KEEPING TEACHERS IN TEXAS CLASSROOMS
Evidence and Insights from Across the Texas RP3 Network
Teachers are leaving Texas classrooms and we need to understand how we can retain them. In 2021-22, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported an \textit{historic high of 13.4\% of teachers exiting the profession}\cite{1}. Teacher turnover, especially at high rates over time, can harm organizational stability, instructional quality and, ultimately, students’ experiences and outcomes\cite{2}.

Researchers from the Texas Education RP3 Network found that \textit{teacher turnover is caused by a variety of factors}, including principal turnover, educator burnout, low salaries and factors related to caretaking responsibilities at school and within their home\cite{3,12}. However, \textit{some turnover is caused by factors that are more amenable to policy levers}. A recent survey of over 1,200 Texas teachers conducted by the Charles Butt Foundation found that approximately three-fourths of respondents seriously considered leaving the profession\cite{4}. Of those respondents, 97\% described \textit{positive work culture and environment as reasons to stay in the classroom}.

In another survey of San Antonio teachers and administrators, 80\% of participants considered leaving the profession, describing increased workload demands and low pay as contributing factors\cite{5}. Furthermore, Dallas Independent School District is finding \textit{strategic compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) positively affects teacher retention}\cite{6}. Recent statewide findings from TEA showed that TIA designated teachers were retained in any role nearly 3 percentage points higher compared to non-TIA designated teachers from the 2021-22 to 2022-23 school year\cite{7}. Examining what drives teachers to stay in the classroom enables us to design and implement strategies and policies to ensure that all Texas children have access to high-quality teachers.

\textbf{“Having fair compensation is important, but also feeling supported and valued by my administration is needed. Even just saying, ‘you’re doing a good job’ goes a long way.”}

Elementary school teacher, South-Central Texas
Texas Education Research-Practice-Policy Partnership (RP3) Network members from across the state share drivers of teacher turnover and retention.

Navigating dual responsibilities of caregiving at school and at home are potential consequences for whether Pre-K teachers found it feasible to remain in the profession. (Paso del Norte Partnership for Education Research)

In a survey of San Antonio teachers and administrators, participants described increased workload demands and low pay as the drivers for leaving the education profession. (UTSA Urban Education Institute)

Teacher retention could be improved by community-engaged teacher preparation models. (The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)

Rural STEM teachers are less likely to turnover relative to their peers in urban and suburban settings. (Texas Tech University, CIRCLE)

Dallas ISD’s multi-year approach to strategic compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment has yielded impressive results with the district retaining over 90% of its most effective teachers. (Commit Partnership)

Researchers are exploring the formation of mentoring relationships and mentor learning in the context of a university-based induction program. (UT Austin, College of Education)

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**State Policy**
Change school finance formulas so districts can provide positive working conditions and competitive salaries to teachers.

**Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)**
Develop and refine induction programs to support new teachers through mentoring and coaching.

**District Leaders**
Build the capacity of school leaders and refine approaches to teacher mentoring and compensation strategies.
TEACHER TURNOVER & RETENTION: Emerging Research Across the Network

Solving staffing challenges in Texas requires understanding how to increase teacher retention. Multiple variables shape retention, including coaching and mentoring, school culture/leadership, agency/autonomy and teachers’ self-efficacy. Additionally, teachers need sufficient preparation in order to ensure retention.

While teacher mobility has been stable for most of the last decade, small increases of movement can be seen starting with the 2020-2021 school year. A recent survey from the Charles Butt Foundation found that 77% of teachers had considered leaving the profession in 2022, an increase of 19% from 2020. Of those considering leaving education, 93% had taken concrete steps toward pursuing other careers. These more recent findings indicate teacher mobility and attrition will increase in the coming years.

**Teacher Demographics**
Rural STEM teachers are less likely to turnover relative to their peers in urban and suburban settings.

STEM teachers prepared via traditional university-based preparation pathways have the lowest turnover rates in the first five years of teaching compared to teachers prepared through other pathways such as alternative certification.

*Gottlieb and colleagues (2023), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Urban Education Institute*

**Teacher Stress and Well-being**
Pre-K teachers interviewed about their stress and well being expressed being burdened by navigating the dual responsibilities of caregiving at school and at home as a potential cause for leaving the profession.

*Wiltshire, C. A., Fields, H., & Kim, S. (2023), Paso del Norte Partnership for Education Research*

**Teacher Working Conditions**
In a survey of San Antonio teachers and administrators, 80% of the respondents reported considering leaving the education profession in 2022, citing increased workload demands and low pay as the primary reasons.

*Victor and colleagues (2023), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Urban Education Institute*
Teacher retention in Texas is influenced by a variety of factors.

**Teacher Pay**
Dallas ISD’s Teacher Excellence Initiative to strategic compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment has yielded impressive results with the district retaining over 90% of its most effective teachers.


**Teacher Characteristics**
A series of studies showed that recruiting teachers with formal training in education is important for teacher retention and is associated with better student achievement, attendance and reduction in disciplinary referral rates, especially for Black and Hispanic students.

*Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC), Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University*

**Educator Preparation**
In a recent study that followed teachers over a nine-year period, university-certified teachers had a 24% higher retention rate than alternatively certified teachers and students performed better when they had a university-certified teacher.

*Texas Educator Preparation Pathways Study (2022), The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education*

**Educator Preparation**
According to the interviews of 32 local educators and community advocates in the Rio Grande Valley, teacher retention could be improved by leveraging community-engaged teacher preparation that prioritizes teacher candidates’ relationships with students and their families.

