

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

HOW RESEARCH CAN INFORM EFFORTS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS

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Politicians, policy analysts, professors of education, and practitioners agree that U.S. schools face a serious challenge as they seek highly qualified teachers. In the next 10 years, the nation will experience at least 2 million faculty openings in elementary and secondary education. Research can inform the policies and practices that will be put into place to address the problem. This article highlights studies that describe the contours of the teacher shortage and reviews research about strategies that have been applied to rectify the situation. Finally, it previews forthcoming studies that will shed new light on the issue.

THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

The United States Department of Education has estimated that by the year 2008, 2.2 million new teachers will have entered the nation's classrooms (O'Keefe, 1999). The shortage, however, is not uniform; variations exist according to geography, grade level, sector, and subject. The maldistribution of qualified teachers is perhaps the most serious staffing issue the nation faces (Yasin, 1999). According to a recent survey of the membership of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators, the need is greatest for special education teachers, technology teachers, minority teachers, school administrators, math teachers, science teachers, foreign language teachers, psychologists, male elementary teachers, and school-based health care professionals (Tonnsen, 1999). A disproportionate percentage of teachers in all districts are female (74%) and White (87%), whereas only half of the student population is female and 65% are White (Yasin, 1999). Staffing problems are especially acute in urban and rural areas, which have the highest concentrations of children in poverty. For example, in a sample of large urban districts (Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., Council of the Great City

Schools & Council of the Great City Colleges of Education, 2000b) shortages prompted 82.5% of the respondents to allow noncredentialed teachers to teach in their district under emergency provisions. Nearly all reported an immediate demand for science teachers (97%), math teachers (95%), and people trained in special education (95%). Three-quarters of the districts reported an immediate demand for teachers of color. In an investigation of the reasons why people of color eschew the teaching profession, Wilder (1999) cited a diminished role of historically Black colleges, culturally biased teacher-competency tests, low status, behavior problems among students, and low salaries.

Low salaries do indeed account for much of the problem. U.S. teachers receive less remuneration than their colleagues in other comparable countries (Wilgoren, 2001). An equally important and related factor is professional esteem; in a transnational study of teacher attrition, Macdonald (1999), speaking of the U.S. situation, cited as central the "elusive notion of increasing the status of the teaching profession" (p. 846).

For public schools, the teacher shortage is problematic; for private schools, it is potentially disastrous. According to the last School and Staffing Survey in 1994, new hires in public schools account for 8.5% of teachers whereas the comparable private-school figure was 16.7%. Other notable public-private comparisons are as follows: Sixteen percent of public-school hires were people of color; the comparable private-school figure was 7.4%. The annual base-year salary for public school hires was \$27,455, and in private schools it was \$17,236. Among the hires in public schools, 70% had an academic major and certification in their teaching area; the figure was 41.8% for private schools (Broughman, & Rollefson, 2000).

With a higher turnover rate and lower salaries, it is surprising that private schools do as well as they do. The answer is found in federal studies that indicate a higher level of satisfaction among private-school teachers than their public-school colleagues (Perie & Baker, 1997). Principals in private schools report higher morale and less absenteeism among teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In a recent government report one reads:

Public school teachers were consistently less likely than peers in private schools to agree that the principals in their schools took the following actions: communicated expectations to staff, was supportive and encouraging, recognized staff for a job well done, and talked with them about instructional practices. Other national data that suggest differences between leadership in public and private schools are likely to relate to structural variations in public and private school governance systems. (Mayer, Mullens, & Moore, 2000, p. 39)

The advantages that private schools enjoy may be diminishing. Charter schools present new opportunities to work in a “personalized teaching setting,” but with salaries comparable to public schools. Also, many states are relaxing once-rigid certification requirements, which gave private schools the advantage of being the only possible employer of promising candidates with no formal teacher training or licensure. Given the supply-and-demand of the job market, most states have become much more flexible about licensure (Gewertz, 2001).

Across private-school sectors, the staffing pinch is being felt. For example, at the Association of Christian Schools International, for the 469 openings posted in April 2001, only 33 teachers posted resumes. In 1995, the clearinghouse posted 152 resumes for 143 postings (Gewertz, 2001). Catholic diocesan superintendents also feel the effects of the teacher shortage. According to a recent survey (O’Keefe, 2001), 94% of the respondents reported a shortage, which was acute in several cases. Dioceses experience the greatest shortage in urban and rural areas and in the disciplines of math, natural science, computer science, and Spanish. Moreover, many of the new hires were unfamiliar with Catholic education—few attended Catholic schools themselves and even fewer had experienced Catholic higher education. Another unique feature of the teacher shortage in the Catholic sector is the dearth of highly qualified religion teachers at the secondary level (Cook, 2001; Cook & Fraynd, 1999) or elementary level (Galletto, 2000).

