2020 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Recruitment and retention

Recruiting and retaining a diverse, high-quality teaching corps

Minnesota is facing a shortage of qualified educators that will only get worse if the Legislature fails to respond with policies that attract and retain more teachers, particularly teachers of color.

The evidence is indisputable. Rural districts can't find enough teachers of all kinds. Substitute teachers are in short supply everywhere. Even metro districts report difficulty hiring teachers for students with special needs or to teach math and science classes. There are far too few teachers of color for Minnesota's rapidly diversifying student population and teachers of color leave the profession at a rate of 24 percent higher than their white colleagues.

The shortage has two causes. Too many teachers are leaving the profession before retirement age and too few young people are going into teaching in the first place. Education Minnesota supports a package of policies to address both retention and recruitment.

The “2019 Report of Teacher Supply and Demand in Minnesota’s Public Schools” was released January 2019 by the Minnesota Department of Education. The report shows several trends that threaten the quality of education in Minnesota's public schools.

• The number of teachers reported as leaving their positions has increased 56.8 percent since 2008-09. Resignations for personal or unspecified reasons are by far the most common reason teachers leave their jobs, surpassing retirements, promotions, transfers to other schools, layoffs or terminations for performance.

• Hiring officials said teacher shortages are a problem. About 41.9 percent of districts reported it is a major problem and 51.8 percent said it is minor problem. Compared to five years ago, more than half reported there are significantly fewer applicants and one-third said it is a minor problem.

• The percentage of teachers of color remains stagnant while the percentage of students of color continues to grow.

• The most difficult to hire positions continue to be in special education, math, science and rural schools.

• Schools are finding it more difficult to hire short-term and long-term substitutes than reported in recent years.

Recruitment

• Create programs to promote the teaching profession to high school students, with an emphasis on reaching students of color.

• Design and foster grow-your-own programs aimed at candidates of color who already work in education.

• Provide resources so school districts and teacher training institutes can create new programs to recruit a racially-diverse workforce of future educators.

• Give student teachers a stipend.

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• Provide additional financial support to attract highly-qualified teachers, including higher starting salaries and effective loan forgiveness programs. Additional incentives should be considered, including housing assistance for recruiting teachers in rural schools and high-needs schools.

Retention
• Fund robust induction and teacher mentoring programs, especially for teachers of color who often feel isolated in their schools.
• Increase support for teacher autonomy so teachers are empowered to meet the changing needs of their students.
• Provide additional financial benefits to all current educators with additional incentives for educators of color. New educators earn about 20 percent less than those with a college degree in other fields and the gap widens to roughly 30 percent by midcareer.
• Invest in quality professional development for all educators. Provide additional resources to allow educators of color to seek professional development for their unique needs.
• Provide additional resources for school districts to hire more student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications,
• Expanding mental health services and trauma-informed practices for students to ensure all schools are safe and welcoming places for students and educators to learn and work.
• Fully fund special education so districts can adopt appropriate caseload and hire more staff to better meet the needs of students. Additionally, decrease the paperwork and unnecessary stress on educators who work with students with special needs.
• Encourage and support Tier 1, 2 and 3 teachers in moving to Tier 4, the highest state standard for teachers.

Resignations from education: Top reason teachers leave