



The characteristics and experiences of beginning teachers in seven Northeast and Islands Region states and nationally





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Summary

March 2012

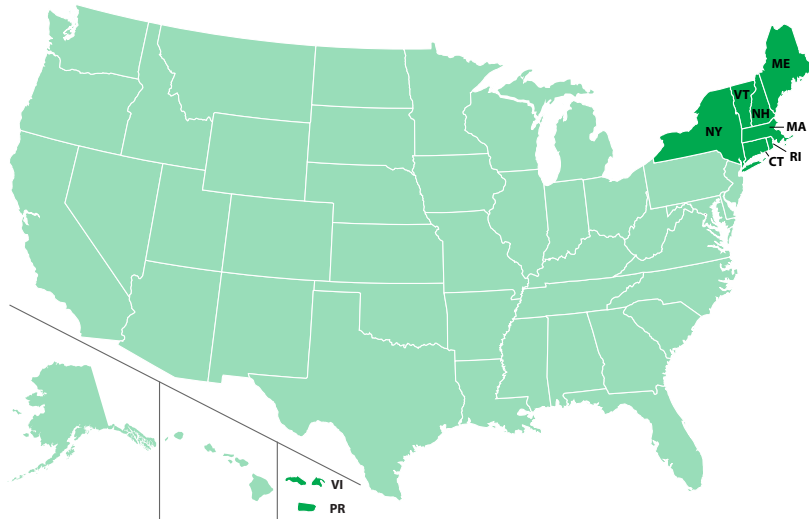
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Issues & Answers is an ongoing series of reports from short-term Fast Response Projects conducted by the regional educational laboratories on current education issues of importance at local, state, and regional levels. Fast Response Project topics change to reflect new issues, as identified through lab outreach and requests for assistance from policymakers and educators at state and local levels and from communities, businesses, parents, families, and youth. All Issues & Answers reports meet Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research.

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The characteristics and experiences of beginning teachers in seven Northeast and Islands Region states and nationally

This study describes the characteristics and experiences of beginning public school teachers in the Northeast and Islands Region states and compares them with the characteristics and experiences of beginning teachers nationally using data from the 2007/08 Schools and Staffing Survey.

This study uses data from the 2007/08 Schools and Staffing Survey to describe the characteristics and experiences of beginning teachers in the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands Region states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont)¹ and nationally. Beginning teachers are defined as teachers who reported that they started teaching during or after the 2003/04 school year and therefore had fewer than five years of teaching experience. The report focuses on variables related to teachers' preparation and workplace supports that research suggests might be associated with their perceptions of preparedness, effectiveness, and retention.

This study provides data to help states in the region tailor initiatives to the needs of beginning teachers. It responds to a request expressed by stakeholders in four of the region's states and the New England Collaborative for Educator Effectiveness (formed by six New England states

to address common issues related to educator evaluation) to better understand the characteristics and preparation of beginning teachers in the region and to have information on how beginning teachers are supported. This study also contributes to the literature on teacher preparation, working conditions, and support by providing an overview of the characteristics and experiences of beginning teachers in the Northeast Region and nationally.

The following are key findings of the study:

On demographic characteristics:

- In 2007/08, there were an estimated 90,370 beginning teachers in the Northeast Region states, ranging from 1,476 in Vermont to 52,409 in New York, and 832,264 nationally.
- The majority of beginning teachers regionally and nationally were female and White: regionally, 73.7 percent were female and 91.0 percent were White; nationally, 75.7 percent were female and 89.4 percent were White.

On preparation and certification characteristics:

- Almost all beginning teachers had a bachelor's degree (99.2 percent regionally and

- 98.9 percent and nationally). Most beginning teachers had a degree from a department, school, or college of education (59.1 percent regionally and 64.7 percent nationally).
- Regionally, about a fifth (22.5 percent) of beginning teachers had an undergraduate major in elementary or secondary education, the most common single field or area, compared with 31.2 percent nationally.
 - Regionally, a majority of beginning teachers had a master's degree (58.2 percent), with most (88.6 percent) of these awarded by a department, school, or college of education. Nationally, 28.9 percent of beginning teachers had a master's degree, with 85.4 percent of these from a department, school, or college of education.
 - Almost all beginning teachers regionally had taken courses focused on teaching methods or strategies (94.3 percent), compared with 87.3 percent nationally.
 - The most common length of teaching practice was 12 weeks or more: 63.1 percent regionally and 61.2 percent nationally.
 - Most beginning teachers had a regular type of teaching certificate as opposed to an alternate or emergency certification (63.1 percent regionally and 69.9 percent nationally).
 - About a quarter of beginning teachers entered teaching through an alternative certification program (23.0 percent regionally and 25.6 percent nationally).
 - Elementary or secondary education was the most common area of primary certification (34.0 percent regionally and 43.6 percent nationally), and early childhood to grade 5 was the most common grade range covered by the primary certification (25.4 percent regionally and 28.5 percent nationally).
 - Most beginning teachers were considered "highly qualified" in their state (82.7 percent regionally and 82.3 percent nationally).
- On induction and supports:
- Most beginning public school teachers reported having participated in an induction program of some sort (72.8 percent regionally and 73.5 percent nationally).
 - Regionally, the most common support received during the first year of teaching was ongoing guidance and feedback from a mentor or master teacher (82.5 percent), and the least common was reduced teaching schedule or number of preparations (13.6 percent). Nationally, the most common support received was regular communication with the principal or another administrator (80.0 percent), and the least common was reduced teaching schedule or reduced number of preparations (11.9 percent).
 - A majority of beginning teachers reported feeling well or very well prepared in the first year of teaching to handle a range of classroom management or discipline situations (54.7 percent regionally and 59.3 percent nationally), to use a variety

of instructional methods (73.2 percent regionally and 71.3 percent nationally), to teach their subject matter (88.1 percent regionally and 82.8 percent nationally), to use computers in classroom instruction (62.7 percent regionally and 67.0 percent nationally), to assess students (69.4 percent regionally and 70.0 percent nationally), and to select and adapt curriculum and instructional materials (72.0 percent regionally and 65.2 percent nationally).

On characteristics of students and classes taught:

- For beginning teachers who teach the same group of students for most of the day, the average class size was 19.0 regionally and 20.9 nationally. For those who teach several classes of different students in one day, the average number of separate classes taught was 5.7 regionally and 5.6 nationally.
- Beginning teachers in the region reported that 19.5 percent of their students had an individualized education program (because they have disabilities or are special education students), compared with 15.7 percent nationally. Both regionally

and nationally, teachers report that 9.5 percent of their students were limited English proficient.

On adequate yearly progress status of beginning teachers' schools:

- The majority of beginning teachers worked in schools that were reported by their principal as having made adequate yearly progress in 2006/07 (77.1 percent regionally and 72.3 percent nationally).
- Of beginning teachers in schools that did not make adequate yearly progress in 2006/07, 79.9 percent in the region and 49.8 percent nationally were teaching in schools identified for improvement (schools that had not made adequate improvement in the same content area for two or more consecutive years).

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Note

1. The Schools and Staffing Survey is not conducted in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, the two other jurisdictions in the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands Region.