

B. Compensation for teachers of hard-to-fill subjects and teachers in hard-to-staff schools

Does evidence suggest that additional compensation alone is sufficient to attract and keep good teachers in high-need schools? If not, what other changes does the research suggest are needed to solve staffing shortages?

There is a large literature showing that teacher turnover is affected by both pay and working conditions (see for example Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Kirby, Naftel, & Berends, 1999; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Scafidi, Sjodquist, & Stinebrickner, 2002; Winter & Melloy, 2005). There is also some evidence that suggests that higher pay might contribute to improving teacher recruitment and retention in high-need schools (Clotfelter et al., 2006; Guarino et al., 2004). However, it is not clear whether higher pay or better working conditions is the more cost-efficient way to achieve these aims. Some evidence suggests that the amount of additional pay that would be needed to attract and retain teachers in schools that teachers consider less desirable – with no concurrent change in working conditions – would likely be cost-prohibitive for most school districts (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004).

A number of studies conclude that a range of circumstances and conditions, which include but are not limited to added pay, must be in place to attract and keep good teachers in high-need schools (see Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005 for a review; see also Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004).

Without these conditions, teachers tend to seek schools with higher levels of student achievement and more advantaged students (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). These also tend to be schools with lower concentrations of minority students (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004).

In general, when considering whether to select positions in chronically hard-to-staff schools, teachers look for effective and supportive administration, favorable working conditions (including adequate resources), and like-minded colleagues with whom they can share practices (Koppich, Humphrey, & Hough, 2007). These conditions become increasingly important when considering urban schools that serve low-income students. The majority of hard-to-staff positions are concentrated in these schools, which have nearly twice the annual teacher turnover (19 percent versus 11 percent) as large suburban schools that serve fewer low-income students (Ingersoll, 2002).

Some research suggests that one of the most important factors that teachers consider is the quality of school leadership (Koppich, Humphrey, & Hough, 2007; Prince, 2007). Schools with weak or unsupportive principals

have difficulty attracting high-quality teachers and even more difficulty retaining them. In one study of teacher recruitment, would-be teachers in three teacher training institutions rated a supportive principal as the factor that would most likely influence their decision to apply for or accept various teaching positions in an urban district (Milanowski et al., 2007). In a study of teacher turnover in New York City schools, Boyd et al. (2009) found that both current and former teachers cited dissatisfaction with administrative support as the most important factor influencing their decision to leave the school where they taught.

In addition to school leadership, working conditions are important. Hard-to-staff schools are more likely than less challenging schools to offer poor professional conditions. Inadequate physical facilities and insufficient resources (including textbooks and supplies) contribute to these schools' difficulty in retaining quality teachers.

Professional culture is a critical factor that teachers consider as well. Teachers seek schools at which they can exercise reasonable professional autonomy and share practice and ideas with colleagues. In addition, the general school atmosphere, as influenced by student behavior and discipline, contributes to teachers' decisions to select or remain at a high-needs school (Futernick, 2007; Kelly, 2004; Koppich, Humphrey, & Hough, 2007).

The challenge of ensuring good teachers in high-needs schools is compounded by the high incidence of inexperienced teachers assigned to these locations. When experienced teachers do not move to the most challenging assignments, less experienced (often brand new) teachers are assigned there. Even when circumstances are ideal, novice teachers benefit from well-designed mentoring and induction programs to learn their craft. This is even more important when beginning teachers are assigned to high-needs schools. Yet research suggests that the kinds of institutional resources that are required to implement supportive induction and mentoring programs are often absent in challenging schools. Thus, inexperienced teachers in high-needs schools are forced to learn to teach in environments that would challenge even their most experienced colleagues (Kelly, 2004; Johnson et al., 2004).

In sum, pay does matter, though research is inconclusive on the precise rate of added pay that will influence teachers' choice of school.

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