



Local Talking Points

Closing the Teacher Gap

February 28, 2005

Teaching has become a revolving door profession, is not supported as a long-term career.

- Teacher retention has become a national crisis.
- The U.S. Department of Education reports that over the next decade, more than two million new teachers will walk into a classroom for their first day. Unfortunately, as the National Center for Education Statistics found, 666,000 of those new teachers will leave sometime during the first three years of teaching and one million of them will not make it past five years.¹
- School staffing problems are primarily due to a “revolving door” – where too many qualified teachers are departing their jobs long before retirement. Attrition rates of this magnitude suggest that pouring money into recruitment efforts without fixing the retention problem is like pouring more water into a leaky bucket. First you have to fix the holes.²

State and local governments will get a bigger bang for their taxpayer’s buck if they confront teacher retention head on.

- The cost of high teacher turnover and attrition rates is enormous. Every year, American schools spend \$2.6 billion on teacher attrition.³
- A recent analysis of the Texas school system estimates that the cost of annual, statewide turnover could be “conservatively set at \$329 million.”⁴
- Studies show that after taking into account the costs to states, universities, and school districts for preparation, recruitment, induction, and replacement due to attrition—the cost of preparing a teacher in the more intensive five-year programs is actually less than

¹ Ingersoll, Richard M. and Thomas M. Smith. “[The Wrong Solution to the Teacher Shortage](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/EL_TheWrongSolution_to_theTeacherShortage.pdf%3e)”. *Educational Leadership*. May 2003. Vol. 60:8. pp. 30-33.

<http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/EL_TheWrongSolution_to_theTeacherShortage.pdf%3e>

² Ibid.

³ Alliance for Excellent Education: “Tapping the Every Child A Graduate: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers.” <<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/TappingThePotential/TappingThePotential.pdf>>

⁴ Texas State Board for Educator Certification, The Cost of Teacher Turnover (2000), <www.sbec.state.tx.us/txbess/turnoverrpt.pdf>.

that of preparing a greater number of teachers in shorter programs who are less likely to stay in the profession and are less successful in the classroom.⁵

Conventional wisdom on teacher shortages is a case of the wrong diagnosis and the wrong prescription.

The wrong diagnosis – Increase demand

- For years, policymakers have acted on the assumption that teacher shortages are caused by an increase in demand through retirement and increased enrollment due to demographic changes.

The wrong prescription – Increase supply

- Logic dictates that increased demand can be met with increased supply. Not surprisingly, billions of dollars have been spent on increasing the supply of teachers through recruitment efforts, instead of solving the *real* reason for teacher shortages.
- Studies show that retirement and increased enrollment account for only a fraction of teacher shortages. Overall, the nation dramatically increased its supply of teachers during the 1990s and generally produces enough teachers to meet each year's new needs.
- Between the end of the 1999-2000 and the beginning of the 2000-2001 school years, about 67,000 teachers retired, accounting for only 24 percent of the 278,000 turnover and only 12 percent of the total turnover of 546,000 during that period. Rather, the data show that the demand for new teachers, and subsequent staffing difficulties, are primarily due to pre-retirement teacher turnover.⁶

The right diagnosis – Teacher retention, not teacher recruitment, is the number one cause of the teacher gap in America.

- As a recent National Governor's Association paper reveals,⁷ "data from a recent survey show that inadequate administrative support, low salaries, student discipline problems, and limited faculty input into school decisionmaking contribute to higher turnover rates.⁸ The converse is also true—teachers with more support from administrators, higher

⁵ Linda Darling-Hammond, *Solving the Dilemmas of Teacher Supply, Demand, and Standards: How We Can Ensure a Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teacher for Every Child* (New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1999), at <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/~teachcomm/conference-99/solving>.

