

## ***Teacher Attrition: A Costly Loss to the Nation and to the States***

Earlier this summer, bells rang in schools across the nation to mark the end of another academic year. Students and teachers left to enjoy their summer vacations, but for too many teachers, fall will not mark a return to the classrooms in which they taught last year. Every school day, nearly a thousand teachers leave the field of teaching. Another thousand teachers change schools, many in pursuit of better working conditions. And these figures do not include the teachers who retire.<sup>1</sup>

The exit of teachers from the profession and the movement of teachers to better schools are costly phenomena, both for the students, who lose the value of being taught by an experienced teacher, and to the schools and districts, which must recruit and train their replacements.

A conservative national estimate of the cost of replacing public school teachers who have dropped out of the profession is \$2.2 billion a year.<sup>2</sup> If the cost of replacing public school teachers who transfer schools is added, the total reaches \$4.9 billion every year. For individual states, cost estimates range from \$8.5 million in North Dakota to a whopping half a billion dollars for a large state like Texas.

Many analysts believe that the price tag is even higher; hiring costs vary by district and sometimes include signing bonuses, subject matter stipends, and other recruiting costs specific to hard-to-staff schools. Others believe that the cost of the loss in teacher quality and student achievement should also be added to the bill.<sup>3</sup>

There is a growing consensus among researchers and educators that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality of his or her teachers. Therefore, if the national goal of providing an equitable education to children across the nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be concentrated on developing *and retaining* high-quality teachers in every community and at every grade level.

Why is teacher turnover so high? Many assume that retirement is the primary reason for teacher attrition, but when the facts are examined closely, it becomes clear that the number of teachers retiring from the profession is not a leading cause.<sup>4</sup> In an analysis of teacher turnover, teachers reported retirement as a reason for leaving less often than because of job dissatisfaction or to pursue another job.<sup>5</sup>

Among teachers who transferred schools, lack of planning time (65 percent), too heavy a workload (60 percent), problematic student behavior (53 percent), and a lack of influence over school policy (52 percent) were cited as common sources of dissatisfaction.<sup>6</sup>

Many teachers who see no hope for change leave the profession altogether. While it is true that teachers of all ages and in all kinds of schools leave the profession each year, it is also true that

**Secondary School Students  
Need Highly Qualified Teachers**

All students, in all grades, need well-qualified, experienced teachers. But the need is particularly acute in America's middle and high schools.

Nationally, six million students are at high risk of dropping out of school or graduating without the skills they need to succeed in college or the twenty-first-century workforce. In fact, every year more than a million students do not graduate with their peers—with seven thousand students dropping out every single school day.

Only about 30 percent of high school students read proficiently, and more than a quarter read significantly below grade level.

These students need the best teachers possible to raise their achievement and attainment levels—to graduate prepared for further training and education, and to become contributing members of society.

- the rate of attrition is roughly 50 percent higher in poor schools than in wealthier ones;<sup>7</sup> and
- teachers new to the profession are far more likely to leave than are their more experienced counterparts.<sup>8</sup>

Some attrition is inevitable. Some teachers do retire, others leave for personal reasons such as to care for family or children, and a relatively small number are dismissed from their jobs and encouraged to leave the profession. But nearly half of all teachers who enter the field leave it within a mere five years, and the best and brightest teachers are often the first to leave.<sup>9</sup> Why do teachers—particularly those who have taught for only a few years—leave the classrooms they worked so hard to enter? Teachers cite a lack of support and poor working conditions among the primary factors.

Beginning teachers are particularly vulnerable because they are more likely than their more experienced colleagues to be assigned low-performing students. Despite the added challenges that come with teaching children and adolescents with higher needs, most new teachers are given little professional support, feedback, or demonstration of what it takes to help their students succeed.

