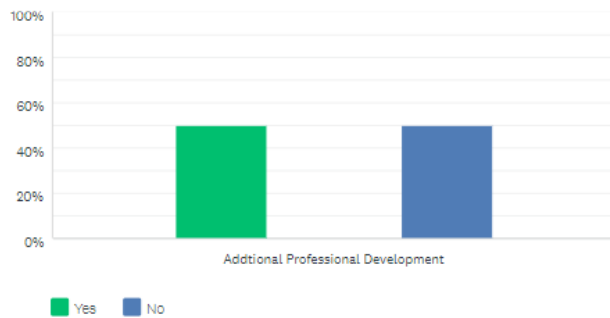
Lastly, Survey Resposnent 30 highlighted, "Honestly, the whole program needs to be revamped. I don't think they actually encourage long term persistence at all. They offer very little support and many of the people that dropped out were not given any help or encouragement to stay. They recruit people who chose teaching as a back up career, those people find the program too difficult, drop out, and then UT acts surprised. Professional development can't solve the kinds of deep seeded problems that they have."

The above narratives are indicative that professional development provided solely by Urban Teachers is necessary to continue to foster further development which can utlitmately lead to persistence. Although the Master's program is effective in fundamentals of teaching and pedagogy, the component that the end users (teachers) feel is still needed is additional development not offered on their individual campuses.

Figure 20: Program Staff Response to Survey Question #11 (Source: Survey Monkey)

Based on your experience with this organization, is there any additional professional development that should be added to Urban Teachers to encourage long term persistence as a classroom teacher?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



Of the surveyed population of program staff, there was an even split on adding additional professional development. 50% agreed that more

professional development needed to be added, while 50% concluded that there was no additional development added to the curriculum. Survey Respondent #2 shared, “I do think there is additional development that our teachers need. I remember being a teacher and quickly learning how many other skills such as professionalism, business etiquette, how to deal with administration and parents was a huge learning shift in the way I approached the work. Trying to navigate all of that without the resources to learn how to do it are frustrating and leads to burnout which is how we lose teachers.” Cohort Interviewee #2 added this sentiment, “There are some diversity groups that I see in the Wednesday Weekly memo we receive, but I don't know that they encourage long term persistence in education. I know of no other support groups or anything created to help us cope or even vent. While program staff says they're available, I don't believe that. Their schedules are from like 8-5, which is when we're busy working with students, and I can count on one hand the number of times Urban Teachers staff have been on campus just to check in on program members.”

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*Professional development takes many different forms, with a range of quality and effectiveness. Studies in the last several years have provided empirical evidence that the most effective professional development programs, whose goal is to increase teachers' knowledge and skills and improve their teaching practice, have the following characteristics: 1) activities that are ongoing and sustained over time; 2)*



*focus on subject matter content and how students learn that content; and 3) provide teachers with opportunities to interact actively and engage with each other around curriculum and instruction (Tournaki, Lyublinskaya, & Carolan, 2011).*

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In their study of professional development as an ongoing process, Tournaki et al. (2011 p.311) argue “there is a need for researchers to continue identifying and examining best practices in the area of professional development. There are certainly elements of the curriculum development approach to professional development that are beneficial for improving classroom instruction. The study results reinforce the under-appreciated notion that professional development needs to be ongoing and last, perhaps, as long as 2–3 years to begin getting returns on its investment (Tournaki, Lyublinskaya, & Carolan, 2011). This literature supports the suggestion that if Urban Teachers cohort members can attend a varied range of professional development (mindfulness, socioemotional learning, ways to decrease burnout, content knowledge, growth mindset, etc.) continuously, it provides more resources for teachers in the program. These additional affordances could serve as a measure of sustainability in the classroom in which teachers could confidently persist in education which has a direct impact on the achievement gap.

In surgery, the signature pedagogy for learning new procedures has been ‘watch one, do one, teach one’— an approach with the likelihood of error and significant danger to the patient (Schulman L. , 2005). Moreover, this same concept can be applied to education, in which a teacher attempts to implement a skill taught to them, tries to teach the same skill to their students without adequate resources to practice to be sure there is extra feedback as a mechanism for continuous improvement. As this aspect seems to be missing from the Urban Teachers professional development cycle, there is a chance that teachers enrolled with the program could be the cause of the widening the achievement gap as a result of lack of resources within the program development.

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*Teacher turnover has a broader, harmful influence on student achievement since it can reach beyond just those students of teachers who left or of those that replaced them. Though there may be cases where turnover is helpful to student achievement, it is harmful on average as there is a benefit to keeping grade-level teams intact over time (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2013).*

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## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations suggested are based on the survey findings and interviews collected from both Program Staff and fellows within their respective Urban Teacher cohorts. These recommendations are also suggested to understand the needs of K-12 education based on the COVID-19 and the impact of the worldwide pandemic on education. This study serves as a starting point for others with a desire to investigate alternative certification programs that serve “high needs” or urban school environments.

To facilitate organizational change, there must be an in-depth program evaluation of the Urban Teachers DFW location and the other two divisions (Washington, D.C., and Baltimore) as an opportunity to accumulate additional findings and collect more data. This approach can directly address the program's current needs from the end users' feedback (Residents, Fellows, and Program Staff).




- Provide teachers with a holistic recruitment and onboarding process, with an emphasis and accurate description of "high needs" schools.

Initial recruitment and onboarding of an organization are of extreme value and importance. Research shows that individuals are attracted to organizations with good reputations, values consistent with their own, and organizations that they perceive as having a strong person-job and

person-organization fit with themselves (Bauer, Erdogan, & Taylor, 2012 ). However, there is also a need for full transparency from the organization to potentially hire individuals fully aware of the firm's values and goals to promote longevity in the profession. *Finding 5* with a specific connection to *Research Question #2* revealed an overall lack of initial transparency with the structure of high needs schools and what teachers need to be successful in teaching in these environments. If Urban Teachers were to include visiting this concept as during the recruitment and onboarding phase. This approach could significantly decrease turnover and increase retention, which could also narrow the achievement gap.

