

**Reference Desk Response No. 135a:
Teacher Incentives: High-needs Schools, Hard-to-staff Subjects/Grade Levels**

Questions:

1. What types of incentives for attracting teachers to and retaining them in high need schools and hard to staff subject areas and grade levels have been studied? Which of these incentive types have been proven effective or to have promising results, and which have not?

Report:

We conducted a search for rigorous research reports in this area. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research centers, and several educational research databases. Our results include literature reviews, journal articles, and lists of resources. We also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as a resource for your concerns. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations ourselves, but offer this list to you for your information only.

Reference Desk Researchers found that thus far, the research that is available on incentives to attract or retain teachers largely involves financial incentives. Other types of incentives—working conditions, physical environment, relationships with administrators and others, adequacy of resources such as time and materials, and mentoring and induction programs (for beginning teachers)—are beginning to be examined as well.

While we focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed incentives and their effects, we supplemented these findings with a selection of articles reviewing recruitment, retention, and attrition.

Questions:

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1.1. Teacher Retention at Low-Performing Schools: Using the Evidence.

SERVE Center for Continuous Improvement at UNC-Greensboro; December 2006; ERIC ED498833.

Source: ERIC

(http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/34/f0/3d.pdf)

This research update summarizes three studies addressing issues related to teacher retention. One study examined North Carolina's use of a yearly bonus to certified math, science, and special education teachers working in high poverty and at-risk secondary schools. The study found that, on average, the bonus reduced turnover rates of the targeted teachers by 12 percent; that experienced teachers were most likely to respond to the program; and that, in many cases, principals did not know about the program. "Implications of the study indicate that: (1)

Supplemental pay may be a promising approach to retaining teachers in hard to staff subjects and schools; and (2) Greater efforts must be made to promote such programs.”

1.2. The Workplace Matters: Teacher Quality, Retention, and Effectiveness.

Johnson, S.M.; National Education Association; July 2006

Source: ERIC

(http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/28/05/13.pdf)

This research review explores how the context in which teachers work contributes to their willingness to enter and remain in teaching and to their success or failure in the classroom. The author discusses research findings which indicated that “once teachers are in the classroom, they are more likely to report that they would leave teaching because of poor working conditions than because of low pay” (page 3). She also cites a 2004 study from Buckley, Schneider, and Shank of survey data from urban K–12 teachers that found “facility quality” to be an important predictor of teachers’ decisions to leave their current position. These researchers concluded that “the benefits of facilities improvement for retention can be equal to or even greater than those from pay increases” (page 15).

1.3. Eight Questions on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What Does the Research Say?

Allen, M.; September 2005

Source: Education Commission of the States

(<http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/issuesK12.asp>)

This report found that “the research provides strong support for the conclusion that compensation plays a key role in the recruitment and retention of teachers. Not surprisingly, the research indicates that increasing compensation tends to increase the rate of teacher retention, but this relationship is not a simple one. Compensation has a varying impact on retention depending on other factors such as teachers’ gender, level of experience, and current job satisfaction. There is moderate evidence that working conditions may, in some cases, trump salary as a factor in teacher retention, and it is the *relative* salary between districts that is the important consideration. The research evidence is inconclusive as to whether limited career-advancement opportunities in teaching contribute to attrition.”

1.4. Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004-2005 Teacher Follow-up Survey.

Lyter, D., Peltola, P. Strizek, G., Morthon, B.; January 2007

Source: American Institutes for Research

(<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007307.pdf>)

Data from the Teacher Follow-Up Survey were analyzed to examine the characteristics of those who stay in the teaching profession and those who leave, providing information about teacher mobility and attrition. Participants included elementary and secondary school teachers. Among the public school teachers who moved to a new school, 16.5 % rated better salary or benefits as very or extremely important in their decision to change schools. These teachers’ top reasons included opportunity for a better teaching assignment—that is, subject area or grade level (38.1%), dissatisfaction with support from administrators at previous school (37.2%), dissatisfaction with workplace conditions at previous school (32.7%), and dissatisfaction with base year school for other reasons (31.2%) (page 12).

