

Review of Teacher Incentive Programs

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In the following report, Hanover Research reviews the literature on teacher incentive policies, specifically as they relate to recruitment and retention in high-needs schools. The report provides an in-depth assessment of current research and then moves into a discussion of successful teacher incentive programs.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of research identifying teacher quality as a central determinant of student outcomes, programs have been created to incentivize teacher recruitment, retention, and performance. Generally, these strategies can be classified as either financial incentives or workplace incentives. The following report provides insight into both approaches to teacher incentives and explores the relevant research supporting each. Specific attention is paid to how these programs impact teacher retention in high-need schools. The report comprises the following sections:

- **Section I** provides an overview of incentive programs and assesses their impact on several key outcomes, including teacher recruitment and retention and student achievement.
- **Section II** explores several exemplary incentive programs and identifies key drivers of their success.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Research suggests that incentive programs are most effective when implemented as part of a broader, holistic retention strategy, rather than as standalone initiatives.** Compensation is not the only, or even primary, consideration teachers take into account in their decisions regarding where to work. Many identify workplace conditions as main priorities. Common teacher-identified priorities include: strong principals, skilled and supportive colleagues, adequate resources for teaching, smaller student loads, autonomy, and high-quality professional development. Such factors should be incorporated into incentive programs geared toward recruitment and retention.
- **Individual pay-for-performance models have been shown to positively impact student performance.** Several studies have shown that when teachers' pay is linked to students' academic outcomes, achievement increases. However, some researchers have noted that individual merit pay has negative consequences for teacher collaboration and commitment. In addition, financial incentives must be carefully gauged, so that they are neither too easy nor too difficult to attain.
- **While transfer incentives may be effective in persuading quality teachers to work in high-need schools, money alone is typically not enough to retain them.** Signing and retention bonuses work to encourage teachers to move to high-needs schools. Indeed, one study demonstrated that teacher retention during the payment period can be significantly higher than average. However, at the end of the payment period, retention will likely return to its previous rate, suggesting that purely financial incentives are not sufficient to retain teachers in challenging settings.

- **Research indicates that mentoring and induction programs are promising workplace incentives that may help to improve teacher retention.** Though little conclusive research exists on the topic, early indicators suggest that these programs can work to reduce teacher turnover and attrition. Similarly, career ladders present an under-researched opportunity to increase teacher engagement and, in turn, improve retention rates.
- **Districts that have experienced success in recruiting and retaining high-performing teachers have typically embedded incentives within more comprehensive reform efforts.** The Hamilton County Department of Education (TN) has combined financial and workplace incentives to encourage teachers to work in high-needs schools. D.C. Public Schools utilizes a pay-for-performance system that incorporates a career ladder. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC) has implemented a Strategic Staffing Initiative, which incorporates financial incentives into a broader initiative geared toward fostering a positive working environment in high-need schools.

SECTION I: TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Experts point to teacher quality as the single most important determinant of student academic achievement. In his seminal 1991 study, Ferguson found overwhelming evidence to support the centrality of teacher quality, as measured by certification exam results, experience levels, and master's degrees, to students' academic outcomes.¹ In fact:²

The effects were so strong, and the variations in teacher expertise so great, that after controlling for socioeconomic status, the large disparities in achievement between black and white students were almost entirely accounted for by differences in the qualifications of their teachers.

Despite the widespread recognition of the need to recruit and retain quality instructors, studies show that the most qualified educators are not working with the populations who need them most. In addition, teacher turnover is higher at low-performing, low-income schools with large minority populations.³

Ample research has been conducted to address the factors driving high teacher turnover and attrition at low-performing schools, finding that these problems stems mainly from dissatisfaction with compensation and working environment. Studies show that salary plays a large role in teachers' decisions to enter and remain in the profession. Similarly, teachers often identify working conditions as key factors in their decisions regarding which schools to teach in. In this vein, teachers "identify low salaries and the organization's working conditions (e.g., a lack of support, lack of resources, high teacher to student ratios, student discipline issues) as most often shaping their decisions to leave their schools, or the profession."⁴ Districts attempting to recruit and retain qualified teachers often turn to incentive programs as a means to address these primary concerns.

The subsections that follow address both economic and workplace incentive programs through an assessment of relevant literature. Where possible, Hanover highlights quantitative data linking particular policies to student achievement and teacher retention outcomes. However, such data are relatively sparse and not always conclusive. The section concludes with policy recommendations to consider when creating teacher incentive programs.

¹ Ferguson, R.F. 1991. Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters." *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, 28(2), 465-498.

² Ibid., cited in Adamson, F. and L. Darling-Hammond. "Funding Disparities and the Inadequate Distribution of Teachers: Evaluating Sources and Solutions." *Education Policy Analysis*, 20:37, November 19, 2012. p. 9. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ990114.pdf>

³ Allen, et al. "Eight Questions on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What Does the Research Say? A Summary of the Findings." Education Commission of the States, 2005. p. 3 – 4. <http://www.ecs.org/html/educationIssues/TeachingQuality/TRRreport/home/TRRreportSummary.pdf>

⁴ Amrein-Beardsley, A. "Recruiting Expert Teachers into High-Needs Schools: Leadership, Money, and Colleagues." *Education Policy Analysis*, 20:27, September 10, 2012. p. 3. <http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/2750/275022797027.pdf>

FINANCIAL INCENTIVE POLICIES

Financial incentives are among the most common approaches for addressing staffing and performance issues. These initiatives typically address teacher recruitment, retention, and performance. In targeting the two former areas, economic incentives are premised on the assumption that additional compensation can induce teachers to accept jobs they may otherwise not be inclined to accept (e.g. low-income schools, high priority subjects, at-risk populations).⁵ With regard to the latter focus area, the underlying justifications for fiscal inducements are that teachers work harder and their compensation is more “fair” if they are paid on the basis of performance. These policies also allow teachers to earn more money for effective service, even if they cannot, for a variety of reasons, earn a pay increase.⁶

The varied justifications for and applications of economic incentives have given rise to “a heterogeneous set of human resource policies that vary in both their design and implementation.”⁷ In their typology of economic incentive policies, Kolbe and Strunk outline six key incentive categories, presented in Figure 1.1. Beyond the standard salary bonus, such programs may also incorporate student loan forgiveness, in-kind payments, and tuition tax credits, among others. However varied, all use economic inducements to increase the supply of qualified teachers, recruit for hard to fill positions, and promote teacher retention.⁸

Studies show that salary plays a key role in teachers’ decisions to enter and remain in the profession.

⁵ Kolbe, T. and K. Strunk. “Economic Incentives as a Strategy for Responding to Teacher Staffing Problems: A Typology of Policies and Practices.” *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48:5, December 2012. p. 5.

http://www.uscrossier.org/ceg/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Kolbe_Strunk_Economic-Incentives_EAQ_2012.pdf

⁶ Firestone, W. and J. Pennell. “Teacher Commitment, Working Conditions, and Differential Incentive Policies.” *Review of Educational Research*, 63:4, Winter 1993. p. 511.