Nationally, more than six million middle and high school students are at significant risk of dropping out of school. The

reality is that a third of entering ninth-grade students will drop out of high school before attaining a diploma, and another third will graduate unprepared for college or a good job. In our cities, the situation is worse: about half of the high schools in the nation's thirty-five largest cities have severe dropout rates—often as high as 50 percent.<sup>10</sup> Students in high-poverty or high-minority schools are in desperate need of expert, high-quality teachers if their achievement and attainment levels are to improve, yet they are almost twice as likely as other students to have novice teachers.<sup>11</sup>

According to the National Center for Education Statistics' 1999–2000 "Public School Teacher Survey," 47 percent of public school teachers worked with a mentor teacher in the same subject area.<sup>12</sup> Sixty-six percent of teachers who were formally mentored by another teacher reported that it "improved their classroom teaching a lot."<sup>13</sup>

Mentors are an important factor in providing support for new teachers as they enter the real world of the classroom, but mentoring alone is not enough. **Comprehensive induction** proves most effective at keeping good teachers in the classroom. Studies demonstrate that new teacher turnover rates can be cut in half through comprehensive induction—a combination of high-

quality mentoring, professional development and support, scheduled interaction with other teachers in the school and in the larger community, and formal assessments for new teachers during at least their first two years of teaching.<sup>14</sup>

More importantly, classes taught by new teachers working with teacher mentors (who are released from their own teaching assignments in order to work with inductees for two years) are more likely to result in positive academic gains for students.<sup>15</sup> Inducted teachers use teaching practices that improve learning.<sup>16</sup> And the time it takes for new teachers to perform at the same level as an experienced teacher—on average, from three to seven years—can be shortened when the new teacher participates in a comprehensive induction program. One study has shown that the classes of teachers who participated in this type of induction saw comparable achievement gains to classes taught by more experienced teachers.<sup>17</sup>

In the 2004–05 MetLife “Survey of the American Teacher,” new teachers reported being greatly stressed by administrative duties, classroom management, and testing responsibilities, as well as by their relationships (or lack thereof) with parents.<sup>18</sup> Comprehensive induction programs are designed to address the roots of teacher dissatisfaction by providing teachers with the supports and tools they need for success—by guiding their work, further developing their skills to handle the full range of their responsibilities, and evaluating their performance during the first few years of teaching.

Induction also improves the satisfaction and skills of veteran teachers. Experienced teachers serving as mentors or evaluators improve their own teaching practices by observing and coaching beginners. Often teacher coaches find that mentoring provides them new opportunities for career growth and better pay. Through induction, both new and veteran teachers regularly gather to plan instruction. This common planning creates a community of educators committed to raising the performance of their school and district, allowing more teachers input into their work and improving overall working conditions. The benefit of induction to all teachers, new and seasoned alike, should not be underestimated.

Comprehensive induction has shown to more than pay for itself.<sup>19</sup> And yet, across the nation, states spend millions of dollars each year to replace teachers who leave the classroom instead of investing in these programs, which simultaneously retain newer teachers and help them become better, more effective teachers in a shorter time. The loss—to taxpayers, schools, educators, students, and communities—is immense.

