Indicators of Successful Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Oklahoma Rural Schools

Relevance to Oklahoma

- There is a teacher shortage in Oklahoma.
- Teacher recruitment and retention is an issue in many rural schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the patterns of teacher mobility in rural and nonrural school districts in Oklahoma?
2. Which factors predict the successful recruitment (completing a probationary period of employment in a single district for three years and obtaining tenure in the fourth year of teaching) of teachers at rural school districts in Oklahoma?
3. Which factors predict the continued retention of tenured teachers at rural school districts in Oklahoma?

Analytical Strategy

- Explore patterns of teacher job mobility in rural districts using descriptive statistics and survival analysis.
- Separate analysis of successful recruitment (= teacher completes 3-year probationary period and obtains tenure) versus retention of tenured teachers.
- Identify individual indicators associated with the likelihood of successful recruitment and with the duration of employment.
- Examine the relative importance of the three groups of factors: teacher-level, district-level, and community-level.

Results

- Teachers at Oklahoma rural schools have a 70% chance of reaching their fourth year of teaching in the same district and thus of achieving tenure, this study’s definition of successful teacher recruitment; this rate is slightly lower than the rates for teachers in nonrural areas.
- Teacher-level indicators dominate among the predictive factors for successful recruitment and retention; teacher indicators contributed 78% to the explained variance for recruitment and 58% to the explained variance for retention. All variables included in the analysis explained just under 18% of the total variance for recruitment and retention.
- Indicators had similar relationships to outcomes across recruitment and retention. One notable exception is that higher teacher workload has a positive association with successful recruitment but a negative association with retention.
- Teachers who are male, have higher postsecondary degrees, and have more teaching experience are harder than others to recruit and retain in rural schools.
- For teachers in rural schools, higher total compensation and increased responsibilities in job assignment are positively associated with successful recruitment and retention.

Conclusion

Successful recruitment and retention of teachers at rural schools is related more to teacher indicators than to district indicators or community factors. The factors identified in this study as related to better recruitment rates can potentially be improved or supported by initiatives that target individuals or subgroups of teachers. Identifying these malleable indicators could inform future efforts to study and evaluate new recruitment and retention policies. Determining community-level contextual factors could help policymakers target districts that would benefit from additional resources.

References