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/214115966/A29411890CD0423CPQ/3?accountid=132487>

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸ Kolbe and Strunk, *Op. cit.*, p. 13 – 14.

Figure 1.1: Example Financial Incentive Policies

INCENTIVE CATEGORIES	EXAMPLE POLICY TYPES
Salary schedule modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-mandated minimum salary levels • Across-the-board salary increases • Alternative salary schedules • “Frontloaded” or “backloads” salary schedules
Salary enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary credits • Additional pay for teaching in geographic – or subject – shortage areas • Additional pay for certifications or credentials • Additional pay for extra responsibilities • Tax waivers and credits • Transportation subsidies
Limited duration incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing bonuses • Relocation incentives • Credential or certification bonuses • Performance-based rewards • Loan forgiveness • Home ownership assistance
Education- and training-related incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition subsidies and remission • Pre-service teacher scholarships and stipends • Alternative routes to teacher certification • Tuition tax credits
In-kind incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing assistance • Subsidized meals • Access to local amenities
Retirement benefit waivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return-to-work policies • Deferred retirement

Source: Kolbe and Strunk⁹

The bulk of research on economic incentives focuses on merit-based pay systems and transfer incentives. Hanover explores each of these models in depth below.

MERIT-BASED PAY

Much of the discourse surrounding economic incentives is focused on merit pay, or pay-for-performance, systems. In such systems, teachers are offered additional compensation or bonuses, which are dependent on achieving specific student achievement goals. Bonuses may be awarded according to goals set for individual teachers or may require groups of teachers or an entire school to reach collective goals. Despite the fact that many states have implemented pay-for-performance models, the research linking these efforts to student achievement is largely inconclusive. To the extent that there is consensus, research suggests that individual teacher incentives may be more effective than collective incentives in improving student academic gains.

One of the largest, most statistically rigorous studies reviewed for this analysis finds a positive correlation between individual financial incentives and student test scores. Figlio

⁹ Table contents quoted from: Kolbe and Strunk, Op. cit., p. 9.

and Kenny used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) and an original survey conducted in 2000 to shed light on the relationship between individual financial incentives and student outcomes. The researchers found that these incentives had a significant positive impact on student learning, as measured by standardized tests, in middle- and low-income schools. However, there was no significant effect in high-income schools. Though the gains were small, they were comparable to those achieved through other proposed interventions.¹⁰ Figlio and Kenny are careful to note alternative explanations for their study's results – namely, that schools implementing merit-based systems may be more innovative and open to new techniques, which can also account for academic gains. They also point out that financial incentives must be used judiciously in order to be effective. When merit pay is distributed indiscriminately, there is no measurable effect on student outcomes.¹¹

An earlier meta-analysis conducted by Firestone and Pennell examined differential incentive programs and their impact on teacher commitment. Firestone and Pennell determine that individual financial incentives are detrimental to teacher collaboration and undermine teachers' commitment to their job due to perceptions of *fairness* in distribution.¹² When individual incentive programs evaluate teacher performance in order to allocate rewards, educators tend to find fault with the measures of performance. For instance, when rewards are based on observation, teachers may claim observer bias; when rewards are based on standardized test results, teachers may argue that scores are impacted by factors outside of their control, such as innate student ability, family background, or socioeconomic status. These concerns regarding the fairness of evaluation can cause teacher performance to suffer.¹³ Similarly, selective incentive programs increase competition among teachers for rewards and may therefore negatively impact collaboration.¹⁴

An alternative to individual pay-for-performance models is the collective model, in which groups of teachers must meet predetermined student achievement goals in order to receive financial rewards.

An alternative to individual pay-for-performance models is the collective model, in which groups of teachers within a school or district must meet predetermined student achievement goals in order to receive financial rewards. The evidence supporting these incentives is limited. A 2011 study examined North Carolina's school bonus system, which awards teachers up to \$1,500 each if the standardized test scores of the *entire school* improve by a predetermined amount. The researchers used school-level data from 1999 to 2002 to evaluate the impact of the system. The results showed that teachers took 0.6 fewer sick days on average and that test scores rose 1.3 percent of a standard deviation in reading

¹⁰ Figlio, D. and L. Kenny. "Individual Teacher Incentives and Student Performance." *Journal of Public Economics*, 91, June 2007. p. 912 – 913. http://www.nber.org/papers/w12627.pdf?new_window=1

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 913.

¹² Firestone and Pennell, *Op. cit.*, p. 513.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

and 0.9 percent of a standard deviation in math.¹⁵ Based on these results, the researchers conclude that “compared to other popular education reforms, such as reduced class sizes, incentives provide more than four times the amount of student improvement per dollar spent.”¹⁶ It is, however, important to note that this study has several significant limitations. Chief among them are the fact that no randomized trial was conducted as part of the program evaluation. Therefore, due to demographic shifts and population growth in the state, it is very difficult to attribute learning trends directly to the bonus program.

On the other hand, several rigorous studies have shown *no* positive correlation between collective bonus programs and student outcomes. Goodman and Turner conducted a randomized controlled trial in 200 New York City public schools from 2007 to 2009 to

Some districts offer signing or retention bonuses to “expert teachers” who agree to teach in challenging schools or under-staffed subjects.

determine the impact of a group-based incentive pay initiative which awarded approximately \$3,000 to each teacher in schools that met certain student achievement goals. They found that the program had no significant impact on learners’ performance in math or reading.¹⁷ The authors attribute this to “free-riding” among teachers who, because there was little monitoring or individual accountability for group goals, may not have put in the requisite effort to improve student test scores.¹⁸

Another study, conducted by RAND, investigated bonus pay for school-based teacher teams in nine Round Rock Independent School District (TX) middle schools over the course of two years. Teams were awarded bonuses between \$3,800 and \$5,000 for student standardized test gains in mathematics, English, language arts, science, and social studies. Again, researchers found no significant relationship between student achievement and team bonuses.¹⁹ However, the study also found that teachers in both the control and study groups did not understand and/or had misgivings about the program. These findings indicate limited utility in collective pay-for-performance models and highlight the importance of teacher understanding and “buy-in” for such programs.

¹⁵ Ahn, T. and J. Vigdor. “Making Teacher Incentives Work: Lessons from North Carolina’s Teacher Bonus Program.” American Enterprise Institute, June 28, 2011. <http://www.aei.org/outlook/education/k-12/making-teacher-incentives-work-outlook/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Goodman, S. and L. Turner. “Teacher Incentive Pay and Educational Outcomes: Evidence from the NYC Bonus Program.” Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Paper Series, May 2010. p. 13. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED513540.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1 – 2.