Many teachers enter the classroom unprepared to work with high-needs students. Teachers may not know the community and culturally relevant pedagogy that will enable them to teach effectively and work well with their students and colleagues. Consequently, the need for ongoing professional development becomes a top priority (Berry, Rasberry, & Williams, 2016). Although Urban Teachers does offer a full school year of field experience as a resident teacher, there is still a need for transparency before hiring to limit the possibility of “culture shocks” while immersed in the work.

The following are two approaches that Urban Teachers could consider to add to their recruitment and onboarding process precisely aligned to preparation for high needs schools.

- 
- Creation of additional screening and a virtual workshop to complete during the selection phase for prospective candidates.
  - Partner with current Urban Teacher Fellows and Alumni to serve as additional recruiters as well as informational facilitators for prospective candidates before final selection.

## **Additional Screening and Virtual Workshops**

**Phase I:** This series would first begin during the application process. Urban Teachers could consider adding question(s) to the initial application as an additional opportunity for applicants to exemplify preliminary knowledge of high needs in a campus setting.

*Sample Questions:*

*“In 200 words or less, explain why you are interested in working at a high-needs campus.”*

*“Based on the high-needs campuses we currently serve, if selected, explain how you plan to make an impact in narrowing the achievement gap.”*

*“Describe your K-12 experience in education. What type of support did you receive from your teachers and additional staff on your campus? Do you think that had an impact on your success?”*

**Phase II:** After the application process has ended and the program is in the review phase while waiting to hear back, Urban Teachers could create an asynchronous workshop. To move forward in the process, applicants would need to complete the workshop as a preliminary requirement. This workshop would serve as an opportunity to introduce applicants to the schools Urban Teachers DFW serves, the demographics, percentage of special populations in their partner districts, and define “high needs” in detail. This approach can serve as an additional screening mechanism for selection and provide much-needed transparency to allow teachers to prepare, regardless of the final selections.

**Phase III:** After preliminary selections are made, applicants would advance to another round of selection in which they are interviewed by a panel specifically focused on attributes of high needs schools in a more focused lens. This interview panel would be facilitated by current Fellows from years 2-4 and additional alumni to create a relatable candidate approach. This would be an opportunity to participate in scenarios most commonly found in high needs campuses (lack of resources, low parent engagement, Tier III and Tier IV campuses that have been placed on improvement required plans, high teacher attrition, a large

percentage of students on free/reduced lunch, etc.) Applicants would be able to receive feedback and have the opportunity to ask questions of the panel to gain more insight if necessary.

**Phase IV:** After final selections, when teachers are placed as Residents with their host campuses for the school year, Instructional Coaches can include a reoccurring agenda item for each of their check ins teachers for the entirety of the year. In the high needs check in part of the meeting, the resident/fellow would be able to identify themes they have gathered from their campus that they feel are difficult to navigate, as those would be added to their areas of opportunity to receive specific coaching and development.

**Sample Agenda:**

**Participants**

*Krissy Watson, T. Ware*

**Fundamental Agreements & Team Norms**

1. Student needs are at the forefront of all decisions.
2. Strong teams develop trust and foster collaboration rather than competition.
3. All members of our community deserve our generosity of spirit, gratitude, respect, and feedback.
4. The work of all members of our community matter equally to the achievement of campus goals.
5. Our team members, students, and families deserve our best effort and follow-through every day.
6. We serve all members of our community fairly and equitably, not equally.
7. Professionalism, strong relationships, and a joyful working environment can co-exist.
8. There is power in providing students and families aligned messaging.
9. The diversity of our community is an asset.
10. We best serve our community when we admit our mistakes and are willing to grow.

**Review Agenda (Whole Group- 1 min)**

- Mental Health Check-In (2 mins)
- High Needs Check-In (12 mins)
- Observation Debrief (15 mins)

- Commitments and Action Items (5 Mins)

Mental Health Check-In (2 mins)

- How Are You?
- How Are Your Classes?
- One thing you did for yourself since our last check-in?
- One thing you want to do for yourself before we meet again?
- What is your “driver to stay” this week?

High Needs on Campus Check-In (12 mins)

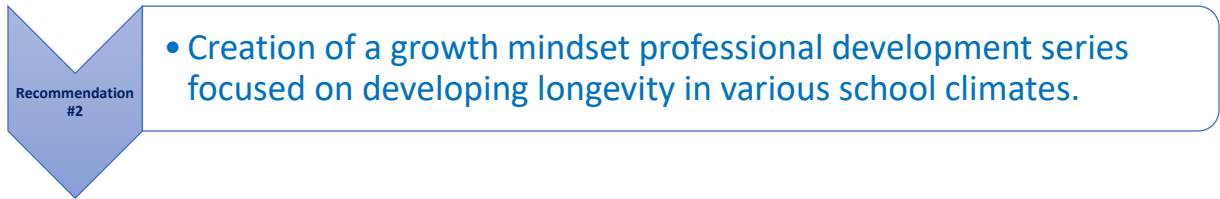
- Number of Special Populations by Period ( SpED, ESL, LEP, 504) and plan of support per class period.
- Communication plan of cadence with families (what method can be used bi-weekly?)
- Recent Student Data in comparison with the district.
- Methods of coping with high stress for teachers

Observation Debrief (15 mins)

Commitments and Action Items (5 mins)

Watson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to send Ware weekly “coping techniques” that promote healthy teacher mental health.</li> <li>• Provide feedback on parent communication for Special Pops parents.</li> <li>• Connect Ware D. Bishop and S. King, teachers who are excellent sources for mentors to guide growth mindsets in teaching.</li> </ul>
Ware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send three encouraging emails/Schoology messages to the scholar of your choice. Preferably a student that has made significant progress.</li> <li>• Watch this video and apply it to your outlook on the profession. Be prepared to discuss this in our next meeting. → <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUJkbWNnNy4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUJkbWNnNy4</a></li> <li>• Continue to stay as positive as possible and reach out to Watson when needed.</li> </ul>

If implemented, the two suggestions above could create the chance to re-define the selection and recruitment process of the Urban Teachers to hire teachers that are well aware of the environment they are entering and consistent coaching that can help promote longevity in the classroom.

