Teacher Turnover:
Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It

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Over the course of 4 years, my school's administration steadily expanded the workload and workday while barely adjusting salaries. More and more major decisions were made behind closed doors, and more and more teachers felt micromanaged rather than supported.

—Sarah Fine, a former Washington, DC, teacher who left teaching after 4 years
Nation’s schools short at least 100,000 qualified teachers.

Teacher shortages affecting every state as 2017-18 school year begins.

BARTOW, Fla. - Only three schools in Polk County are still looking for teachers.

Oklahoma Teacher Shortage

Administrators of Oklahoma's previous four districts still seeking teachers.

Metro Students Have To Take Online Courses Due To Teacher Shortage

Teacher shortage looms over Detroit
Teacher attrition drives teacher demand.

Teacher demand due to teacher attrition: 97%
Teacher demand due to changes in enrollment: 3%
Teacher demand due to pupil/teacher ratios: 0%

Most attrition is not due to retirement.

Shortages undermine teacher quality and student achievement.
What is teacher turnover?

- Teachers leaving the profession & moving schools
- 8% of teachers leave
- 8% of teachers switch schools
Turnover varies across the country.

Note: States with fewer than 25 teachers surveyed were excluded (DC, HI, and WY). Three small New England states with similar data patterns were combined (NH, RI, VT).

Turnover is worse in critical shortage subjects.

- General elementary: 4.9% leavers, 6.4% movers
- Humanities: 7.3% leavers, 5.3% movers
- Mathematics/science: 7.2% leavers, 6.1% movers
- Special education: 5.6% leavers, 8.6% movers
- English language development: 6.9% leavers, 12% movers

Turnover is higher in schools serving low-income students.

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Turnover is higher in schools serving students of color.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Top Quartile</th>
<th>Bottom Quartile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All teachers</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities teachers</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics and science teachers</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education teachers</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD teachers</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular certification pathway</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative certification pathway</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more years’ experience</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or fewer years’ experience</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6. Teachers of color teach in high turnover schools

- 18% of the teacher workforce
- 3 in 4 work in schools serving the most student of color
- Twice as likely to enter through an alternative certification pathway
- Comparable turnover, holding all else constant
Turnover has costs.

- Teacher quality
- School stability
- Student achievement
- Financial costs
Turnover has costs.
Turnover has costs.
Why does teacher turnover matter?

- High turnover rates drive teacher shortages
- Shortages undermine teacher quality and student achievement
- Turnover also undermines student achievement
- Turnover is worse in mathematics, science, special education, foreign languages, and English language development
- Turnover most impacts students from low-income families and students of color
- Turnover has costs
Types of Reasons Given by Teachers for Leaving the Profession

Source: LPI analysis of the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS), 2013, from the Schools and Staffing Survey, National Center for Education Statistics.
Types of Reasons Given by Teachers for Moving Schools

- Dissatisfaction
  - Accountability pressures: 66%
  - Administration: 52%
  - Working conditions: 48%
- Family/personal reasons: 27%
- To teach at another school: 4%
- Financial reasons: 4%
- Retirement benefits: 4%

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 as teachers may select more than one reason for moving.

Dissatisfaction with administrative support impacts turnover.

![Bar chart showing opinions on school administration support]

- Strongly Agree: 10%
- Somewhat Agree: 15%
- Somewhat Disagree: 20%
- Strongly Disagree: More than 2x greater

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IS SUPPORTIVE
Lack of preparation impacts turnover.

Note: Brackets represent 95% confidence interval of the estimate.
This decision wasn’t an easy one. Not by a long shot. … I considered other jobs, tried to find adjunct positions, and my wife and I have worked very hard to pay off our debt in bigger chunks. But at the end of the day, the simple truth is that we can be paid a respectable wage for doing the same job—this job we love very much—by heading out of state.”

—Shawn Sheehan, 2016 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year who moved to Texas for a better-paid teaching position
Compensation impacts turnover.

![Bar chart showing predicted turnover rates based on highest teacher salary possible in district.]

Note: Brackets represent 95% confidence interval of the estimate.

What can we do about turnover?

Better compensation packages:

• Competitive, equitable salaries
• Service scholarships & loan forgiveness
• Financial incentives
  ✓ Housing
  ✓ Child care
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Build lasting teacher supply:
- Teacher residencies
- “Grow-Your-Own” programs
- Beginning teacher induction & mentoring
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**Build lasting teacher supply:**
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**Improve school leadership:**
- Principals prepared to lead supportive and collegial work settings
- High-quality principal professional learning
- Leadership pipelines