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Recruiting, Retaining, and Fairly Compensating Our Teachers

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Abstract
This article examines three interlinked problems facing public schools today: how to recruit, retain, and pay our teachers. The article begins with an overview of the current situation in the United States, paying particular attention to schools in areas where minorities are the majority. It goes on to examine some of the causes of teacher attrition, with a special section on charter schools, which have a unique set of problems. Finally, it looks at the effects of in-school policies such as teacher pre-service and in-service programs, and then discusses several successful programs around the country, including the TAP model and the Missouri Career Ladder.

Keywords: Recruitment, retainment, fair compensation, teacher pre-service and in-service programs

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Staffing Schools with Committed and Competent Teachers

In order for school reform in the United States to be successful, we must recruit, train, retrain, and fairly compensate teachers. School districts are continually engaged in the complementary processes of recruiting and retaining teachers. The current economic downturn, however, has forced many states to make painful reductions in their public education expenditures—which in turn impact the ability of school districts to hire and sometimes to retain high-quality teachers. It makes sense, then, for districts that are able to hire to proceed with the most prudent polices available that relate to teacher recruitment, and to implement effective strategies to retain excellent teachers.

We will first take an overview of the teacher attrition situation, and look at some of the root causes of attrition and the problems associated with retention, before turning to programs that have proved successful in retaining teachers.

Teacher Entry, Mobility, and Attrition

The highest proportion of new teachers in any given year is female, with white women accounting for higher numbers than women in ethnic minority groups. There is evidence, however, that in the early 1990s the number of new minority educators increased. At the same time, college students graduating with high academic achievements are less likely to enter teaching than other graduates. Teachers, both those in their early years of teaching and those nearing retirement, show a similar trend in high turnover and drop-out rates, producing a pattern related to age or experience. Higher attrition rates have been noted in whites and females in the fields of science and mathematics, and in those who have higher measured academic ability.

Location of teaching position also impacts mobility and attrition rates. Most studies demonstrate that suburban and rural school districts have lower attrition rates than urban districts. Public schools, on average, are found to maintain higher teacher retention rates than private schools. Not surprisingly, higher salaries are associated with lower teacher attrition, while dissatisfaction with salary is associated with higher attrition and a waning commitment to teaching (Guarino et al., 2006).

Compensation and Working Conditions

The patterns discussed above seem to indicate that teachers are seeking increased salaries, greater rewards, and improved working conditions. Educators tend to transfer to other teaching posts – or even to non-teaching posts – that may meet their desired criteria. It is well established that higher compensation results in lower attrition (see, e.g., Borman and Dowling, 2008). These findings lend support to the notion that teacher recruitment and retention is dependent on the desirability of the teaching profession in relation to alternative opportunities. The inherent appeal of teaching depends on the supposition of corresponding "total compensation," this being a comparison of the total reward to be gained from teaching, both extrinsic and intrinsic, with possible rewards determined through other activities.

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Urban schools and schools with high percentages of minority students are harder to staff, and teachers tend to leave these schools when more attractive opportunities become available (Guarino et al., 2006). Lower turnover rates among beginning teachers are found in schools with induction and mentoring programs, and particularly those related to collegial support. Teachers given greater autonomy and administrative support show lower rates of attrition and migration. Better working conditions, intrinsic rewards, and higher salaries remain the most compelling elements of concern to teachers.

Research conducted by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Education examined the compensation process for public school teachers, an element of teacher recruitment and retention that has been relatively ignored for many years (Glazerman et al., 2006). The traditional system, whereby teachers are paid based solely on their years of experience and level of education, has caused many critics to claim that it does not promote good teaching, or is not as fair as other systems that pay based on performance, ability in certain skills, or willingness to teach in areas of high need. Proponents of the traditional system argue that teachers' experience and education are crucial indicators of their performance. To reach an optimum balance, educators and policymakers have created numerous methods for revising how teachers are compensated, each seeking to adjust teacher incentives differently. As the scientific evidence on these methods' effectiveness is extremely limited, it is difficult to choose among them. Historically, implementing any pay reform, let alone directing a critical study of one, can be a demanding issue. A number of ambitious and interesting reforms have folded, often within a few years, under opposing political pressure or from fiscal restrictions. Attempts to study the few surviving reforms have yielded little usable data to date.