A graphic element consisting of a blue downward-pointing chevron on the left containing the text "Recommendation #2". To its right is a blue-bordered rounded rectangle containing a bullet point.

Recommendation #2

- Creation of a growth mindset professional development series focused on developing longevity in various school climates.

All teachers' professional development needs can vary based on tenure, experience, content needs, or specific development areas. On average, each independent campus or district plans its professional development for staff based on the campus's highest needs or state compliance measures. Based on *Finding three and Finding seven*, with specific connections to *Research Question #1 and Research Question #3*, suggested that Urban Teachers should consider creating a consistent, ongoing, professional development series centered on growth mindset in various school climates with resources to steer longevity in the classroom.

As the Urban Teachers are placed in high-needs schools, the program should consider creating a professional development series to apply a growth mindset and signature pedagogies (implicit structure) approach to navigating concerns within high-needs educational environments. Teacher development is a critical factor in improving teaching practice and staying current with the field's latest knowledge. Ongoing efforts at career development are needed for teachers to understand the best methods for reaching their students, and ongoing teacher development can help in-service practitioners to become familiar with the latest resources and methodologies and to avoid falling behind on the current standards for instruction (Celik, Bayraktar, & İlyas, 2013). However, Professional Development is not limited to instructional practices but now must be viewed as a

holistic approach involving multiple aspects of education to ensure its success and the student, campus, and district.

The below is a projected sequence of professional development series in which Urban Teachers DFW could consider to meet the needs of their Residents and Fellows within the cohort. As a note, this can be adjusted yearly based on years of service, need, and development priority.

**Table 5: Sample Monthly Cadence of Professional Development**

Month	Professional Development Topic
August	<p><u>What Are Growth Mindsets?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Applying Growth Mindsets to Teaching Practice</li> <li>○ Growing My Mindset Before Attempting to Grow Scholar Mindsets</li> <li>○ Introduction to Signature Pedagogies in The Profession (Surface Structure)</li> </ul>
September	<p><u>High Needs Revisited</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are the differences between Tier I, Tier II, Tier III, and Tier IV campuses?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does it mean for my classroom and students?                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Special Populations (SpED, LEP/ ESL, 504)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Applying Growth Mindsets to High Needs of my campus.</li> </ul>
October	<p><u>What Is Title I?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does this mean for my scholars and my classroom?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Applying Growth Mindsets to Title I</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Signature Pedagogies Pt. II (Deep Structure)</li> </ul>
November	<p><u>Socioemotional Learning (SEL)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why is SEL just as important as academia?</li> <li>○ Applying growth mindsets to the SEL framework</li> <li>○ Incorporating SEL in my classes to support scholars                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Signature Pedagogies Pt. III (Implicit Structure)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
December	<p><u>Semester I Recap (What Did We Learn?)</u></p> <p>Growth Mindset &amp; Signature Pedagogy Theory Applied To:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High Needs Campuses                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Title I</li> <li>○ Socioemotional Learning</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Mental Health Check-ins and Unplugging during Christmas Break</li> </ul>
January	<p><u>Low Budgets and Lack of Resources in Title I Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What resources are needs vs. wants?</li> <li>○ Applying Growth Mindsets to the reality of my campus/district finances.</li> <li>○ What is “Donors Choose”? How can I use it in my classroom for more resources?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Closing the achievement gap</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
February	<p><u>State Testing and Why You Should Care</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ STAAR 101</li> <li>○ Applying Growth Mindsets to state testing.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher Incentive Allotment and House Bill 3 in Texas (TIA and HB3)</li> </ul>
March	<p><u>Mindful Moments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mental Health Matters</li> <li>○ Applying Growth Mindsets to Teacher Mental Health             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work-Life Balance</li> <li>○ Unplugging During Spring Break</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
April	<p><u>Reflections (Part. I)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Drivers for Persistence</li> <li>○ Applying Growth Mindset to Persistence             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why Should You Stay?</li> <li>○ Growth Rollup</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
May	<p><u>Reflections (Part II)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why Am I Needed on My Campus?</li> <li>○ My approach to closing the achievement gap             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Where Do I Go from Here?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

This option explores the strengths and areas of opportunity and creates space for teachers to collaborate freely on issues they will encounter throughout the school year. Additionally, this is an opportunity to provide teachers with a holistic and consistent professional development series targeting the high-needs campuses that Urban Teachers supports. Moreover, as growth mindsets continue to be addressed, it is an additional opportunity to shift teachers' perceptions to develop a career outlook toward longevity in the profession.

Recommendation  
#3

The addition of a graduate class on Educational Policies (according to State) to the Johns Hopkins Urban Teachers Master's Curriculum.

America's recent push to reform the schools has created high standards, rigorous tests, and strict accountability measures to force schools to improve the education they provide students. Supporters of these plans postulate that schools and teachers already know what to do but need to work harder and demand more students (Berry, Rasberry, & Williams, 2016). *Findings 3 and 4*, with a specific connection

to *Research Question #2*, illustrate the opportunity to provide teachers with an in-depth analysis of educational policies that affect the charter and public schools within their state. To better support teachers to understand educational policies that affect their state and become knowledgeable of the “why” behind many decisions made within K-12 education, the addition of an extra course during the Residency year could be sufficient for the Urban Teachers model.

