



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

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Teacher Transfer and Turnover

At A Glance

Studies indicate that as many as 20 percent of teachers nationwide leave the profession after three years and close to 30 percent leave after five years. This research capsule examines the characteristics of teachers who move or leave and the types of schools they are most likely to leave. Findings on the impact of financial compensation on turnover rates, as well as policy recommendations for reducing teacher turnover, are also included. Finally, teacher retention in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), the district's beginning teacher induction program, and financial incentives offered to M-DCPS teachers are summarized.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS WHO REMAIN VERSUS THOSE WHO LEAVE OR MOVE

Studies indicate that as many as 20 percent of new teachers leave the teaching profession after three years and close to 30 percent leave after five years. Fifty percent of teachers leave their initial assignment, but not necessarily the teaching profession itself, in the first five years of their career. Research has shown that teachers who transfer to other schools or leave the teaching profession share certain characteristics.

Teaching Experience. There is strong evidence that teacher turnover is highest among beginning teachers. The likelihood of a teacher moving or leaving declines significantly after he or she has been in the classroom for four to five years. Attrition rates increase again after 25 to 30 years in the profession, as retirement age approaches. Studies conducted across the United States have corroborated this U-shaped pattern of attrition, with teachers in their middle years staying at the highest rates and those in their early and late years leaving at higher rates.

Teacher Age When Entering the Profession. Several studies have found that those who entered teaching at a more mature age were less likely to leave than those who began teaching when they were younger.

Teacher Ethnicity. Findings on the influence of teacher ethnicity on turnover have been mixed. National turnover rates are very similar for Black, Hispanic, and White teachers; however, one study found that Black teachers were significantly less likely than White teachers to leave the profession, but much more likely to transfer among districts.

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Teacher Gender. Studies have found that male and female teacher turnover rates are similar, but the reasons they provide for leaving the profession are different. The exit pattern for males is more consistent with the traditional job search model and males who leave teaching are much more likely than women to be reemployed. Females are more likely to cite pregnancy and child rearing as reasons for leaving the profession.

Teacher Subject Area. Most researchers have concluded that teacher turnover is strongly affected by academic field. Differences in attrition rates between academic areas have been attributed to the fact that the fields of math and science offer more attractive earning opportunities outside of teaching than other subject areas.

Teacher Qualifications. Studies have found that those teaching in a field in which they were certified were less likely to leave the profession than those teaching in a field in which they were not certified. Non-certified teachers also transferred to other schools or districts at higher rates. The research also offers some evidence that teachers with higher test scores (such as SAT and ACT) are more likely to leave teaching. Findings on the influence of academic degree attained on turnover have been inconclusive.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS THAT TEACHERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO LEAVE

Working conditions play a large role in teachers' decisions to change schools or leave the profession and are strong predictors of turnover. Research indicates that the schools teachers are most likely to leave share certain characteristics.

High Poverty Schools. Nationally, teacher turnover is 50 percent higher in high poverty schools than in more affluent schools. One study found that 20 percent of teachers in high poverty schools have three or less years of teaching experience, compared with 11 percent in low poverty schools.

Minority Student Populations. Research has shown that schools serving a larger proportion of minority students retain fewer teachers.

Low Performing Students. Most studies have found that teacher turnover is greater in schools with low student achievement. Research also indicates that the qualifications of teachers in schools with low performing students tend to be inferior to the qualifications of teachers in other schools.

Although studies suggest that teacher turnover is greater in schools with relatively high proportions of low-income, minority, and low performing students, researchers have determined that school working conditions and student characteristics are often highly correlated. Therefore, teachers may choose not to work with low-income, minority, low performing students because of the poor working conditions often associated with the schools these students attend.

Urban Schools. Studies of teacher turnover in urban schools have produced mixed results. Several studies have found that urban schools have only slightly higher turnover rates than suburban schools. Other studies have documented that urban teachers exit and transfer at significantly higher rates than teachers at suburban schools.

School Level. Findings on turnover rates by school level have been mixed. Some studies found similar turnover rates at elementary and secondary schools, other studies reported higher turnover rates at the secondary level, and still others found higher turnover rates at elementary schools.

