

## Developing Teacher Resilience and Resilient School Cultures

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### Abstract

Teacher resilience in a pandemic is a timely topic for America's superintendents. This literature review focuses on teacher resilience and retention, with relevance for building resilient school cultures. The question guiding analysis of studies was "What factors and processes contribute to teacher resilience and the ability to overcome adversity?" Findings were that individual and contextual factors of resilience impact teachers' ability to persevere, as well as schools' capacity to retain novice teachers. Resilience is associated with retention, job satisfaction, and other positive outcomes. Actions for developing teacher resilience and resilient school cultures are identified. K-12 teachers who attend to factors of resilience can better adapt and overcome adversity. School district leaders who encourage teacher resilience can foster resilient school cultures.

### Key Words

contextual factors, individual factors, literature review, school culture, teacher resilience, teacher retention

**C**ultivating resilience to adversity is gaining attention during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Developing this framework we assigned individual factors (e.g., professional autonomy) and contextual factors (e.g., commitment) of resilience for each

dimension (e.g., professional). Table 1 identifies factors attributed to Mansfield et al.'s (2012) dimensions of resilience.

Table 1  
Factors Illustrating Resilience Dimensions

Professional	Social	Motivational	Emotional
Professional autonomy	Positive relationships	Optimism	Religion
Commitment	Problem solving	Education viewed as important	Values
Flexible locus of control	Opportunity to build	Self-efficacy	Beliefs

Reflection

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unexpected and recover from disruption and crises (Duchek, 2020) Individual factors (e.g., self-efficacy) of resilience occur inside the teacher, whereas contextual factors (e.g., administrative support) originate outside (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019;

Mansfield et al., 2016) Table 2 highlights these factors each with a number denoting how many sources mentioned it (e.g., 10 of them observed self-efficacy as an individual factor, 7 sources cited administrative support as a contextual factor).

Table 1

teachers' motivation, which guides classroom work, facilitates achievement, and maintains expected behavior (Chiong et al., 2017)

Seeking to discover why teachers stayed in an urban school Walker (2004) identified as influences (a) effectiveness working with youngsters; (b) good relationships within the district; and (3) a sense of self-satisfaction. Polidore et al. (2010) found that the individual resilience factors of three veteran African American female teachers who faced significant adversity in their careers were moral/spiritual support, flexible locus of control, control of events, importance of education, positive relationships, bias for optimism, enjoyment of change, and deep commitment. Taylor's (2013) study involving four African American rural teachers supported these factors, adding self-efficacy owing to their belief that they could make meaningful contributions to teaching.

Besides these resilience attributes and Day (2013) identified a calling to teach, as did Bennett et al. (2013) who found that veteran teachers felt passionate about their career. Hong (2012) confirmed self-efficacy and positive student relationships as variables of teacher resilience, also identifying beliefs and emotions. Comparing teachers who leave and stay, Hong uncovered that those who departed displayed weaker self-efficacy and had less administrative support.

Yost (2006) examined the personal self-efficacy of novice teachers who were adjusting in their first year. They attributed their earlier positive student teaching experiences to feeling self-confident and competent. Perrachione et al. (2008) added that personal teaching efficacy influences retention and that teacher interaction with students and job satisfaction are also important individual factors.

Fostering resilience through learning experiences can boost teacher confidence and self-efficacy (Tait, 2008). Novice teachers that demonstrated resilience, personal efficacy, and emotional intelligence were able to show competence, act on opportunities to develop confidence, and engage in problem-solving. Notably, they could "rebound after a difficult experience; learn from experience and set goals; take care of themselves, and [remain optimistic]" (Tait, p. 69; Yost, 2006).

Martin (2016) explored retention pertaining to special education teachers whose retention is generally lower than general education teachers. The inquiry centered on how passion and perseverance for long-term goals may impact retention. Special educators who displayed these qualities and devoted themselves to teaching, were observed as having positive relationships, persevering despite obstacles, and working hard on what they love.

Teacher perspectives on hope as a sustaining influence led Levine (2013) to conclude that veteran teachers feel they make a difference through their student advocacy. They seem to be guided by a faith-based call to teach and attain professional autonomy and respect. Towers (2017), who explored why long-serving teachers stay in challenging London primary schools, learned that they felt fulfilled from influencing children's lives, sharing bonds and dynamic relationships with colleagues, and having love for students and staff. The teachers expressed feeling comfortable and confident in their abilities and displaying self-efficacy at work.

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Generally, PLCs address teacher development and student attainment, and accounts for educators' interests (e.g., collective resilience in the wake of pandemics) and tenacious school problems (e.g., student dropout and re-engagement; Patterson et al., 2004).

Realities of teaching that impede novice teachers' adaptation must be made known to preservice teachers (Fontaine et al., 2012). Prevailing contextual factors of schooling that affect teacher self-efficacy and morale include poor working conditions, difficult work assignments, little administrative support, and lack of compensation (Custi 2012).

In their preparatory programs, teacher candidates must also learn about strategies that cultivate resilience. Gains can be realized from opportunities for resilience comprehension and development that build courage, teach skills and attitudes, provide helpful supports, and cultivate quality relationships.

- *Creates a positive collegial school culture: demonstrates inclusive and collaborative leadership in a variety of ways*



## Conclusion

Veteran teacher resilience and retention are understudied, and the literature depends on small sample sizes. A compensatory move of our review process was to consider teacher resilience and retention more generally.

Most teacher resilience literature is from teacher educators so we encourage more contributions from EDL/EDAEDL/EDA researchers do study school cultures and dynamics that shape “healthy” and “productive” environments (e.g., Louis &

Murphy, 2017; Ryan, 2020), so we

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