

Recommendations To Address the Teacher Shortage in North Carolina

While the national debate rages over whether there is a teacher shortage in public education, the facts argue for a teacher supply problem in North Carolina. Class-size reduction, growth in the number of school-age children, and the federal law that every classroom be staffed by a highly qualified teacher will make the situation worse, creating demand some estimate to be as high as 10,900 teachers annually by 2010. This supply problem divides into three major challenges—production of newly qualified teachers, recruitment and placement of qualified teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas and geographic areas with high teacher turnover, and retention of teachers already in the classroom.

Production of New Teachers

The Center finds strong evidence of a teacher supply problem, as witnessed by growth in the number of lateral entry candidates who are moving into the classroom, increased reliance on recruiting teachers from out of state, efforts to lure retired teachers back into the classroom, and the number of teachers placed through emergency permits.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction hired 8,780 new teachers in 2002–2003. Of those, 2,112 were lateral entry teachers—those with professional experience in another field who move directly into teaching. That's up from 833 lateral entry teachers in 1995–96. Additionally, 2,634 were experienced teachers teaching for the first time in North Carolina, and 527 had emergency permits. A total of 3,507 were beginning teachers—40 percent of the total. But with North Carolina's public and private traditional teacher education programs producing about 3,100 prospective teachers annually, the available pool of newly minted teachers is being sucked dry in a state thirsty for new hires.

There is good reason to add more teachers to this pool. As the N.C. Department of Public Instruction indicates in its tracking of teacher retention data, newly licensed teachers taking their first classroom teaching position are the ones most likely to keep teaching after their first year, and the retention advantage lasts for years. With four years or more invested in preparing for the classroom, these teachers are more reluctant to leave it than a lateral entry or emergency certificate teacher rushed into the classroom to meet a spot shortage—perhaps with

too little preparation and support. Local superintendents and human resource officers report that home-grown teachers also are more likely to stay on the job long-term than those recruited from out of state.

Currently, the 15 public universities in North Carolina that have teacher education programs (all but the N.C. School of the Arts) produce 2,310 teachers a year, while 32 of the 37 private colleges and universities produce 817 teachers each year for the public schools of North Carolina. This means that dealing with the problem of the shortage of teachers in North Carolina will require coordinated action by the 16-campus University of North Carolina, the 58-campus Community College System, the 37 private colleges and universities in North Carolina, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, and the State Board of Education. Thus, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research believes the ideal group to have overall responsibility to address this problem is the Education Cabinet. Created under N.C. General Statute 116C-1 in 1993, the Education Cabinet consists of the Governor, the President of the UNC System, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chairman of the State Board of Education, the President of the N.C. Community College System, and the President of the N.C. Independent Colleges and Universities. In his role as Chairman of the Education Cabinet, the Governor could ask the Cabinet to make North Carolina's teacher shortage the Cabinet's #1 priority.

The Cabinet should build on the exemplary work by the UNC Board of Governors' Task Force on Meeting Teacher Supply and Demand and this Task Force's March 2004 report. The UNC Board of Governors plans to adopt specific enrollment targets for each of the 15 campuses that have a teacher education program. UNC President Molly Broad also says it is important to focus on shortages in certain subject-matter fields such as math and science and on shortages in the geographic areas in North Carolina with the greatest need.

Thus, based on our research, **(1) the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research recommends that the Governor ask the Education Cabinet to make the teacher shortage in North Carolina the Cabinet's #1 priority for the next five years. The Center further recommends adoption of the following specific goals for producing more teachers for the state's public school classrooms:**

(a) That the Cabinet adopt a goal and a plan for producing at least 10,900 teachers a year (the current estimate of the number of teachers needed to hire each year for the next 10 years) by 2010, with interim targets of producing 3,500 new teachers by 2006; 7,000 new teachers by 2008; and 11,000 new teachers by 2010.

(b) That the Cabinet and N.C. General Assembly adopt a plan and specific targets for meeting the shortage of teachers in certain subject-matter fields, beginning with the current shortages in high school math, high school science, middle school math, middle school science, special education, middle school language arts, and foreign languages, especially Spanish.

(c) That the Cabinet adopt a plan and specific targets to give priority to meeting the teacher shortages in the counties with the greatest needs, perhaps experimenting with state bonuses to teach in the counties with greatest needs.