<b>State</b>	<b>Total Number of Teachers*</b>	<b>Teachers Leaving the Profession**</b>	<b>Cost Related to Teachers Who Leave the Profession***</b>	<b>Teachers Transferring to Other Schools**</b>	<b>Cost Related to Teachers Who Transfer to Other Schools***</b>	<b>Total Teacher Turnover Cost (Not Including Retirements)</b>
<b>AL</b>	50,577	2,632	<b>\$ 28,969,359</b>	3,815	<b>\$ 41,987,258</b>	<b>\$ 70,956,618</b>
<b>AK</b>	8,318	568	<b>\$ 7,920,331</b>	761	<b>\$ 10,611,317</b>	<b>\$ 18,531,647</b>
<b>AZ</b>	48,088	3,977	<b>\$ 44,026,392</b>	4,009	<b>\$ 44,379,821</b>	<b>\$ 88,406,214</b>
<b>AR</b>	30,191	1,434	<b>\$ 14,361,155</b>	2,369	<b>\$ 23,725,427</b>	<b>\$ 38,086,582</b>
<b>CA</b>	279,945	14,417	<b>\$ 206,213,616</b>	17,444	<b>\$ 249,518,976</b>	<b>\$ 455,732,592</b>
<b>CO</b>	42,345	3,637	<b>\$ 41,635,928</b>	3,050	<b>\$ 34,919,145</b>	<b>\$ 76,555,073</b>
<b>CT</b>	42,122	2,019	<b>\$ 31,359,651</b>	2,315	<b>\$ 35,965,870</b>	<b>\$ 67,325,521</b>
<b>DE</b>	7,528	363	<b>\$ 4,841,971</b>	687	<b>\$ 9,162,186</b>	<b>\$ 14,004,157</b>
<b>DC</b>	5,708	426	<b>\$ 6,017,796</b>	487	<b>\$ 6,871,872</b>	<b>\$ 12,889,668</b>
<b>FL</b>	128,436	7,152	<b>\$ 78,790,723</b>	10,244	<b>\$ 112,854,050</b>	<b>\$ 191,644,774</b>
<b>GA</b>	87,839	6,642	<b>\$ 81,736,892</b>	8,419	<b>\$ 103,609,330</b>	<b>\$ 185,346,221</b>
<b>HI</b>	12,057	1,282	<b>\$ 15,607,820</b>	681	<b>\$ 8,287,407</b>	<b>\$ 23,895,228</b>
<b>ID</b>	14,451	800	<b>\$ 8,530,747</b>	1,360	<b>\$ 14,507,442</b>	<b>\$ 23,038,188</b>
<b>IL</b>	137,204	5,662	<b>\$ 78,961,817</b>	10,405	<b>\$ 145,106,049</b>	<b>\$ 224,067,866</b>
<b>IN</b>	61,135	2,138	<b>\$ 26,843,846</b>	3,781	<b>\$ 47,469,200</b>	<b>\$ 74,313,045</b>
<b>IA</b>	38,116	1,882	<b>\$ 20,144,334</b>	2,804	<b>\$ 30,013,404</b>	<b>\$ 50,157,738</b>
<b>KS</b>	34,134	2,158	<b>\$ 22,649,585</b>	2,732	<b>\$ 28,669,378</b>	<b>\$ 51,318,964</b>
<b>KY</b>	42,842	1,650	<b>\$ 18,010,556</b>	4,080	<b>\$ 44,526,937</b>	<b>\$ 62,537,493</b>
<b>LA</b>	50,806	3,099	<b>\$ 30,776,968</b>	4,638	<b>\$ 46,065,876</b>	<b>\$ 76,842,844</b>
<b>ME</b>	17,508	994	<b>\$ 10,606,424</b>	967	<b>\$ 10,318,166</b>	<b>\$ 20,924,590</b>
<b>MD</b>	54,553	3,378	<b>\$ 44,644,190</b>	5,249	<b>\$ 69,365,028</b>	<b>\$ 114,009,218</b>
<b>MA</b>	78,199	4,011	<b>\$ 56,049,714</b>	4,277	<b>\$ 59,762,606</b>	<b>\$ 115,812,320</b>
<b>MI</b>	100,221	4,558	<b>\$ 67,056,880</b>	7,610	<b>\$ 111,971,866</b>	<b>\$ 179,028,746</b>