¹⁹ “No Evidence That Incentive Pay for Teacher Teams Improves Student Outcomes: Results From a Randomized Trial.” RAND Education, 2012. p. 2. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/2012/RAND_RB9649.pdf

INCENTIVIZING HIGH-NEEDS TEACHING POSITIONS

There is a significant body of evidence suggesting that teachers make decisions about where to work based in large part on salary considerations. This knowledge informs many of the financial incentive programs in place to retain educators in high-needs positions. These initiatives typically offer signing bonuses or retention bonuses to “expert teachers” who agree to teach in challenging schools or under-staffed subjects. The evidence to support such programs’ efficacy is limited, though it does highlight several important conclusions.

One widely-cited study, commissioned by the Institute of Education Sciences, examined the impact of financial incentives on quality teacher recruitment and retention. The investigation focused on implementation of the Talent Transfer Initiative (TTI) in seven school districts over the course of one academic year (2009-2010). TTI uses a value-added model to identify top teachers in a district. Program officers contact these teachers and offer them the chance to transfer to a low-performing school in their district in exchange for \$20,000 paid over a two-year period. Exceptional teachers already working in under-performing schools are offered a \$10,000 retention bonus paid over two years. Of the 1,000 effective teachers identified, 63 earned positions within the TTI (there were 70 spots that needed to be filled). These results indicate that, while excellent teachers can be enticed to teach in high-need schools by financial incentives, a large pool of candidates is needed to fill all vacancies.²⁰ The researchers followed up with TTI teachers after one, two, and three years and found that, during the two-year payment period teacher retention was higher than average retention in the district (93 versus 70 percent). However, once the payments stopped, TTI retention dropped to numbers on par with district averages.²¹

Overall, the research on transfer or retention incentives in high-needs schools is fairly sparse. Available research points to the limitations of such approaches, suggesting that financial incentives may not work in the long-term to retain quality teachers at challenging schools. Adamson and Darling-Hammond make the salient point that “many of the solutions offered for the inequitable distribution of teachers have been rendered less effective by large inequalities in school resources that translate into widely disparate teacher salaries and working conditions.”²² While transfer bonuses may work in the short-term, they do not do enough to overcome sizeable salary and workplace disparities that currently exist between high- and low-income schools.

²⁰ Glazerman, et al. “Moving High-Performing Teachers: Implementation of Transfer Incentives in Seven Districts.” Institute of Education Sciences, April 2012. p. 67. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20124051/pdf/20124051.pdf>

²¹ Glazerman, et al. “Transfer Incentives for High-Performing Teachers: Final Results from a Multisite Randomized Experiment – Executive Summary.” Institute of Educational Sciences, November 2013. http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/education/tti_high_perform_teachers_es.pdf

²² Adamson and Darling-Hammond, Op. cit., p. 33.

WORKPLACE INCENTIVE POLICIES

Despite an overwhelming policy focus on financial incentives, much of the literature on teacher recruitment and retention, especially in high-need schools, indicates that monetary concerns are not the only, or even primary, factor in teacher decision-making. A 2009 *Education Week* piece describes an emerging focus on how workplace conditions play into educators' decisions about where to teach.²³

As states and districts increasingly explore tactics like performance-based pay, incentive programs, and bonuses to attract the best teachers to troubled schools, experts contend that such programs are unlikely to succeed over the long haul unless officials simultaneously work to improve school conditions and leadership capacity in these schools.

Indeed, mounting evidence highlights the centrality of working conditions to teachers' decisions to move to or remain in high-needs schools. For instance, a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) survey of certified teachers conducted in 2005 found that financial incentives alone were not enough to entice teachers to high-need schools. Factors such as quality leadership, positive staff relationships, and supportive parents played important roles in teachers' decision-making.²⁴

Similarly, a large-scale study of California teachers found that the top reasons for teacher attrition were inadequate systems, bureaucratic impediments, and lack of collegial support. The study found that compensation was important to teachers, but unless the school environment was conducive to teaching, higher compensation would not improve retention.²⁵ Research conducted in Alabama schools indicated that 39.2 percent of teachers considered "supportive school leadership" the most important factor in deciding to remain or leave a school. Significantly fewer teachers, 21.9 percent, listed "salary and benefits" as their primary consideration.²⁶

A California study found that compensation was important to teachers, but unless the school environment was conducive to effective teaching, higher compensation would not improve retention.

While significant evidence points to the importance of workplace conditions in teacher recruitment and retention, little work has been done to rigorously evaluate workplace

²³ Sawchuk, S. "Incentives Alone Not Enough to Prod Teacher Effectiveness." *Education Week*, 29:8, October 21, 2009. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/202761436/A8B8D578186D4A5EPQ/23?accountid=132487P>

²⁴ Berry, B., M. Rasberry, and A. Williams. "Recruiting and Retaining Quality Teachers for High-Needs Schools: Insights from NBCT Summits and Other Policy Initiatives." National Strategy Forum, 2007. p. 5. http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_nationalstrategyforumreport.pdf

²⁵ Futernick, K. "A Possible Dream: Retaining California Teachers So All Students Learn – Executive Summary." Center for Teacher Quality, 2007. p. 3. https://www.calstate.edu/teacherquality/documents/possible_dream_exec.pdf

²⁶ Hirsch, E. "Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Alabama: Educators on What It Will Take to Staff All Classrooms with Quality Teachers." Center for Teaching Quality, February 2006. p. 11. http://www.teachingquality.org/sites/default/files/al_recruitretain_0.pdf

incentive policies or even to determine the most important aspects of school environment.²⁷ However, some of the most frequent teacher-identified priorities include: strong principals, skilled and supportive colleagues, adequate resources for teaching, smaller student loads, teacher autonomy, and high-quality professional development.²⁸ Specific to high-needs schools, specialized preparation for teaching in challenging schools, support from more experienced teachers, and opportunities to connect with students outside of the classroom are important inducements.²⁹

CAREER LADDERS AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

Only a few incentive programs exist to address workplace supports for recruiting and retaining teachers for high-needs schools. These programs focus on making work engaging and rewarding for teachers through career ladders, and on providing support and professional development for teachers through mentoring and induction programs. Career ladders are based on a series of positions with increasing responsibility. As teachers progress through career ladders, they take on a variety of roles, including administrative duties, curriculum development, and mentoring, among others. This system incentivizes retention through the opportunity to take on more fulfilling and diverse work.³⁰ In addition, many programs couple increased responsibility with increased compensation. Though little quantitative work has been done to evaluate the impact of career ladders on teacher retention, there is some evidence to suggest that these programs may positively impact teacher engagement and sense of efficacy. According to Firestone and Pennell, “teachers in these career ladder schools report higher morale, commitment, satisfaction, and sense of efficacy.”³¹ However, schools should be careful not to assign too many additional tasks to teachers in career ladder programs, as this may lead to “job overload” and actually deter teachers from moving up the ladder.³²

Mentoring and induction programs have been evaluated more extensively, though these results should be interpreted cautiously, due to the many difficult-to-measure aspects of the programs. For instance, few studies have examined the relationship between hard-to-define aspects of mentoring programs – such as program quality, mentor commitment, or leadership support – and teacher retention outcomes. In addition, since most investigations use teacher reports of efficacy to inform their results, the presence of individual bias is a significant concern.³³ Despite these limitations, the studies that have been conducted thus

²⁷ Allen et al., Op. cit., p. 4 – 5.