Implementing high-stakes testing and accountability systems has provided the type of shock to the institutional environment, potentially altering the relationship between local cultures of practice and teachers’ professional identities. While most discussions in education policy today focus on the technical dimensions of teaching and its enhancement, teachers’ humanness is a part of their practice essential to remember. They (teachers) need expressions of personal regard and support as much as anyone else does (Booher-Jennings, 2005 ). Providing additional support for teachers in learning more about some of the uncontrollable facets of the profession they cannot personally control, however, applying growth mindset theory for overall acceptance to have a fulfilling career as a teacher of record in a classroom. Additionally, this could allow the teacher to explore other options they can explore that they can control, but possibly never knew that their voices matter in some of the decisions made in K-12 education, whether it be local, state, or nationally.

*Note: These are recommendations of aspects that could be covered within an Educational policy class over the course of a semester.*

**Table 6: Sample Cadence of Topics To Be Covered in An Educational Policy Class (DFW)**

<b>Course Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>The Who’s Who of Educational Policy. Identifying relevant stakeholders and uses and misuses of accountability and measurement.</b>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>History of the No Child Left Behind Act and how it still affects education 20 years later.</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Accountability Measures 101. (Specific Focus on Texas Education Agency Requirements for Satisfactory Schools in Texas)</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Campus/ District Report Cards. What does its measure mean for my campus and district?</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Do I Have Rights? The power of At-will employment vs. Teacher Unions in Texas.</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>How is “data driven” measured by the state of Texas?</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>STAAR. Why is state testing so important?</b>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and linkage to state funding.</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Title I in Texas Education</b>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>House Bill 3 and Teacher Incentive Allotment</b>
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Teacher Retirement (TRS)</b>

If teachers had the opportunity to receive more insight, there is a chance that these could be the same teachers that will persist long term in education and could transition into researchers of educational policy that lead to a radical change in the education system. The issues within the field are not limited to the classroom, but a structure created that disempowers teachers' authenticity and limits the true holistic potential of a student as they are measured through testing, not overall ability outside of mandated state and district testing.



- Adding all major contents represented in K-12 education as a degree plan within the Johns Hopkins Master's Program, specifically created for Urban Teachers.

In his exploration of content knowledge, Schuman (1987, p.8) argued, “Among those categories, pedagogical content knowledge is of special interest because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching. It represents the blending of content and pedagogy to understand how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners and presented for instruction. Pedagogical content knowledge is the category most likely to distinguish the content specialist's understanding of the pedagogue (Schulman L. S., 1987). Thus argument supports the suggestion that Urban Teachers should consider adding all significant contents of K-12 education as a degree plan of choice within the Master's program. This approach could lead to better preparation for teachers and aligned matching to the content they have experience in or have significant content knowledge. Thus, attributing to an increase in student achievement due to more content knowledge initially from the teacher and participation within a Master’s program equips them with more skills in their particular content area.

As stated, the Urban Teachers partnership with Johns Hopkins only includes three specific degree plans for teachers to choose from (see table 9), including Elementary Education and Special Education, Secondary English Language and Special Education, Secondary Math and Special Education. While two significant contents are represented in this approach, some contents are missing (science, social studies, and acceptable arts/elective courses) that are not the only state-tested subjects and contents needed for promotion and to receive a diploma in the state of Texas. The following are recommended additional degree plans that Urban Teachers could consider adopting in partnership to Johns Hopkins to support all teachers in all contents.

**Table 7: Sample Additional Degree Plans To Be Offered (Source: The University of Texas at Arlington M.Ed. and Certificate Programs**

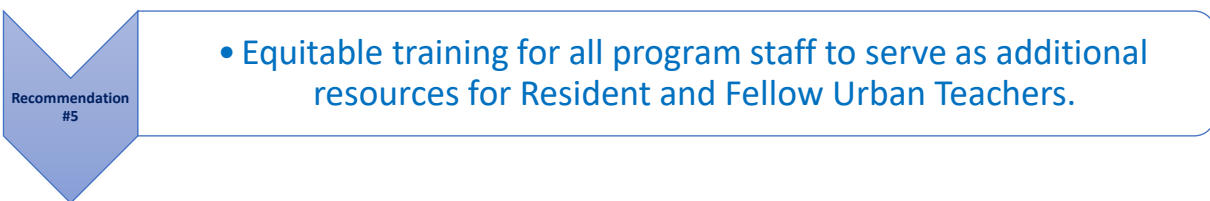
(Arlington, 2021))

<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction - Literacy Studies</b> -</p> <p>This <b>TEACH Grant-eligible**</b> online master's degree program (30 credit hours) is infused with advanced coursework designed to meet a variety of professional goals related to improving K-12 student literacy and learning outcomes. Students may pursue professional certificates in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Specialist</li> <li>• English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher</li> </ul>	<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction - Mathematics Education</b> -</p> <p>This <b>TEACH Grant-eligible**</b> online master's degree program (30 credit hours) covers innovative learning techniques specific to K-12 math curriculum using problem-based, inquiry-based teaching strategies consistent with math disciplines and centered on how people learn. Students will gain specialized knowledge including the overall state of education and the link between the theory and practice of teaching. This program does not require teaching experience or certification to enroll.</p>
<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction - Science Education</b> -</p> <p>This <b>TEACH Grant-eligible**</b> online master's degree program (30 credit hours) is designed for teachers in K-12 school settings as well as for curriculum developers and coordinators, district content specialists, and those in a variety of alternative educational settings such as museums, zoos, nature centers, and corporate education/outreach divisions. Students will discuss and discover innovative learning techniques with an emphasis on K-12 science curriculum, implementation and design. This program does not require teaching experience or certification to enroll.</p>	<p><b>M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies</b> -</p> <p>This non-thesis online master's degree program (30 credit hours) is designed to prepare classroom teachers to advance in K-12 education. Discover how you can build upon your existing expertise with progressive skills that can improve teacher retention and increase student achievement. Learn more about your leadership style and lead with greater confidence in your classroom and learning community.</p>