1.6 A Possible Dream: Retaining California’s Teachers So All Students Learn.

Futernick, K.; Sacramento: California State University; 2007.

Source: Education Commission of the States

(http://www.calstate.edu/teacherquality/documents/possible_dream_exec.pdf)

“Teachers who planned to stay in the classroom most often pointed to having meaningful input in the decision-making process at their schools and to strong, collaborative relationships with their colleagues. These teachers also cited the importance of effective ‘system supports’ such as adequate time for planning, and resources for classroom learning materials. When these positive conditions were in place, many of these teachers viewed their compensation as adequate and a reason for staying in the profession.”

Additional Organizations to Consult

- **Center on Reinventing Public Education**
(<http://www.crpe.org>)
In the 2007 School Finance Redesign Project working paper *Recruiting New Teachers to Urban School Districts: What Incentives Will Work*, authors Milanowski, A.T., Longwell-Grice, H., Saffold, F., Jones, J., Odden, A.R., and Schomisch, K. make this recommendation: “Improving working conditions, especially principal support, may be more cost effective than higher beginning pay in attracting new teachers. Districts may be better off spending money to attract, retain, and train better principals than to provide higher beginning salaries to teachers. Since much of what new teachers know about districts or schools comes via word of mouth, if current teachers are satisfied with the district or school, they will help ‘sell’ it to new teachers. Improving working conditions for all teachers is therefore likely to help attract new teachers.”
(<http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/view/projects/3?page=initiatives&initiative=13>) Also appearing at the site, *Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers*, a series of articles and working papers, “points to promising new ways of using salaries, incentives, and working conditions to alter current patterns of recruitment, assignment, and retention. These findings suggest that stronger links among instructional strategy, teacher work, and professional compensation are possible.”
- **Center on Innovation and Improvement**
(www.centerii.org)
Reports and issue briefs are available at (www.centerii.org/search/ciisearch.aspx) when keywords such as “teacher retention” are entered. For example, the 2008 report *Financial Incentives for Hard-To-Staff Positions: Cross-Sector Lessons for Public Education* by Kowal, J., Hassel, B. C., and Hassel, E. A. suggests private-sector retention strategies that may apply in education. Another 2008 report, *Creating and Sustaining Urban Teacher Residencies: A New Way to Recruit, Prepare, and Retain Effective Teachers in High-Needs Districts* by Berry, B., Montgomery, D., Curtis, R., Hernandez, M., Wurtzel, J., & Snyder, J., describes Urban Teacher Residencies, wherein “aspiring teachers are selected according to a rigorous criteria taking into account district needs, then do master’s level course work incorporating a two-year mentoring program.”
- **The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality**
(<http://www.tqsource.org>)
Many resources on teacher recruitment and retention—including data tools and features allowing visitors to compare state policy, incentives, and search a variety of publications on the topic—are available at TQ Source (<http://www2.tqsource.org/topics/recruitment.asp>). Reports and issue briefs such as *America’s Challenge: Effective Teachers for At-Risk Schools and Students, 2007* (<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/NCCTQBiennialReport.pdf>) and *Key Issues: Recruiting Quality Science, Mathematics, and Special Education Teachers for Urban Schools, 2006* (<http://www2.tqsource.org/strategies/recruit/recruitqualityteachers.pdf>) are also available.
- **Education Commission of the States**
(<http://www.ecs.org>)
The ECS K–12 issues page (<http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/issuesK12.asp>) contains information and recommendations for 11 categories, including compensation and diversified pay systems, hard-to-staff schools, high-need students, and recruitment and retention.