RESPONSES TO THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

Reflecting the broader education world, Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (2000a) considers the following strategies most effective for recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers:

- signing bonuses
- help with housing
- higher starting salaries
- recruiting from afar
- recruiting teachers early in the school year
- incentives for advancement
- rewards for experienced teachers
- school-based “grow your own” programs
- teacher cadet programs
- tapping qualified substitutes
- luring retired teachers back
- offering child care
- creating effective internet database of candidates and resumes
- assisting non-certified teachers in their preparation for licensure examinations

Martin and Kragler (1999) stress the importance of giving teachers time during the day to collaborate with peers and mentors. They also recommend giving teachers a determinative role in their professional development. Pricola (2001) offers for consideration successful programs of signing bonuses, gift certificates and coupons from local merchants, college tuition remission for those who teach three years after the bachelor's degree, and payment of teachers to attend professional development activities. Hardey (1999) highlights the recruitment advantage of schools that have strong partnerships with local universities. McMahon (1999) suggests that schools make special efforts to hire unemployed PhDs, whose number is increasing. Love and Rowland (1999) point to the importance of mentorship in retaining novices and report that the number of states with a policy for mentoring grew from 8 in 1984 to 32 in 1995. Archer (2001) tracked the increase in U.S. schools that recruit internationally.

Finally, a study about urban schools commissioned by the Council of Great City Schools (Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., 2000a), reports that the following strategies are most successful:

- special recruitment efforts at local colleges and universities
- recruitment at historically Black or Hispanic colleges
- international recruitment efforts
- waiver of licensure requirements
- particular school placement guarantees
- on-the-spot contracts
- effective induction and support programs
- assistance with alternative certification routes

FORTHCOMING STUDIES ABOUT TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Several forthcoming federal research projects will provide the Catholic-education community with important data about teacher recruitment and retention.

The Private School Universe Survey (PSS) collects basic data from all private schools every two years. Data were collected in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. One can track the number of students and the number of teachers over time, thus yielding per-pupil ratios. PSS data can be compared to the annual studies of U.S. public schools (i.e., Core of Common Data).

The School and Staffing Survey (SASS) provides much richer information than PSS. Using an elaborate sampling frame, the National Center for Education Statistics sent an in-depth survey to 14,697 schools (9,893 public, 3,558 private, 1,122 charter, and 124 Indian). The instrument gathered data on the following teacher variables:

- basic demographic information
- teaching assignment
- grades taught
- salary and benefits
- teacher qualifications
- academic degrees
- teaching experience
- certification and licensure
- professional development
- early teaching experience
- adequacy of pre-service preparation
- preparation for handling classroom situations
- participation in teacher induction programs
- first-year assignment
- mentoring received
- job satisfaction
- level of support
- influence in school matters
- school safety
- student behavior

Of greatest use is the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). During the 2000-2001 school year, the survey was sent to a representative sample of teachers who completed SASS in the 1999-2000 school year. One form of the instrument was sent to those who stayed in their teaching position from the 1999-2000 academic year to the 2000-2001 academic year. TFS gathered the following information from those who stayed:

- full or part-time status
- assignments other than classroom teaching
- degrees and certification
- salary and benefits
- job security
- physical plant
- safety of neighborhood
- safety within the school
- student behavior
- student motivation to learn
- school's emphasis on academic success
- parental support
- community support
- satisfactory procedures for evaluation
- satisfactory procedures for assigning students
- class size
- satisfaction with grade level
- satisfaction with discipline

- doable workload
- influence over practices and policies
- autonomy and control over own classroom
- access to supplies
- access to technology
- preparation time
- professional caliber of colleagues
- opportunities for collaboration with colleagues
- uninterrupted class time
- mainstreaming special-needs students
- opportunities for professional advancement
- opportunities for professional development
- quality of professional development activities
- supportive and encouraging administrators
- shared beliefs among colleagues
- cooperative effort
- opportunities to learn technology
- assessment of administrators
- communication of respect
- help with attaining curriculum standards and assistance with instructional modification
- encouragement of professional collaboration
- encouragement of collaborative work with teachers to solve school problems
- encouragement of teaching staff to use student evaluations
- development of broad agreement over the school's mission
- facilitation of professional development
- backup when the teacher enforces rules of student conduct

Those who left their teaching job were asked many of the same questions as their colleagues who stayed. In addition, members of this group were asked if they left because of change of residence, family obligations, health, regular retirement, early retirement incentive, or sabbatical. TFS asked leavers about the source of disgruntlement: better salary and benefits elsewhere, little community support for the school, dissatisfactory job description and responsibilities, disagreement with changes in job description and responsibilities, or disagreement with new reform measures. Finally, TFS asked the leavers who still work to describe their new jobs.

Research can inform the policies and practices that will be put into place to address the teacher shortage. The completed studies referenced in the first two sections of this article provide policy makers and practitioners a range of strategies that work. The federal studies described in the third section of the article will be especially helpful to Catholic educators. The teacher shortage is upon us; PSS, SASS, and TFS will provide a comparative national overview of numbers of teachers and their distribution. Without a doubt, decent salaries and benefits are the major factors for success in the competi-

tive teacher job market; SASS will provide the Catholic community with solid comparable data. As important as salaries and benefits are, other factors contribute significantly to teacher satisfaction. Satisfied teachers experience respect, esteem, and collegiality; their workplace provides a setting in which they can live out a meaningful vocation. PSS, SASS, and TFS will help Catholic educators understand these dynamics by describing the Catholic-school workplace today in comparison to a decade ago and in comparison with other school sectors, such as charter schools, with whom there will be increased competition for qualified staff.

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