



Overview of Best Practices to Improve Retention

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Topics

Common Factors in Teacher Turnover

Researched Best Practices

- » Working Conditions
- » Professional Development
- » Induction/Mentoring
- » Bonuses/Financial Incentives



Common Factors in Teacher Turnover

Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey

- National data suggest that the most common reason for teacher turnover is *dissatisfaction* with the position or working conditions.¹
 - > This is true for both leavers and movers.
- Within this broad category of *dissatisfaction*, some additional findings emerge:²
 - > **Assessment and Accountability Issues** – especially related to measures
 - > **Administrative Issues** – including intrusions on teaching time, discipline and autonomy
 - > **Teaching Career** – most commonly reported as general dissatisfaction
 - > **Working Conditions** – including class sizes and facilities

¹ Ingersoll, Merrill, Stuckey and Collins, 2018

² Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017



Common Factors in Teacher Turnover cont.

Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey

- National data also suggest that *financial reasons* is a common factor, though less common than *family/personal reasons* and *moving to a different school*.
 - > This *financial reasons* category includes salary and benefits, as well as job security.
- These data also suggest that:
 - > dissatisfaction with facilities and school administration are *particularly* common factors among teachers of color.
 - > concerns about salary are *particularly* common among special education teachers.



Common Factors in Teacher Turnover cont.2

Empirical Research

- Research into observed patterns of turnover support survey data findings especially with respect to working conditions and administrative issues.³
- However, a teacher's plans to leave her assignment may not predict actual turnover as well as one might think.⁴
- Research is somewhat mixed as to whether teachers who choose to leave are more often the more effective or less effective teachers, complicating an understanding of turnover as a challenge.⁵

³ **working conditions:** Horng (2009); Simon & Johnson (2015); Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak (2005); **administrative issues:** Ladd (2009); Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2011); Marinell & Coca (2013); Simon & Johnson (2015)

⁴ Ladd (2009)

⁵ Simon & Johnson (2015); Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2011); Jacob, Vidyarthi, & Carroll (2012)



Researched Best Practices

A Summary of Selected Findings

Common Strategies: Working Conditions

Overview

- Research into working conditions as a factor in teacher retention tend to focus on two topics:
 - > the prevalence of working conditions as a stated reason for turnover
 - > the extent to which measures of working conditions predict actual patterns of turnover
- Though aspects of working conditions can be measured directly (i.e. planning time, quality of facilities, etc.), in practice working conditions are most often measured through a survey collection.
 - > In the latter case, what is measured is the respondent's *perception* of working conditions, rather than the conditions themselves.



Common Strategies: Working Conditions cont.

Overview

» Working conditions may include a variety of distinct dimensions of an educational environment.

> For example, the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey includes eight dimensions:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Use of Time | 5. Teacher Leadership |
| 2. Community Support/Involvement | 6. School Leadership |
| 3. Facilities and Resources | 7. Professional Development |
| 4. Managing Student Conduct | |

» In fact, working conditions is such a broad category that some other factors in retention might reasonably be considered a *specific type* of working condition.

> E.g. professional development, administrative and collegial support, mentoring, etc.



Common Strategies: Working Conditions cont.2

Overview

Though past research has identified turnover as associated with student characteristics, more recent studies find that the working conditions often present in schools serving particular student subgroups are a more powerful factor in turnover than the students themselves.⁶

⁶ Horng (2009); Simon & Johnson (2015); Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak (2005)



Common Strategies: Working Conditions cont.3

Best Practices for Working Conditions

- **Collect Data:** A first step in improving working conditions is understanding what conditions are currently, how teachers feel about them, and how this varies depending on context (i.e. statewide survey).
- **Invest in Leadership Development:** There is some evidence that administrative support is a particularly powerful aspect of working conditions,⁷ and thus a focus on improving school leadership is a common best practice.
- **Promote Collegial Support:** Consistently identified by teachers as an important aspect of working conditions, creating formal structures to promote inclusive and collaborative environments, and a shared mission is also a common best practice.⁸

