

Teacher Recruitment, Induction, and Retention

by Basha Krasnoff

It is critically important that we develop much more effective policies to attract, retain, and support the continued learning of prepared and committed teachers. When teachers have assembled the kind of training and experience that allows them to be successful with students, they constitute a valuable human resource for schools—one that needs to be treasured and supported if schools are to become and remain effective. (Darling-Hammond & Wei, 2009, p. 631)

Teacher quality and student achievement

Over the years there has been substantial evidence to suggest that among all school resources, well-prepared, expert, and experienced teachers are among the most important determinants of student achievement. Studies at the state, district, school, and individual level have found that teachers' experience, as well as their academic background, preparation for teaching, and certification status, matter for teachers' effectiveness. Because of the strong evidence about how much teacher effectiveness matters to student achievement, the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) requires that highly qualified teachers staff all schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

To ensure that all students have “teachers with the subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills necessary to help them achieve to high academic standards, regardless of their individual learning styles or needs,” ESEA Title II, Part A (2006) provides substantial funding “to help states and districts recruit, train, reward, and retain highly qualified teachers.” The law emphasizes that teachers of core academic subjects meet certain minimum requirements to be considered highly qualified: at least a bachelor's degree, full state certification,

The difference between the effect of having a very well-qualified teacher rather than one who was poorly qualified was larger than the effects of race and parent education combined. The achievement gap would be much reduced if low-income minority students were routinely assigned highly qualified teachers, rather than the poorly qualified teachers they most often encounter. (Clotfelter et al., 2007, p. 673)

full licensure by the state for their teaching assignment, and subject matter knowledge and teaching skill in each core academic subject assigned to teach (ESEA, 2006).

Recruiting “highly qualified” teachers

A longitudinal study of high school students in North Carolina found that students’ achievement is significantly higher if they are taught by a teacher who is certified in his or her teaching field, was fully prepared upon entry, had higher scores on the teacher licensing test, graduated from a competitive college, had taught for more than two years, or was National Board Certified. While each of these traits helped make teachers more effective, the combined influence of having a teacher with most of these qualifications, as compared to having a teacher with fewer of them, was larger than the effects of race and parent education combined (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007).

A study of teachers in New York City found that student achievement was most enhanced by having a fully certified teacher who had graduated from a university preservice program, had a strong academic background, and had more than two years of experience. Students’ achievement was hurt most by having an inexperienced teacher on a temporary license, which is the teaching profile most common in high-minority, low-income schools with ongoing teacher turnover. In combination, improvements in these qualifications reduced the gap in achievement between the schools serving the poorest and the most affluent student bodies by 25 percent (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008).

The requirement that schools staff all classrooms with “highly qualified teachers” has created challenges for many schools, particularly those in inner city and poor rural areas. The challenge is due neither to teacher shortages (the United States produces many more qualified teachers than are hired) nor to growing student enrollments or increasing teacher retirements. Data show that the chronic demand for new teachers is largely due to teacher turnover: teachers moving from or leaving their teaching jobs. Retaining teachers is the greatest challenge facing schools today (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004).

Hiring practices—not a small applicant pool—seem to be at the root of the recruitment problem for some districts. When The New Teacher Project studied hiring practices in four hard-to-staff urban districts, researchers found that strategic recruitment yielded a multitude of applicants, but many of the high-quality candidates withdrew their applications before hiring decisions were made in mid- to late summer. Withdrawers had significantly higher GPAs and were 40 percent more likely to have a degree and experience in their teaching field than candidates who were eventually hired. The majority of those who withdrew subsequently cited late hiring as their reason for accepting employment elsewhere. Researchers suggested that schools work with teacher unions and partner with teacher preparation programs to streamline the hiring process to competitively post and fill their positions and to tailor compensation packages to applicant credentials (Levin & Quinn, 2003).

While applicants' acceptance decisions consider salaries being offered in other districts and in fields outside of teaching, "salary" has not been correlated to teacher "shortages" or attrition, except as it relates to excessive workloads, high-stakes testing, disruptive student behavior, poor leadership and administration within schools, and views of teaching as a temporary profession. Researchers found that even moderate salary increases are only moderately effective at increasing the candidate pool or stopping existing teacher attrition. In fact, raises of 25–40 percent would be necessary to have a significant impact. Salary levels vary significantly by district: Teachers in schools serving the largest concentrations of low-income students earn, at the top of their salary scale, one third less than teachers in higher income schools (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future [NCTAF], 1996).