⁶ Ingersoll, Richard M. "Why Do High-Poverty Schools Have Difficulty Staffing their Classrooms with Qualified Teachers?" *Renewing our Schools, Securing our Future, A National Task Force on Public Education. a joint initiative of the Center for American Progress and the Institute for America's Future*. November 2004. <<http://www.americanprogress.org/atf/cf/%7BE9245FE4-9A2B-43C7-A521-5D6FF2E06E03%7D/Ingersoll-FINAL.pdf>>

⁷ "Teacher Supply and Demand: Is There a Shortage?" *NGA Center for Best Practices*. Issue Brief. 25 January 2000. Accessed 28 February 2005. <<http://www.nga.org/cda/files/000125TEACHERS.pdf>>

⁸ Ingersoll, Richard M. "Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools," January 2001. <<http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/Turnover-Ing-01-2001.pdf>>.

salaries, fewer student discipline problems, and higher levels of autonomy and influence over decisionmaking are more likely to stay, regardless of personal or school characteristics, such as age, gender, subject taught, school poverty, or school location.”⁹

- According to a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey of 8,400 public and private school teachers, the main reasons for high teacher turnover and attrition rates are with inadequate administrative support (38 percent) and workplace conditions (32 percent).¹⁰
- Teacher recruitment and other supply-side solutions may not only fail to solve the problem, but could also make it worse if recruitment strategies involve lowering teacher standards, or if the effect of increasing teacher supply is to deflate salaries or erode working conditions.¹¹

The right prescription – We cannot close the achievement gap if we don’t address the teacher gap head on.

- Not surprisingly, increasing salaries and reducing class size are two sure-fire ways to boost retention rates. But, given the fiscal reality of most states, these more costly fixes may not always be feasible.
- Well-crafted and comprehensive induction programs can improve teaching quality, stem high rates of teacher attrition and, in doing so, decrease the overall costs of teacher recruitment and retention.
- Induction goes beyond mentoring to provide an extensive framework of support, professional development and standards-based assessments and evaluations. Comprehensive induction programs vary in their particular design, but essential elements include a high quality mentor program, ongoing professional development, access to an external network of beginning teachers, and standards-based evaluations of beginning teachers and the program itself.¹²
- Research demonstrates that comprehensive induction cuts attrition rates in half and has shown to create a payoff of \$1.37 for every \$1 invested.¹³

Best Practices [as seen in State Progress’ [Just the Facts](#) section]

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ National Center for Education Statistics, “Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000–01.” <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004301.pdf>>

¹¹ Ingersoll, Richard M. “[Why Do High-Poverty Schools Have Difficulty Staffing their Classrooms with Qualified Teachers?](#)”

¹² Wong, Harry. “Significant Research and Readings on Comprehensive Induction.” <http://www.newteacher.com/pdf/Significant_Research_on_Induction.pdf>

¹³ Anthony Villar, *Measuring the Benefits and Costs of Mentor-Based Induction: A Value-Added Assessment of New Teacher Effectiveness Linked to Student Achievement* (Santa Cruz, CA: New Center, 2004).

Some of the most comprehensive and effective induction programs:

[Note: For an in-depth analysis of the domestic best practices below click [here](#) to read the Alliance for Excellent Education's report: *Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers.*]

- *Connecticut:* [Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training \(BEST\)](#)
New teachers in this program are inducted over two or, if needed, three years, after which they present portfolios documenting their teaching as a basis for the award of a provisional license to continue teaching. Teachers are supported with well-trained mentors, content-specific seminars, and, in some districts, “senior advisors” who are released from their normal teaching duties to work intensely with three to five new teachers.
- *California:* Jon Snyder of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future gives an [in-depth analysis](#) of the effects of [California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment \(BTSA\)](#).
- *Louisiana:* [Tangipahoa FIRST](#) – All new teachers in Louisiana are assigned a mentor who guides them through their first years of teaching and prepares them to be assessed by the state. This program is called LaTAAP (Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program). A separate induction program, Louisiana FIRST (Framework for Inducting, Retaining, and Supporting Teachers), provides a variety of supports to new teachers in school districts that apply for and receive state grant money. This case study looks at Tangipahoa Parish, a rural district in Louisiana, to see how induction works in remote areas through both LaTAAP and LaFIRST.
- *Ohio:* [The Toledo Plan](#) – This plan is a cooperative project between the Toledo school district and the Toledo Federation of Teachers. New teachers are considered interns, and are supported by mentors and reviewed as to their effectiveness at the end of their first year. A Board of Review, composed of administrators and teacher leaders, examines the progress of each teacher and decides whether or not to renew his or her contract. The Toledo Plan also identifies poorly performing veteran teachers and provides them mentored support.
- [International Best Practices](#) (Switzerland, Shanghai, New Zealand, Japan, France).

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