



Five Lessons on Teacher Recruitment and Retention

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1. **Recognize that we know what to do:** The world's top performing school systems have highly effective systems of teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention. (Singapore has a 3 percent annual teacher attrition rate.) Education leaders of these nations report their strategies were developed by drawing on evidence-based programs from U.S. educators and researchers.¹
2. **Remember financial incentives are necessary, but insufficient.** A RAND survey (conducted before the pandemic) found that over 4 in 10 U.S. teachers who recently voluntarily resigned did so because of *stresses and disappointments with their work*, more than double those who reported that their salaries were insufficient.² Studies show recruiting and retaining teachers for high need schools requires a mix of incentives (no one size fits all), better compensation, and a teacher team-based approach to school leadership and turnaround.³
3. **Focus on the working conditions that matter for retention and performance:** When teachers have time to learn with colleagues and opportunities to lead and work with administrators who embrace and know who to utilize them as leaders, they are more likely to stay and their schools improve.⁴ Teachers who work in schools with more professional working conditions are more likely to grow in teaching effectiveness as measured by student achievement, and remain in the profession.⁵
4. **Get serious about preparation.** Researchers have found that teacher education programs with extended clinical training produce more effective teachers who are less likely to leave.⁶ These programs cost more, but states could pay for them with the savings accrued from lowering the high cost of turnover. Teacher candidates who are hired into the same school type as their student teaching (or internship) placement are more likely to remain in teaching.⁷
5. **Address the mismatch of supply and demand.** Over the last decade, teacher education enrollments have dropped precipitously, and shortages are rampant.⁸ One reason is that the average teacher education student graduates with \$20,000 to \$50,000 of college debt.⁹ Because of pressures to increase enrollments, university-based preparation programs often produce teachers in fields not needed.¹⁰ State policies may be encouraging duplication among universities, undermining cost-efficiencies and effectiveness.¹¹

A note on pandemic-induced schooling: Research on the teacher experience.

- Teachers are stressed, working 25 percent more hours (on average), and are far more concerned about their students' social-emotional and mental health learning loss than just academic drop-offs caused by the disruptions in schooling.
- Teachers report they have received vast majority of support from their teaching colleagues; and have not found their school systems, universities, and state education agencies helpful.
- The vast majority of teachers report discovering innovations in teaching, curriculum, parent engagement and more — yet their administrators have underutilized their expertise.¹²

Big Takeaway: *Addressing teaching quality and shortages in the future requires developing an educator development system. It also means going beyond the “1 teacher per 1 classroom with 30 students” strategy.*

Investments in teaching will pay dividends in student learning gains and lowering the high cost of replacing teachers (at \$20,000 each). *It also means collecting more comprehensive data on teacher and school leader development to inform evidence-based policies and practices that improve student outcomes.*

Endnotes

¹ Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Empowered Educators: How top performing nations shape teaching quality around the world.

² Diliberti, M. K., Schwartz, H. L., and Grant, D. (2021). Stress Topped the Reasons Why Public School Teachers Quit, Even Before COVID-19. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1121-2.html.

³ Berry, B. (2008). Staffing high-needs schools: Insights from the nation’s best teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(10), 766-771. Retrieved from <http://pdk.sagepub.com/content/89/10/766.full.pdf+html>

⁴ Berry, B., Bastian, K. C., Darling-Hammond, L., & Kini, T. (2021). How teaching and learning conditions affect teacher retention and school performance in North Carolina. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Leandro_Teacher_Working_Conditions_BRIEF.pdf

⁵ Kraft, M., & Papay, J. (2015, May 28). Developing workplaces where teachers stay, improve, and succeed [Blog post].

<http://www.shankerinstitute.org/blog/developing-workplaces-where-teachers-stay-improve-and-succeed>; Kraft, M., & Papay, J. (2014). Can professional environments in schools promote teacher development? Explaining heterogeneity in returns to teaching experience. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(4), 476–500.

⁶ Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & May, H. (2014). *What are the effects of teacher education and preparation on beginning teacher attrition?*. Research Report (#RR-82). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

⁷ Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J., Theodald, R. and Goggins, M. (2020). Front End to Back End: Teacher Preparation, Workforce Entry, and Attrition. Calder. Working Paper No. 246-1220. Retrieved <https://caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/WP%20246-1220.pdf>

⁸ DiNapoli, M. (2021). Eroding Opportunity: COVID-19’s Toll on Student Access to Well-Prepared and Diverse Teachers. Learning Policy Institute Retrieved from <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/covid-eroding-opportunity-student-access-prepared-diverse-teachers>

⁹ Fiddimann, B. (2019). Student Debt: An Overlooked Barrier to Increasing Teacher Diversity. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/reports/2019/07/09/471850/student-debt-overlooked-barrier-increasing-teacher-diversity/>

¹⁰ National Research Council (1992). *Teacher Supply, Demand, and Quality: Policy Issues, Models, and Data Bases*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/2040>; Berry, B. (2005). The future of teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56(3), 272-279; Pennington-McVay, K. and Trinidad, J. (2019). Nuance in the Noise: The Complex Reality of Teacher Shortages. Bellwether Associates. Retrieved from https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/Nuance%20In%20The%20Noise_Bellwether.pdf

¹¹ Berry, B. (forthcoming). Whole child policy analysis in South Carolina: Gaps and opportunities. Columbia South Carolina: ALL4SC

¹² Berry, B. et al. (2020). Teachers and Teaching in the Midst of a Pandemic: Implications for South Carolina’s Policy Leaders. Research commissioned by The SC Education Association, the Palmetto Teachers Association, and the SC Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/yynybmxm>; Inverness Institute (2021). Teachers reflect on a year of learning under covid. EdSource. Retrieved from <https://edsources.org/2021/teachers-reflect-on-a-year-of-learning-under-covid-california-teacher-consultant-response-network/648206>;

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