

## EDUCATION WEEK – JULY 2014

### Teacher Attrition Costs United States Up to \$2.2 Billion Annually, Says New Alliance Report

***Report Includes State-by-State Teacher Attrition Costs, Says Comprehensive Induction Programs Can Improve Teaching Effectiveness and Retain High-Quality Teachers***

WASHINGTON, DC – Roughly half a million U.S. teachers either move or leave the profession each year—attrition that costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually, according to a new report from the Alliance for Excellent Education.

This high turnover rate disproportionately affects high-poverty schools and seriously compromises the nation's capacity to ensure that all students have access to skilled teaching, says *On the Path to Equity: Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers*.

“Teacher attrition hits states and school districts in the wallet, but students and teachers pay the real price,” said Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia. “The monetary cost of teacher attrition pales in comparison to the loss of human potential associated with hard-to-staff schools that disproportionately serve low-income students and students of color. In these schools, poor learning climates and low achievement often result in students—and teachers—leaving in droves.”

The report cites the well-established principle that teaching quality is the most powerful school-based factor in student learning—one that outweighs students' social and economic background in accounting for differences in student learning. It also notes that chronic gaps remain in disadvantaged students' access to effective teaching—a scenario that unmistakably harms students, but also has an impact on teachers.

Without access to excellent peers, mentors, and opportunities for collaboration and feedback, teachers' performance in high-poverty schools plateaus after a few years and both morale and work environment suffer. Ultimately, the report notes, these hard-to-staff schools become known as “places to leave, not places in which to stay.” According to the report, high-poverty schools experience a teacher turnover rate of about 20 percent per calendar year—roughly 50 percent higher than the rate in more affluent schools.

To calculate the cost of teacher attrition, the Alliance worked with Richard Ingersoll, professor of education and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to the national figure, Ingersoll also provides cost estimates for all fifty states and the District of

Columbia that range between roughly \$2 million in Delaware, Vermont, and Wyoming and up to \$235 million in Texas.

Teachers leave their profession for a variety of reasons, including inadequate administrative support, isolated working conditions, poor student discipline, low salaries, and a lack of collective teacher influence over schoolwide decisions. Turnover is especially high among new teachers, with 40 to 50 percent leaving the profession after five years, according to research cited in the report.

To curb turnover—especially among new teachers—the report recommends a comprehensive induction program comprised of multiple types of support, including high-quality mentoring, common planning times, and ongoing support from school leaders. Teachers who receive such support have higher levels of job satisfaction, rate higher in their classroom teaching practices, and are associated with higher levels of student achievement. Unfortunately, only about half of novice teachers receive mentoring from a teacher in their teaching field or have common planning time with other teachers.

The good news is that multiple initiatives are now under way to develop professional standards for beginning teachers, strengthen preparation, and shape strategies to address the developmental needs of teachers throughout their careers.

The report highlights the work of the New Teacher Center (NTC), a national nonprofit organization headquartered in Santa Cruz, California that partners with states, districts, and policymakers and has established a well-designed, evidence-based induction model for beginning teachers that increases teacher retention, improves classroom effectiveness, and advances student learning.

NTC also partners with states and districts to report data on teaching and learning conditions using its Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) survey to help states develop policies and practices that connect related factors, such as school leadership, teaching, and learning conditions, and specific educator policies.

*On the Path to Equity* cautions that policies to improve teaching effectiveness are complex and depend on individual teachers' abilities as well as the working conditions within schools. It adds that systemic approaches are needed to reverse the inequities in the distribution of teaching talent and to foster school environments that support the kind of ongoing, intensive professional learning that positively impacts student learning. To this end, the report offers five policy recommendations for states and districts:

- Require regular evaluations of teachers using multiple measures.
- Develop systems to encourage high-quality educator development and teaching.
- Require comprehensive induction programs for new teachers.
- Embed analysis and improvement of teaching and learning conditions.
- Support staff selection and professional growth systems that foster collegial collaboration.

“To fundamentally transform education and help students meet the higher performance required by the Common Core State Standards and other college- and career-ready standards, the culture of how teachers are supported must change,” said Wise. “Such a change requires new initiatives and structures to attract, develop, and retain the best teaching talent in high schools serving students with the greatest needs, as well as a system that ensures that new teachers receive comprehensive induction and access to school-based collaborative learning.”

*On the Path to Equity* includes a state-by-state breakdown detailing the number of teachers leaving the profession, as well as a low and high estimate of teacher attrition costs. It is available at <http://www.all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/path-to-equity>.