Turnover and attrition

Underpaid teachers are typically underprepared and not supported as they confront lower levels of resources, poorer working conditions, and the stresses of working with students and families who have a wide range of needs. Beginning teachers are particularly vulnerable because they are more likely to be assigned low-performing students. Despite the added challenges that come with teaching students with higher needs, most beginners are given no professional support, feedback, or demonstration of what it takes to help their students succeed. The result is that new teachers are the most at risk of leaving the teaching profession. Research shows that 14 percent of new teachers leave by the end of their first year; 33 percent leave within three years of beginning teaching; and almost 50 percent leave within five years (Ingersoll, 2003). These high attrition rates mean students continually face inexperienced teachers and that schools face the higher economic costs of continually hiring and training new teachers. High turnover rates also disrupt the team-based, organizational structure and functioning of a school and interrupt the planning and implementation of a coherent, comprehensive, and unified curriculum (Guin, 2004).

Policies that address the root problems of high turnover must address the four major factors that exert strong influences on teacher entry and retention:

- Compensation
- Working conditions
- Teacher preparation
- Mentoring and support

The advantages of having highly qualified teachers are clear but it is not so clear what attracts and keeps highly qualified teachers teaching and what drives them out of schools and the profession. The burning questions challenging educators from the federal to the local level today are:

- What will increase the power of the teaching profession to recruit and retain well-prepared, experienced, accomplished, high-quality teachers?
- What will create a stable, expert teaching force in all kinds of schools and districts?

Who's Leaving the Teaching Profession?

Research tells us that the teachers leaving the profession mostly fit this profile:

- White
- Female
- Higher measured ability
- Teaching math or science
- Teaching fewer than five years
- Near retirement

(Guarino, Santibañez, Daley, & Brewer, 2004)

Factors Influencing Teacher Retention

In research studies, teachers consistently identify five factors as reasons for remaining in their classrooms and schools:

- **Time to collaborate with colleagues** to plan and to participate in professional activities, which allows colleagues to learn from one another and reduces isolation
- **Job-embedded professional development** planned collaboratively with other teachers and leaders to target instructional strategies and other content immediately applicable to their practice
- **Sense of autonomy** to exercise authority in their classrooms and participate in the decisionmaking process at the school level

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High turnover often links directly to teachers' sense of effectiveness. Research consistently shows that teachers often leave high-poverty, low-performing, at-risk schools because they have not been adequately prepared to teach in such challenging environments and lack much needed support from administrators (Laine, 2008). On the other hand, research shows that new recruits who have had training in specific aspects of teaching (e.g., selection and use of instructional materials, child psychology, and learning theory), who have experienced practice teaching, and who received feedback on their teaching leave the profession at half the rate of those who did not (NCTAF, 2003).

Attracting “high-quality” teachers

To attract high-quality teachers (i.e., those who are well prepared, experienced, and accomplished), research suggests that schools must match their recruitment and retention efforts to the characteristics and motivations of the teachers and teaching candidates they hope to attract. For example, one highly qualified, board-certified teacher provided some insight when he asserted that the following conditions would have to be met before he would even consider working in a high-needs school:

I would want to see social services for parents and children, accomplished leadership, adequate resources and facilities, and flexibility, freedom and time One of the single greatest factors that would convince me would be an effective administrator. The leadership of the principal has everything to do with school success [because] effective leaders are magnets for accomplished teachers It is amazing to me the level of attention that is being focused on teacher qualifications in hard-to-staff schools when little is done to address the sometimes appalling conditions in which teachers are forced to work and students are forced to learn As an accomplished teacher, my greatest fear is being assigned to a hard-to-staff school and not being given the time and the flexibility to make the changes that I believe are necessary to bring about student achievement. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 21)

Research evidence supports these “demands” and suggests that schools could recruit and retain more high-quality teachers if school leaders promoted good working conditions, including an atmosphere of collegial support, meaningful involvement in decisionmaking, and a focus on student learning. While some researchers have pointed out the mediating influence of working conditions on recruitment and retention (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991), others have demonstrated how teacher commitment (and attrition) is moderated by powerful intervening variables related to working conditions, such as collegiality, involvement in decisionmaking, and opportunities for professional development (Rosenholtz, 1989).

