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WAYS TO KEEP TEACHERS IN FLORIDA: WHAT TEACHERS THINK

We have a teacher retention and recruitment crisis in Florida that is hurting our children's ability to learn. Below is some of what we have heard from teachers who leave — and stay — in Florida's public schools. Their experiences should help guide our policy decisions. How we address each of these factors matter a lot. Our children are depending on us.

1. Focus on student learning

- » **Hire well prepared teachers, provide them the resources and time to plan and work together.**

We need to hire well prepared teachers and provide adequate resources for collaboration. We should let teachers use their training and experience to help every child unlock their full potential. Time should be provided for teacher planning and learning, which will lead to real student growth and — yes — even improved test scores.

2. Allow more time for teaching

- » **Time spent on paperwork and documentation takes away from instruction.**

State- and district-mandated increases in documentation and paperwork take away time teachers could be using to instruct students. More demands should be coupled with additional time and compensation for that time.

3. Reduce high-stakes tests

- » **Instruction should take priority.**

Florida's accountability system prioritizes the results of a single state assessment over day-to-day instructional decisions. Teachers need flexibility to use everyday assessment of their students' work to guide their pacing and instruction without the monumental loss of time for tests and testing administration. Time and resources spent on testing and test preparation are better used to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

4. Provide competitive salaries

- » **Increase Florida's teacher salaries to the national average.**

Starting salaries and the instability of funding do not ensure that teachers can even pay off their student loans. Too many promising students decide to forgo teaching for another career just to make a living wage. Housing costs in many cities in Florida far outstrip the spending power of teacher salaries. We must bring Florida teacher salaries up to the national average.

5. Support early career teachers

- » **Dedicate time and resources to support early career teachers as they grow into the profession.**

Strong mentoring programs that focus on building instructional skills and productive relationships with students is absolutely critical for teacher retention. We must dedicate time and resources to support early career teachers as they learn their profession.

6. Retain effective teachers

- » **Most teachers in Florida are rated effective or highly effective yet have no assurance that they will have a job the following year.**

Great teachers have no faith that they will be rehired for the next school year under current law, and many teachers — given Florida's below-average pay — are just not willing to

live on a year-to-year basis. They struggle to obtain loans for cars or houses without knowing if they will continue to be employed. Effective teachers should be able to expect some level of job security.

7. Create avenues for advancement

- » **Encourage districts to find ways to use teachers in leadership and mentoring roles without requiring that they leave the classroom.**

Some teachers want to stay in a classroom for their entire career. They should be able to afford to do that with a salary schedule that increases with growing experience and training. Other teachers want to find ways to use their leadership and mentoring skills without having to leave the classroom completely. When teachers take on additional responsibilities they should receive compensation and recognition.

8. Recognize success

- » **Florida's teacher retention policies should reflect our commitment to our students' success.**

We need to show support by helping teachers to do their work better. We need smart policies that recognize and reward experience and expertise. Sound policy should allow teachers to reach and teach every student.

We all want to keep Florida's great teachers. Legislating smarter policy is the strategic decision Florida's students deserve.

Data Summary Relating to Teacher Retention in Florida

Our students need the adults to act in their best interests. We must address the staggering and increasing loss of teachers in our state. We are simply not retaining the teachers we are hiring. An extensive body of research shows that experience does matter for teacher effectiveness.

US Department of Education statistics about Florida's schools.

(Data collected every other year.)

In 2009-10 school year the proportion of first-year teachers was **11.6%**.

First-year teachers: **22,000**

In 2011-12 school year the proportion of first-year teachers was **19.4%**.

First-year teachers: **34,000**

In 2013-14 school year the proportion of first-year teachers was **23%**.

First Year Teachers: **37,000**

- Despite the proportion of first-year teachers more than doubling over the last four years, the number of second-year teachers has remained relatively constant. **In 2013-14, 5.5% of teachers were in their second year compared to 23% in their first — more than any other state.**

Florida's loss of early career teachers hurts our students and wastes our tax dollars.

Our loss of first- and second-year teachers is far above the loss other states experience. Combined, Florida first- and second-year teachers make up 28% of all teachers employed in the district. (2013-14 data)

15% of Florida teachers do not hold a full professional certificate, the highest number of any state in the US. These teachers are more likely to leave the profession with 35% of the teachers holding a temporary certificate not converting to a professional license within three years.

- Research into the cost of training a new teacher is about 20% of the "leaving"

teacher's salary. In Florida, that amounts to \$7,000 to \$15,000 depending on the experience level of the teacher.

- Teacher shortages in classrooms are being met by hiring untrained teachers with temporary certificates as well as large numbers of substitutes and permanent substitutes.
- Research shows that the quality of newly hired teachers is about the same in high and low poverty schools, but that teachers in high needs schools are more likely to leave high poverty schools.
- Teachers with temporary certificates are more likely to leave teaching in Florida than teachers with a professional certificate and full teacher education training.
- Colleges are struggling to find teacher who will accept and train student teachers, and because of the high turn-over in high needs schools, there are even fewer teachers who are eligible to accept intern teachers.
- Higher attrition for less experienced teachers creates a feedback loop that is increasing the number of new and untrained teachers in classrooms at the expense of student learning.
- Teachers in high needs schools are less likely to be judged highly effective on their VAM scores, even if they were highly effective at their previous school. Fewer teachers are willing to move to high needs schools.
- Laws that restrict teachers in low performing schools to effective and highly effective evaluations result in a disproportionate number of new teachers staffing high needs schools.

ADDITIONAL DATA RESOURCES

Data on teacher training and experience by state: <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations>

Full data file 13-14: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2013-14.html>

The Department of Education report on critical needs for teachers no longer includes the table describing the number of new hires in each certification area. The most recent reports that

includes these numbers are here:

- Total number of new hires 11-12 = 28,673 (page 5) <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7766/urlt/0084449-ctsa1314.pdf>
- Total number of new hires 12-13 = 32,509 (page 4) http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7766/urlt/Critical-Teacher-Shortage-Areas-2014-15-Feb_10.pdf
- Total number of new hires 13-14 = 38,899 (page 5): http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7766/urlt/Critical-Teacher-Shortage-Areas-2015-16_Right-Logo-w-EM-Edits-1-22-15.pdf

Department of Education presentation: Teacher Quality (pages 5 and 6):

http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?PublicationType=-Committees&Committeeld=2909&Session=2017&DocumentType=MeetingPackets&FileName=pkqs_1-11-17.pdf

Additional data collected from (a) Superintendent's and Teacher's Panels in Senate and House Committee Hearings Weeks of January 11 and January 25 and (b) The Florida Channel and Education Committees and Subcommittees Meetings.

Teacher Mentoring Research:

Smith, Thomas M. and Ingersoll, Richard M. 2004. "What Are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?" *American Educational Research Journal* Volume 41, No. 3: 681-714. Accessed February 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3699442>

Brill, Sam and McCartney, Abby. 2008. "Stopping the Revolving Door: Increasing Teacher Retention." *Politics & Policy*. Volume 36, No. 5: 750-774.

» Article addresses costs, effectiveness and mentoring as well as other strategies for increasing retention.

Guin, Kacey. 2004 "Chronic Teacher Turnover in Urban Elementary Schools" *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, August 16. 12(42).

» Documents turnover, describes impacts on student achievement, reviews literature on costs both financial and organizational.