School Size and Class Size. Studies provide limited support for the conclusion that teacher turnover is more frequent in small schools when compared to larger schools. The research on the effect of class size reduction on teacher turnover is inconclusive. Several studies have suggested that class size reduction reduces teacher attrition, but the actual impact reported is very small.

Student Discipline. Research indicates that turnover rates are lower in schools with fewer student discipline problems. One study found that teachers who were dissatisfied with student discipline were twice as likely to leave the classroom.

Administrative Support. Research has shown schools that provide greater administrative support have lower levels of teacher turnover. Studies found that lack of administrative support was frequently a factor in teachers' decisions to transfer to another school or leave the teaching profession.

IMPACT OF FINANCIAL COMPENSATION ON TEACHER RETENTION

Numerous studies have provided strong support for the conclusion that higher compensation increases the rate of teacher retention, but the relationship between teacher turnover and salary is complex. Compensation seems to have a varying

impact on retention, depending on other factors such as teachers' level of experience, qualifications, and job satisfaction. There is also evidence that, in some cases, working conditions may be more important than salary as a factor in teacher turnover.

Studies indicate that relative salary between districts is an important consideration. Raising salaries across-the-board in a district will not reduce transfers if neighboring districts offer higher salaries or similar compensation with better working conditions. Salaries relative to those in other districts have been found to be strongly related to decisions to move from one district to another, but have little impact on teachers' decisions to leave the profession.

While researchers believe that raising salaries can slow transfer and attrition, studies are inconclusive regarding the amount that salaries would need to be increased to significantly reduce turnover rates. Because teachers' decisions to leave the profession or transfer to another school or district are usually influenced by many factors, it has been suggested that raising salaries may not reduce turnover enough to be worth the expense.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RETAINING TEACHERS

There is no single solution for reducing teacher turnover. Studies suggest that salary increases alone are not enough to reduce attrition and mobility. Decision makers must determine which policies are most cost effective and most feasible, given local demographic and labor market considerations and the availability of resources in their state or district. Research indicates that the following measures can help reduce teacher turnover:

Implementation of Induction Programs. Since research has shown that teachers leave the profession at the highest rates in the early years of their teaching careers, induction programs may help increase the retention rates of beginning teachers. Studies have found that teachers who did not participate in induction programs were nearly twice as likely to leave the profession. Although the content of induction programs varies greatly from district to district, most induction programs include features such as orientation, mentoring, and professional development sessions.

Restructuring of Beginning Teachers' Workloads. Schools should find ways to limit the demands placed upon new teachers' time, such as providing them with additional release and planning time or limiting their extracurricular responsibilities. Reduced teacher workloads and close matches between qualifications and teaching assignments also help to support new teachers.

Improvements in the Working Environment. Research has shown that working conditions are an influential factor in teachers' decisions to leave or stay at their school. Schools' administrative staff should be encouraged to provide teachers with strong leadership, include teachers in school-based decision-making, provide teachers with as much autonomy as possible in their classrooms, address safety and discipline issues, and organize schools into small learning communities.

Provision of Financial Incentives. Studies suggest that targeted financial incentives can help reduce teacher turnover. Districts can offer an array of financial incentives, including:

- Bonuses for remaining in the district for a minimum number of years.
- Bonuses or targeted salary increases for teaching in hard-to-staff schools.
- Bonuses or targeted salary increases for teaching in critical demand subject areas.
- Bonuses for acquiring additional skills and knowledge.
- Bonuses for mentoring and assuming leadership responsibilities.
- Stipends for professional development and National Board Certification.
- Housing subsidies that require teachers to remain in the district for a minimum number of years.
- Tuition assistance and forgivable loans, contingent upon teachers remaining in the district for a minimum number of years.
- Enhanced retirement benefits that encourage experienced teachers to remain in the classroom.

Implementation of Enhanced Teacher Preparation Programs. University and college teacher preparation programs should assist candidates in their transition from the role of student to that of teacher by providing them with exposure to a variety of real-life classroom situations. A growing body of evidence indicates that better prepared teachers stay in the profession longer.