Causes of Teacher Attrition

Almost half a million teachers leave their posts each year. Only 16% of this teacher attrition is related to retirement. The remaining 84% is due to transfer of teachers between schools, and teachers who leave the profession all together (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). In New York City alone, more than 5,000 teachers left their posts in 2005. Eight percent transferred to a different school, and 10% moved out of the New York City school system. Current studies are drilling down to better understand the complexities of teacher turnovers. For example, they distinguish between permanent and temporary exits from teaching, and make distinctions among transfers within districts, across districts, and exiting teaching completely (DeAngelis & Preseley, 2007; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Generally, previous research on teacher retention has either dealt with the parallels between the turnover and teachers' characteristics (types of teachers more likely to leave), or between turnover and school characteristics (types of schools affected by greater teacher turnover rates).

According to the report *The Influence of School Administrators on Teacher Retention Decisions Across the United States* (Boyd et al., 2009), when given the opportunity, many teachers choose to leave schools that serve greater percentages of low-income, low-performing, and minority ethnic group students. While this phenomenon has been well documented by substantial research literature, far less research has been put into understanding which specific features of the working conditions in these schools might result in this elevated turnover rate. Extremely high

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teacher turnover rates can be financially draining and are damaging to schools' educational cohesion. Therefore, in an effort to interrupt teacher attrition in schools with high turnover rates, mentoring programs and teacher retention bonuses have been initiated. These initiatives will prove less effective than anticipated at reducing damaging attrition unless schools have a clearer understanding of why teachers leave.

Reasons behind teacher turnover can be highly complex. Rather than lumping all exits from schools into one group, it is more useful to differentiate between those who move to another school district, those who transfer to another school within the district, and those who move to another profession entirely. The 2009 Boyd et al. report endeavored to delve beneath the topography of racial and socioeconomic factors that are usually offered as primary reasons for departure. Issues they looked at included teachers' power and leverage regarding school policy decisions, relationships with the school administration and other staff-members, student behavior, and the state of school facilities.

They found that teacher effectiveness is a high predictor of teacher retention: those whose students perform well are more likely to stay in their jobs. In New York City, for example, first-year teachers from schools that perform at a low level have a 27% attrition rate, as opposed to a 15% attrition rate for those at high-performing schools.

The 2009 Boyd et al. study, which focused on teachers in New York City schools, certainly showed the expected correlations between working conditions and socioeconomic and racial factors. Schools with a higher prevalence of students who qualified for free lunches, for example, tended to have worse reported working conditions. The same was true of schools with higher proportions of Hispanic and African American students. However, when all factors were controlled for by statistically checking for mulitcollinearity, the only highly predictive factor indicating the likelihood of a teacher leaving was perception of the administration. A teacher who had a problem with the administration increased the likelihood that he or she would leave the school by 44%. Another relatively consistent predictor of turnover is found in teacher characteristics and their work experience. Turnover is greater among young and old teachers compared to middle-aged teachers, and among less experienced teachers in comparison to their more experienced peers (Ingersoll, 2001; Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2006). Previous research that links teacher gender, race, or ethnicity to turnover proves less consistent (see Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Teachers' pre-teaching experiences and pathways into teaching also reflect attrition behavior. It appears that, generally, teachers appointed via early-entry routes (e.g., Teach for America and the New York City Teaching Fellows) show a greater tendency to leave posts than teachers entering via more traditional routes (Boyd et. al., 2006).

In the above-mentioned studies, attrition patterns and teacher quality measures have been shown to be linked, but not consistently. Teachers with stronger qualifications as measured by self-test scores, and who received their degrees from an undergraduate institution with a strong reputation, show increased tendency to leave teaching (Boyd et al., 2005). Teachers who are measured as more effective by their

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students' test score gains show less likelihood of leaving teaching (Boyd et al., 2007; Goldhaber, Gross, & Player, 2007; Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien, & Rivkin, 2005).