**Table 8: Sample Additional Degree Plans To Be Offered (Source: Southeastern Oklahoma State University M.Ed. Programs (University, 2021))**

<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum &amp; Instruction – General</b> —</p> <p>This M.Ed. C&amp;I program covers every facet of pedagogy, emphasizing your role in supporting innovative, transformational learning environments. Study professional ethics, assessment and evaluation, and K-12 curriculum development.</p>	<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum &amp; Instruction – Educational Technology</b> —</p> <p>Develop your ability to support innovative, transformational learning environments. Gain the practical foundations for applied learning in the digital age relevant to the classroom, non-profits, universities, museums and more.</p>
<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum &amp; Instruction – English</b> —</p> <p>Expand your impact in educational settings by honing your English instructional practices and curriculum development strategies. Become a content expert in classroom rhetoric and literature with this online program.</p>	<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum &amp; Instruction – Math</b> —</p> <p>Learn to implement effective instructional practices and curriculum development strategies. This online program will prepare you as a content expert in classroom math with specialized courses emphasizing technology, manipulatives and problem solving.</p>
<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum &amp; Instruction – Science</b> —</p> <p>Study in-depth concepts of pedagogy in this M.Ed. C&amp;I program. Become a content expert in classroom science, learn to implement creative curricula that stimulates student interest, and develop standards-based assessments.</p>	<p><b>M.Ed. in Curriculum &amp; Instruction – Theatre Pedagogy</b> —</p> <p>Develop the ability to express ideas and make human connections through the study of character development. Focus on methodologies to teach and work with theatre students both inside and outside the classroom.</p>

Although this suggestion does not represent all contents as previously mentioned, Urban Teachers could use a similar model to incorporate the missing contents to better prepare teachers to enter classrooms and provide additional resources to encourage teachers to stay within their content. This approach would also shift the need for teachers to “learn a content” while also “learning to teach” simultaneously. As the Masters program was specifically created for the Urban Teachers cohort members, there is an additional need to create more opportunity to build and expand content knowledge. Therefore, teachers are equipped to teach students correctly in order to meet promotion and graduation standards according to each state. From survey responses and interviews, the current approach by Urban Teachers has resulted in several emotions linked to the uncertainty of persistence in education. Conceptions of teacher competence are consistent in conversations surrounding educational reform, as the standards for teacher education and assessment are necessarily predicated on images of teaching and its demands. The conception of pedagogical reasoning emphasizes the intellectual basis for



teaching performance rather than on behavior alone. Teacher education programs will no longer confine their activity to the content-free domains of pedagogy and supervision but emphasize pedagogical content knowledge to permeate the teacher preparation curriculum (Schulman L. S., 1987).

Vital initial preparation's commitment effects are enhanced by equally strong induction and mentoring in the first years of teaching. Several studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs improve retention rates for new teachers and their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In analyzing surveys and interviews, there is evidence to suggest that more support is needed for Urban Teachers outside their instructional coaches. Also, it was discovered there is also a need for alignment in the development for all current coaches to ensure there

is equity in teachers' development. Below is a suggested summer cadence of professional development/onboarding for all Program Staff of Urban Teachers to increase availability to meet teachers' needs both in and out of the classroom.

**Table 9: Sample Summer Cadence of Topics To Be Covered For Program Staff Development**

Month	Topic
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Week 1:</b> Training and briefings related to curriculum and instruction programming and changes for the next school year in their partnership districts.</li> <li>• <b>Week 2:</b> In-depth analysis of Math/Science Curriculums</li> <li>• <b>Week 3:</b> In-depth analysis of English/ Social Studies Curriculums</li> <li>• <b>Week 4:</b> In-depth analysis of Special Education/Elective Curriculums</li> </ul>
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Week 1:</b> Training in relation to Title I and High Needs Campuses (What’s Needed and How to Support Teachers)</li> <li>• <b>Week 2:</b> Behavior Management in Classrooms</li> <li>• <b>Week 3:</b> Inclusive/Growth Mindsets for Teachers</li> <li>• <b>Week 4:</b> How to Teach (Virtually, In-Person, Remotely) in The Pandemic</li> </ul>
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Week 1:</b> Socioemotional Learning for Teachers (Mental Health Matters)</li> <li>• <b>Week 2:</b> “Fireside Chats” .... Helping Teachers Develop Their “Why”</li> <li>• <b>Week 3:</b> Applying Signature Pedagogies to Teaching</li> <li>• <b>Week 4:</b> Developing Career Mindsets and Longevity in Teaching</li> </ul>

*Note: The summer cadence is suggested as this allows program staff to undergo development and onboarding while teachers are on summer vacation to be better prepared for the beginning of the school year when teachers return.*

If Urban Teachers DFW considers this model, it could significantly increase program staff's ability to become multi-skilled based on the program's needs as a whole, as the DFW location is still growing and developing. Multiskilling has been identified as significantly improving service quality, retention, job satisfaction, remuneration, and promotion (Chen & Wallace, 2011). A well-trained, multiskilled workforce has been identified as contributing to an organization's economic success through cost reduction and/ or



increased productivity. A workforce multiskilled through job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation, and cross-training can enable organizations to cope with the seasonal or peak time labor requirements and increased competition for high service levels (Chen & Wallace, 2011). This literature supports the suggestion that Urban Teachers should consider investing in providing resources for all program staff to be additional resources for teachers. This support could be impactful during the seasons of testing, semester closeouts, or times of high stress for teachers. Thus, creating an environment of aligned support throughout the program, which can promote retention in the classroom.