Resources on Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Attrition in General

- **Attrition of Public School Mathematics and Science Teachers.** *Institute of Education Sciences: NCES Issue Brief; May 2008; NCES 2008–077*
Source: Schools and Staffing Survey
(<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008077.pdf>)
This issue brief summarizes the characteristics of science and math teachers who leave teaching and their reasons for leaving. Among teachers with regular certification, smaller percentages of math and science teachers than teachers of other subjects left teaching. More math and science leavers than other leavers rated salary or benefits as important for their decision to leave.

- **Why Teachers Leave: Factors that Influence Retention and Resignation.** *Kersaint, G., Lewis, J., Potter, R., Meisels, G.; 2007; Teaching and Teacher Education Volume 23, pp. 775–794*
 Source: FirstSearch
http://www.monarchcenter.org/pdfs/leavekersaint_07.pdf
 “This study revealed six factors that influence teacher retention. Time with family and family responsibility are of greatest importance to teachers who have left the profession. This is closely followed by administrative support, financial benefits, and paperwork/assessment. In comparison, teachers who remain in the profession placed less importance on time with family, administrative support, and financial benefits than those who left the profession.”
 - **Creating and Sustaining Urban Teacher Residencies: A New Way to Recruit, Prepare, and Retain Effective Teachers in High-Needs Districts.** *Barnett, B., Montgomery, D., Rachel, C., Hernandez, M., Wurtzel, J., Snyder, J.; August 2008; Center for Teaching Quality.*
 Source: ERIC
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/3e/b8/0e.pdf
 “Urban Teacher Residencies (UTRs) are an emerging innovation designed to embody best practices in recruitment, screening, preparation, placement, induction, and teacher leadership for urban school districts ... While these programs are quite new, there is promising evidence that UTRs are attracting a new pool of talented and diverse recruits, preparing them to be successful in urban classrooms, and keeping them in high needs schools and subjects. For example, school administrators rate UTR graduates’ skills and competencies highly and 90 to 95 percent of graduates are still teaching after three years.”
 - **Teacher Recruitment and Retention: A Review of the Recent Empirical Literature.** *Guarino, C., Santibañez, L., and Daley, G.; 2006; Review of Educational Research Volume 76, number 2, pp.173-208.*
 Source: ERIC
http://www.monarchcenter.org/pdfs/recruitguarino_06.pdf
 “This article critically reviews the recent empirical literature on teacher recruitment and retention published in the United States. It examines the characteristics of individuals who enter and remain in the teaching profession, the characteristics of schools and districts that successfully recruit and retain teachers, and the types of policies that show evidence of efficacy in recruiting and retaining teachers.”
 - **Developing the Compendium of Strategies to Reduce Teacher Turnover in the Northeast and Islands Region: A Companion to the Database.** *Ellis, P., Grogan, M.; Levy, A.J., Tucker-Seeley, K.; September 2008.*
 Source: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2008052a.pdf This report provides state-, regional-, and district-level decision-makers in the Northeast and Islands Region with a description of the Compendium of Strategies to Reduce Teacher Turnover in the Northeast and Islands Region, a searchable database of selected profiles of retention strategies implemented in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont.
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Key words and search strings used in the search:

Teacher Persistence, Incentives, Recruitment, Turnover, Shortage, Effectiveness; Teaching Conditions; Beginning Teacher; Urban Schools; Rural Schools; Poverty; Mathematics; Science; Special Education

Search databases and websites:

Sources For Rigorous Research Reports: Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL); What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); Doing What Works (DWW); National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Institute for Education Sciences (IES)

Other Federally Funded Sites: The Center on Innovation and Improvement; The Center on Instruction; The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality; Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS); Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement; Education Commission of the States; Regional Comprehensive Centers; Regional Resource Centers

Additional Data Resources: Education Development Center; WestEd; American Institutes for Research; ERIC; EBSCO Databases; Education Index Retrospective; FirstSearch (OCLC); <http://www.google.com>; general internet search

REL Northeast and Islands

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