Research performed on the interplay between teacher retention and school characteristics has primarily investigated measures relating to the student composition of the school. Schools with greater concentrations of students from low-income groups, non-white and ethnic minority groups, and with low-achieving students are predicted to experience greater teacher turnover rates (Boyd et al., 2005; Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2005).

The relationship between teacher turnover and certain district or school factors is evident in certain state databases. Imazeki (2005), assessing data from Wisconsin, determined that higher teacher retention is directly related to higher salaries. Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak (2005) extrapolated data from California to determine that, although a school's racial makeup and the proportion of low-income students may predict teacher turnover, pay rates and working conditions are clearer factors in forecasting high rates of turnover. These factors include increased class sizes, problems in facilities, multi-track schools, and shortage of textbooks. Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) found that low student test scores in elementary schools were an indicator of low teacher retention from year to year. Their study transcended student make-up by also taking into account measures of school working conditions such as teachers' reports regarding how they interact with their principal, parents, and other teachers. The researchers discovered that school working conditions assist in explaining a great degree of the variability in decisions relating to teacher retention. The researchers used administrative records from over 50,000 teachers, plus survey responses from a sample of teachers and students.

Allensworth et al. took a comprehensive look at the Chicago public school system in 2009. Around a hundred of the schools they looked at showed drastic turnover rates (about a quarter of the teachers left each year). This meant that enormous effort was expended in recruiting and training new teachers. While all of these schools had predominantly African American or Hispanic student populations, the study showed that racial and socioeconomic conditions were by no means the only factors in teacher attrition. Teachers cited teacher-parent relations as a major factor in overall working conditions. A sense that parents were partners in their child's education played a major part in encouraging teacher stability. A second issue was school size, which the study showed to be highly predictive of teacher attrition: smaller schools tended to have lower rates of stability. A supportive administration was another factor cited by teachers who remained in their positions.

Helen Ladd, in a 2009 study, investigated administrative and school-level responses to surveys of school climate data in schools in California and North Carolina. She notes that previous studies had tended to fall into two categories: those that focused on easily quantifiable data such as racial or economic factors, and those that looked at teacher surveys or other ethnographic data in an attempt to understand the underlying causes of teacher attrition. Ladd developed a more highly refined mechanism, based on wider teacher samples and more carefully honed questions, to pinpoint the precise reasons behind the teachers' decisions to leave.

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Ladd's analysis of her results tended to support more recent studies such as those of Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczac (2005), in showing that simple racial demographics are not enough to fully explain teacher attrition. For example, teachers' perceptions of their working conditions are an often-overlooked factor in the mix. She mentions two commonly cited ideas to bolster teacher retention: spreading students from disadvantaged backgrounds more widely throughout the school system, and paying teachers higher salaries. However, based on the results of her teacher surveys, she floats a third option that she feels has not been adequately tested: to work within schools to ameliorate working conditions. Among the issues of most concern to teachers were the lack of teacher empowerment, inadequate school leadership, lack of viable school facilities, and inadequate opportunities for professional development. However, the results of her survey suggest that lack of teacher empowerment is only a factor in teacher attrition at the high school level. On the other hand, teachers' perceptions of school leadership, Ladd found, is highly predictive of the teachers' decisions to remain at that school or seek alternative posts. This, of course, is identical to what the 2009 Boyd et al. report discovered.

Because of the similar conclusions of the Boyd and Ladd studies, and, to a lesser extent, the Allensworth study, suggesting that a negative perception of the school administration is a key factor in the departure of teachers from public schools, it is clear that new studies are warranted to decipher the nature of the detrimental relationships at these schools. In particular, it would be interesting to examine the role of racial and socioeconomic factors in that interplay.

In the spring of 2011, Violet Nichols, a teacher in the Virginia public school system with twenty-one years of experience and a reputation for building relationships with students, was fired for perceived failures to adapt to changing teaching methods. The story gained national attention when the *Washington Post* published an extensive article, looking at all sides of the issue. The performance of Nichols's students was on par with that of other students in the school, and she was highly valued by students and parents, suggesting she, as well as other teachers, are judged by quick glances by the administration that may not offer a complete picture. Nichols is African American; the principal who fired her, Terri Czarniak, is white. Though Nichols filed a racial discrimination case against Czarniak, this was dismissed by the school system. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to place this case in a wider context: how often do racial and socioeconomic factors come into play in cases of this type? Who is being fired, and who is doing the firing?