(d) That, after consultation and agreement on the plan and targets adopted by the Education Cabinet, the General Assembly should appropriate the funds necessary to carry out the Cabinet's plan, with additional incentive funds to be appropriated to the university system, community college system, private colleges and universities, or public schools if they meet the agreed-upon targets on the agreed-upon schedule.

(e) That the General Assembly's Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee be assigned to oversee this process, with the Education Cabinet to provide annual reports by March 1 each year, beginning in 2005.

This recommendation would provide enough new teachers for class-size reduction efforts, projected enrollment growth, and the demand for highly qualified teachers in every classroom, as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. There are many avenues to reach the goal of 11,000 additional prospective teachers—targeted enrollment growth at the 15 University of North Carolina system campuses with teacher education programs, expansion of cooperative efforts with the N.C. Community Colleges, and distance learning initiatives that allow would-be teachers to learn closer to home.

Retention of Existing Teachers

Aside from producing more teachers, North Carolina must find a way to retain teachers. Teacher turnover for the state's 117 school districts averaged 12.44 percent in 2002–2003—at the national average of 12.4 percent, but that percentage

masked a major problem in some school districts. A total of 32 school districts, or 27 percent, had average turnover above 15 percent annually over a five-year period. Of those, five school systems—Edgecombe, Franklin, Hoke, and Warren counties and the Weldon City Schools—had average turnover in excess of 20 percent. North Carolina must do more to address chronic turnover in these difficult-to-staff school systems.

(2) The State Board of Education should require Teacher Retention Improvement Plans for all local school systems where turnover exceeds 15 percent, to take effect for the 2005–2006 school year. These plans should include mentoring programs for new teachers, continuing education, and strengthened school-level leadership and support—frequently cited by teachers as a key reason for staying on the job. School systems with teacher improvement plans should be required to show incremental improvement toward the state average of 12.44 percent, which should decrease as North Carolina addresses retention issues statewide.

Local teacher salary supplements range from \$0 to \$5,755 in North Carolina's 117 school districts. Eight systems pay no supplement at all. (3) The Center recommends that the State Board of Education seek funds for low-wealth counties with no or low local teacher salary supplements and teacher turnover in excess of 15 percent. School systems with Teacher Retention Improvement Plans would be the systems that qualify for these funds. Finances must be part of the equation. Poor school districts have trouble retaining teachers because they can't afford significant local supplements to boost teacher pay like more affluent school districts. This recommendation also will help the state meet its obligation under the *Leandro* decision on school finance.

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All of these recommendations are means to an end—a labor pool filled with well-qualified teachers thoroughly prepared for the demands of today's classroom, and retention and placement efforts strong enough that teachers stay on the job.

UNC President Molly Broad summarizes the importance of addressing the shortage of teachers by saying, "If you believe, as I do, that education is the defining domestic policy of our state and our nation, we simply cannot afford to fail in our efforts to ensure that every North Carolina child has access to an effective and caring school with highly qualified teachers. . . . In short, it is both a social and economic imperative." —Mike McLaughlin

