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Study finds 1 in 10 new teachers leaves after first year

To better understand the challenge of retaining beginning teachers in the profession, a new study from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) is taking a closer look at a group of 1,990 teachers hired in 2007 and 2008 to see how long they remain in the profession.

Preliminary data released in September indicate that "of the teachers who began teaching in public schools in 2007 or 2008, about 10 percent were not teaching in 2008-09, and 12 percent were not teaching in 2009-10," according to [Beginning Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results From the First Through Third Waves of the 2007-08 Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study](#).

Study author Ashley Kaiser is conducting this first-ever longitudinal study of beginning teachers' career patterns for at least five years -- historically, up to 50 percent of novice teachers leave within that time period.

Other surveys have examined attrition across the field generally. For instance, [The Condition of Education: A Closer Look 2005](#) found that 4 percent of 280,000 educators who left the profession in 1999-2000 said they decided to take another job instead of continue elementary or secondary teaching; others left due to retirement, to continue their own education, for family, or for other reasons.

Kaiser's study found that 9.9 percent of teachers who started teaching in 2007-08 left a year later, with 7.1 percent exiting the field altogether. The other 2.8 percent worked in education but not as regular K-12 teachers.

In 2009-10, a total of 12.5 percent of the original teachers in the sample had left teaching, with 5 percent moving on to education jobs outside the K-12 classroom.

Why they leave

Kaiser says that while a third of leavers each year -- 31 percent in 2008-09 and 35 percent in 2009-10 -- left due to non-renewal of contracts, the majority left for other reasons.

Historically, high-poverty schools have higher attrition rates, and teachers generally report poor working conditions, lack of support from school administrators, and students' discipline problems as the top reasons for why they leave.

The NCES study found mentoring reduced attrition rates, however. It found that 8 percent of teachers assigned a mentor in 2007-08 were not teaching a year later and 10 percent were not teaching two years later, compared to the 16 percent and 23 percent of teachers not assigned a mentor who left during those two years, respectively.

"The study confirms what we at [New Teacher Center](#) have held to be true for some while -- monies spent on high-quality, intensive induction and mentoring of our newest educators represents a sound taxpayer investment," said Eric Hirsch, NTC's chief external affairs officer.

Helping them stay

While the NCES study does not offer policy recommendations, a new [brief](#) from the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) calls for induction supports that provide coaching and guidance by well-trained mentors and increased opportunities for novice educators to collaborate with colleagues.

The recommendations are based on research conducted by Richard Ingersoll, a professor of education and sociology at the [University of Pennsylvania](#), and the induction services provided by the New Teacher Center.

Speaking at the Alliance briefing, Ingersoll explained that fewer first-year teachers leave if they have access to a combination of supports and that having a mentor who teaches the same subject and access to structured time to collaborate with colleagues have the biggest impact.

Gwendolyn Benson, an associate dean for the College of Education at [Georgia State University](#), said comprehensive induction has helped retain many of the 500 teachers the university produces annually -- 94 percent of teachers in 2009 were still teaching a year later, and 92 percent were still there two years later.

Benson said the university has used federal Teacher Quality Partnership Grants to provide induction by trained mentors from partner school districts and offer additional supports through Cross Career Learning Communities. She said CCLCs help novice teachers feel less isolated and build skills as part of a team that respects their expertise, such as on the use of technology. The CCLC teams consist of novice and veteran educators, administrators, and university faculty that work together to discuss students' work, instructional practices, and analyze data.

NTC Executive Director Ellen Moir said federal Title II, Part A dollars are the most commonly used source for induction services. She urged states to also provide funding and require at least two years of induction.

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