The Importance of Teacher Quality in the Recruitment and Retention Process

Goldhaber's (2006) work, which reviews education research that dates back to the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966), demonstrates that of all the school-related factors affecting student achievement, the most important is teacher quality. This is confirmed by more recent micro-level findings (Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004), which also suggests that quality varies considerably among teachers. Therefore, there is a great deal of interest in understanding teacher quality and the ways in which it may be affected by the various education policies.

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In an attempt to guarantee a minimal level of teacher quality, a primary screen used by all states is the teacher licensure system (commonly referred to as "teacher certification"). Those wanting to become public school teachers have to meet certain requirements. All states, for example, require teachers to hold a bachelor's degree and have had some training in pedagogy to be licensed to teach. Most also require teachers to have had training in the subject they teach, as well as some type of student teaching experience. Teachers also have to pass background checks and state-mandated tests before they can work in a classroom (Rotherham & Mead, 2004). States deem candidates ineligible to teach if they cannot meet or exceed a "cut score" on a licensure test. Despite the popularity of teacher testing as a policy, there is much uncertainty about using these tests as an indication of quality. In general, licensure is not a guarantee of service quality and there is relatively little empirical work that links teacher test scores to student achievement. The pass/fail cut score for teacher content or other licensure-related exams varies by state and is typically set by expert consensus panels, not by empirical evidence. In the absence of evidence about the relationship between teacher tests and measures of teachers' classroom effectiveness, there is no means of judging the extent to which states' use of these tests allows ineffective teachers into the classroom or screens the potentially effective teachers away from the workforce.

Evidence demonstrates that states face significant tradeoffs when they set particular performance levels as a precondition to becoming a teacher. In spite of testing, many teachers who might not be desirable in the teacher workforce, based on their contribution toward student achievement, nevertheless become eligible based on their test performance. Conversely, many individuals who would be effective teachers become ineligible due to their test performance. This does not necessarily mean that states should not be demanding these tests; they may provide important information for local hiring authorities to assess along with other teacher attributes in making their hiring decisions. However, it does indicate that in the hiring process, there are other factors that should be considered in hiring decision-making process. It is this category of "other factors" that school districts must find ways to tease out, as they hire new teachers and endeavor to retain effective teachers.

Attrition in Charter Schools

Charter schools form an interesting subset in the school system, and attrition rates at these schools may throw some light on the system as a whole. According to Miron and Applegate (2007), while several other studies have researched the reasons teachers seek employment in charter schools, few have actually asked why teachers leave these schools. There are considerable performance differences among charter schools, both among and within states (Gill, Timpane, Ross, & Brewer, 2001). The quality and stability of the teaching force is one factor increasingly viewed as important to charter school success, but research about charter school educators remains limited.

In addition to providing more choice for families, charter schools intend to offer new opportunities to teachers. Teachers are able to assist in inaugurating a new charter school, they can choose to work in one, and often they have the freedom to teach using a method they prefer. The charter concept assumes that managing value conflicts among personnel will be notably reduced when teachers' beliefs and

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interests approximate those of the schools' educational missions. Additionally, charter proponents often use the argument that charter schools encourage teachers to innovate, providing a better match between teachers' preferences and the school's desire to be innovative. Innovation is influenced by teachers' satisfaction with facilities, autonomy, and opportunities for professional development. Literature on organizational innovation strongly suggests that people innovate when they have sufficient resources, appropriate incentives, and professional autonomy (Mintrom, 2000).

Substantive frustration with working conditions, dissatisfaction with salaries and benefits not meeting expectations, and disappointment with the administration and governance are all issues that almost universally contribute to teachers leaving their posts. This erosion of the teaching force each year is an indication that many charter schools will experience difficulty establishing professional learning communities that can propagate a difference in children's education. Consequently, a high rate of teacher attrition in charter schools is one of the greatest barriers to successful charter school reform.

