

## Teachers Who Aren't Teaching Who Are They and How Do We Get Them Back?

Michigan education leaders want to know whether recruiting certified teachers who are not teaching would be an effective way to fill teacher vacancies in public schools. To explore the viability of this option, the Michigan Department of Education partnered with Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest to study the characteristics of these teachers, their reasons for not teaching, and the incentives that would motivate them to teach in public schools. REL Midwest also created a documentary to further explore this topic.

### About the documentary

This 30-minute public television program, produced for REL Midwest's [Alliance to Improve Teacher Preparation](#) with Detroit Public Television, presents research on the primary reasons that many certified teachers are not teaching in public schools and the core incentives that would motivate them to return to the classroom. The program focuses on the ways state policymakers and district leaders can develop recruitment and retention strategies that could address the teacher shortage by tailoring their efforts to the needs of certified teachers who reside in Michigan but are not teaching in public schools.

This documentary features the perspectives of district leaders as well as longtime teachers, those teachers who have left the profession and returned, and those who are certified but are no longer teaching in public schools. In addition, Leah Breen, director of the Office of Professional Preparation Services at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), shares the state's strategies for improving teacher recruitment and retention efforts. The program also features researchers Natalya Gnedko-Berry, PhD, REL Midwest, and Lisa Lachlan, PhD, American Institutes for Research (AIR), who discuss studies related to the teacher shortage and the incentives that would motivate nonteaching certified teachers to teach in public schools. The researchers provide information on the teacher shortage in Michigan and the importance of incentivizing teachers.

*My hope that in five years there is not a teacher left who the teacher says, I have to leave teaching because I cannot afford to teach. I want that to be a thing of the past.*

– Natalya Gnedko-Berry, PhD, Senior Researcher,  
REL Midwest at the American Institutes for  
Research (AIR)



Scan the QR code to  
watch the documentary.

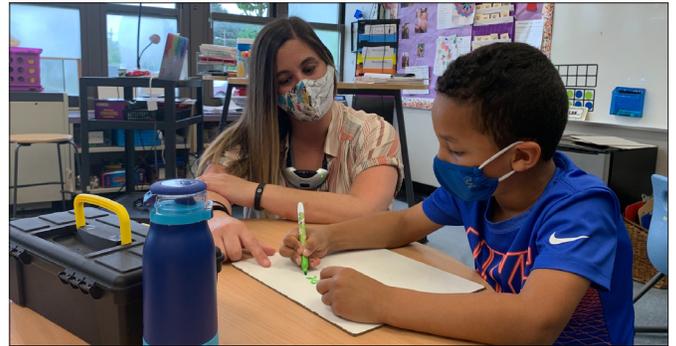
To learn more about REL Midwest's study examining the incentives that would motivate certified teachers who are not teaching to teach in Michigan public schools, [view the report and infographic](#).

### Intended audience

REL Midwest created this documentary as a tool for state policymakers, district leaders, teacher union leadership, school leaders, teachers, researchers, state education agency staff, and the general public to use when they engage in teacher recruitment and retention efforts. Although the documentary focuses on examples from Michigan, the best practices and strategies are relevant for policymakers and educators across the country.

## ? Discussion questions

- How would you apply the stories and research highlighted in the documentary to address teacher recruitment and retention challenges in your school, district, or state?
- From your experience, why are some certified teachers not teaching in the classroom?
- From your experience, what incentives would bring nonteaching certified teachers back to the classroom?
- If you were part of an effort to improve teacher recruitment and retention within your school or district, whom would you involve in those conversations? What steps would you and others need to take to transform those discussions into actions?
- What challenges do you see in recruiting teachers who are certified but not currently teaching back to the classroom? What are possible ways to overcome these challenges?
- How do the strategies shown in the documentary align with goals of your school and/or district? How can school and district leaders incorporate these strategies into their strategic planning?



## About REL Midwest

REL Midwest is part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. REL Midwest works in partnership with practitioners in seven Midwest states to conduct applied research and provide training, coaching, and technical support to create a more evidence-based education system. To learn more, visit the [REL Midwest website](#) and follow [@RELMidwest](#) on Twitter.