## X. CONCLUSION

As a number of studies have found, there is a magnetic effect when school systems make it clear that they are committed to finding, keeping, and supporting good teachers as a primary focus of school and district management. In urban centers, just as in suburban and rural districts, good teachers gravitate to places where they know they will be appreciated; they are sustained by the other good teachers who become their colleagues; and together, these teachers become a magnet for still others who are attracted to environments where they can learn from their colleagues and create success for their students (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

This Capstone sought to understand better the critical components needed in Alternative Certification Programs to encourage the development of longstanding, career teachers. This study relied on quantitative and qualitative data to explore the program model and its direct effects on teachers outlook on a long-term career in education. Additionally, this capstone provided recommendations for further investigation into shifting the model of Urban Teachers to accommodate the overarching needs of K-12 education. To further research, this investigation could be replicated by the other two Urban Teacher locations ( Washington D.C. and Baltimore) to compare results to organize collectively to make adjustments within the program model.

This study had several limitations, as the COVID-19 pandemic altered the study in several ways, significantly impacting the data collection process. As this capstone began at the beginning of the pandemic, there was a global shift to “a new normal.” Thus, leading to a season of adjustment for all, which resulted in lower participation rates for survey and interview responses than initially anticipated. Although these are factors outside of the researcher’s control, we realize that this limitation directly impacted the study's internal and external validity. To keep the project grain size, the researcher chose to focus on one location of Urban Teachers (DFW); however, as there are three locations, the data and outcomes collected within this location may not indicate the status of the other locations. Although the program is universal, more investigation is needed to understand its overall impact on all nationwide stakeholders truly.

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*PERSONAL ACCOUNT: IN MY CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE, FOR EIGHT YEARS, I TAUGHT ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP), NON-AP ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, AND BIOLOGY. AS AN INSTRUCTOR OF THOSE COURSES FOR SEVERAL YEARS, I ACQUIRED A MASS AMOUNT OF CONTENT KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND DEVELOPED INTO A MASTER TEACHER. OVER MY TENURE, I MAINTAINED HIGH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON THE LOCAL, DISTRICT, AND STATE EXAMS, NARROWING MY CAMPUS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ACHIEVEMENT GAP. WHEN I RESIGNED DUE TO RELOCATION, IT LEFT THREE COURSES IN A STATE OF ABANDONMENT AND NOW LABELED AS PRIORITY COURSES THAT ARE IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED. AS A RESULT, THOSE COURSES ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF BEING “RE-VAMPED” WITH A NEW TEACHER.*

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Although my situation displayed longevity in 8 years, this same scenario is true yearly in classrooms around the United States. A course, or several courses, can sometimes experience a new teacher every year, which can also be a gamble depending on teacher preparation before entering the classroom. The significance of critical findings helped guide intervention recommendations that will hopefully lead to sustainable practices that lead to holistic support for teachers entering the education field. Moreover, from reading this project, researchers should analyze Alternative Teacher Certification programs across the country to determine what factors are most important to place into program models to ensure

teachers have a well-rounded foundation of education before entering a classroom and throughout their participation within the program. As Urban Teachers seeks to be recognized as an organization whose mission is to serve high-needs schools, the program must consider internal shifts to meet the needs of the education system changes. Additionally, develop all stakeholders (program staff and teachers) equipped to meet the demand, leading to narrowing the academic achievement gap in K-12 education.

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## Appendix A- Initial Messaging To Urban Teachers DFW

*My name is Krissy Watson and I currently, I serve as the 11th and 12th Grade Dean (Assistant Principal) of Uplift Hampton High School. This semester, I am in the final stage of my Doctoral Program at Vanderbilt University. As a part of my dissertation, I am investigating if components of the Urban Teachers four-year alternative certification model lead to long standing careers in education. I am asking for your support with my data collection by filling out an anonymous survey that should take no more than 10 minutes. **This research is separate from Urban Teachers and your participation is completely voluntary. If you do choose to participate, you may discontinue your participation at any time.***

*Over my 10-year tenure in this work, and as a classroom teacher for 8 years before transitioning to the Dean role, I witnessed a mass amount of teacher attrition, which we also know has a direct impact on student achievement. I've searched for different theories of what could possibly lead to this significant amount of turnover (exhaustion, lack of work-life balance, student behavior, state testing, etc.), however, I truly believe that an area of foci yet to be investigated is the mindset of teachers entering education as well as programming used/unused in during the alternative certification process that can possibly lead to an abundance of career teachers.*

*I am looking for Urban Teachers staff in DFW who would be interested in engaging in the below survey to discuss your specific viewpoints on the Urban Teacher model in response to long term career readiness in education. Complete honesty and transparency are welcomed so that I receive an accurate depiction of the organization. My goal is to collect as many vantage points as possible to assemble substantial data to identify trends, areas of opportunity and glows of the Urban Teacher model. **I will be sharing the results of my analysis and dissertation back to Urban Teachers; however, all information shared will be deidentified and aggregated to preserve the confidentiality of your responses.***

*Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly ([kwatson@uplifteducation.org](mailto:kwatson@uplifteducation.org)) if you should have any questions or need additional clarification. In advance, thank you so much for your consideration to participate in this endeavor as an active contributor as I seek to investigate solutions to end our ever-increasing attrition rate in K-12 Education. I look forward to seeing your response and viewpoints very soon! Continue to be amazing humans dedicated to the tireless work we do to serve our children. Your commitment and dedication are priceless.*

**Educationally Centered,**



**Krissy Watson**

High School Dean | [Uplift Hampton Preparatory](https://www.uplifteducation.org)  
972-421-1982 | [kwatson@uplifteducation.org](mailto:kwatson@uplifteducation.org)



## Appendix B- Urban Teachers Career Readiness Survey

### Background

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Urban Teachers model as an Alternative Certification Program in education. This research seeks to investigate if the practices of this program lead to developing career mindsets in aspiring educational professionals.

\*1. How many years have you been a teacher/worked in the education field?

1-2 Years      3-5 Years      6-8 Years      8-10 Years      10+ Years

\* 2. What year in the Urban Teachers Program are you in?

Year I

Year II

Year III

Year IV

Urban Teachers Alum

\* 3. Did you receive a bachelor's degree in Education?