⁷ Ladd (2009); Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2011); Marinell & Coca (2013); Simon & Johnson (2015)

⁸ Simon & Johnson (2015)



Common Strategies: Professional Development

Overview

- The supports a teacher receives to grow in her capacity as an instructor and advance on a career path have been found to be a factor in turnover.⁹
- While “professional development” typically is thought to include formal training, in this context, we will also include career advancement (e.g. teacher leadership). What is not included here (and addressed separately) are induction and mentoring programs.
- While some evidence does exist, in general the precise qualities of effective professional development are not yet understood beyond some basic features.¹⁰

⁹ Teach Plus (2014); Headden (2014); Coggshall, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Drill (2011)

¹⁰ Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017)

Common Strategies: Professional Development cont.

Best Practices for Professional Development

Teacher Leadership: Establishing a career advancement path through teacher leadership is a common approach to improving retention, as well as other goals such as improving achievement and extending the positive influence of effective teachers to students and their peers.¹¹

¹¹ Teach Plus (2014); Coggshall, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Drill (2011); Coggins & McGovern (2014); Hassel & Hassel (2009)



Common Strategies: Professional Development cont.2

Best Practices for Professional Development

Features of Strong Professional Development: Some previous studies collectively point to common features¹² of strong professional development programs, including:

- Content focused
- Active learning
- Job-embedded context
- Models and modeling
- Coaching and expert support
- Feedback and reflection opportunities
- Sustained duration

¹² Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017)



Common Strategies: Induction/Mentoring

Overview

- Induction and mentoring is a special case of professional development that research has found can positively impact retention.¹³
- This is not the case for all induction/mentoring, however. The quality of the program is often found to be critical.¹⁴
- In addition to being a strategy for improving retention, a strong induction program may also support improvements in recruitment.¹⁵

¹³ Headden (2014); Ingersoll & Strong (2011); Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas (2016)

¹⁴ Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas (2016)

¹⁵ Guha, Hylar, & Darling-Hammond (2016)



Common Strategies: Induction/Mentoring cont.

Best Practices for Mentoring

» **High-Quality Mentoring:** The characteristics of a high-quality mentoring program identified by research¹⁶ include especially:

1. Mentor in same subject area
2. Common planning time with like-subject peers
3. Regular collaboration with other teachers
1. Formal training for mentors
2. Opportunities for mentors to observe and coach in the classroom

» **Teacher Residencies:** Residencies are a particular type of induction program which bridges pre-service to in-service development and have been found to improve retention. This improvement is thought to result from a combination of program quality, a commitment by residents to teach for a specific time period in return for financial support, and the inclusion of induction support for the first two years of teaching.¹⁷

¹⁶ Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas (2016)

¹⁷ Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond (2016)

Common Strategies: Bonuses/Financial Incentives

Overview

- Though compensation is often cited as a strategy for improving retention, the evidence for this strategy is mixed and has evolved over time.
- The use of financial incentives to improve retention tend to be most effective when targeted to very specific, and narrow goals.¹⁸
 - E.g. Retention of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects, retention of particular teacher subgroups, retention to hard-to-staff schools.
- In general, increasing compensation across the board has not been found to be especially effective in improving retention.

¹⁸ Cowan, Goldhaber, Hayes, & Theobald (2016)



Common Strategies: Bonuses/Financial Incentives cont.

Best Practices for Bonuses/Financial Incentives

- **Targeted Bonuses:** Some evidence exists to support the use of bonuses to improve retention to hard-to-staff schools and subject areas. For example, this includes targeting STEM and special education assignments and schools with high-needs student populations.¹⁹
- **Targeting Retention of Highly Effective Teachers:** Retaining effective teachers and turning over ineffective teachers is thought to improve achievement overall. Recent studies suggest the strategy of using an incentive pay structure based on performance to turnover ineffective teachers and replace them with (and subsequently retain) more effective teachers may have merit.²⁰

¹⁹ Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, (2011); Cowan, Goldhaber, Hayes, & Theobald (2016); Feng & Sass (2015)

²⁰ James & Wyckoff (2019)



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