

Education Policy Brief

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Teacher Supply and Demand

Across the nation many states and local districts are faced with the challenge of meeting the increased demand for teachers while at the same time ensuring a quality education for students. Recent projections by the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that by the year 2006, 2 million teachers will need to be hired. Currently in Delaware there are teacher shortages in key subject areas. In addition, shortages exist in the number of minority and male teachers. Building regional reciprocity and removing obstacles related to hiring are key to meeting the demand for qualified teachers.

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INTRODUCTION:

Research in the area of teacher quality indicates that providing students with competent and qualified teachers has a greater impact on student achievement than class size, school climate, ability grouping, or the location of the school.ⁱ The challenge of providing students with quality instruction comes at a time when most states are experiencing teacher shortages. Increasing student enrollments, high rates of teacher attrition, and reform initiatives such as reductions in class size have increased the demand for teachers. Given the critical role played by teachers, recruiting and retaining qualified individuals into the teaching profession is a top priority.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Projected and Current Shortages

By the year 2006, it is expected that 2 million teachers will need to be hired.ⁱⁱ While there are currently surpluses of some types of teachers in certain geographic areas of the country, there are shortages in others. A recent study of the nation's largest school districts revealed shortages in the areas of special education, mathematics, and bilingual education. Shortages in the number of male and minority teachers were also reported.ⁱⁱⁱ

Urban and rural school districts are particularly affected by teacher shortages as are areas of high poverty. When the supply of qualified teachers is too low to meet the demand, many states issue waivers relaxing the certification or licensure requirements for teachers. A recent report by the Secretary of Education on the quality of teacher preparation revealed that high poverty school districts had higher percentages of teachers with waivers.^{iv} This practice has led many to the concern that those students most in need of quality instruction are the same students that are least likely to receive it.

Factors Affecting Supply and Demand

Teacher supply and demand is determined by a number of factors. The supply of qualified personnel depends on how many people complete the requirements for a teaching degree, the number of out-of-state hires, and the number of people that transfer teaching positions within the state. The demand for teachers is determined by student enrollment, teacher-to-pupil classroom ratios, and attrition for both retirement and non-retirement reasons.

Of these factors, teacher attrition has received the most attention in the research. It has been estimated that as many as 30% of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years.^v In urban districts the loss of new teachers within the first few years can be as high as 50%.

Increasing Supply and Addressing Demand

Most of the strategies designed to improve teacher quality focus on increasing the supply of qualified candidates or finding ways to reduce teacher attrition. A few of these strategies include:

Increasing teacher pay: This often takes the form of higher starting salaries to attract individuals into the profession, and sometimes involves incentives for teachers currently in the profession (i.e. salary supplements for increased skill and knowledge or National Board Certification).

Providing teacher induction programs: Research suggests that decisions to leave teaching are typically tied to lack of professional success in the early stages of teachers' careers.^{vi} In response to this, several states have developed programs that pair new teachers with a skilled mentor who is able to provide support and direction.

Enhancing Regional Reciprocity: Providing information on the availability and demand of teachers in neighboring states as well as developing regionally consistent requirements for certification and licensing would allow school districts to recruit more easily from surrounding states. Currently there are many barriers to regional reciprocity. For example, requirements for licensing and renewing procedures vary by state. In addition, most states require teachers who relocate from another state to be re-certified and many teachers lose their tenure and pension benefits upon moving to another state.

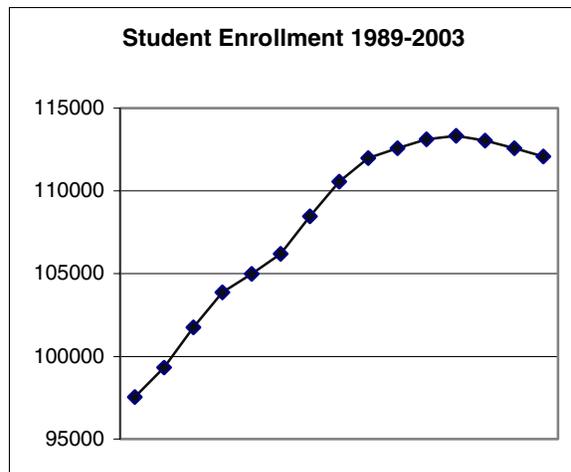
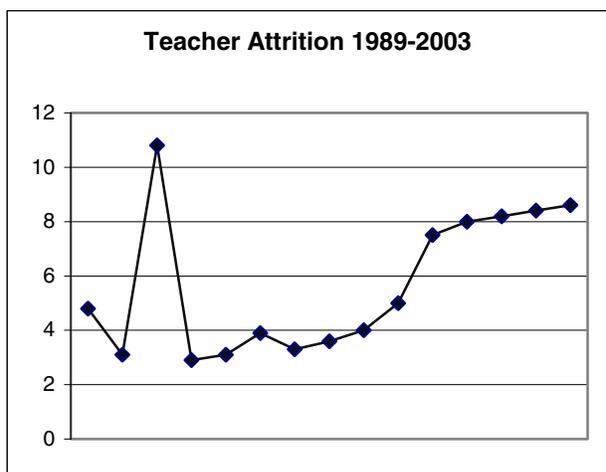
DELAWARE SITUATION:

