



What factors impact teacher retention?

Teacher retention is primarily driven by a positive school environment, strong administrative support (including principals who display support and effective communication), and a culture where teacher feedback is valued. Key factors for staying include supportive relationships with colleagues and students, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, higher education, more autonomy, better resources, and higher salaries. Conversely, factors like emotional exhaustion increase turnover risk. Additionally, mentorship programs boost novice teacher retention. Importantly, teacher turnover negatively impacts student achievement, especially in historically underserved and low-performing schools.

- LEARN Research Roundups -

These are annotated bibliographies created through our “Ask a Researcher” program at the request of a district leader to inform a specific initiative.

“Predicting preschool teacher retention and turnover in newly hired Head Start teachers across the first half of the school year”

Citation

Wells, M. B. (2015). *Predicting preschool teacher retention and turnover in newly hired Head Start teachers across the first half of the school year*. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 30, 152–159.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.10.003>

Overview

Factors impacting a teacher's decision to stay or leave the school.

Research Questions

What factors play a role in teacher retention? How many until they leave?

Methodology

Various questionnaires and tracking those who quit.

Analysis & Results

Pulled stats from the Statistical Package for Social Science to try to predict those who quit based off their questionnaire answers. "Preschool teachers who continued teaching had a higher education, were happier, liked their work environment more, had a stronger relationship with their center director and were more interested in staying in the early childhood field compared to those who quit teaching. Additionally, the author hypothesized and found that the accumulation of the risk factors was associated with preschool teachers quitting. In fact, only preschool teachers who had three or more of the risk factors quit their teaching position." (Wells, 2015)

Conclusions

Asking teachers about the supports they need instead of assuming them makes for better supports.

Action Step

Valuing teacher feedback and voices not only makes for more accurate addressing of the issues, but makes them feel heard and valued. Starting here would be a good idea.

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“Improving teacher retention through support and development”

Citation

Shuls, J., & Flores, J. (2020). *Improving teacher retention through support and development*. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (JELPS)*, 4(1). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1282763.pdf>

Overview

Proposing ideas of how to increase teacher retention based on the success of other districts.

Research Questions

Is the teacher retention intentional or is it merely a positive result of a program that is intended to target another issue?

Methodology

"...semi-structured interviews with key personnel at several of Missouri's top retaining districts." (Shuls & Flores, 2020)

Analysis & Results

Interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed, then analyzed vertically (analyzing each interview separately) and horizontally (analysing the interviews for trends across all takes). District 1- teachers supporting and teaching each other, teachers voices being considered in administrative decisions, strong culture of work-life-balance. District 2- new hire mentorship, program for those interested in administration, buddy-mentorship. District 3- intensive hiring process, teacher voices heard, professional development.

Conclusions

Encouraging, supportive, and involved administration, positive work and community culture, professional development opportunities, new hire induction/support programs, and leadership opportunities were common themes in what worked for teacher retention.

Action Step

Improving work culture, administration relationships with teachers, and mentorship/induction programs are all good areas to start when developing teacher retention programs.

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“The Influence of School Administrators on Teacher Retention Decisions”

Citation

Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). *The Influence of School Administrators on Teacher Retention Decisions*. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(2), 303–333. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210380788>

Overview

Relationship between teacher retention and school environment factors.

Research Questions

"What are first-year teachers' perceptions of school contextual factors?...What is the relationship between school contextual factors and teacher attrition?...How are first-year teachers' assessments of school contextual factors related to their own retention decisions after accounting for other measured school and teacher characteristics?...How do first-year teachers' assessments of school contextual factors predict the turnover decisions of other teachers in the same school?...What aspects of the school context do former teachers report as being the most influential in their decisions to leave teaching?" (Boyd et al., 2011)

Methodology

"...multinomial logistic regression to estimate the relationship between teacher and school characteristics and teacher retention decisions." (Boyd et al., 2011) using survey data from prior studies.