The teachers' sense of self-efficacy—the personal satisfaction that comes from feeling competent to do the job well—plays a role in the decision to stay or leave for both novice and veteran teachers. A survey of 2,000 current and former

teachers in California showed that teachers felt greater personal satisfaction when they believed in their own efficacy, were involved in decisionmaking, and established strong collegial relationships (Futernick, 2007).

When teachers cite their many reasons for leaving their job, most involve nonsalary-related dissatisfaction. Teachers most frequently cite excessive workloads and high-stakes testing, disruptive student behavior, poor leadership and administration within schools, and views of teaching as a temporary profession. Most strategies identified in the research as cost effective and influential in convincing teachers to remain relate to improving teachers' work environment and providing professional development.

Transforming schools so that they can recruit and retain good teachers who are equipped to support strong learning requires attention to all these factors and more. Instead of emphasizing monetary bonuses to attract teachers to hard-to-staff schools, evidence directs policymakers instead to invest in the professional working conditions and supports for teacher learning that are critical to their success (Berry, 2004). While money does "sweeten the offer," both novice and experienced teachers are attracted primarily to principals who are good instructional leaders, to like-minded colleagues who are committed to the same goals, to teaching conditions and readily available, relevant instructional materials, and to learning supports that enable them to be effective (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Developing and retaining "highly effective" teachers

Building a professional teacher corps is a process that only begins with recruiting highly qualified teachers. Once recruited, these teachers need professional development, coaching, mentoring, and other supports to develop a strong sense of their own efficacy based on high-quality teaching skills and experience. Ultimately, with these types of supports, teachers become highly effective at producing high-quality, student learning and fostering high student achievement. When school leaders and policymakers understand the reasons for teacher attrition, they develop policies that stem attrition through better preparation, assignment, working conditions, and mentor support: all of which contributes toward the goal of ensuring qualified teachers for all students (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Schools can enhance the beneficial effects of strong initial preparation with strong mentoring and induction programs during the first years of teaching. A number of studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs improve retention rates for new teachers. They also improve teachers' attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills. Providing expert mentors with release time to coach beginning teachers reduced attrition by more than two thirds. Furthermore, the beginning teachers became competent more quickly than those who were forced to learn by trial and error (NCTAF, 1996).

There is much evidence that well-operated induction and mentoring programs are the best method for increasing teacher retention. In California, high-quality induction and mentoring programs reduced attrition by 26 percent in just two years (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Retention increases when effective principals are actively involved in teacher induction, providing "professional

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- **Time to interact with supportive educational leaders** in a reciprocal relationship of respect, support, and involvement in leadership opportunities
- **Opportunities to provide input regarding student learning outcomes** as part of a professional learning community where teachers question and discuss student needs, subject matter, assessments, equity and access, and generate local knowledge

(Charlton & Kritsonis, 2009–2010)

Educators in one exemplary elementary school meet regularly to focus on student learning: one of the conditions that contribute to teacher retention.



socialization” in the form of frequent discussion, monitoring, and feedback. In schools where there is a climate that sets high expectations for student learning combined with the belief that all students can learn, beginning teachers express loyalty to, and the intention to stay, in a particular school because the mission, vision, and values of the school culture match their own. However, there is also compelling evidence that socializing new teachers into an ineffective school promulgates ineffective practices and produces internal conflicts for new teachers (Angelle, 2006).

A well-researched approach—comprehensive induction—is a combination of mentoring, professional development, support, and formal assessments for new teachers during at least their first two years of teaching. Studies show that comprehensive induction programs cut attrition rates in half and even more importantly, help to develop novice teachers into high-quality professionals who really impact student achievement. Most researchers and education experts agree that, in general, new teachers require from three to seven years in the field to reach proficiency and maximize student performance. Economists have reported that investing in comprehensive induction can create a payoff of \$1.37 for every \$1.00 invested (Villar, 2004).

A comprehensive induction program developed and operated by the New Teacher Center was designed to break the cycle of inequity and provide children who are most in need of a quality education with teachers capable of helping them. This approach to induction provides one-to-one mentoring sessions, during which an exemplary teacher helps a novice teacher to analyze her practice and uses classroom data to offer constructive suggestions for improvement. Mentors help new teachers set professional goals, plan lessons, analyze student work, and reflect on their progress. They may team-teach or model lessons while the new teacher observes.