²⁸ Berry, Rasberry, and Williams, Op. cit., p. 5, 14.; Guarino, C., L. Santibanez, and G. Daley. “Teacher Recruitment and Retention: A Review of the Recent Empirical Literature.” *Review of Educational Research*, 76:2, Summer 2006. p. 197 – 198. Retrieved from ProQuest.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁰ Firestone and Pennell, Op. cit., p. 511.

³¹ Ibid., p. 516.

³² Ibid., p. 516.

³³ Waterman, S. and Y. He. “Effects of Mentoring Programs on New Teacher Retention: A Literature Review.” *Mentoring & Tutoring*, 19:2, 2011. p. 149.
http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/board_initiatives/education_improvement_taskforce/06-21-13/Waterman%20Ye%20He%202011.pdf

far are able to provide useful insights into general connections between mentoring programs and teacher retention.

Smith and Ingersoll completed a study in 2004 using 1990-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) data to evaluate the impact of mentoring and induction programs on new teacher retention nationally. They found that these programs did, in fact, impact new teacher retention. The researchers found that having a mentor in one's field reduced the risk of attrition by 30 percent, though it did not impact the probability that a new teacher would change schools at the end of the year. Common planning time and structured collaboration periods with fellow teachers reduced the risk of attrition by 43 percent. Supportive communication with principals and administrators was another factor cited as an effective practice, though its impact was not statistically significant.³⁴ The predicted probability of new teacher turnover is depicted in Figure 1.2 on the next page. In general, the more supports offered during a teachers' first year, the more likely they are to remain in a school.

A recent meta-analysis conducted by Waterman and He explored research published on the effects of mentoring and induction programs published since 2005. The researchers identified 14 studies that met the criteria for review: five supported links between mentoring programs and retention, three inferred a connection, two found no connection, and the final three reported mixed findings.³⁵ Two of the most statistically rigorous studies reported no connection between comprehensive mentoring programs (including trained mentors, school support, professional development, and frequent interactions between mentors and mentees) and retention. Despite these results, both reports conclude that mentoring has the capacity to support new teachers.³⁶

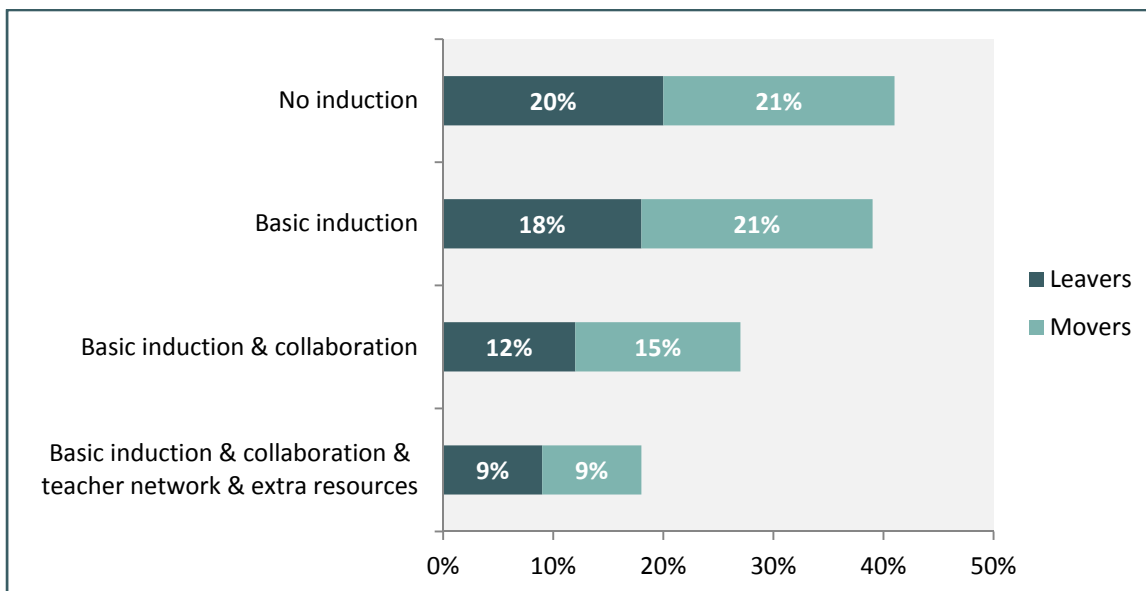
In general, the more supports offered during a teachers' first year, the more likely they are to remain in a school.

³⁴ Smith, T. and T. Ingersoll. "What Are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?" *American Educational Research Journal*, 41:3, Autumn 2004. p. 703 – 704.
<http://n3v3rl4nd.wikispaces.com/file/view/Smith+%26+Ingersoll+2004.pdf>

³⁵ Waterman and He, Op. cit., p. 147.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 148.

Figure 1.2: Predicted Probability of Turnover after First Year of Teaching, by Induction “Packages”



Source: Smith and Ingersoll³⁷

NEA/CTQ SUGGESTED WORKPLACE POLICIES FOR TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In the absence of sufficient research to inform best practices, Hanover turns to expert suggestions regarding workplace policies to recruit and retain effective teachers. The 2005 National Board Certified Teacher Policy Summit brought together over 2,000 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) and leading policymakers to examine recruitment and retention efforts. The goal of the summit was to develop a set of policy recommendations to inform schools' recruitment and retention efforts. The National Education Association (NEA) and Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) compiled the results and identified five main guidelines:³⁸

- **Transform the teaching and learning conditions in high-needs schools.** Leaders should ensure that teachers in high-needs schools have the necessary resources to teach their students (universal pre-school, social service supports, technological tools, etc.) and that class sizes are manageable. According to the teachers, “many NBCT’s would teach in a high-needs school if they had a reasonable student load.”³⁹ They feel that high stakes testing and incentives based on test scores are not the best way to gauge student or teacher performance. Moving to a high-needs district would pose additional challenges to meeting performance goals, and therefore bonuses would be more difficult to earn. NBCTs also called on schools to give teachers more time during the work week to collaborate with colleagues.
- **Prepare and support teachers for the specific challenges posed by working in high-needs schools.** Special skills, such as community knowledge or training in culturally

³⁷ Smith and Ingersoll, Op. cit., p. 705.