<b>MN</b>	57,791	3,315	<b>\$ 39,579,507</b>	4,454	<b>\$ 53,188,209</b>	<b>\$ 92,767,715</b>
<b>MS</b>	33,009	1,935	<b>\$ 18,492,272</b>	2,109	<b>\$ 20,159,747</b>	<b>\$ 38,652,018</b>
<b>MO</b>	64,094	4,036	<b>\$ 43,169,611</b>	6,401	<b>\$ 68,474,496</b>	<b>\$ 111,644,106</b>
<b>MT</b>	11,921	573	<b>\$ 5,525,286</b>	911	<b>\$ 8,780,211</b>	<b>\$ 14,305,497</b>
<b>NE</b>	23,086	1,120	<b>\$ 11,166,635</b>	1,570	<b>\$ 15,654,627</b>	<b>\$ 26,821,262</b>
<b>NV</b>	17,253	1,086	<b>\$ 12,830,603</b>	2,341	<b>\$ 27,660,052</b>	<b>\$ 40,490,655</b>
<b>NH</b>	14,957	645	<b>\$ 7,299,916</b>	903	<b>\$ 10,220,329</b>	<b>\$ 17,520,245</b>
<b>NJ</b>	98,310	4,655	<b>\$ 72,633,486</b>	4,994	<b>\$ 77,928,873</b>	<b>\$ 150,562,359</b>
<b>NM</b>	21,086	1,255	<b>\$ 12,254,139</b>	1,601	<b>\$ 15,632,756</b>	<b>\$ 27,886,896</b>
<b>NY</b>	208,278	13,760	<b>\$ 210,614,387</b>	9,999	<b>\$ 153,046,225</b>	<b>\$ 363,660,611</b>
<b>NC</b>	85,573	7,148	<b>\$ 84,497,347</b>	8,804	<b>\$ 104,067,934</b>	<b>\$ 188,565,281</b>
<b>ND</b>	9,246	398	<b>\$ 3,563,447</b>	554	<b>\$ 4,965,650</b>	<b>\$ 8,529,097</b>
<b>OH</b>	123,370	8,900	<b>\$ 110,627,905</b>	7,708	<b>\$ 95,816,606</b>	<b>\$ 206,444,511</b>
<b>OK</b>	45,739	2,455	<b>\$ 23,047,221</b>	3,542	<b>\$ 33,258,194</b>	<b>\$ 56,305,415</b>
<b>OR</b>	28,361	1,524	<b>\$ 19,354,114</b>	2,140	<b>\$ 27,179,712</b>	<b>\$ 46,533,826</b>
<b>PA</b>	126,915	6,100	<b>\$ 88,432,504</b>	6,233	<b>\$ 90,358,337</b>	<b>\$ 178,790,841</b>
<b>RI</b>	11,582	396	<b>\$ 5,592,175</b>	772	<b>\$ 10,898,365</b>	<b>\$ 16,490,540</b>
<b>SC</b>	43,723	2,822	<b>\$ 30,551,316</b>	4,067	<b>\$ 44,026,758</b>	<b>\$ 74,578,074</b>
<b>SD</b>	11,538	611	<b>\$ 5,328,932</b>	868	<b>\$ 7,569,478</b>	<b>\$ 12,898,410</b>
<b>TN</b>	58,275	2,971	<b>\$ 32,378,057</b>	5,090	<b>\$ 55,472,856</b>	<b>\$ 87,850,913</b>
<b>TX</b>	266,661	19,034	<b>\$ 214,509,448</b>	25,768	<b>\$ 290,407,937</b>	<b>\$ 504,917,385</b>
<b>UT</b>	23,346	1,736	<b>\$ 18,203,284</b>	1,426	<b>\$ 14,944,657</b>	<b>\$ 33,147,941</b>
<b>VT</b>	9,186	593	<b>\$ 6,715,307</b>	510	<b>\$ 5,773,916</b>	<b>\$ 12,489,223</b>
<b>VA</b>	80,987	5,337	<b>\$ 62,031,275</b>	7,319	<b>\$ 85,074,850</b>	<b>\$ 147,106,125</b>
<b>WA</b>	54,573	3,096	<b>\$ 38,120,738</b>	2,996	<b>\$ 36,889,448</b>	<b>\$ 75,010,187</b>

<b>WV</b>	22,552	636	<b>\$ 6,677,984</b>	1,776	<b>\$ 18,649,644</b>	<b>\$ 25,327,629</b>
<b>WI</b>	67,221	2,033	<b>\$ 25,093,968</b>	3,114	<b>\$ 38,448,836</b>	<b>\$ 63,542,804</b>
<b>WY</b>	7,839	393	<b>\$ 4,026,798</b>	546	<b>\$ 5,587,750</b>	<b>\$ 9,614,549</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,998,795</b>	<b>173,439</b>	<b>\$2,158,074,356</b>	<b>220,700</b>	<b>\$ 2,709,805,065</b>	<b>\$ 4,867,879,421</b>

\*U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education, Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999–2000 (“Public School Teacher Questionnaire,” “Private School Teacher Questionnaire,” and “Public Charter School Teacher Questionnaire”), and 2000–01 Teacher Follow-up Survey (“Questionnaire for Current Teachers” and “Questionnaire for Former Teachers,” Table I.01). Washington, DC.

\*\*State estimations based on analysis by Richard Ingersoll, Professor of Education and Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, from the National Center for Education Statistics Student and Staffing Survey, and therefore include a slight margin of error. Additional data available at [http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty\\_research/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf).

\*\*\*The Department of Labor conservatively estimates that attrition costs an employer 30 percent of the leaving employee’s salary. Teacher salary data was taken from the National Education Association’s Estimates of School Statistics, 1969–70 through 2002–03, and prepared August 2003. Available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d03/tables/dt078.asp>.

<sup>1</sup>National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. (2003.) *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children*. Washington, DC.