Over two decades of experience, the New Teacher Center learned many lessons about the efficacy of new teacher induction and mentoring (Moir, 2009). Ellen Moir, the founder of the New Teacher Center, shared the most valuable lessons learned from the Center's extensive experience:

1. New teacher induction programs require a systemwide commitment to teacher development. Induction programs are most effective when all stakeholder groups are represented in the program design and when new teacher induction is part of a districtwide initiative to improve teaching and learning.
2. Induction programs accelerate the effectiveness of new teachers, fast-tracking their progress to exemplary teachers who have the ability to positively impact student achievement.
3. Standards-based, formative assessment tools and procedures are necessary to establish professional norms, collect evidence of student learning, and measure teacher growth over time.
4. Induction programs give talented teachers a midcareer boost and a powerful opportunity to develop leadership skills. An effective training course for mentors provides opportunities for professional growth for the mentor as well.
5. Principals are the critical component of any mentoring program when they have an unswerving commitment to ongoing professional development. The principal must fully understand and endorse teacher/mentor and collaborative grade-level meetings to cultivate a thriving learning community.
6. Effective induction programs must combine high-quality mentoring within communities of practice where teachers collaborate to design lessons, observe each other teach, and analyze student data.
7. To be successful, teachers need supportive school environments, where educators are valued, trusted, and have the time and ability to collaborate to improve instruction. For mentoring to affect the enculturation and instructional practice of beginning teachers, schools need sufficient resources, empowered educators, and the time and professional development to work closely with colleagues.
8. Online learning communities supplement in-person meetings and professional development training to provide timely, cost-effective mentoring. They offer access to resources, including experienced teachers, content facilitators, and content experts who may not always be available within the district.
9. There must be policies in place that fund mandates for mentored induction so that program quality and intention are strong enough to have an impact. A state-level infrastructure, including well-designed programs and teacher performance standards, and a system of communication and support are necessary.

10. Strong induction programs must embrace a robust, well-articulated vision and then work toward impacting teacher effectiveness and equitable student learning. State policies guide the development of the vision but accountability rests at the district level. Accountability transcends compliance and moves the school toward a cycle of continuous improvement that provides evidence of an acceleration of new teacher effectiveness.

Policy considerations

According to Linda Darling-Hammond, we need to develop much more effective policies to attract, induct, and retain prepared and committed teachers. Since attrition is a much greater problem in the overall teacher supply picture than is producing enough teachers to satisfy demand, we need to retain strong teachers by supporting their continued learning. School leaders and policymakers must understand the reasons for teacher attrition and develop effective strategies for keeping their best teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The implications from the research for educational policy and practice:

- **Organizational structures and supports:** Investing in competitive salaries is important; however, recruiting and keeping good teachers—both novice and experienced—is equally a question of attending to key working conditions that matter to them. In addition to class size, teaching loads, and the availability of materials, significant conditions include teacher participation in decision-making, strong and supportive instructional leadership from principals, and collegial learning opportunities.
- **Recruitment of prepared and qualified teachers:** Seeking out and hiring better prepared teachers has many payoffs and savings in the long run, both in terms of lower attrition and higher levels of competence.
- **Investment in induction and mentoring programs:** Investing in induction and mentoring programs provides a pipeline of effective and satisfied teachers who are prepared to enter and stay in high-need schools. Considering the high costs of attrition, many of the strategic investments needed to support competent teachers in staying, such as mentoring for beginners and ongoing learning and leadership challenges for veterans, pay for themselves in large degree.
- **Development of communities of professional teachers:** Developing a stable, high-quality teaching force that becomes increasingly effective creates a professional learning community that not only reduces the cost of teacher failure but also the cost of student failure.

Summary of findings

Today, school districts have the flexibility to use Title II, Part A funds creatively to address the challenges of teacher quality, including teacher preparation and qualifications of new teachers, recruitment and hiring, induction, professional development, and retention. Effective induction and mentoring programs have been shown to increase retention rates in many types of schools. To be effective the programs must be well-organized with instructive and expedient activities, a formal mentoring aspect, reduced

teaching requirements for new teachers to give them time for training, and a formal way to assess the new teachers with a focus on assistance rather than evaluation (Serpell & Bozemen, 1999).