³⁸ Bullets quoted with some modifications from: Berry, Rasberry, and Williams, Op. cit., p. 6 – 14.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

- responsive teaching, are needed for work with high-needs students. Therefore, teachers entering these workplaces should receive specialized skills training and ongoing, effective professional development. They also call on leaders to pay more attention to new teacher mentoring and induction programs. These should be thoughtfully developed and supported by school administrators.⁴⁰
- **Recruit and develop administrators who can draw on the expertise of specially-prepared teacher leaders.** The summit highlighted the importance of supportive school leaders who are not threatened by teachers' leadership potential and allow teachers some flexibility in curriculum and lesson-design. Accomplished teachers "do not want to teach in a school where their expertise is not valued and respected."⁴¹ Schools should provide avenues for experienced teachers to take on leadership roles and use their expertise to benefit schools (e.g. help with curriculum design, create impactful student assessments, reach out to parents).⁴²
 - **Create a menu of recruitment incentives, but focus on growing teaching expertise within high-needs schools.** Policymakers should not take a "silver bullet" approach to teacher recruitment and retention, but should instead provide a menu of incentives to address different teacher needs. They should also support emerging talent already in high-needs schools by encouraging these teachers to become board certified. The recommendations note that "financial rewards are needed to entice teachers to tough schools, but a large menu of incentives will be necessary to attract and retain the best ones."⁴³
 - **Build awareness among policymakers, practitioners, and the public about the importance of National Board Certification for high-needs schools.** School leaders must recognize the skills and knowledge base of NBCTs in order to take advantage of them effectively. NBCTs are strategically equipped to take on leadership roles, mentor other teachers, assist in professional development, and contribute many other ways. Principals and superintendents need to recognize this.⁴⁴

While several of these recommendations are obviously informed by teacher preferences, such as de-linking merit-based pay from standardized test scores or referencing NBCTs in leadership roles, the composite list provides actionable insights from the people most impacted by recruitment and retention programs.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 7 – 8.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴² Ibid., p. 9.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

SECTION II: SUCCESSFUL TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

HAMILTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

In 2000 the Hamilton County Department of Education, located in Chattanooga, TN, had nine of the 20 worst performing elementary schools in the state. In an effort to improve performance, these schools were targeted for a teacher transfer program, which would recruit the district's top educators to work in its highest-need schools. The program, dubbed the Benwood Initiative, was the product of collaboration between the Hamilton County Department of Education, the Benwood Foundation, and the Public Education Foundation (PEF). This particular incentive program is unique due to its diversity of incentives and supports, and its efficacy in improving student achievement and teacher retention. In fact, the district's efforts were hailed by the NEA as "the most powerful effort to staff high-needs schools" in its 2006 report on recruiting and retaining teachers.⁴⁵ The Benwood Initiative does not rely on one "silver bullet" solution; instead it takes a comprehensive approach to staffing needs.

Before reforms could be implemented, the District worked with the local teachers' union to come to an agreement regarding teacher reconstitution and bonus payment. This step was essential, as it paved the way for consensus and support for reform initiatives. Ultimately, the district reconstituted all of the target school employees and asked them to re-apply for their positions. Approximately one-third of teachers left the schools, either of their volition or because they were not rehired.⁴⁶ Handley and Kronley note the importance of this move to the Benwood Initiative's success; "it was this reconstitution that allowed the development of the dynamic leadership teams and faculty that have been key to turning around the downward spiral of the Benwood schools."⁴⁷

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

The Benwood Initiative received a total of \$7.5 million in grants to undertake its incentive programs. In the program, incentives are given to teachers and principals who are identified as "high-performing" based on their Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores. Bonuses include:⁴⁸

- **Housing incentives**, which provide Benwood teachers with a loan of up to \$10,000 to purchase a home in select neighborhoods. After five years of occupancy, the loan is forgiven.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁶ Handley, C. and R. Kronley. "Lessons Learned: A Report on the Benwood Initiative." Public Education Foundation. p. 5. <http://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/lessons-learned.pdf>

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁸ "Benwood Initiative." Education Commission of the States, 2013. <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=1131>

- **Retention bonuses** for teachers identified as high-performing who remain in Benwood schools. The bonus amounts to an annual \$5,000 for three years.
- **Recruitment bonuses** for high-performing teachers who transfer to teach in Benwood schools. The bonus amounts to an annual \$5,000 for three years.
- **Salary bonuses** for school principals whose students achieve high performance. The bonus amounts to \$10,000.
- **Team bonuses** for schools with students who achieve a predetermined target TVAAS score. The bonus amounts to either \$1,000 or \$2,000 per teaching professional, depending on the value of the score.

WORKPLACE INCENTIVES

Despite the allure of financial incentives, they were not enough to entice a sufficient number of effective teachers to the Benwood schools. According to one source, “Benwood teachers appreciate bonuses as much as anyone would, but they report that bonuses are not the primary motivation for them to seek or retain employment at a struggling school.”⁴⁹ Instead, teachers identified a personal interest in working with underserved populations, supportive principals, and a collegial staff environment as essential inducements.⁵⁰ To make the move more attractive, organizers implemented a number of workplace reforms based on teachers’ input.

One crucial component is professional development, which takes several forms, from site visits to coaching from external consultants to “embedded” professional learning. The advantage of “embedded professional development” is that “instead of half-day or one-day seminars on topics chosen by administrators disconnected from the needs of the school, embedded professional development occurs in schools, during the school day and targets the needs that have been identified by that particular school.”⁵¹ This type of learning responds directly to what teachers need in order to thrive in an urban school, and provides them support in transitioning to a more challenging role. In addition, professional development is conducted by master teachers who have proven success and experience in the classroom. Other workplace incentives include developing more supportive principals through the PEF-operated Leadership Institute and setting aside work hours for collaboration and curriculum planning among teachers.⁵²

⁴⁹ Handley and Kronley, Op. cit., p. 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵² Ibid., p. 3.

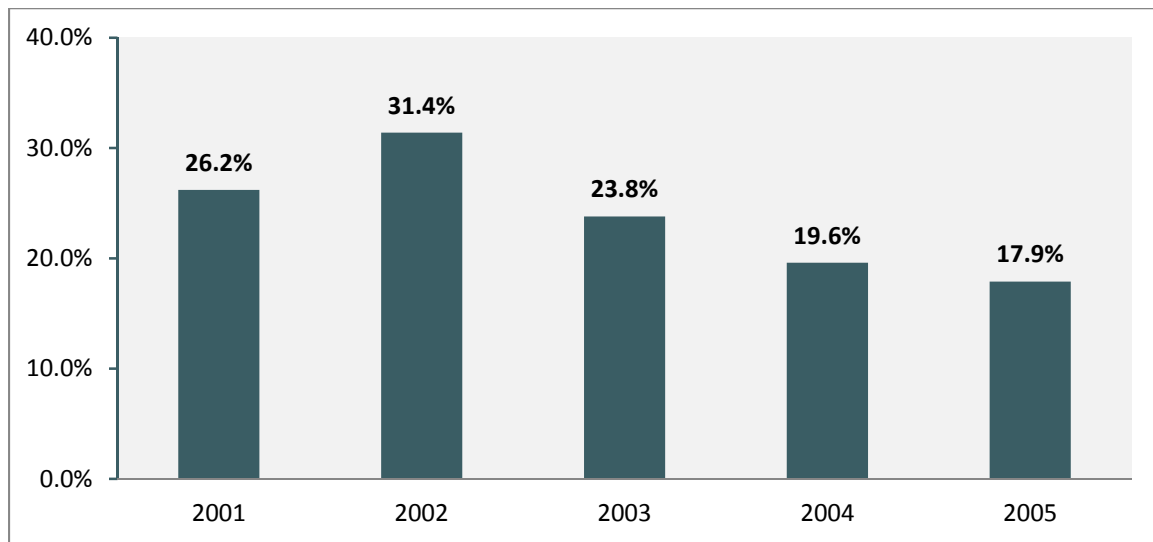
RESULTS

The Benwood Initiative was found to have a positive impact on student achievement during its first evaluation in 2006. Elementary student proficiency in reading and math climbed over the first five years of implementation.⁵³