ON A LOCAL NOTE

Teacher Retention in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) collects information, by district, on departing teachers, their reasons for leaving the profession, and their future employment plans. A review of the responses from exit interviews with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) teachers who left the district following the 2004-05 school year (the most recent school year for which data are available) follows. The reader is advised to interpret the data with caution. Exit interview responses are not based on a representative sample of those who left the profession. Since completion of the interview is not mandatory, many teachers choose not to participate in the interview process. Additionally, responses are collected at school sites and forwarded directly to the FLDOE. Therefore, the accuracy and validity of responses has not been verified.

According to the Teacher Exit Interview Information provided by the FLDOE, 199 teachers (less than one percent of the workforce) left M-DCPS after the 2004-05 school year. Ninety-one percent of the resignations were voluntary and nine percent were involuntary. As can be seen in Table 1, among those who left teaching voluntarily, relocation and family/personal reasons were selected by the highest percent of respondents as factors in their decision to leave M-DCPS.

Table 1. M-DCPS Teacher Exit Interview Information, 2004-05: Reasons for Voluntary Separation from the District*

Relocation	38.7%
Family/personal reasons	32.6%
Other reasons	17.1%
Retirement	8.3%
Continuing Education	5.5%
Stress on the Job	3.9%
Inadequate Salary	2.8%
Dissatisfaction with Supervisor	1.1%
Resignation in Lieu of Termination	1.1%
Dislike of or Unsuitable for Assigned Duties	0.6%

*Responses do not sum to 100 because respondents were able to select more than one reason for leaving the district.

Exiting teachers were classified according to four broad categories of future employment plans: teaching; employment in education, other than teaching; employment outside of education; and none or not known.

- 25.6 percent of exiting M-DCPS teachers reported they would continue to teach (74.5 percent in another Florida district, 15.7 percent outside of Florida, and 9.8 percent in a nonpublic school).
- 14.6 percent of exiting M-DCPS teachers stated they planned to work in education, but not as a teacher (51.7 percent in another Florida district, 37.9 percent within M-DCPS, and 10.3 percent outside of Florida).
- 15.1 percent of exiting M-DCPS teachers reported they planned to work outside of the field of education (46.7 percent within Miami-Dade County, 33.3 percent in another Florida county, and 20.0 percent outside of Florida).
- 44.7 percent of exiting M-DCPS teachers indicated they had no future employment plans or did not know where they would be employed.

The FLDOE's teacher exit interview data are available online at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/eias/eiaspubs/reports.htm>.

A study of teacher retention in M-DCPS, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, was conducted by the CNA Corporation (a not-for-profit research and analysis institute). The study analyzed the retention patterns of 6,429 M-DCPS secondary teachers at salary steps 10 and below in school years 1990-91 to 2000-01.

In 2000-01, the turnover rate for M-DCPS secondary teachers at salary steps 10 and below was 9.3 percent. When turnover rates were disaggregated by subject area, it was determined that science teachers were more likely to leave the district than math and other secondary teachers and that math teacher turnover was similar to that of other secondary school teachers. Turnover rates were 11.1 percent for science teachers, 8.4 percent for math teachers, and 9.1 percent for teachers of other subject areas.

Consistent with findings of other studies, the researchers determined that M-DCPS turnover rates were highest in the first few years of teaching

and that, by the time teachers reached step 5 on the district's salary schedule, 40 percent of teachers had left the district. Turnover decreased as years of teaching experience increased. Teachers with an undergraduate major in an education-related field and teachers who earned their bachelor's degree from one of three universities within the state (Florida International University, Florida State University, or University of South Florida) had lower turnover rates. Additionally, turnover rates for teachers with master's degrees were higher than for teachers with less educational experience.

From 1990-91 to 2000-01, turnover rates for M-DCPS secondary teachers at salary steps 10 and below increased from 5.3 percent to 9.3 percent. Analysis of turnover rates by subject area indicated that math teachers' turnover rate increased from 3.1 percent to 8.4 percent and science teachers' turnover rate increased from 7.1 percent to 11.1 percent.