Yes

No. Please include what field of concentration you received your degree in. (Psychology, Biology, Social Work, etc.)

\* 4. What served as the driving force in your decision to become a teacher?

\* 5. What inspired you to join the Urban Teachers program?

\* 6. How impactful is/was the relationship with your Urban Teachers development coach on your future as teacher?

Not Impactful    Somewhat Impactful    Impactful    Very Impactful

\* 7. The Urban Teachers program encourages persistence in education beyond the four years of the program.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

\* 8. Does Urban Teachers encourage a long-term pathway to developing career classroom teachers or career administrative leaders in education?

Career Classroom Teachers      Careers in Educational Leadership

Both? Please explain in detail below.

\* 9. Based on your experience, is there any additional professional development that needs to be added to Urban Teachers to encourage long term persistence as a classroom teacher?

Yes

No

Please elaborate on your choice below.

\* 10. Do you view teaching as a long-term career in which you will retire?

Definitely Not      Maybe Not      Maybe      Definitely Can

Please explain your choice below.

## Appendix C- Urban Teachers Staff Career Readiness Reflection

### Background

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Urban Teachers model as an Alternative Certification Program in education. This research seeks to investigate if the practices of this program lead to developing career mindsets in aspiring educational professionals.

\* 1. How many years have you been employed with Urban Teachers?

1 Year   2-3 Years   3-5 Years   5+ Years

\* 2. In what capacity do you serve at Urban Teachers? (Please select all that may apply)

Clinical Faculty   Lead Clinical Faculty   Instructional Development Coach   Other (please indicate below)

Indicate Specific Capacity Below....

\* 3. Before transitioning to Urban Teachers, how many years did you serve in K-12 education?

0 Years   1-2 Years   2-3 Years   3-5 Years   5-8 Years   8-10 Years   10+ Years

\* 4. What are your top 3 priorities for professionally developing long -term teachers?

Priority #1

Priority #2

Priority #3

\* 5. What top 3 strategies do you use within development to achieve the above priorities through the Urban Teachers program?

Strategy #1

Strategy #2

Strategy #3

\* 6. What do you feel is the most important goal for teachers to strive toward after completing this specified this 4-year program?

Build A Career As A Classroom Teacher (Leading to Retirement)

Become an Administrator (In an educational setting)

Become an Instructional Coach

Become a Course Content Writer

Other (please place specifics below)

\* 7. How does Urban Teachers evaluate the program's influence on maintaining long-term teaching careers of all members? (Please select all that apply)

One on One Monthly Check Ins

Surveys

Interviews/Collection of personal narratives

Quarterly collection of data to determine how many teachers persist in education

Other (please specify)

\* 8. What portion(s) of the Urban Teachers professional development aligns most to encourage long term teaching careers? (Please select all that apply)

One on One Coaching

Teacher-Mentor Partnerships

Professional Development

Career Assessment Surveys

Other (please specify)

\* 9. The Urban Teachers program encourages teachers persistence in education beyond the four years of the program.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

10. Does the Urban Teachers program focus on encouraging a long-term pathway to developing career classroom teachers or careers in administrative leadership?

Career Classroom Teachers

Careers in Educational Leadership

Both? (please explain in detail below if applicable)

\* 11. Based on your experience with this organization, is there any additional professional development that should be added to Urban Teachers to encourage long term persistence as a classroom teacher?

Yes      No

Please elaborate on your choice below.

\* 12. Do you view teaching as a sustainable, long term career in which a person can retire?

Definitely Not              Maybe Not              Maybe              Definitely Can

Please explain your choice below.

## **Appendix D- Urban Teachers and Program Staff Interview Guide**

Below were the questions used in follow up interviews with Urban Teachers cohort members and Program Staff to gain more context on initial data aggregated from surveys.

### **Urban Teachers Cohort Interview Questions**

#### **Questions Around Career Mindsets**

- Did you enter this program with the intention of teaching more than 5 years?
- Does the Urban Teachers preparation model encourage the possibility of retirement as a classroom instructor?
- Does teaching within Urban Teachers DFW partnership schools make the profession seem less sustainable long term?

#### **Questions Regarding Urban Teacher Development**

- Explain your recruitment process. What was the Urban Teachers approach to ensuring your commitment to the four-year program?
- Was there transparency regarding the demographics of schools that Urban Teachers DFW serves (special populations, improvement required, etc.)?
- Do you think that Urban Teacher's coaching model help develop growth mindsets to longevity in the profession despite the hardships endured for teachers in education?
- Aside from your coursework in your master's Program, what additional Professional Development does Urban Teachers provide for teachers?
- Does the Urban Teacher's program increase or decrease the achievement gap for students in their teacher preparation model?

#### **Questions Surrounding Additional Support**

- Beyond your Instructional Coaches, what additional support does Urban Teachers provide for teachers to encourage long term persistence in education? Are there affinity groups, teacher support groups, additional availability of program staff etc.?
- In your opinion, does Urban Teachers relay a solid foundation in the messaging of the importance of teacher persistence beyond the 4 years of the program?
- What type of relationship do you have with your Urban Teachers Instructional Coach? Is this relationship a factor in your retention in education?

#### **Questions Surrounding Retention Within Cohorts**

- Of your cohort, do you know a rough estimate of how many you all began with, as opposed to how many are left in your cohort?
- What factors played the largest role in your cohort's attrition or retention?
- What role does full teacher certification not becoming available until year three of the program and the completion of the Master's in year two, play in retention of cohort members?

## Urban Teachers Staff Interview Questions

### Questions Around Career Mindsets

- What impact do long term teachers have on the learning environment of scholars?
- How many years were you a classroom teacher? In what kind of educational setting? (*Title I schools, higher taxonomic bracket locations etc.*)
- In the lens of growth mindsets in education, what professional development does Urban Teachers offer to encourage long term careers in education?