By 2005, third grade reading proficiency scores increased to 74 percent (up from 53 percent in 2003), while fifth grade reached 80 percent (up from 62 percent). Improvements in math scores were equally impressive—with third and fifth grade scores increasing to 62 percent (up from 50 percent in 2003) and 76 percent (up from 57 percent) respectively.

Similarly, teacher satisfaction in Benwood schools showed promising results. One pair of researchers determined that the schools were “undeniably more professionally satisfying places to work and more consistently instructionally focused.”⁵⁴ A school climate survey administered in 2006 showed that Benwood school teachers found working conditions in their schools to be as good as the highest-performing schools in the county on eight out of 10 measures. The teachers even rated Benwood schools higher on “adequacy of professional development” and “the value of involvement with outside assisters.”⁵⁵ In addition, teacher turnover slowed in the intervention schools. Figure 2.1 depicts a steady decline from year to year, with the exception of 2002, in the percentage of new teachers at Benwood Initiative schools.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of New Teachers at Benwood Schools



Source: Handley and Kronley⁵⁶

⁵³ Berry, Rasberry, and Williams, Op. cit., p. 10.

⁵⁴ Silva, E. “The Benwood Plan: A Lesson in Comprehensive Teacher Reform.” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90:2, October 2008. p. 133. http://www.pdkmembers.org/members_online/publications/Archive/pdf/k0810sil.pdf

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 133.

⁵⁶ Handley and Kronley, Op. cit., p. 4.

One negative aspect of the Benwood Initiative was the lack of communication between community members and the program’s organizers. This resulted in several misconceptions of the intervention, which made implementation slightly more difficult. The program evaluators summarize:⁵⁷

The hard lesson here is that the political and business communities must be informed about reform and offered opportunities to be engaged in the process. Communications must be a focus – otherwise comprehensive reform efforts such as the Benwood Initiative become mired in misperceptions that can undermine their long-term success and sustainability.

D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) has been hailed for its efforts to strengthen teacher evaluation and retain top-ranked teachers in the system. Early evidence shows that these strategies are effective, especially as they pertain to teacher performance. In 2009, DCPS launched its IMPACT evaluation program, which uses multiple criteria, including student assessment results, to rate teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom.⁵⁸ The move was meant to clarify standards for teachers and accurately gauge their performance so that targeted support could be offered to those who needed it. Following three years of IMPACT’s implementation, the Leadership Initiative for Teachers (LIFT) career ladder was added in 2012 in an effort to retain the most effective teachers in the schools that need them most. LIFT provides a path for within-school promotion for excellent teachers, granting them increasing responsibility and leadership opportunities. Crucially, it also ties teachers’ IMPACT evaluations to their pay, providing additional incentives for teachers to stay in the school system, especially in high-needs placements. The DCPS case is an important exemplar, in that it represents a highly ambitious approach to evaluation and retention.⁵⁹

IMPACT

The DCPS’s IMPACT evaluation is unique in that it uses multiple criteria, not just student assessment results, to rate teachers’ performance.⁶⁰ The IMPACT score is determined using four dimensions:

- **Student Achievement** – measured through assessments and Individual Value-Added (IVA) student achievement data;
- **Instructional Expertise** – measured through five classroom observations throughout the academic year based on DCPS’s Teaching and Learning Framework (TLF) criteria;

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁸ It is important to note that the IMPACT evaluation systems apply to all DCPS employees. However, only the criteria for teachers will be discussed here as they are most pertinent to this study.

⁵⁹ Leonhardt, D. “Study Finds Gains from Teacher Evaluations.” *The New York Times*, October 17, 2013. http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/17/a-new-look-at-teacher-evaluations-and-learning/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=1

⁶⁰ Dee, T. and J. Wyckoff. “Incentives, Selection, and Teacher Performance: Evidence from IMPACT.” National Bureau of Economic Research, October 2013. p. 2. <https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/w19529.pdf>

- **Collaboration** – determined by the Commitment to the School Community (CSC) rubric; and
- **Professionalism** – evaluated using the Core Professionalism (CP) rubric.

Based on these measures, a single IMPACT score is calculated for each teacher. The score corresponds to a rating scale of Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, Minimally Effective, or Ineffective. Those teachers rated Highly Effective are eligible for an annual bonus of up to \$25,000.⁶¹ The qualifications for the bonus are presented in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.2: DCPS Eligibility for Annual Bonus

IMPACT RATING	SCHOOL'S FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH STATUS	BONUS	ADD-ON IF TEACHER IS IN IMPACT GROUP 1	ADD-ON IF TEACHER IS IN ONE OF THE 40 LOWEST PERFORMING SCHOOLS	TOTAL POSSIBLE ANNUAL BONUS
Highly Effective	High	\$10,000	Additional \$5,000	Additional \$10,000	\$25,000
	Low	\$2,000	Additional \$1,000	N/A	\$3,000

Source: DCPS⁶²

The structure of DCPS' bonuses is such that it encourages 'Highly Effective' teachers to work in the schools that need them most.⁶³ Teachers in high-poverty schools can earn up to \$22,000 *more* than those in high-income schools through annual bonuses. In addition, educators are supported in their endeavors to improve by instructional coaches and master teachers who provide intensive, on-the-job coaching and mentoring. However, those rated 'Minimally Effective' for two years or 'Ineffective' for one year are encouraged to leave the system.⁶⁴

LIFT

In an effort to retain quality teachers in schools, as opposed to promoting them into administrative positions as is often the case, DCPS implemented the LIFT career ladder in 2012. The stated goals of the program are to retain top performers, reward experience, broaden teachers' recognition, and increase career stability.⁶⁵ In this system, teachers move up a five-stage career ladder, depicted in Figure 2.3. Teachers move up the ladder based on their IMPACT scores and years of service in DCPS.