After controlling for teacher characteristics, the study's authors concluded that salary increases had only a small effect on retaining teachers. Math teachers appeared to be more responsive to salary increases than other secondary teachers. Further analysis determined that expected earnings for math teachers in non-teaching occupations were approximately 14 percent higher than those for science teachers and approximately 27 percent higher than those for teachers in other subject areas. Based on these findings, the authors suggested that teachers may be more likely to leave the profession when non-teaching occupations offer higher salaries.

The current study found that working conditions, high minority/high poverty student enrollment, and student test scores on state exams did not appear to have an impact on teacher retention rates. Two school characteristics that appeared to have a significant effect on teacher turnover were the number of incidents of crime and violence per student and expenditures on at-risk students. M-DCPS teacher turnover increased when schools' crime and violent incidents and at-risk student expenditures increased.

The full report on M-DCPS teacher retention, authored by Hansen, Lien, Cavalluzzo, and Wenger, and entitled *Relative Pay and Teacher Retention: An Empirical Analysis in a Large Urban District*, can be accessed online at <http://www.cna.org/documents/IPR11020.1.pdf>.

Induction Programs. M-DCPS implements an induction, or beginning teacher, program designed to reduce attrition by providing supportive services to teachers during their first year in the classroom. A three-year induction program, pending School Board approval, is planned for the 2006-07 school year. M-DCPS' Beginning Teacher Program includes the following components:

- **New Teacher Orientation.** A New Teacher Orientation is held each year prior to the opening of schools to provide beginning teachers with information on topics such as M-DCPS' curriculum, instruction, classroom management, fringe benefits, and certification.
- **Mentoring.** All beginning teachers are assigned a Professional Growth Team, consisting of two colleague teachers. The Professional Growth Team provides assistance to new teachers throughout the year and identifies appropriate professional development activities. In addition, retired teachers, curriculum support specialists, and National Board Certified teachers are assigned to mentor new teachers. The following mentoring programs are currently being implemented in the district:
 - **The New Teacher Mentor Program.** The program, funded by a grant from Washington Mutual, in partnership with The Education Fund, assigns retired teachers to serve as mentors at the district's most challenging schools. Mentors provide support to beginning teachers during a nine-week period for one-half day per week. All beginning teachers can request a retired teacher mentor by calling the New Teacher Helpline established by the Office of Professional Development.
 - **New Teacher Center.** As a participating district in a study sponsored by the United States Department of Education and conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, M-DCPS has received five full-time mentors. Each mentor assists 12 to 14 beginning teachers for a minimum of two hours per week.
 - **Project Getting Assistance to Teach Effectively (GATE).** GATE is a mentoring project that is a collaborative effort between the Dade/Monroe Professional Development Partnership, the Office of

Professional Development, and the Division of Special Education. The project assigns mentors to newly hired special education teachers. Last year, 46 special education teachers participated in the project.

- New Educators Support Team (NEST). NEST supports newly hired teachers by providing an opportunity for teacher collaboration and the establishment of professional learning communities. Participants model instructional strategies, share best practices, and receive on-going follow-up support. Participation in the program allows teachers to develop teaching strategies, work on specific areas of concern, and develop action plans to address these areas of concern. NEST sessions are facilitated by National Board Certified teachers and curriculum support specialists. Sessions are held in most feeder pattern schools throughout M-DCPS and are available to all new and early career teachers. Last year, 327 beginning teachers participated in NEST.
- Mentoring by Curriculum Support Specialists. Curriculum support specialists assigned to the Beginning Teacher Program provide mentoring and support to new teachers in Assistance Plus Schools, Zone and Stellar Schools, and schools with large numbers of new teachers. Curriculum support specialists provide professional development, conduct needs assessments, model lessons, and coordinate and assist with reading interventions.
- The New Educator Newsletter. *The New Educator* is a monthly newsletter containing multiple resources for new teachers to access online. The newsletter advertises available training, NEST sessions, and in-services that new teachers are required to attend. A monthly featured article focusing on literacy, educational tips, and a question and answer section are included. The newsletter also promotes the district's New Teacher Helpline and the Florida Department of Education's *Start With Success* Web site. The newsletter can be accessed at <http://prodev.dadeschools.net/Instructional/NewTeacher/default.asp>.
- Beginning Teacher Tool Box. The Beginning Teacher Tool Box provides online resources, such as practical tips, helpful articles, a catalog

of educational resources, an "Ask A Mentor" section, *The New Educator* newsletter, and a discussion forum. The tool box can be accessed at <http://prodev.dadeschools.net/Instructional/NewTeacher/default.asp>.

