

Why Do Teachers Leave?

Increasing the number of teachers entering the profession is one strategy for reducing the teacher shortage, but we also need to address the persistent problem of teacher turnover. Each year, more than 200,000 teachers leave the profession, with nearly two out of three leaving for reasons other than retirement.

What is contributing to the teacher exodus?



Inadequate Preparation

Beginning teachers with little or no preparation are 2½ times more likely to leave the classroom after one year compared to their well-prepared peers.

Lack Of Support For New Teachers

New teachers who do not receive mentoring and other supports leave at more than two times the rate of those who do.



Challenging Working Conditions

Teachers often cite working conditions, such as the support of their principals and the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues, as the top reason for leaving.

Dissatisfaction With Compensation

Beginning teachers earn about 20% less than individuals with college degrees in other fields, a wage gap that can widen to 30% for mid-career educators.



Better Career Opportunities

More than 1 in 4 teachers who leave say they do so to pursue other career opportunities.

Personal Reasons

More than 1 in 3 teachers who leave cite personal reasons, including pregnancy and child care, as extremely or very important in their decision.





Policies to Slow the Teacher Exodus

Improve teacher preparation and reduce costs to enter the profession

1. Provide **service scholarships and loan forgiveness programs** to attract prospective teachers to the fields and locations with the greatest shortages.
2. Develop **teacher residencies**, which recruit talented candidates into high-need fields to work as paid apprentices to skilled expert teachers.
3. Create **local pipelines into the profession**, such as **high school career pathways** and other “**Grow Your Own**” **models** that recruit talented individuals from the community to a career in teaching and support them as they prepare for the profession.

Strengthen school and district hiring practices and personnel management

1. **Strengthen hiring practices** by hiring early, investing time in multi-step hiring processes, such as teaching demonstration lessons, and involving teachers and other school staff in the hiring process.
2. **Set earlier timelines for voluntary transfers or resignations and budget decisions**, so that the hiring process can begin as early as possible.
3. Build hiring pipelines, such as by **developing strong partnerships with local teacher preparation programs** to train and recruit student teachers.
4. Develop systems to **monitor and address teacher turnover**.
5. **Reduce unnecessary barriers to entry for veteran teachers moving from other states and districts** through such mechanisms as credential reciprocity agreements, cross-state teacher pension portability, and removal of limitations that prevent new hires from getting full credit for their years of experience on salary schedules.

Provide quality mentoring and induction for beginning teachers

1. Invest in high-quality mentoring and induction programs for beginning teachers using **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title II** dollars and competitive grant funds.

Improve teachers' working conditions

1. **Invest in the development of high-quality principals** by establishing strong standards and expectations for shared decision-making and positive school climate and investing in principal preparation programs.
2. **Survey teachers** to assess the quality of the teaching and learning environment, and to guide school improvements.
3. **Incentivize professional development strategies and the redesign of schools to foster greater collaboration**.

Increase teacher compensation

1. **Increase teacher salaries** in schools and communities where salaries are not competitive or able to support a middle-class lifestyle.
2. **Use federal levers in ESSA** to provide low-income schools and districts with additional resources to attract and retain quality teachers.
3. Increase overall teacher compensation by offering **housing incentives**, such as money for rent, relocation, and down payment assistance.
4. Offer **career advancement opportunities** that provide increased compensation, responsibility, and recognition.