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## NEWS

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Contact: Barbara McKenna, 831-588-4309, [bmckenna@learningpolicyinstitute.org](mailto:bmckenna@learningpolicyinstitute.org)

### Where Have All the Teachers Gone?

*New study finds that tackling teacher turnover is critical step in ending U.S. teacher shortage*

[Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It](#) [Note: URL will not be functional until the embargo lifts]

PALO ALTO, CA—When students return to school in the upcoming weeks, many will enter one of the more than 100,000 classrooms across the country staffed by an instructor who is not fully qualified to teach. This is because many districts, facing ongoing teacher shortages, are hiring underqualified candidates to fill vacancies. While shortages tend to draw attention to recruitment issues, a new report, just released by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), finds that 90% of open teaching positions are created by teachers who leave the profession. Some are retiring, but about 2/3 of teachers leave for other reasons, most due to dissatisfactions with teaching. Teacher attrition in the U.S. is about twice as high as in high-achieving jurisdictions like Finland, Singapore, and Ontario, Canada.

Addressing early attrition is critical to stemming the country's continuing teacher shortage crisis. It is also important for school effectiveness. The cost of attrition to student learning and district budgets is significant. Teachers are the number one in-school influence on student achievement. Research finds that high rates of turnover in schools harm student achievement. In high-turnover schools, the inexperienced and underqualified teachers often hired to fill empty spots also have a negative impact on student learning. Financially, the report estimates that each teacher who leaves, on average, can cost as much as \$20,000 in an urban district. (To help districts estimate their own turnover costs, LPI will release a teacher turnover calculator for superintendents, school board members, parents, and others to use.)

The report, [Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It](#), will be released August 15, 2017, at 9 PM EST. It is authored by Desiree Carver-Thomas and Linda Darling-Hammond and builds on findings from a 2016 study by LPI, [A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.](#) Using data from the latest National Center for Education Statistics' *Schools and Staffing Surveys*, the authors detail who is leaving, why, and which students are most impacted. They also provide information on policy considerations that can address attrition. (See below for details.)

## Who Is Leaving?

- Total turnover rates are highest in the South (16%) and lowest in the Northeast (10%), where states tend to offer higher pay, support smaller class sizes, and make greater investments in education.
- Teachers of mathematics, science, special education, English language development, and foreign languages are more likely to leave their school or the profession than those in other fields. These are teaching fields that experience shortages in most states across the country.
- Turnover rates are 50% higher for teachers in Title I schools, which serve more low-income students. Mathematics and science teacher turnover rates are nearly 70% greater in Title I schools than in non-Title I schools, and turnover rates for alternatively certified teachers are more than 80% higher.
- Turnover rates are also 70% higher for teachers in schools serving the largest concentrations of students of color.
- Teachers of color, who disproportionately teach in high-minority, low-income schools and who are also significantly more likely to enter teaching without having completed their training, have higher turnover rates than White teachers overall (about 19% versus about 15%). While they leave at higher rates than White teachers generally, their turnover rates are about the same as all other teachers in high-poverty and high-minority schools.

## Why Are Teachers Leaving?

- Holding other factors constant, alternatively certified teachers, overall, are 25% more likely to leave their school, on average. Turnover rates are 2.5 times higher for teachers trained through alternative certification pathways in high-minority schools than for those in low-minority schools.
- Teachers who report a lack of administrative support have the strongest likelihood of leaving.
- Controlling for other factors, teachers in districts with a maximum teacher salary greater than \$72,000 are 31% less likely to leave their schools or the profession than teachers in districts with poorer pay scales.
- The most frequently cited reasons for leaving in 2012-13 were dissatisfactions with testing and accountability pressures (listed by 25% of those who left the profession); lack of administrative support; dissatisfactions with the teaching career, including lack of opportunities for advancement; and dissatisfaction with working conditions. These kinds of dissatisfactions were noted by 55% of those who left the profession and 66% of those who left their school to go to another school.

The report also provides a series of recommendations based on the findings, to address teacher turnover.

## Policy Recommendations

To stem teacher turnover, federal, state, and district policymakers should consider improving the key factors associated with turnover: compensation, teacher preparation and support, and teaching conditions.

### Compensation

- **Compensation packages:** Provide packages that are competitive with those of other occupations requiring similar levels of education and that are equitable across districts, so all schools can compete in the labor market for well-prepared teachers.
- **Service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs:** These programs reduce the debt burden of teaching and support improved retention by paying for the cost of attending a high-quality teacher preparation program in exchange for a commitment to teach in a subject or location of need for 3 to 5 years. These programs can be targeted to the subjects and schools where teachers are least likely to be well prepared and where turnover is greatest: mathematics, science, special education, and in schools serving students of color and students in poverty.

### Teacher Preparation and Support

- **Establish high-retention pathways into teaching:** Support pathways that explicitly serve high-need communities, such as teacher residency programs. Based on the medical residency model, residents train in high-needs schools for an entire school year under the guidance and supervision of a master teacher, while earning a credential and a master's degree from a partnering university. Most programs offer tuition assistance and a stipend for living expenses, plus two years of mentoring after the training year. In exchange, residents commit to teaching in the district for 3 to 5 years after their residency year. These programs tend to have much higher than average teacher retention rates.
- **Develop "Grow-your-own" teacher preparation models:** These models are especially effective in hard-to-staff communities and can recruit local high school students, paraprofessionals, or other local community members into teaching. These models capitalize on the fact that teachers are more likely to stay and continue teaching in their own communities. Grow your own models often underwrite the costs of teacher training through the kind of high-quality preparation programs associated with improved teacher retention, while they also provide supports for candidates to succeed.



- **Provide high-quality induction to beginning teachers:** High-quality induction programs that reduce attrition include mentoring with observation and feedback, time for collaborative planning with colleagues, a reduced teaching load, and a focus on high-leverage activities such as analyzing student work and discussing instructional strategies.

### **School Leadership**

- **Support the development of strong school leaders** who can create supportive environments for teaching: Develop rigorous accreditation and licensure standards for principal training programs based on research on effective school leadership., as well as systems for regular program review by qualified experts.
- **Fund residencies for principal training and state leadership academies:** These programs coordinate mentoring and professional learning to develop school leadership capacity to build and nurture school settings that encourage teacher retention.
- **Develop leadership locally:** Create systems and resources for developing robust leadership pipelines within districts to fill positions districtwide and targeted to the schools in greatest need.

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