- Closing of Schools Conference. The conference prepares new teachers for activities that occur during the last month of school. Last year, session topics included effective teaching strategies, classroom management, professional development plans, certification, and student services issues.
- Beginning Teacher Workshops. The Office of Professional Development provides professional development opportunities specifically designed for new teachers. Workshop topics include classroom management, instructional strategies, literacy, technology, and integrated curriculum.

Financial Incentives. The following financial incentives are offered to Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) teachers to help reduce teacher mobility and attrition:

- Teaching at Hard-to-Staff Schools. Teachers who opt to teach at one of M-DCPS' School Improvement Zone schools receive an annual salary that is 20 percent higher than the salary received by teachers at other M-DCPS schools.
- Teaching in Critical Shortage Subject Areas. Teachers working in critical shortage areas receive a stipend of \$1,000 at the end of the school year and are hired to begin at Step 2, instead of Step 1, on the salary schedule. Step 2 is \$171 higher than Step 1 on the 10-month salary schedule and \$205 higher than Step 1 on the 12-month/School Improvement Zone salary schedule.
- National Board Certification. The state of Florida pays 90 percent of teachers' National Board Certification application fee and a \$150 incentive to help defray portfolio preparation costs. Teachers who become National Board Certified receive a one-time payment of \$7,500 from M-DCPS. In addition to the payment from M-DCPS, National Board Certified teachers receive an annual bonus of 10 percent for the life of the certificate (10 years) from the state. The state also pays an additional 10 percent bonus to those who provide the equivalent of 90 hours of approved mentoring services to

teachers who do not hold National Board Certification. The annual bonuses are equal to 10 percent of the previous year's statewide average pay for classroom teachers.

- Tuition Reimbursement. M-DCPS offers teachers tuition reimbursement for educational courses that will lead to an in-field master's degree. The district reimburses teachers for up to nine credits per year. The state of Florida offers reimbursement of undergraduate and graduate educational courses that will lead to certification in a critical teacher shortage subject area. Tuition reimbursement from the state is available for up to nine credits per year.
- Loan Forgiveness. The state of Florida assists teachers in the repayment of undergraduate and graduate educational loans that led to certification in a critical teacher shortage subject area. Awards are available for up to \$2,500 per year to repay undergraduate loans and up to \$5,000 per year to repay graduate loans. Teachers can receive a maximum of \$10,000 for the duration of the program.

SUMMARY

Research suggests that teachers who transfer to other schools or leave the profession share certain characteristics. Turnover is highest among beginning teachers and those who enter teaching at a younger age. Studies indicate that turnover rates are higher among teachers who are not certified in the field in which they teach and some studies have found that attrition is highest in fields that offer more attractive earning opportunities outside of teaching, such as math and science. Turnover rates for male and female teachers appear to be comparable. Studies that have examined differences in turnover rates by ethnic group have not produced consistent findings.

Research indicates that working conditions play a large role in teachers' decisions to change schools or leave the profession. Turnover is greater in high

poverty schools and schools with high percentages of minority and low-performing students. Researchers have recently suggested that many teachers may leave high poverty schools with minority, low-performing students because of the poor working conditions often associated with the schools these students attend.

Researchers have documented the influence of salary on teacher attrition, but the relationship is not a simple one. Financial compensation appears to have a varying impact on teacher retention, depending on other factors such as teachers' years of experience, qualifications, and satisfaction with workplace conditions.

In sum, the data indicate that teachers leave their jobs for a variety of reasons. Researchers have identified policies that may help reduce teacher turnover, including induction programs for beginning teachers, restructuring of beginning teachers' workloads, and the provision of financial incentives to encourage teachers to remain in the classroom. A number of such programs have been developed and established in M-DCPS.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For a detailed discussion of this issue and a listing of references, please refer to the complete report, *Literature Review on Teacher Transfer and Turnover*, available from Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Research Services.