

# ILLINOIS EDUCATION RESEARCH COUNCIL

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## PATHS TO TEACHING

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### HIGHLIGHTS OF A NATIONAL STUDY OF TEACHERS

This report traces the early career patterns of teachers who graduated from college in 1993. The results provide information on which college graduates became teachers, where they taught and whether they left teaching within three years<sup>2</sup>.

**IT IS NOT EASY TO PREDICT WHO MAY BE POTENTIAL TEACHERS WHEN STUDENTS ARE IN COLLEGE.** *Some undergraduates who completed all the steps to become a teacher did not teach, and some who showed no apparent preparation to teach ended up in the classroom. The results also show that over one-third of those who taught were not employed in a traditional K-12 public school.*

- ✓ Preparing college graduates who teach is the job of the whole institution:
  - 15% of college graduates teach within three years
  - Two in five beginning teachers had not prepared to teach while in college<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ 30% of those who prepared to teach while in college did not teach within three years.
- ✓ 16% of certified teachers did not teach.
- ✓ Less than two thirds (63%) of beginning teachers were teaching in K-12 public schools. Almost 13% were teaching in private schools, 7% were teaching in pre-K, and 18% were doing “some other sort of teaching.”<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ 40% of beginning public school teachers had taken community college classes, compared to 34% of non-teachers.

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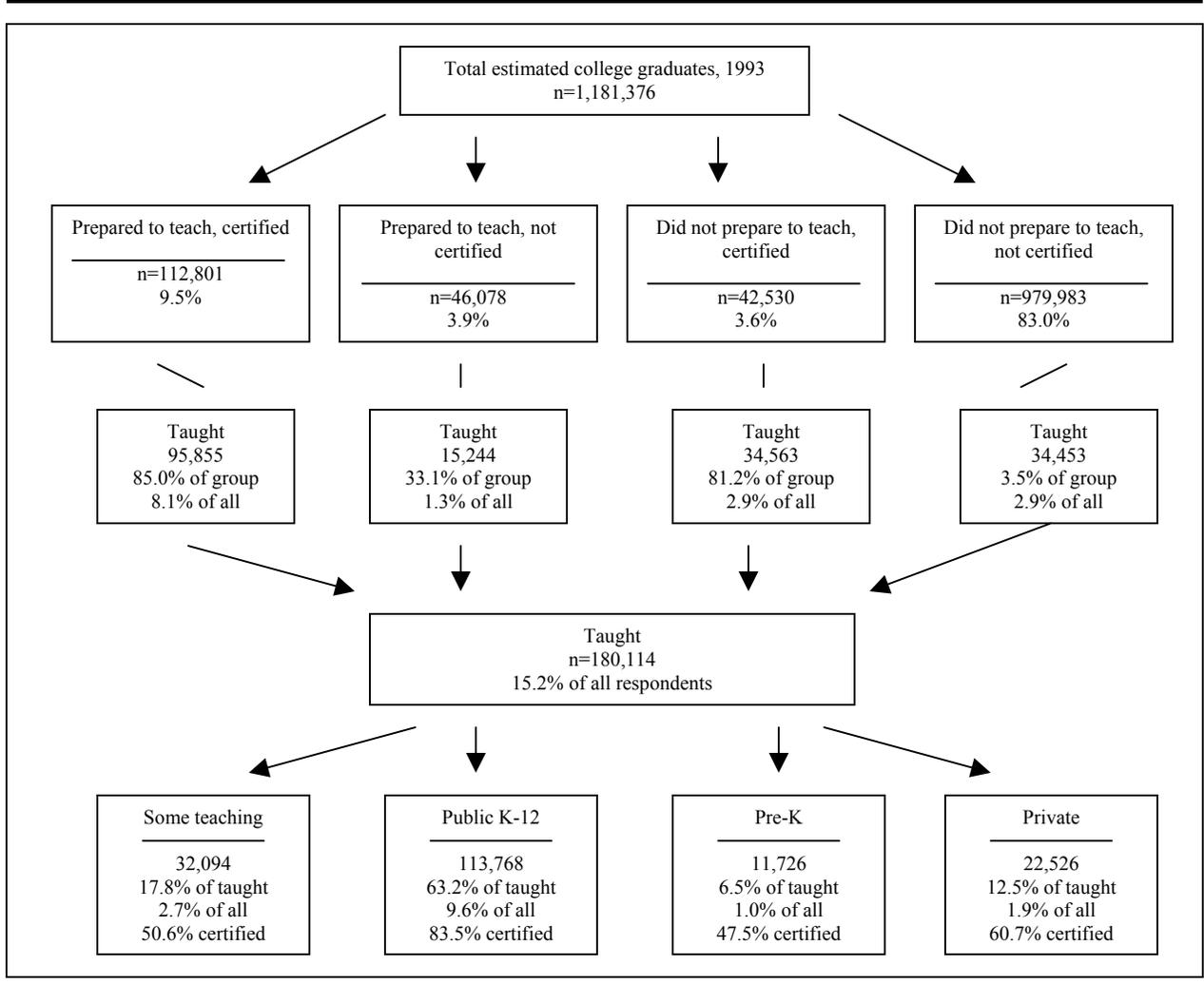
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<sup>2</sup> We used the national longitudinal data referred to as Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B:93-97). This National Center for Education Statistics database followed a cohort of more than 11,000 college students who were seniors in 1993 for three years after finishing college. The sample was weighted to represent all college seniors in 1993. We identify differences between groups only when they reach the 95 percent level of significance, using t-tests. This means that we can be 95 percent certain that the differences would occur if we were to examine the total population of college graduates in 1993.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Prepared to teach’ includes those with a major or minor in education, and anyone who student taught during their postsecondary education.