It can be argued that a certain amount of attrition can be positive, as it corrects a mismatch between teacher and school. On average, charter schools' attrition rates are between 20% and 25%; however, for new teachers, the attrition rate is nearer to 40% annually. This extensive attrition is disturbing. School resources (human and financial) are consumed by high attrition that undermines comprehensive staff training programs, and efforts to consolidate effective, stable learning communities. It is likely to undercut the legitimacy of the school as viewed through the parents' eyes.

Age is the primary background characteristic that strongly predicts teacher attrition. In charter schools, younger teachers are more likely to leave than older teachers. There are no significant attrition differences noted between the sexes, or among teachers with various ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The grade level taught is also a strong indicator, with attrition rates being greatest in upper grades, particularly grades 6, 7, 10, and 11. There is a slightly greater chance of special education teachers leaving charter schools than regular education teachers.

Teachers with limited experience are significantly more likely to leave charter schools. Many of these inexperienced teachers are presumed to have moved to teaching jobs in other schools. Certification also carries significance: attrition is higher for non-certified teachers and for those teaching outside their certification areas. This factor may be related to pressure on schools from NCLB to ensure that their teaching staffs meet the definition of "highly qualified."

Other prominent teacher attrition factors include teachers' relative satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the school's mission, their perception of the school's ability to attain that mission, and their confidence in the capacity of the assigned school administration to lead the cause of the school's mission. Most teachers who leave are routinely less than satisfied with school curriculum and instruction, available resources and facilities, and salary and benefits.

Proponents of charter schools would be well advised to focus their efforts on reducing teacher attrition, particularly the excessively high turnover of young, new

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teachers. Discrepancies between teachers' expectations for charter schools and those schools' realities should be identified, and strategies for reducing the gaps should be designed and implemented. Strengthening teachers' sense of security should be paramount, as it will increase their overall satisfaction with working conditions, salaries, benefits, administration, and governance.

We have looked at some of the causes of teacher attrition, and showed that the issue is more complex than it is normally perceived to be. Now we'll turn to some policies and programs that have been put in place to alleviate teacher attrition, and evaluate their efficacy.

Pre-service and In-service Teacher Policies

Literature on the influence of pre-service policies on teacher recruitment and retention is limited; however, two important points should command the attention of school districts. One of the recommendations of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) in its report *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* was that teachers be licensed based on demonstration of knowledge and skills. This edict led states and teacher education programs to require teachers to pass a battery of tests before they exited teacher education programs and/or before they were licensed by states. These actions resulted in a reduction of the number of minority students entering and completing teacher education programs. Therefore, school districts seeking a more diverse teaching staff will see a limited number of minority candidates available for recruitment.

A second pre-service teacher policy to which districts should attend is the difference between candidates completing traditional teacher education programs and those completing alternative route programs. According to the Guarino et al. (2006) review of literature, teacher candidates completing alternative-route teacher education programs tend to be older and more diverse. In addition, they tend to have higher retention rates than candidates completing traditional programs. Recruiting teacher candidates from these programs could address both the needs for more diverse teaching staffs and the desire to retain good teachers.

Districts wanting to retain their best teachers should strongly consider what matters to teachers who remain in their teaching positions. Mentoring and induction programs tend to matter to in-service teachers, as do class size, autonomy, and administrative support. It is also interesting to note that state accountability practices impact teachers' decisions to remain in their positions (Guarino et al., 2006). Financial circumstances notwithstanding, districts have control over some of these issues. They should consider publicizing situations favorable to in-service teachers, as a tool for both recruitment and retention. As districts develop their reform agenda, they should put at the forefront a vision for the type of teaching force needed to support their plans for reform, and use empirical studies such as those reviewed by Guarino et al. as a guide to recruit and retain teachers.

Teacher Enhancement Programs That Work

It is often easy to focus on the negative aspects of the educational system, but there are a number of exciting new programs that have produced demonstrable

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changes. One of the most promising of these new initiatives is the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). The TAP's goal is to attract skilled and talented individuals into the teaching profession and retain them by promoting the availability of higher salaries and career advancement without the need to leave their classrooms. The TAP model sets teacher pay and their further advancement to correspond to student achievement growth, noted classroom performance, qualifications in high-demand subjects, and willingness to contribute to mentoring duties. This model also seeks to enhance teacher quality through ongoing professional development and performance accountability.