Requiring performance standards for “fully qualified teachers” as a prerequisite to hiring new staff means that well-prepared teachers will more likely remain in the profession long enough to contribute to the school’s improvement goals. A synthesis of the research base on what teachers should know and be able to do to support student learning offers criteria that could serve as benchmarks for teacher preparation, licensing, and hiring. According to researchers and practitioners, “highly qualified” teachers possess the following characteristics:

- Possess a deep understanding of the subjects they teach
- Show a firm understanding of how students learn
- Demonstrate the teaching skills necessary to help all students achieve high standards
- Create a positive learning environment
- Use a variety of assessment strategies to diagnose and respond to individual learning needs
- Demonstrate and integrate modern technology into the school curriculum to support student learning
- Collaborate with colleagues, parents, community members, and other educators to improve student learning
- Reflect on their practice to improve future teaching and student achievement
- Pursue professional growth in both content and pedagogy
- Instill a passion for learning in their students (NCTAF, 2003)

Supporting new teachers with high-quality, induction programs that lighten initial class load to accommodate coaching, mentorship, and collaborative planning would accelerate effectiveness. Focused professional development on lesson study, student work, test scores, and linguistic and cultural competence would yield quality instruction for improved learning (Serpell & Bozemen, 1999).

Good teachers are strongly attracted to school systems that focus on finding, keeping, and supporting good teachers. Effective teachers want to work in environments that support and appreciate them. They are sustained and nourished by other good teachers who become their trusted colleagues, coaches, and mentors and who share a commitment to creating a good learning environment for their students. Effective leaders attract effective teachers and together they create a great school environment where their teaching and learning can flourish (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Higher salaries may be necessary but not sufficient to attract and retain high-quality teachers, especially in hard-to-staff schools. Strong administrative leadership in new teacher support would, at the very least, lower class loads and increase curricular resources, but would especially provide opportunities

for new teachers to work collaboratively with other teachers under the tutelage of mentors who can help them develop their knowledge and skill from within the school community (Brill & McCartney, 2008).

Building the teaching profession to ensure quality teachers and learning for each student means paying teachers more, but differently, by reorganizing the school structure to create a tiered teaching profession that accommodates and rewards highly accomplished teachers who can manage and lead less experienced teachers (NCTAF, 2003).

As policymakers seek new ways to recruit and retain highly qualified and highly effective teachers, many of the current approaches—pay for performance and alternative routes—may have little impact. A systematic approach to teacher development is needed to directly address the problems schools and districts face (Berry, 2004). School staffing problems are not caused by “inexorable societal demographic trends” but by organizational issues that are amenable to systemic policy changes. By looking closely at the data, the underlying organizational conditions that undermine teacher recruitment programs can be identified and addressed. States, districts, and schools must address these organizational conditions that cause high levels of teacher attrition before teacher recruitment programs will successfully attract highly qualified and effective teachers into some of our schools (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 21).

As school systems approach teacher development systematically, there will be a paradigm shift. Ultimately, data structures will be reinvented so that valid and reliable information is used as a foundation for assessing the teacher development system and for pushing advances in policy and practice. Through this systematic shift, schools will cultivate teachers who know content, can teach, and understand how all students learn based on established and enforced standards for the teaching profession (Berry, 2004).

Lessons learned

Impact of attrition

- There is no shortage of teachers coming into the system. The real difficulty is that too many teachers are leaving the profession after only a few years.
- Finding, hiring, and training new teachers creates a large financial cost. As trained teachers leave their schools, a double loss occurs: Money has been lost in training that will not be applied as a tool for improvement at that particular school and more money has to be spent for training incoming teachers.
- High teacher turnover affects the school community and hinders long-term planning. Losing experienced teachers has negative implications for individual students, as well as for the school and district.

Impact of inequity

- Inequitable distribution of teacher expertise increases the likelihood that students in more impoverished and racially isolated schools will be taught by inexperienced and/or uncertified teachers.

Impact of work conditions

- Overwhelming workloads and too little planning time are the primary sources of dissatisfaction cited by teachers upon leaving a school or the profession.
- Severe behavior problems have been found to be negatively correlated with teacher satisfaction and novice teachers are typically assigned to the most difficult or problematic classrooms.
- School facilities, resources, and materials all have to meet basic quality requirements so they don't contribute to teacher attrition.
- Increases of between 25 and 40 percent are required before salary impacts retention.

Impact of professional supports

- Teachers seek work environments in which they are supported and treated as professionals, sharing ideas and resources with colleagues, and receiving respect and guidance from the principal.
- Strong professional communities that stress support and involvement in major decisionmaking improve teacher retention.
- Effective induction and mentoring programs have been shown to increase retention rates in many types of schools. The programs must be well organized with instructive and expedient activities and involve formal mentoring, reduced teaching requirements for new teachers to allow for training, and systematic assessment that focuses on assistance rather than evaluation of new teachers.

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