Analysis & Results

Data pulled was placed into tables showing statistical significance between various factors, results shown in tables [1-7](#) and figures [1-2](#). The results show that "...teachers' perceptions of the school administration has by far the greatest influence on teacher retention decisions." (Boyd et al., 2011)

Conclusions

How teachers feel the relationship between them and administration is greatly impacts a teachers decision to stay or leave the school.

Action Step

Improving schools at the administrative level may help improve teacher retention.

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“Teacher job satisfaction and retention in small rural schools: A theory of recognition approach”

Citation

Cuervo, H. (2025). *Teacher job satisfaction and retention in small rural schools: A theory of recognition approach*. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 134, 102844.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2025.102844>

Overview

Relationship between small schools and rural retention rates.

Research Questions

What is the relationship between small schools (less than 100 students) and teacher retention?

Methodology

Theory of recognition review of studies that used semi-structured interviews.

Analysis & Results

Theory of recognition use to review studies, results on school and teacher characteristics listed on [table one](#), "Eleven out of the fourteen interviewed teachers affirmed that their relations with students and/or colleagues were the main reason for staying rural. Focusing on classroom and school practices and relationships, most teachers affirmed that they felt a strong sense of duty and care for their students." (Cuervo, 2025)

Conclusions

"In this study, esteem and respect for teachers' professional work and identity in the school and community reveals the development of a positive job satisfaction that addresses the problem of staff attrition." (Cuervo, 2025)

Action Step

Encouraging interpersonal relationships and support will help improve teacher retention. Smaller schools often need more of such support.

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“Principal characteristics effect on teacher retention: A systematic review”

Citation

L. Shell Darron, S. Hurt Carletta, & White Hiraetta. (2023). *Principal characteristics effect on teacher retention: A systematic review*. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 18(6), 104–113.
<https://doi.org/10.5897/err2023.4318>

Overview

Predictors of teacher retention.

Research Questions

"What characteristics of principals predict teacher retention in elementary and secondary schools in the U.S.?"
(L. Shell Darron et al., 2023)

Methodology

Systematic literature review.

Analysis & Results

All studies used had to match all eight of the criterion listed in the paper, studies found on ProQuest, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect, [chart on page 110](#) shows a list of principal attributes that have to do with whether or not a teacher stays or leaves based on the studies that met criteria.

Conclusions

"Principals who support and encourage their teachers tend to receive teacher loyalty, which causes high teacher retention rates...Regardless of the school location (rural or urban) and the school type (elementary, middle, high, special), the characteristic of principal support remains a significant predictor of U.S. teacher retention and attrition...Schools where principals fail to display support for teachers and where standards and expectations are not communicated effectively experience low retention rates." (L. Shell Darron et al., 2023)

Action Step

Efforts to increase teacher appreciation, making them feel heard, seen, and that their efforts are appreciated, will make teachers less likely to leave.

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“A Meta-analysis of the Antecedents of Teacher Turnover and Retention”

Citation

Hugh A.D. Gundlach, Slemp, G. R., & Hattie, J. (2024). *A Meta-analysis of the Antecedents of Teacher Turnover and Retention*. *Educational Research Review*, 100606–100606.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2024.100606>

Overview

Looking at what it is that causes teachers to stay, leave, change professions, etc.

Research Questions

"RQ1: Which antecedents are most influential in contributing to teacher turnover intentions and behavior, and retention intentions and behavior?"

RQ2: To what extent do differences exist between the magnitudes of turnover and retention intentions and behaviors?" (Hugh A.D. Gundlach et al., 2024)

Methodology

Systematic literature review.

Analysis & Results

185 studies, "Age has a large association with staying ($r = 0.44$), but no association with leaving (0.02)...Organizational commitment (0.52) has a large positive association with intentions to stay in schools or the profession...Emotional exhaustion has a large positive association with intentions to leave the profession (0.56) and with general intentions to leave (0.47)..." (Hugh A.D. Gundlach et al., 2024), please view [the full table for all attributes](#) charted.