*Badenhorst and colleagues (2023), The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley*
TEACHER TURNOVER & RETENTION: Emerging Promising Practices from Across the Network

Designing policy and practices that improve teacher retention and reduce teacher turnover is challenging due to the complex nature of the issues. Fortunately, several policy options that are grounded in research suggest working conditions, pay and preparation all play a role in a teacher’s decision to stay in the classroom. Depending on the proposed solution, these policies may be incentivized and supported by the legislature or adopted by individual districts and campuses.

"As a principal, I know that establishing and maintaining high expectations and accountability for teachers is what is needed to ensure students achieve at the highest level possible. While we want to continue to increase capacity in teachers, these pressures can become difficult to balance. Maintaining accountability and expectations while still being in tune with feelings and mindset is key to retaining highly effective teachers."

School Administrator, West Texas
Table 1. RP3 members share potential solutions and implications for improving teacher retention across the state.

### Teacher Working Conditions

| Potential Solution: | Implementation Strategy: The **E3 Alliance** is developing a shared governance model with one of their partner districts that aims to positively affect the workplace culture by focusing on designing expectations for teachers. This model could address many workplace satisfaction and school culture issues that teachers cite as reasons to leave a campus or district.  

**Question to consider:** How are these models addressing the workplace satisfaction and school culture issues that teachers cite as reasons to leave a given campus or district?

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### Teacher Compensation

| Potential Solution: | Implementation Strategy: Several network members, including **Texas Tech University’s CIRCLE**, are exploring the impact of the HB3 Teacher Incentive Allotment on teacher retention in Texas.  

**Questions to consider:** How do the TIA’s effects compare across a more extensive range of school districts?  

What is the impact of TIA on student success?

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### Educator Preparation & Early Career Support

| Potential Solution: | Implementation Strategy: Dr. Wetzel, Dr. Maloch and colleagues at UT Austin are exploring the formation of mentoring relationships and mentor learning in the context of a university-developed induction program. [13, 14]  

**Question to consider:** How can district and school leaders create positive, supportive conditions for teachers using existing resources?

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Potential Solution:  
Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)  
Induction Programs to Support New Teachers
TAKE ACTION: Network Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Research

Understanding the research and leveraging promising practices that lead to systemic improvement across the state are vital for ensuring teacher retention. Actionable recommendations for state administrators, educator preparation programs, district leaders and researchers for improving teacher retention across the state follow:

Key Recommendations for Retaining Educators

State Policy

- Policymakers could consider ways to ensure that hard-to-staff rural and urban schools have adequate resources and incentives to recruit and retain effective teachers, which might include scholarship programs, reduced cost for certification exams, incentive pay, housing and travel vouchers, and classroom resources.

- State administrators could play a role in designing, evaluating, and promoting different models of new teacher and principal support, like required induction and coaching programs found in other states [15], to reduce churn and increase stability, contributing to positive outcomes for schools and students.

- State policy and resources could also encourage Education Service Centers to develop professional learning communities for school district human resources and talent management administrators to boost the knowledge and skills of these district leaders for recruiting, hiring and retaining effective educators.

Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)

- Work with district partners to develop induction programs that are more attentive to the unique contexts and working conditions of nearby schools and to ensure teachers are not only Day 1 ready but are also coached and mentored during their initial years in the profession.

- Partner with principal preparation programs to ensure administrators are aware of innovative practices to induct teachers and create healthy working conditions.

District Leaders

- District leaders can create opportunities to retain and support teachers though engaging in continuous improvement techniques to collect evidence on and then refine approaches to new teacher mentoring and compensation strategies.

- Build capacity of school leaders (e.g., principals, instructional coaches) to create positive working conditions and deliver targeted, ongoing support to teachers.

Researchers

- Using longitudinal data, identify districts and schools with high rates of teacher retention and student achievement outcomes for more in-depth qualitative analysis to understand positive working conditions.

- Researchers can conduct teacher turnover studies that are more attentive to locale and context to provide greater insight into how geographic location, student demographics, and other district and school variables influence teacher retention.

- Examine whether teachers are being tasked with additional roles and responsibilities, including counseling, substitute teaching and bus driving. Shining a light on these patterns matters because it helps leaders, reformers, advocates and researchers understand teacher working conditions as well as labor market issues across the state’s numerous contexts.
REFERENCES


Jessica Gottlieb is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Leadership, & Counseling. Dr. Gottlieb previously worked as a classroom teacher in Los Angeles, CA. Her research focuses on how educational policy can be used to improve access to high-quality education opportunities through a focus on teacher preparation and teacher retention.

Sarah Woulfin is an associate professor of educational leadership and policy at the University of Texas at Austin and a fellow of the L.D. Haskew Centennial Professorship in Public School Administration. Her research uses lenses of organizational theory and qualitative methods to understand how district and school leaders implement instructional reform.

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ABOUT RP3 NETWORK

The Texas Education Research-Practice-Policy Partnership Network is a network of existing regional partnerships between colleges of education, education nonprofits and education systems that are advancing research rooted in authentic engagement with community members and focused on urgent and timely problems of practice and policy identified locally. The RP3 Network is a coordinated statewide effort to accelerate and amplify these existing regional efforts to generate and translate the knowledge, tools and experiences needed to change practice, reform policy and transform education systems at scale.

Emerging Evidence provides research and data from RP3 Network members and their community partners on urgent and timely problems of practice and policy with recommendations for actions to improve educational outcomes across Texas.

HOW TO CITE THIS WORK