In the late 1990s, the Milken Family Foundation in Santa Monica, California developed TAP as a comprehensive school reform model. This school-wide program provides teachers with opportunities for enhanced pay for performance (calculated through expert observers and analysis of student test data) and future career advancement with related pay raises and continued professional development, simultaneously holding teachers accountable for student learning. TAP's strategy for recruitment, motivation, and retention of the most effective teachers promoted four principles: Multiple Career Paths, Ongoing Applied Professional Growth, Instructionally Focused Accountability, and Performance-Based Compensation.

The Multiple Career Paths principle offers classroom-based teachers the option to remain "career" teachers, or seek promotion to a mentor or master teacher post. In conjunction with the principal, mentor and master teachers comprise the school leadership team overseeing all TAP activities. Both master and mentor teachers receive enhanced compensation for assuming any additional responsibilities, including supporting professional growth of other teachers and liaising with their principal in order to plan and set achievement goals and teacher evaluation. A competitive, performance-based selection process exists for the promotion to mentor or master teacher posts; the final promotion decision is made by the principal based on input from administrators and a teachers' committee.

Ongoing Applied Professional Growth provides for time to be built into the school week, using TAP, for school-based teacher learning that can address identified student needs. Mentor or master teachers lead weekly "cluster group" meetings for teachers. An individual growth plan with specific goals and activities is determined for each teacher. Mentor and master teachers provide other teachers with ongoing classroom support.

Instructionally Focused Accountability provides certified and multi-trained evaluators to assess each teacher four to six times per year. Teachers are evaluated both individually (based on a given teacher's students' learning growth achievements) and collectively (based on the learning growth of the total number of students in the school).

Performance-Based Compensation allows teachers to earn annual bonuses related to both individual teaching performance (as determined by multiple teacher evaluations), and growth in student achievement. Classroom-level and school-level achievement growth both impact performance pay. Districts are encouraged by TAP to pay competitive rates for teachers working in high-need subjects and schools.

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Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina applied TAP principles to their Pay for Performance pilot program in order to improve student achievement in low-performing schools by rewarding staff based on their attendance, professional development, and student performance. All staff members working in the pilot schools were eligible for participation in the program, and received cash bonuses for reaching certain goals. In the first year (2004–2005), the bonus was contingent on staff members attaining individualized goals for student achievement. Teachers' goals were based on raising student test scores on North Carolina's End of Grade and End of Course testing, in addition to local tests. Non-teaching staff members were assigned goals related to student outcomes in their area of expertise. For example, social workers were expected to reduce dropout rates for their students. If their achievement goals were met, they had the opportunity to earn a bonus of $1,400. They could earn an additional bonus of $600 if they missed four or less days during a school year, and attended at least thirty hours of teacher professional development. An average of 200 certified teachers were paid the bonus in the first year, which amounted to approximately 25% of educators participating in the program. Approximately 50% of these received the student achievement bonus only, and did not qualify for the added attendance/professional development bonus.

Another successful program, the Cincinnati Evaluation and Compensation System, seeks to enhance teacher professionalism and boost student achievement levels by relating teacher pay to teacher skill and performance as measured by classroom observations and teachers' portfolio reviews. Cincinnati has now replaced the traditional teacher salary structure of regular automatic advancements based on teachers' experience and graduate degrees with a system tying promotions to teacher evaluations. The assessments are based on sixteen criteria encompassing four domains: preparation for student learning, creating a suitable environment conducive to learning, instruction for learning, and strict professionalism. To determine the teachers' ratings, evaluation teams review lesson plan portfolios and observe classroom practices. Annual ratings then provide formative guidance to teachers. "Comprehensive" reviews, generally occurring once every five years, grade teachers into one of the five decreed mastery levels, thus determining their salary range.

