

BACKGROUND: WORKFORCE QUALITY

The Challenge

The annual loss of effective public school teachers is devastating to the U.S. economy and exacerbates the achievement gap. The statistics for turnover among new teachers are startling. Some 30 percent of all new hires leave the classroom within three years. In urban districts, the numbers are worse; close to 50 percent of newcomers flee the profession during their first five years of teaching. In a 2010 report, Truman School of Public Affairs researchers estimated that this turnover costs U.S. public schools approximately \$5 billion annually.¹ Moreover, the loss of effective teachers has been proven to negatively impact student achievement—specifically math and English language arts. This impact is even greater for African American students.²

The National Education Association (NEA) believes educator turnover can be attributed to several factors: 1) a lack of clarity or standards around defining teacher leadership and related skills, knowledge, and practices; 2) flat career continuums that offer accomplished teachers little opportunity for growth in skill, responsibility, and compensation; 3) systems that do not offer new roles and increased compensation to those who have voluntarily taken steps to improve their practice and leadership skills; 4) a single career pathway that does not consider the varying interests and abilities of educators, and; 5) school systems that do not offer teachers opportunities to be successful, collaborate with colleagues, take formal leadership roles, or contribute in the decision-making process at school and district levels.

Stanford University education researchers Frank Adamson and Linda Darling-Hammond reiterate the importance of a supportive working environment: “Those working conditions—including professional

teaching conditions, such as the availability of materials, class sizes, the attractiveness and safety of facilities, high-quality leadership, and professional learning opportunities—play a role in teachers’ decisions to leave teaching in a particular school or sometimes to leave the profession altogether.”³

The Opportunity

Recruiting high-quality teachers and other school staff is only half the challenge. NEA believes that retaining these educators requires providing adequate preparation, support, leadership, and autonomy, as well as compensation that reflects their professional stature.

NEA also believes that maintaining strong and uniform standards for preparation and licensure is the first step in strengthening the teaching profession. More than 1.6 million new teachers are expected to enter the profession within the next decade, and they must prove to be effective practitioners before they are assigned as teachers of record. All teachers entering the profession must demonstrate subject matter competence, pedagogical skills, and teaching ability before entering the classroom. NEA believes that teacher preparation programs must be approved at two levels: at the state level through an agency such as a professional standards board and at the national level through a national accreditation body.

Following high-quality preparation and licensure, teachers should have access to a continuum of supports, beginning with induction and followed by opportunities to form collaborative relationships with colleagues, access to ongoing professional learning, leadership opportunities, and a voice in the development of fair and valid assessments. These



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opportunities should not be limited to teachers, but should also be available to other school staff, including education support professionals (ESP).

Hybrid roles and peer assistance programs are among the strategies to offer support and leadership opportunities. Both offer increasing responsibility and career options. Additionally, systems that make the best use of teacher leaders should consider peer assistance and review programs. These programs use the expertise of accomplished teachers to build the effectiveness of their peers and, thereby, the system as a whole.

Teacher evaluation and accountability systems should reflect the input of the experts—classroom teachers—and be based on multiple measures in three broad areas: practice, professional development, and growth in student learning. No one knows better what it takes to be a good teacher than another teacher. Peer review evaluations should be regular, fair, comprehensive, and culminate in concrete feedback. Feedback should include strategies to help struggling teachers improve and could involve having accomplished teachers mentor struggling and beginning teachers.

Finally, professional salaries are a significant incentive for recruiting and retaining educators to work in a particular district. One researcher estimates that an 11 percent increase in the weekly salary of teachers would increase the proportion of college graduates choosing to enter the teaching profession by 26 percent.⁴

With these conditions in place, it is possible to retain accomplished educators who would have likely departed without new opportunities and responsibilities.

Indicators for Workforce Quality

The conditions necessary to recruit and retain a qualified, caring, diverse, and stable education workforce include: a pool of well-prepared, highly skilled candidates for all vacancies; intensive induction for new educators with mentoring services from trained, veteran educators; opportunities for continual improvement and growth for all employees; working conditions in which they can succeed, including involvement in the decision-making process at the school building level; and, professional compensation and benefits.⁵

The Great Public Schools (GPS) Workforce Quality Indicators reflect NEA's commitment to high-quality public schools. They are: high-quality educator preparation and licensure, leadership training and stability, educator quality and effectiveness, teacher recruitment and retention, and incentives and supports (all school personnel).

High-Quality Educator Preparation and Licensure

- ▶ State provides funding for preparation programs to establish residency programs with local school districts.
- ▶ 100 percent of licensed teachers have successfully completed both a teacher residency program before becoming the teacher-of-record and an induction program within the first three years of teaching.

Leadership Training and Stability

- ▶ State policy provides resources to complete voluntary national certification and endorsements that promote teacher leadership opportunities.

- ▶ 100 percent of teacher leaders have a leadership endorsement/certificate

Educator Quality and Effectiveness

- ▶ State provides funding for “peer assistance” and “peer assistance and review” (PAR) teams.
- ▶ 100 percent of teachers are rated effective based on multiple measures of performance.⁶

Educator Recruitment and Retention

- ▶ State provides funding and technical assistance to strengthen professional learning in high-poverty, high-minority areas with an emphasis on mentoring and cultural competency.
- ▶ 100 percent of districts have professional learning plans, including induction and mentoring, for teachers, education support professionals (ESP), and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP).

Incentives and Supports (All School Personnel)

- ▶ State law provides bargaining rights for public education employees over terms and conditions of employment.
- ▶ 100 percent of teachers surveyed indicate satisfaction with the terms and conditions of employment.

Conclusion

NEA believes public education in America can be improved by ensuring the cultivation, recruitment, and retention of accomplished educators. We can change public education in America for the better. Closing the opportunity, achievement, and skill gaps and accelerating

student learning will require that state legislators, districts, administrators, educators, parents, and the community work together to implement the conditions that successfully prepare educators, provide them the supports they need to teach students with a range of needs and various abilities, and give them a voice in their schools and classrooms.

Notes

1. Grissom, J., & Harrington, J. R. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://truman.missouri.edu/P20/documents/TeacherTurnover.pdf>
2. Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wykoff, J. How teacher turnover harms students' achievements [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/TchTrnStAch AERJ R&R not blind.pdf>
3. Adamson, Frank and Darling-Hammond, Linda. “Speaking of Salaries: What It Will Take to Get Qualified, Effective Teachers in All Communities.” Center for American Progress, May 2011, p. 11.
4. DeAngelis, Karen J. *The Relationship Between Teachers' Salaries and the Quality of the Supply of Recent College Graduates to Teaching*. Stanford University, 2000 as referenced by Adamson, Frank and Darling-Hammond, Linda in “Speaking of Salaries: What It Will Take to Get Qualified, Effective Teachers in All Communities.” Center for American Progress, May 2011, p. 9.
5. ESEA Positive Agenda <http://www.nea.org/home/13193.htm>
6. Measures may include classroom observations, portfolios, leadership roles and professional learning.

For more information please visit nea.org/gpsindicators