

Teacher recruitment and retention: Key indicators

District leaders and staff need district-specific data on educator workforce to make informed decisions about teacher recruitment and retention issues. School and district data on teacher recruitment, hiring, retention, mobility, and turnover levels can help education leaders understand why teachers may be staying in or leaving particular schools and/or districts.

Educator workforce data are becoming more robust at the state, district, and school levels, and the challenge that faces many leaders is how to interpret these data and track what matters. In partnership with the Michigan Department of Education, REL Midwest identified key teacher workforce indicators that would be most helpful to districts to diagnose issues and identify root causes. The indicators were determined based on a review of literature concerning teacher recruitment, retention, and mobility; human resources; and data use. In addition, indicators were informed by frameworks and guidelines on educator workforce management.

The indicators are organized by three key perspectives: supply, equity, and performance.

- Supply perspective. Focuses on identifying the supply gaps in the teacher workforce.
- Equity perspective. Focuses on the potential contribution of differences in recruitment and retention to inequitable distributions of teachers across schools.
- Performance perspective. Focuses on the retention of effective teachers and associations between students' performance levels and teacher retention and turnover.

Each perspective offers important insights into the teacher workforce, and the perspectives are interconnected. For example, data on the teachers' salaries relate to both the recruitment of talent to the profession and the retention of that talent. Collecting and analyzing different metrics should not be with a piecemeal approach, and one metric is not more important than the other. Districts should consider how they can build the best picture of the challenge and success areas of their educator workforce by (a) using the data available, (b) identifying areas where they lack informative workforce data, and (c) collecting additional metrics to improve their understanding of school and district teacher talent recruitment and retention.

Works that informed the key indicators

The American Institutes for Research Educator Talent Management Framework

The Educator Talent Management Framework is part of a suite of solutions developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to maximize educator effectiveness and ensure that every student has access to highly effective, well-supported teachers and leaders who stay in the education system. The Educator Talent Management Framework enables policymakers to critically examine their human resource management policies and offers a systemic approach to improving teacher and school leader recruitment and retention, ensuring that all the key functions of educator policy are connected and addressed. The framework compiles strategies and elements of emerging policy and practice based on the extensive body of literature about teacher and school leader quality.

The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders Talent Development Framework

The Talent Development Framework (TDF) is a research-based analysis of the career development of teachers that was developed by AIR's Center on Great Teachers and Leaders. The TDF offers a comprehensive model of the state policy and practice areas found in a strong talent development system, grouping state policy and practice into three key interdependent policy and practice clusters: (a) attract the right talent into the profession to meet your students' needs; (b) prepare future teachers and school leaders to meet your students' needs; and (c) develop, support, and retain educators in the field to ensure they can meet your students' needs.

Identifying, Monitoring, and Benchmarking Teacher Retention and Turnover: Guidelines for TIF Grantees

This brief series was developed to provide guidelines and frameworks for grantees, school district leaders, human resource personnel, and policymakers to develop a strategic accountability approach to managing teacher talent retention and turnover as part of the U.S. Department of Education for Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Technical Assistance Grant. These briefs address the purposes, methods, and tools for monitoring teacher retention and turnover to address supply, equity, and performance issues.

Teacher recruitment and retention key indicators

Supply perspective

Retention. Tracking annual retention rates will give insight into whether retention rates have been decreasing or increasing over time. Research often uses 5-year attrition rates as a benchmark for new hires.

- One-year teacher retention rates.
- Five-year new hire attrition rates.
- Annual teacher workforce changes.

Preservice experience. Identifying the teacher preparation programs that new hires attended may give insight into the pipeline used to recruit teachers. Research indicates that forming connections with educator preparation programs may help programs address district needs.

- Most frequent institutions or programs (new hires).
- Type of teacher preparation program attended.

Endorsement areas. Assessing new hires and teacher retention by endorsement areas may give insight into anticipated shortages by subject area. Research has shown that teacher shortages often occur in specific subjects, such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields and special education.

- Endorsement area and new hires.
- Endorsement area and teacher retention rates.

Experience levels. Understanding whether beginning or more experienced teachers are leaving may give insight into whether supports are most needed for beginning or experienced teachers. Research indicates that teachers are more likely to leave early or late in their careers.

- Teaching experience within the district.
- Teaching experience within the school.

Leave status. Understanding the various types of teacher leave categories may help give insight into the reasons why teachers are leaving. Research indicates it is important to distinguish between avoidable and unavoidable turnover to help identify specific supports to address turnover.

- Leave status categories.
- Leave status counts.

Equity perspective

School-level demographics and teacher retention. Understanding teacher turnover across schools with different characteristics (for example, family income levels and demographics) will allow districts to understand whether retention issues are concentrated in schools with certain characteristics and to develop focused and targeted strategies. Research finds that recruitment and retention issues are more severe in disadvantaged schools.

- Changes in student enrollment.
- Family income levels.
- Percentage of minority students.
- Percentage of bilingual students.
- Retention rates by school.
- Retention rates by school type.

Teacher demographics. Monitoring changes in teacher race/ethnicity, gender, and age may give districts insight into changes in the diversity of the workforce. Research shows that a diverse teacher workforce is important for improving learning for students of color and for closing achievement gaps.

- Age.
- Race/ethnicity.
- Gender.
- Alignment to student demographics.

Performance perspective

Teacher performance levels. Gauging the extent that high and/or low performers are staying, moving, or leaving may give insight into whether districts are retaining effective teachers. Research indicates that healthy, functional teacher retention is a combination of retaining effective teachers and deselecting ineffective teachers.

- Teacher evaluation ratings.

Student performance levels. Understanding the relationships between student performance and teacher retention may give districts insight into how to prioritize supports and interventions.

- Achievement scores on standardized assessments.
- Growth scores on standardized assessment.