<sup>4</sup> Insufficient data are available to decide exactly where the respondent taught.

## PIPELINE OF COLLEGE GRADUATES WHO TAUGHT: 1993-97



SOURCE: U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Baccalaureate and Beyond: 1993-97 (BPS:97), Data Analysis System (DAS), Washington, DC: 2001.

### TEACHERS' PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS VARY BY GRADE TAUGHT.

*There is no 'typical' teacher. High school teachers are more similar to non-teaching college graduates than to elementary grade teachers. Middle-grade teachers fall between the two groups.*

- ✓ 44% of beginning high school teachers were men, compared with 10 % of elementary school teachers.
- ✓ New high-school teachers' college admission scores are similar to non-teachers – 24% have scores in the top quartile.
- ✓ New elementary teachers are less likely to score in the top quartile – just 8% have scores in the top quartile.

- ✓ Beginning public school teachers have similar or higher college grades than non-teaching college graduates in their major fields of study, whether they were education majors or non-education majors.
- ✓ Among both teachers and non-teachers, education majors have higher grades than non-education majors.
- ✓ Most elementary school teachers majored in education (73%), compared to 52% of middle-grade teachers and 34% of high school teachers.

**JOB SATISFACTION, SALARY, AND SCHOOL LOCALE AND POVERTY LEVEL.** *It appears that some teachers work for lower salary with similar or higher levels of job satisfaction when they are in non-urban areas that have few high-poverty schools.*