⁶¹ "LIFT 2013 – 2014." District of Columbia Public Schools. http://dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/In-the-Classroom/Ensuring-Teacher-Success/20138_LIFT.pdf

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶⁴ "An Overview of IMPACT." District of Columbia Public Schools. [http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+\(Performance+Assessment\)/An+Overview+of+IMPACT](http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+(Performance+Assessment)/An+Overview+of+IMPACT)

⁶⁵ "Leadership Initiative for Teachers (LIFT)." District of Columbia Public Schools. [http://dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/Leadership+Initiative+For+Teachers+\(LIFT\)](http://dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/Leadership+Initiative+For+Teachers+(LIFT))

Figure 2.3: LIFT Career Ladder

Source: DCPS⁶⁶

As teachers move up the ladder, they are rewarded with additional leadership opportunities (e.g. develop curriculum, assist in hiring) and increased compensation. In addition, once a teacher has reached a certain LIFT stage, they cannot be demoted.

One strategy DCPS uses in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is offering teachers competitive salaries. In this vein, incentives to teach in high-needs schools are incorporated into the LIFT infrastructure. According to the LIFT guidelines “At the Advanced, Distinguished, and Expert Teacher stages, teachers in high-poverty schools will be eligible for an increase in their base salary in the form of a service credit, meaning that they will be paid as if they had additional years in the system.”⁶⁷ According to the District, teachers who advance up the LIFT scale have the opportunity to earn \$100,000 in five years as over \$130,000 in seven.⁶⁸ This system gives teachers in high-poverty schools the chance to be better compensated than their peers in more affluent schools.

RESULTS

Though the impact of LIFT has not been rigorously evaluated, given its recent implementation, IMPACT has been the focus of several studies. The most prominent was produced by several researchers from Stanford University and included an analysis of data for all DCPS general education teachers from the first three years of IMPACT’s implementation (2009-2012). The evaluation found that the programs’ strong threat of dismissal increased voluntary attrition among the District’s lowest-performing teachers. However, the highest-performing teachers had a retention rate of 90 to 93 percent.⁶⁹ Thus, the program appears to have been effective in its goals to retain quality teachers and move poor teachers out of the system. These results are backed up by another study conducted in 2012.⁷⁰ Teacher retention rates are presented in Figure 2.4. Beyond retention, Dee and Wyckoff also found that those teachers who remained, both Highly Effective/Effective and

⁶⁶ “LIFT,” Op. cit., p. 4.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁸ “DCPS Launches New Teacher Career Ladder.” District of Columbia Public Schools, September 6, 2012. <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Press+Releases+and+Announcements/Press+Releases/DCPS+Launches+New+Teacher+Career+Ladder>

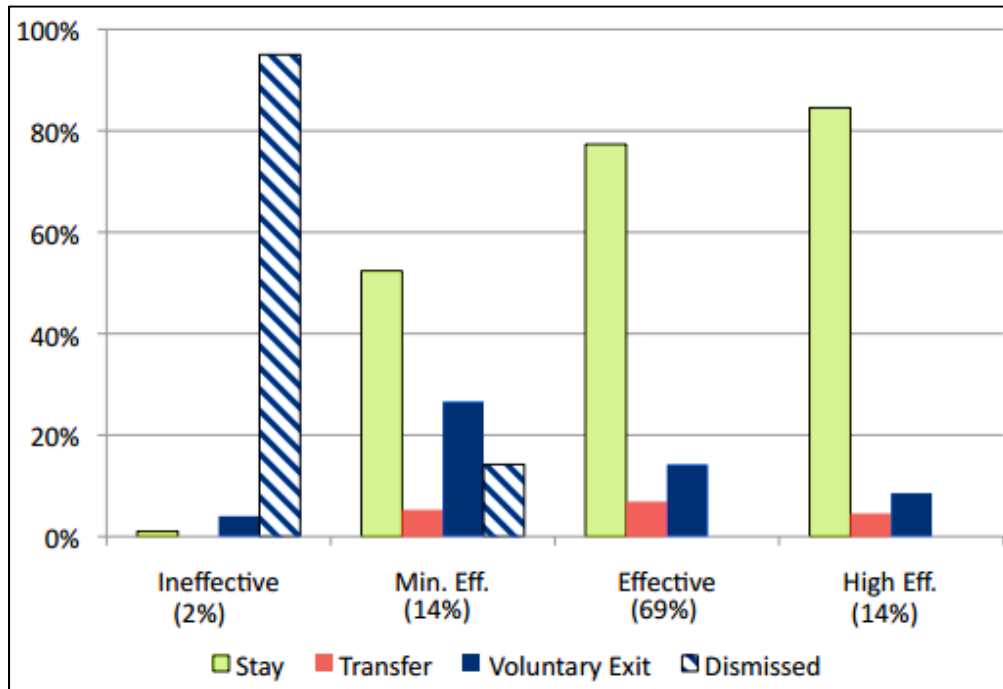
⁶⁹ Dee and Wyckoff, Op. cit., p. 19 – 20.

⁷⁰ “Keeping Irreplaceables in D.C. Public Schools: Lessons in Smart Teacher Retention.” TNTP, 2012. http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_DCirreplaceables_2012.pdf

Minimally Effective/Ineffective improved their teaching significantly. This is a result of the bonus incentives for the former and the threat of dismissal for the latter.⁷¹

Despite these positive results, the researchers are careful to caution that IMPACT’s gains may be the result of biases or manipulations in the data.⁷² In fact, several investigations into test fraud have been carried out in the years since IMPACT’s implementation.⁷³

Figure 2.4: DCPS Teacher Retention, by IMPACT Rating



Source: Dee and Wyckoff⁷⁴

⁷¹ Dee and Wyckoff, Op. cit., p. 20 – 21.

⁷² Ibid., p. 24 – 26.

⁷³ See, e.g., Gillum, J. and M. Bello. “When Standardized Test Scores Soared in D.C., Were the Gains Real?” *USA Today*, March 30, 2011. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2011-03-28-1Aschooltesting28_CV_N.htm

⁷⁴ Dee and Wyckoff, Op. cit., p. 33.

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' (CMS) approach to staffing high-needs schools has been widely recognized as an innovative and successful approach to issues many districts face. Its programs have been scrutinized by reputable institutions, such as the Aspen Institute and Education Resource Strategies, who have identified several key successes. Therefore, the district is an important example of effectively recruiting quality teachers and administrators to high-needs schools. While CMS does implement a pay-for-performance strategy, this case profile focuses solely on their teacher transfer incentives, known as the **Strategic Staffing Initiative (SSI)**.