<sup>2</sup>The Department of Labor conservatively estimates that attrition costs an employer 30 percent of the leaving employee’s salary. Using national data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that each teacher leaving a school costs the district \$12,546. (Average teacher salary in 1999–2000 = \$41,820 x .30 = \$12,546.) In the 1999–2000 school year, approximately 173,439 public school teachers left the profession, not including retirees. Thus, the number of leaving teachers (173,439) multiplied by the average cost of attrition (\$12,546) yields the total cost of attrition, \$2.17 billion, rounded to \$2.2 billion. A total of 394,140 changed or left public schools in school year 1999–2000 (394,140 x \$12,546 = \$4.9 billion). Figures are based on national averages and are slightly higher than the state-by-state calculation represented in the accompanying table.

<sup>3</sup>Texas State Board for Educator Certification. (2000.) *The Cost of Teacher Turnover*. Austin, TX. “Using the most conservative turnover cost estimation method, Texas is losing approximately \$329 million year due to teacher turnover with alternate estimations for the costs reaching as high as \$2.1 billion per year.”

<sup>4</sup>National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. (2003.) *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children*. Washington, DC.

<sup>5</sup>Richard M. Ingersoll. (2003.) *Is There a Teacher Shortage?* Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Seattle, WA.

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Teacher Follow-up Survey (“Questionnaire for Current Teachers” and “Questionnaire for Former Teachers”), 2000–01, Table 6. Washington, DC.

<sup>7</sup>National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. (2003.) Figure 5 shows a yearly rate of teachers moving/leaving “Low Poverty” schools at 12.9 percent and moving/leaving “High Poverty” schools at a rate of 20 percent, which is roughly 55 percent higher.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Ingersoll. (2003.) *Is There Really a Teacher Shortage?* Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania. “Beginning teachers [under five years] leaving at a rate that outpaces experienced teachers is a long-noted phenomenon, with most research upholding that teaching has always had a higher rate of attrition among newcomers.” Study available online at [http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty\\_research/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf).

<sup>9</sup>Robin R. Henke, Xianglei Chen, and Sonya Geis. (2000.) *Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline: 1992–93 College Graduate and Elementary/Secondary School Teaching as of 1997*. Statistical Analysis Report. National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters. (2001.) *How Many Central City High Schools Have a Severe Dropout Problem, Where Are They Located, and Who Attends Them? Initial Estimates Using the Common Core of Data*. Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

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- <sup>11</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (December 2000.) “Monitoring Quality: An Indicators Report,” Figure 2.3. Washington, DC.
- <sup>12</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999–2000. “Public School Teacher Survey,” “Private School Teacher Survey,” and “Public Charter School Teacher Survey,” Table 6. Washington, DC.
- <sup>13</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2002.) *The Condition of Education 2002*. Table 33-4. Washington, DC.
- <sup>14</sup>T. Smith and R. Ingersoll. (2004.) “What Are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?” *American Educational Research Journal* 41 (Fall). Available online at [http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty\\_research/Effects-of-Induction-and-Mentoring-RMI-Fall-2004.doc](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/faculty_research/Effects-of-Induction-and-Mentoring-RMI-Fall-2004.doc). Comprehensive induction is defined here as having four components: basic induction (a mentor from their same or another field and supportive communication with principal or other higher-level administration) and collaboration (common planning time/regular scheduled collaboration with other teachers in subject areas and participation in a seminar for beginning teachers); participating in an external network of teachers; having a reduced number of preparations; and being assigned a teacher’s aide. In 2000, fewer than 1 percent of beginning teachers received comprehensive induction, but those who did saw just over a 50 percent reduced likelihood of turnover.
- <sup>15</sup>Michael Strong, Stephen Fletcher, and Anthony Villar. (2004.) *An Investigation of the Effects of Teacher Experience and Teacher Preparedness on the Performance of Latino Students in California*. New Teacher Center, Santa Cruz, CA.
- <sup>16</sup>Zeleanji Serpell and Leslie Bozeman. (1999.) *Beginning Teacher Induction: A Report on Beginning Teacher Effectiveness and Retention*. National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, Washington, DC.
- <sup>17</sup>Strong, Fletcher, and Villar 2004.
- <sup>18</sup>MetLife. (2004–05.) *Survey of the American Teacher: Transitions and the Role of Supportive Relationships*.
- <sup>19</sup>Stephen Fletcher and Anthony Villar. “Research on Student Achievement and the Benefit-Cost Analysis of New Teacher Induction.” New Teacher Center at University of Santa Cruz, Seventh National Symposium—“Discover the Power of Teacher Induction.” Fairmont Hotel, San Jose, CA, January 31, 2005.