### Questions Regarding Urban Teacher Development

- In your own coaching development of teachers, how much is “growth mindset” toward the entirety of the education profession discussed with cohort members?
- Do you think that Urban Teachers receive holistic support from Urban Teachers to navigate issues within “highest need” schools (*low-socioeconomic factors, increased amount of special populations, instability in school leadership, improvement required campuses, socio-emotional learning etc.*)?
- From your coaching experience, what factors of the Urban Teachers program have the largest effect on cohort members return to the program after years 2-3?
- What portion(s) of the Urban Teachers professional development aligns most to encourage long term teaching careers?

### Questions Surrounding Urban Teachers Development For Staff

- Talk to me about your own development throughout your tenure in this program. How was your onboarding experience?
- Do you receive additional coaching and development from Urban Teachers to help cohort members navigate “high needs” campuses? If yes, please elaborate.

### Questions Surrounding Additional Support

- What value does additional support (aside from Instructional Coaches) have on cohort members decision to remain in education long term?
- What specified additional support does Urban Teachers provide for teachers (*affinity groups, teacher support groups, additional availability of program staff etc.*)?

### Questions Surrounding Retention Within Cohorts

- From your experience, what factors play the largest role in cohort member attrition or retention in the program?
- What is the rationale for full teacher certification not becoming available until year three of the program?
- In your opinion, do cohort members benefit from the fourth year of the program? If yes, please provide specifics.

**Appendix E Follow Up Interview Questions Aligned to Conceptual Framework**

**Table 1-3 Cohort Interview Questions**

<b>Research Question 1: What aspects of the Urban Teachers program shape the development of a career mindset in education?</b>	<b>Conceptual Framework</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the Urban Teachers, preparation model for cohort members encourage the possibility of retirement as a classroom instructor?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think that Urban Teacher’s coaching model help develop growth mindsets to longevity in the profession despite the hardships endured for teachers in education?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beyond your Instructional Coaches, what additional support does Urban Teachers provide for teachers to encourage long term persistence in education? <i>(Example: affinity groups, teacher support groups, additional availability of program staff etc.)</i></li> </ul>	Growth Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What factors do you think played the largest role in your cohort’s attrition or retention within the program?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What type of relationship do you have (have you had) with your current or past Urban Teachers Instructional Coach(es)? Is this relationship a factor in your retention in education?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindsets

<b>Research Question 2: Do members of the Urban Teachers program feel that they can persist long term as a classroom educator, ultimately leading to retirement in the profession?</b>	<b>Conceptual Framework</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you enter this program with the intention of teaching more than 5 years?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does teaching within Urban Teachers DFW partnership schools make the teaching profession seem less sustainable long term?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aside from the coursework in your master’s Program, what additional Professional Development does Urban Teachers provide for teachers?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your opinion, does Urban Teachers relay a solid foundation in the messaging of the importance of teacher persistence beyond the 4 years of the program?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies and Growth Mindset



<b>Research Question 3: With a strategic 4-year commitment, how effective is the Urban Teachers design in increasing teacher retention as a measure to close the academic achievement gap?</b>	<b>Conceptual Framework</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain your recruitment process. What was the Urban Teachers approach to ensuring your commitment to the four-year program?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there transparency shared with you regarding the demographics of schools that Urban Teachers DFW serves (special populations, improvement required, Tier III and IV, etc.)?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindsets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your opinion, does the Urban Teacher’s program increase or decrease the student achievement gap with their preparation model for cohort members? (Additional Context: decrease in teacher retention within the program)</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of your cohort, do you know a rough estimate of how many you all began with, as well as how many are left in your cohort?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What effect does full teacher certification not becoming available until year three of the program and the completion of the Master’s in year two, have on the retention of cohort members?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies

**Table 4-6: Program Staff Interview Questions**

<b>Research Question 1: What aspects of the Urban Teachers program shape the development of a career mindset in education?</b>	<b>Conceptual Framework</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the lens of growth mindsets in education, what professional development does Urban Teachers offer to encourage long term careers in education?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindsets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many years were you a classroom teacher? In what kind of educational setting? (<i>Title I schools, higher taxonomic bracket locations etc.</i>)</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your own coaching development of teachers, how much is “growth mindset” toward the entirety of the education profession discussed with cohort members?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindsets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to me about your own development throughout your tenure in this program. How was your onboarding experience?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What value does additional support (aside from Instructional Coaches) have on cohort members decision to remain in education long term?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What specified additional support does Urban Teachers provide for teachers (<i>affinity groups, teacher support groups, additional availability of program staff etc.</i>)?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindsets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the rationale for full teacher certification not becoming available until year three of the program?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies

<p><b>Research Question 2: Do members of the Urban Teachers program feel that they can persist long term as a classroom educator, ultimately leading to retirement in the profession?</b></p>	Conceptual Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think that Urban Teachers receive holistic support from Urban Teachers to navigate issues within “highest need” schools (<i>low-socioeconomic factors, increased amount of special populations, instability in school leadership, improvement required campuses, socio-emotional learning etc.</i>)?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies and Growth Mindsets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What portion(s) of the Urban Teachers professional development aligns most to encourage long term teaching careers?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From your experience, what factors play the largest role in cohort member attrition or retention in the program?</li> </ul>	Growth Mindsets and Signature Pedagogies

<p><b>Research Question 3: With a strategic 4-year commitment, how effective is the Urban Teachers design in increasing teacher retention as a measure to close the academic achievement gap?</b></p>	Conceptual Framework
<p>What impact do long term teachers have on the learning environment of scholars?</p>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From your coaching experience, what factors of the Urban Teachers program have the largest effect on cohort members return to the program after years 2-3?</li> </ul>	Signature Pedagogies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you receive additional coaching and development from Urban Teachers to help cohort members navigate “high needs” campuses? If yes, please elaborate.</li></ul>	Signature Pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In your opinion, do cohort members benefit from the fourth year of the program? If yes, please provide specifics.</li></ul>	Signature Pedagogies