In 2006, new Superintendent Peter Gorman recognized a need to boost performance at several of the district's schools. He approached the issue by offering teachers financial incentives, bonuses between \$10,000 and \$15,000, to move to high-needs schools. This strategy failed to recruit nearly the number of educators required and instilled in Dr. Gorman an appreciation of a holistic approach to rectifying staffing imbalances.⁷⁵ Realizing that this issue would require more than money to address, Gorman consulted external experts and district principals and teachers. Based on this information, he identified five crucial tenets of what would come to be known as the Strategic Staffing Initiative:⁷⁶

- *A great leader is needed, a principal with a proven track record of success in increasing student achievement. Also, great teachers will not go to a troubled school without a great leader as principal.*
- *A team needs to go to the school so a person is not alone in taking on this challenging assignment; there is strength and support in numbers.*
- *Staff members who are not supportive of reform need to be removed from the school.*
- *Principals must be given the time and authority to reform the school, and be freed from the district list of "non-negotiables" that constrain autonomy.*
- *Not all job assignments are equal in difficulty and compensation should be varied to match.*

The organizational structure of the SSI derives from these guidelines. Struggling schools are identified based on poor achievement records, designation as low-performing by the state, and qualification for restructuring. Teams, led by principals with a history of success, enter the school for at least three years in an effort to improve student achievement. Criteria for principals and teachers chosen for the SSI are listed in Figure 2.5.

⁷⁵ "Strategic Staffing." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, December 2009. p. 1.

<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/superintendent/White%20Papers/Strategic%20Staffing.pdf>

⁷⁶ Bullets quoted from: Ibid., p. 2.

Figure 2.5: Qualifications for Participation in SSI

POSITION	QUALIFICATIONS
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average minimum growth score of 0.04 over two years (shows that more than one year of learning was completed in one year)
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful past summative evaluations • Student achievement growth score minimum of 0.04 in reading and math (shows that more than one year of learning was completed in one year)

Source: CMS⁷⁷

It is important to highlight several other crucial components of the SSI, including a pre-existing evaluation model and a well-thought-out communication strategy. Regarding the former, Travers and Christiansen note that “...it is also important to remember that a turnaround strategy does not exist separately from a district-wide school support and accountability framework.”⁷⁸ In order to implement such a program effectively, districts must be able to reliably measure student growth and school performance. In addition, the district has highlighted its communication strategy as one essential component of implementation.⁷⁹ In an effort to gain community and parent buy-in for the SSI, Gorman and the first cohort of principals took several opportunities to speak and field questions from community members. By explaining the initiative and building local support, the district helped pave the way for a smooth roll-out.

The first teams entered schools in 2008 and initial results from the intervention are promising. Economic and workplace incentives for participation and early indicators are discussed in more detail below.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

The financial incentives for participation in the SSI are fairly straightforward. Principals and administrators who agree to move to struggling schools receive a 10 percent addition to their yearly salary for the three years they complete the program. Teachers who move as part of the principal’s team are awarded a \$10,000 signing bonus and a \$5,000 retention bonus in years two and three.⁸⁰ These incentives seem sufficient to entice teachers and principals away from their original positions. Gorman notes, “we think we hit the right mix of incentives and standards...In two years, I’ve never had a principal refuse to participate in the Strategic Staffing Initiative.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁸ Travers, J. and B. Christiansen. “Strategic Staffing for Successful Schools: Breaking the Cycle of Failure in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.” The Aspen Institute, April 2010. p. 18.

http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/ED_Case_Study_Strategic_Staffing.pdf

⁷⁹ “Strategic Staffing,” Op. cit., p. 2.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 3.

WORKPLACE INCENTIVES

In addition to increased financial compensation, one of the key components of SSI is its attention to important workplace considerations. CMS teachers echo expert opinion that strong leaders play a key role in their decision to move to a high-needs school. In addition, they mention strong, collegial relationships among skilled colleagues as important workplace considerations. The SSI takes both of these priorities into account by using intervention teams, developed around a skilled principal, to affect change in low-performing schools. The teams are chosen by the selected principal and may contain: one assistant principal, one literacy facilitator, and five teachers. In addition, the principal may dismiss up to five teachers already working at the school.⁸² Another key component of the turnaround strategy includes “resources and central support to implement...turnaround vision.”⁸³ This accounts for the central role that adequate resources and professional development play in teachers’ decisions to move to challenging schools. In this vein, the program introduced a formalized training for SSI principals in 2010 designed to prepare them for the demands of high-needs schools. The components of this training are presented in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6: Pre-SSI Principal Training Components

ELEMENT OF PREPARATION	DETAIL
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As much information as possible about their new school
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A solid grounding in the school turnaround research A solid grounding in strategic resource use Knowledge of the lessons learned from prior Strategic Staffing principals Inspiration and ideas from seeing successful turnaround schools in action
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Strategic School Design draft that fits the school context Team members who fit the vision and the Strategic School Design

Source: Travers and Christiansen⁸⁴

RESULTS

One tenet of the SSI is to afford principals flexibility in their approach to school turnaround. In keeping with this approach, interventions were not evaluated until the three-year mark. However, certain trackers were monitored throughout to provide a general overview of student performance in SSI schools. Early data from 2009, one year after the program’s inauguration, showed promising results. The district reported that reading scores on standardized tests rose for students at all schools and that math and science scores rose at all but one school.⁸⁵ According to the Aspen Institute’s report, “in the case of reading and math, the average progress in Strategic Staffing schools exceeded the district average, while progress in science fell slightly below the district average. This is particularly impressive

⁸² Ibid., p. 2.

⁸³ Travers and Christiansen, Op. cit., p. 18.

⁸⁴ Table contents quoted from: Travers and Christiansen, Op. cit., p. 13.

⁸⁵ “Strategic Staffing,” Op. cit., p. 3.

given that overall student performance in many of these schools had been declining in the years prior to the launch of Strategic Staffing.”⁸⁶

In 2011, at the end of the first three-year cycle, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools released findings from an evaluation of the SSI intervention. These data largely backed up trends from earlier data collection. Several key findings from the report include:⁸⁷

- With respect to End-of-Grade (EOG) results across reading, math and science, SS schools tended to show an increase in the percent of students attaining proficiency.
- Based on ABC Growth measures, SS schools tended to show increases, though about half were unable to outpace the collective comparison schools.
- Across time, SS students were able to close the mathematics gap on a synthetic comparison group in two out of three analyses. SS students were unable to close the reading gap.
- The majority of the schools saw large increases in growth (particularly in math), indicating that while moving closer to the comparison schools in proficiency, two years had not been long enough for these schools to catch up in every aspect.

While deemed a success, the initiative does have some considerable limitations. One noteworthy example is the limited supply of effective principals within the district. There are simply not enough quality principals to staff all of the high-needs schools. CMS is attempting to remedy this problem by hiring principals trained by New Leaders for New Schools, a nonprofit for education reform. Additionally, the initiative may have some negative repercussions for high-performing schools that lose principals to SSI. In one instance, an elementary school went through three principals in as many years because they were recruited to SSI.⁸⁸ While not a pervasive problem, these incidents may have negative ramifications for performance and public perception.

⁸⁶ Travers and Christiansen, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁸⁷ Bullets quoted with some modifications from Schoeneberger, J. and C. Pulliam. “Evaluation of the Strategic Staffing Initiative.” Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, January 2011. p. 1 – 2.
<http://media.charlotteobserver.com/images/pdf/StrategicStaffEval.pdf>

⁸⁸ Travers and Christiansen, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

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