The program design seeks to replace the uniform salary schedule, tying permanent pay increases to career advancement where this would not be automatic, rather than offering bonuses in an existing seniority-based salary schedule. It also rotates annual and total reviews, which consist of a complete review in all four domains for each teacher. Once the teacher has advanced past the Apprentice level, the review takes place every two to five years. These are "high stakes" reviews to determine a teacher's mastery ranking, and therefore his or her salary range. "Low stakes" annual reviews are conducted in two of the four domains in years when a teacher has no comprehensive review. Annual reviews determine teachers' proficiency and provide them with constructive criticism to further their improvement. Teachers must meet set proficiency standards in order to qualify for experience-based pay step growth within their mastery rankings, independent of student test scores. Teacher performance is assessed by peers, evaluating the extent to which they are following professional pedagogical norms deemed to contribute to student learning.

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The Missouri Career Ladder program is unusual in that it combines teacher performance, tenure, and extra responsibilities to determine monetary incentives. It seeks to enhance student achievement levels by providing opportunities for teachers to earn extra financial rewards for completing increased work and furthering professional development. Eligibility for participation in the program is determined by teachers' noted performance and portfolios. Policymakers anticipate that by incentivizing educators, academic services, programs, and learning opportunities for all students will be improved. The program began in the fall of 2004, with the anticipation that it would be piloted for at least three years.

In theory, teachers advance along the Career Ladder based on their position and progress in classroom performance as rated by observers; in reality, however, the bonuses are directly related to increased responsibilities. Progress in the Career Ladder is determined solely by increased responsibility and the rate at which any extra work is paid. Teachers meeting statewide and district-level performance standards become eligible to receive pay enhancement for Career Ladder responsibilities. This can be in the form of increased work, or involvement in professional development programs. The program does not replace teachers' regular salary schedule. Career Ladder responsibilities must be of an academic nature and directly related to improvement of programs and services for all students.

There are three stages of the Career Ladder, based on years of experience and other criteria. Progression up the Ladder involves teachers being assessed at each stage via periodic observations and evaluations of documentation. Each successive stage offers an opportunity to acquire extra pay enhancements for taking Career Ladder responsibilities. In Stage I, teachers are eligible for up to $1,500; Stage II, $3,000; and, Stage III, $5,000. Out of more than 65,000 teachers in 524 statewide districts in Missouri, over 17,000 teachers (26%) in 333 districts (64%) participated in the Career Ladder program during the 2005–2006 school year. This represents a remarkable inclination toward improvement on the part of the teachers, and demonstrates that a clearly defined, step-based approach can have a dramatic effect on teacher involvement and interest.

Conclusion

An analysis of the literature shows that several issues come to the forefront when looking at the causes of teacher attrition. Teacher quality is clearly an important factor in teacher stability. However, more work needs to be done to understand precisely what goes into creating a stellar teacher who is willing to go the extra mile.

A supportive administration has been shown in study after study to be a key factor in retaining teachers. Teachers who feel they are bullied by their superiors, or who feel that their efforts are undervalued, are much more inclined to leave. More in-depth research into this area is warranted, to tease out the factors involved. As the Violet Nichols story demonstrates, racism, ageism, and a lack of quality observation may all play a part in the teacher-administration relationship. Teacher empowerment is intrinsically related to this issue, and school administrators should ensure that their teachers are given ample opportunities to introduce opinion and participate in the growth of the school.

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Finally, a highly structured environment, such as the Career Ladder system in Missouri, in which teachers are given incentives to improve their teaching and stay in their jobs, has been successful in promoting the retention of teachers. A greater effort on the part of administrations to come up with similar creative endeavors will save time and money in the long run, as well as increasing the quality of education for students.

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CORRECTION STATEMENT

Dr. Mustafa Yunus Eryaman
Editor, International Journal of Progressive Education

Dear Dr. Eryaman,

Sean Lennon and I recently published an article in the journal, International Journal of Progressive Education. It was pointed out to us by another colleague that there was a typographical error in the article. The number "N=167" should have been "N=67." This was published in volume 7, no. 2 in June 2011.

We sincerely apologize for any misunderstanding or misreading this may have caused. We would ask that you publish a correction in your next issue, if possible. If you decide to print the correction, please let us know the date of the issue, so we can keep this for our records.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie Smith
annmsmith@valdosta.edu
Sean Lennon
smlennon@valdosta.edu