Conclusions

"General findings are that teacher age, education level, years of experience, job satisfaction, commitment, and ill-being responses have the strongest associations with decisions to leave and stay. Teachers who have more autonomy, older and with higher salaries and better resources in their schools are much more likely to stay." (Hugh A.D. Gundlach et al., 2024)

Action Step

Separate migration from attrition, which are two different issues that require different interventions. Schools being more diligent about differentiating these may realize they have one issue over the other, and are thus not addressing it properly.

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“Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It”

Citation

Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606805.pdf>

Overview

Analysis of teacher turnover.

Research Questions

What are the impacts of teacher retention, and how can they be negated?

Methodology

Prior data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey.

Analysis & Results

Logistic regression model, [tables starting on page 40](#) have listed out this data.

Conclusions

Teachers have the greatest impact on student's learning (within the school), supporting them helps to support students.

Action Step

Policy should target areas with the worst turnover rates, that being schools who serve impoverished areas or students of color.

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“Boosting novice teachers’ retention intention: international evidence on the role of mentoring via job satisfaction and organizational commitment”

Citation

Park, S., & Choi, S. (2025). *Boosting novice teachers’ retention intention: international evidence on the role of mentoring via job satisfaction and organizational commitment*. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jea-04-2024-0108>

Overview

Relationship between teacher mentorship and career duration.

Research Questions

"Does participation in a mentoring program correlate with an increase in the expected career length of new teachers? (2) Do job satisfaction and organizational commitment mediate this relationship?" (Park & Choi, 2025)

Methodology

Study uses prior data from the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey.

Analysis & Results

Analysis using multilevel structural equation modeling, "The expected number of years to continue teaching was 20.54" (Park & Choi, 2025)

Conclusions

"...new teachers who participated in mentoring programs were more likely to report a longer expected career length than their counterparts....participation in mentoring programs is associated with an approximately 0.89 years–11 months–increase in the number of years to continue teaching across countries....The increase of approximately five percent in the average expected career length should not be underestimated, especially considering that the average retention intention across countries was around 20 years." (Park & Choi, 2025)

Action Step

There is a correlation between mentorship programs and teacher retention, so schools may benefit by supporting teacher through having such programs available.

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“Balancing the scale: Investigating the effect of frontloading and backloading salary structures on teacher turnover”

Citation

Tran, H., Saharnaz Babaei-Balderlou, & Vesely, R. S. (2024). *Balancing the scale: Investigating the effect of frontloading and backloading salary structures on teacher turnover*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 152, 104809–104809. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2024.104809>

Overview

How frontloading or backloading salaries impacts teacher turnover.

Research Questions

What is the relationship between front loading or backloading teacher salaries and retention?

Methodology

Quasi-experimental research design, looking at school districts in South Carolina.

Analysis & Results

"...results show that a higher experience premium for early-career teachers compared to the second five years (immediate years of tenure) can lead to increased turnover among novice teachers...Conversely, the same frontloading schedule at FS period significantly reduces turnover among seasoned teachers." (Tran et al., 2024)

Conclusions

Whether or not frontloading pay helps retention depends on the experience level of the teacher and the districts demographics.

Action Step

This paper lists several [Policy Recommendations](#) to keep in mind in an effort to decrease teacher retention.

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“How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement”

Citation

Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). *How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement*. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4–36. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212463813>

Overview

Teacher turnover impacts student achievement.

Research Questions

"What is the average effect of teacher turnover on student achievement?...Are the effects different for different kinds of schools?...What explains the relationship between teacher turnover and student achievement?" (Ronfeldt et al., 2013)

Methodology

Prior data, observations of 4th/5th grade students across eight years.

Analysis & Results

Data was reviewed with regression models both for year-by-year and school-by-grade-by-year, data tables 2-17 are available in the paper for the numerically inclined.

Conclusions

"Results suggest that teacher turnover has a significant and negative impact on student achievement in both math and ELA. Moreover, teacher turnover is particularly harmful to the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and Black students." (Ronfeldt et al., 2013)

Action Step

When trying to advocate for policies that help keep teachers, administrators and policy makers ought to bring up the benefit to students by having consistent faculty.

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