According to a recent report examining teacher supply and demand in Delaware, West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, Delaware is one of only two states expected to experience a slight surplus of teachers over the next three years.^{vii} However, regionally there is a serious prospect of a shortage in the near future. Even in the midst of the current slight surplus, there are still certain subject areas currently experiencing teacher shortages.

Critical shortage areas, as reported by the Delaware Department of Education and a survey of Delaware school districts, include bilingual education, foreign languages, mathematics, science, technology education, and special education. In addition, five of Delaware's 19 districts reported that they had to limit or discontinue student course offerings because of staffing shortages.

Shortages also exist in the number of minority and male teachers in Delaware. Roughly 30% of the K-12 student population is composed of minority students yet only 12.7% of teachers in Delaware are minorities. Males constitute 25.7% of teachers in Delaware.

Determining the precise number of vacancies for a given year depends on a variety of factors that are likely to fluctuate over time. Over the next four years teacher attrition is expected to rise to 8.6% while student enrollments are expected to decrease.



Another factor affecting the demand for teachers in Delaware is the number of teachers eligible for retirement. As of December 2000, 24.1% of Delaware's classroom teachers will be eligible for full or partial retirement. An examination of full pension eligibility by county indicates that New Castle County has the highest percentage of teachers eligible for full pensions (12.8%) followed by Kent county (9.7%) with Sussex county having the lowest percentage (7.5%).

SUMMARY

Recruiting and retaining the most qualified individuals within the teaching profession will continue to be a top priority for meeting current teacher shortages and future demands. Several policies have been implemented over the past few years to address the supply and demand of qualified teachers in Delaware (e.g. new teacher mentoring, salary schedule changes, salary supplements for National Board Certification). One area that may need more attention is regional reciprocity. This issue is important not only because of the benefits associated with it but also because many of the new teachers hired in Delaware are trained in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maryland.^{viii} In addition, given that Delaware is an importer of teachers, obstacles preventing districts from making offers to new teachers earlier in the hiring cycle must also be addressed. Delays in making offers puts Delaware at a disadvantage relative to surrounding states.

POLICY QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- Within Delaware, teacher salaries vary across the state. To what extent is this putting some schools and districts at a disadvantage with respect to recruiting and retaining qualified teachers?
- Certification and licensure requirements vary from state to state. What effect might this have on where teachers choose to teach?
- The creation of neighborhood schools will likely lead to some schools having very high percentages of low income students. How is the state planning to ensure that all students receive the same quality education?
- What steps can be taken to promote regional reciprocity?
- What are the reasons that teachers in Delaware leave the teaching profession and what can the state do to address those issues?

ⁱ Sanders, W., & Rivers, J. (1996). Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future students academic achievement. Hanusheck, E. (1992). The trade-off between child quantity and quality. *Journal of Political Economy*.

ⁱⁱ North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. (1999). *Issues of Supply and Demand: Recruiting and Retaining Quality Teachers*. <http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/pdfs/recruit.pdf> (04 Dec 2000)

ⁱⁱⁱ Recruiting New Teachers. (1998). Take this job and love it! Making the mid-career move to teaching. Belmont, MA: Author.

^{iv} U.S. Department of Education. (1999). The Initial Report of the Secretary on the Quality of Teacher Preparation. <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/News/teacherprep/initialreport4.pdf> (14 December 2000)

^v National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (1996). What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future. New York: Author.

^{vi} Rosenholtz, S. (1984). Myths: Political myths about reforming teaching. ECS, Denver, CO. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 272 486)

^{vii} Vance, J. (2000). Steps Toward Data-Driven Policy: A profile of teacher supply and demand data in the Mid-Atlantic region. A report of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Teacher Project sponsored by the Laboratory for Student Success, with the Council for Basic Education and the Maryland State Department of Education.

^{viii} Same as previous.