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ *Leandro v. State of North Carolina*, 346 NC 336.
- ² *Report from the UNC Board of Governors' Task Force on Meeting Teacher Supply and Demand*, University of North Carolina Board of Governors, Chapel Hill, N.C., March 2004, p. 4.
- ³ PL 107-110, *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. The federal definition of a "highly qualified" teacher is one who is fully certified and/or licensed by the state; holds at least a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution, and demonstrates competence in each core area in which the teacher teaches, according to the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.
- ⁴ "Report on Review of the Certification Process," N.C. Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, N.C., January 2004, p. 1.
- ⁵ "Teacher Demand, Supply and Quality: An Analytic Approach," N.C. Education Research Council, Chapel Hill, N.C., March 2004, p. 10.
- ⁶ "Report on Review of the Certification Process," note 4 above, p. 1.
- ⁷ "Teacher Vacancy Report," N.C. Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, N.C., Fall 2003, p. 1.
- ⁸ "System Level Teacher Turnover Report," N.C. Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, N.C., October 2003, p. 1.
- ⁹ "Teacher Demand, Supply and Quality: An Analytic Approach," note 5 above, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ National Center for Education Statistics Predicting the Need for Newly Hired Teachers in the U.S. to 2008-09, as cited by the National Education Association "Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet" at www.nea.org/teachershortage/03shortagefactsheet.html.
- ¹¹ National Center for Education Statistics Projections of Education Statistics to 2008, as cited by National Education Association "Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet" at www.nea.org/teachershortage/03shortagefactsheet.htm/.
- ¹² PL 107-110, *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.
- ¹³ National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey, as cited by the National Education Association "Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet" at www.nea.org/teachershortage/03shortagefactsheet.htm/.
- ¹⁴ National Education Association "Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet" note 11 above.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ "Educator Supply and Demand in the United States: Executive Summary 2003," American Association for Employment in Education, Columbus, Ohio, p. 7.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
- ¹⁸ "System Level Teacher Turnover Report," note 8 above, p. 10.
- ¹⁹ National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-2000, as cited by Recruiting New Teachers at www.rnt.org/channels/clearinghouse/becometeacher/121_teachersshort.htm.
- ²⁰ "Lateral Entry Teachers in North Carolina," N.C. Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, N.C., 2003, p. 1.
- ²¹ *A Profession In Jeopardy—Why Teachers Leave and What We Can Do About It*, The Public School Forum of North Carolina, December 1996, pp. 2-28.
- ²² "No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children," National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, Summary Report, Washington, D.C., January 2003, p. 8.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ²⁴ "System Level Teacher Turnover Report," note 8 above, p. 1.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ²⁶ "Report on Review of the Certification Process," note 4 above, p. 2.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ "Recruitment and Retention Strategies in a Regional and National Context," The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, Chapel Hill, N.C., March 2003, p. 13.
- ³⁰ Barnett Berry, "Recruiting and Retaining Highly Qualified Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools" at www.nassp.org/publications/bulletin/bltn_0304_berry.cfm.
- ³¹ Debra Viadero, "Researcher Skewers Explanations Behind Teacher Shortage," *Education Week*, April 10, 2002 at www.edweek.org/ew/story.cfm?slug=30aera.h21&keywords=teacher%20shortage.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ *Report from the UNC Board of Governors' Task Force on Meeting Teacher Supply and Demand*, note 2 above, p. 26.
- ³⁴ Calculations by the author based on the salary schedule at www.ncpublicschools.org and the *Report from the UNC Board of Governors' Task Force on Meeting Teacher Supply and Demand*, note 2 above, pp. 46-47.
- ³⁵ Barnett Berry, note 30 above.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ "School stepping up efforts to reduce teacher turnover," unsigned wire service report, March 25, 2004 at www.cnn.com/2004/education/03/25/teacher.turnover.ap/index.html.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ "Teacher Demand, Supply and Quality: An Analytic Approach," note 5 above, p. 5.
- ⁴⁰ "Report to the President on UNC Teacher Education Programs' Service to Alternative Pathways Teachers," UNC Division of University-School Programs, October 2003, p. 6.
- ⁴¹ "Teacher Demand, Supply and Quality: An Analytic Approach," note 5 above, p. 11.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ "Report on Review of the Certification Process," note 4 above, p. 13.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ "Pennsylvania Ranks Seventh in Average Teacher Salary," American Federation of Teachers, unsigned press release at www.aft.org/press/salary/downloads/SalarySurvey-PA.pdf, July 11, 2003.
- ⁴⁶ "Recruitment and Retention Strategies in a Regional and National Context," note 29 above, p. 17.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ Kayce T. Ataiyero, "Battle for young minds," *The News & Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., Feb. 11, 2004, p. B1.
- ⁴⁹ "Recruitment and Retention Strategies in a Regional and National Context," note 29 above, p. 4.
- ⁵⁰ *Report from the UNC Board of Governors' Task Force on Meeting Teacher Supply and Demand*, note 2 above, p. 26.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ Julie Blair, "N.C. Drops Assessment For Out-of-State Teachers," *Education Week*, Jan. 21, 2004, at www.edweek.com/ew/story.cfm?slug=19N.Carolina.H23&keywords=julie%20blair.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ House Bill 805 of the 2003-2004 Session.
- ⁵⁶ Senate Bill 710 of the 2003-2004 Session.
- ⁵⁷ Senate Bill 266 of the 2003-2004 Session.
- ⁵⁸ Senate Bill 267 of the 2003-2004 Session.
- ⁵⁹ *Report from the UNC Board of Governors Task Force on Meeting Teacher Supply and Demand*, note 2 above, pp. 11-14.