

## Factors related to teacher mobility and attrition in Colorado, Missouri, and South Dakota

Challenges related to teacher mobility and attrition have led educators in Colorado, Missouri, and South Dakota to seek better information about factors associated with these phenomena. In collaboration with educators in these states, the Regional Educational Laboratory Central used state administrative data to identify whether the characteristics of teachers and schools were related to teacher mobility and attrition. Teacher mobility and attrition are frequently associated with challenges for students and schools, such as low student achievement and inequitable access to high-quality teachers.<sup>1</sup> This study used data from 2011/12 to 2016/17 to examine the relationship between teacher, school, and district characteristics and the likelihood of teachers moving to a classroom teaching position in a different school (referred to as moving or being a mover) or taking a nonteaching position or leaving their state public school system (leaving or being a leaver) from 2015/16 to 2016/17 rather than staying in a classroom teaching position in the same school (staying or being a stayer). The study findings provide region- and state-specific information about factors related to teacher mobility and attrition that may inform the design of policy and practices focused on attracting and keeping teachers.

### Key findings

- **Special education teachers, teachers who had been teaching in the same school for fewer than four years, and younger teachers were more likely than teachers without these characteristics to be movers rather than stayers.** Primary subject-area assignment, years teaching in the same school, and age were most strongly associated with moving rather than staying. This finding suggests that decisionmakers may wish to focus activities for recruiting and retaining teachers on special education teachers and to enhance support for new and younger teachers.
- **Teachers in schools with a low state accountability rating and teachers in schools that paid a lower average teacher salary were more likely than teachers in schools without these characteristics to be movers rather than stayers.** State accountability designation and average teacher salary were most strongly associated with moving rather than staying. This finding suggests the importance of additional support for retaining teachers in schools identified for improvement and schools with the lowest average teacher salaries.
- **Older teachers, teachers who worked less than half time, teachers who had been teaching for fewer years in the same district, and teachers who earned lower salaries were more likely than teachers without these characteristics to be leavers rather than stayers.** Age, full-time equivalency, years teaching in the same district, and salary were most strongly associated with leaving rather than staying. This finding suggests the importance of targeting support to newer teachers and teachers with lower salaries.
- **Teachers in schools with a low accountability rating, teachers in schools that paid a lower average teacher salary, and teachers in schools with a higher proportion of racial/ethnic minority students were more likely than teachers in schools without these characteristics to be leavers rather than stayers.** State accountability designation, average teacher salary, and proportion of racial/ethnic minority students were most strongly associated with leaving rather than staying. This finding suggests that decisionmakers may wish to direct resources toward low-performing schools, those with low average teacher salaries, and those with high proportions of racial/ethnic minority students.

1. Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 367–409. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ896364>.