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Summary

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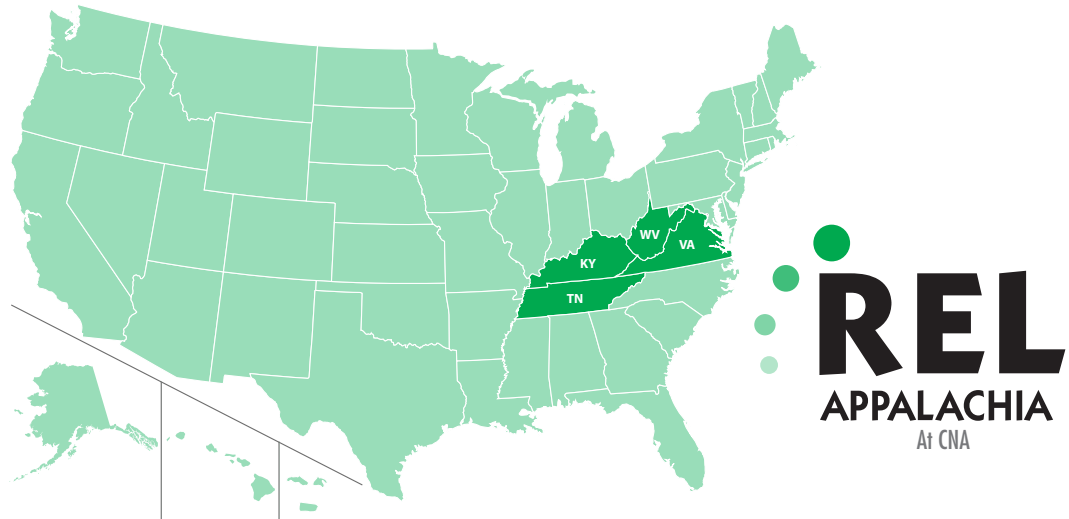
Prepared by

Jerry Johnson, Ed.D.
Ohio University and the Rural School and Community Trust

Tyler Huffman, Ph.D.
Eastern Kentucky University

Karen Madden
Institute for Democracy in Education at Ohio University

Shane Shope
Ohio University



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This report is available on the regional educational laboratory website at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

Superintendent turnover in Kentucky

This study examines superintendent turnover in Kentucky public school districts for 1998/99–2007/08, looking at how turnover varies by rural status, Appalachian and non-Appalachian region, and 2007/08 school district characteristics.

Sustaining, supporting, and building capacity among education leaders in Kentucky’s rural school districts are growing concerns. Designing and targeting such efforts call for clear, comprehensive understanding of superintendent turnover across the state. Yet variations in the extent of superintendent turnover by rural status and region are little understood—indeed, a literature search identified only one published article that considered variations in superintendent turnover by locale (Cooper et al. 2000).

This report, responding to a request from Kentucky officials, is the state’s first detailed description of superintendent turnover. It describes turnover statewide, by rural status (rural or nonrural), and by region (Appalachian or non-Appalachian) and examines how turnover varies by 2007/08 school district characteristics. Because most Kentucky school districts are rural (Johnson and Strange 2009) and many are in the Appalachian region, it intends to help policymakers and other leaders

better understand turnover in these areas so that they can develop new programs to prepare, recruit, and retain superintendents.

The report addresses four research questions for 1998/99–2007/08:

- What is the level of superintendent turnover in Kentucky school districts?
- How does Kentucky superintendent turnover in rural school districts compare with that in nonrural school districts?
- How does Kentucky superintendent turnover in Appalachian school districts compare with that in non-Appalachian school districts?
- How does superintendent turnover in Kentucky school districts vary by school district characteristics in 2007/08, and how do these numbers vary by rural status and by region?

Data sources include 2007/08 district performance reports and financial reports from the Kentucky Department of Education, the 2007/08 Common Core of Data from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2007/08 Appalachian county designations from the Appalachian

Regional Commission, and a 2007/08 superintendent survey from the Center for Educational Research in Appalachia.

Key findings include:

- Kentucky school districts averaged one superintendent turnover during 1998/99–2007/08.
- Average superintendent turnover rates in rural and nonrural school districts over 1998/99–2007/08 were within one-tenth of a point of each other. Rural school districts ($n = 93$) averaged 1.01 superintendent turnovers, and nonrural school districts ($n = 81$) averaged 0.988. The median was 1.00 for both rural and nonrural school districts.
- Average superintendent turnover rates in Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts over 1998/99–2007/08 were within one-tenth of a point of each other. Appalachian school districts ($n = 73$) averaged 0.986 superintendent turnovers, and non-Appalachian school districts ($n = 101$) averaged 1.01. The median was 1.00 for both Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts.
- Statewide, superintendent turnover varied with school districts' demographic, fiscal, and achievement characteristics. However, the differences did not show patterns strong or consistent enough to suggest associations between these characteristics and superintendent turnover.
- In both rural and nonrural school districts and in both Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts, superintendent turnover varied with demographic, fiscal, and achievement characteristics. However, the differences did not show patterns strong or consistent enough to suggest systematic differences between rural and nonrural school districts or between Appalachian and non-Appalachian school districts.

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