- ✓ Approximately one third of beginning teachers teach in non-urban areas.<sup>5</sup> They are paid the lowest salaries (40% are in the bottom salary quartile, while only 10% are in the top quartile), but almost none (3%) are working in high-poverty schools.<sup>6</sup> More of these teachers report being very satisfied with society's esteem for teaching than city or suburban teachers. (Although it should be noted that only 15% reported being very satisfied. It is evident that most teachers, regardless of where they teach, do not feel that the larger society values their efforts.) On other aspects of job satisfaction, non-urban teachers report satisfaction levels that are similar to teachers in city and suburban schools. Low salaries do not lead to lower job satisfaction for non-urban teachers.
- ✓ Another third of beginning teachers teach in city schools. A much lower percent of teachers in city schools are among the lowest paid teachers (17% in the lowest salary quartile, 28% in the top quartile). While one in five (19%) are teaching in a high-poverty school, almost half (49%) are teaching in a low-poverty school. Only 17% of city teachers were very satisfied with student learning compared to 28% of suburban teachers (23% of non-urban teachers were very satisfied).
- ✓ Suburban teachers are also less likely to be among the lowest paid teachers (16% in lowest quartile) and most likely to be among the highest paid teachers (41% in top quartile). More than one in ten (12%) works in a high-poverty school and suburban teachers are generally more satisfied with their jobs than city teachers.
- ✓ Overall, 35% of teachers in high-poverty schools had beginning salaries in the top quartile, compared to 22% of teachers in other schools. While the difference did not meet the 95% level of significance, the data suggest that salaries in high-poverty schools may be higher than in other schools. And yet teachers in high-poverty

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<sup>5</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data was used to classify schools as follows:

- City includes large and mid-sized central cities of a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) or MSA
- Suburban includes urban fringes of large and mid-sized cities within a CMSA or MSA and defined as urban by the Census Bureau
- Non-Urban includes a large town or small town located outside a CMSA or MSA, or any incorporated place, CDP, or non-place territory designated as rural by the Census Bureau

<sup>6</sup> Schools were divided into three groups, depending on the proportion of students participating in the federal free-lunch program. Over one-half, 59%, of public school teachers taught in a school with 30% or less students in the free lunch program, 32% taught in schools with 31-70% and 9% taught in schools with 71% or more students in the free lunch program.

schools were less satisfied than those in low-poverty schools with the school environment (39% compared to 46%).

*Distinguishing Characteristics of Teachers by Locale and School Poverty Level:*

- ✓ More city teachers graduated from a selective higher education institution<sup>7</sup> than those in non-urban school settings (35% compared to 22%).
- ✓ More teachers in city schools were female than teachers in non-urban schools (83% compared to 67%).
- ✓ Teachers in high-poverty schools were more likely to be 26 years old or older when they started teaching (41%), more likely to be minority (41%) and more likely to be female (88%).

**WHICH NEW TEACHERS LEAVE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHING?**

- ✓ 38% of those with no certification compared to 12% of those who were certified
- ✓ 29% of those with college admission scores in top quartile compared to 15% of those not in the top quartile.
- ✓ 28% of those with an ‘Other’ Major, compared to 22% of those with Liberal Arts majors, 19% of those with Science/Math/Engineering/Technology (SMET) majors, and 11% of those with Education majors.
- ✓ 24% of those with a teaching salary in bottom quartile compared to 5% of those with salaries in the top quartile.
- ✓ 24% of those who are dissatisfied with school environment, 22% of those dissatisfied with student discipline and 19% of those dissatisfied with student learning.
- ✓ 22% of those who had no induction program compared to 12% of those who had an induction program.
- ✓ Non-urban teachers – who have the lowest salaries – leave at rates that are similar to teachers in other locales. Nor is there a difference in leaving rates by school poverty level.

**KEY RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES INCLUDE:**

- ✓ Providing beginning college students with a realistic set of expectations and experiences regarding teaching. Use college work-study, internships and volunteer programs to place college students in local schools early in their college careers.
- ✓ Including community colleges early on in students’ school experiences.

**KEY RETENTION STRATEGIES INCLUDE:**

- ✓ Getting non-certified teachers certified
- ✓ Providing induction programs
- ✓ Involving new teachers in school improvement
- ✓ Improving the lowest beginning salaries

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<sup>7</sup> Defined as a Research I or II University, or Liberal Arts College I using the Carnegie Classification of Institutions (see full report for explanation of this classification system).