Leaving Schools or Leaving the Profession: Setting Illinois’ Record Straight on New Teacher Attrition

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IERC Symposium June 7-8, 2007
Purpose of the Study

• Do 50 percent of new teachers in Illinois flee the profession within five years?

• To what extent does new teacher attrition differ across schools?
Data

- TSR data from 1971 to 2006
- New Teacher Cohorts – 1st year teachers, full- and part-time
- Attrition at Two Levels
  - From Profession (IPS)
  - From Schools
- Focus primarily on attrition after first five years following entry into profession
- Track cohorts for up to 35 years
Defining Attrition

• Profession: departure of new teachers from teaching in Illinois public schools (IPS)
  – Five-Year Attrition Rate
  – Return-Adjusted Attrition Rate

• School: departure of new teachers from teaching in their initial school (includes those who leave teaching in IPS, move to another school to teach, and change to a non-teaching position in IPS)
Percent of New White Teachers By Locale and Selected Cohort Years
Average ACT Composite Scores of New Teachers By Locale and Selected Cohort Years
Attrition from the Profession
Five-Year Attrition Rates of New Teachers From Teaching in IPS
Cumulative Percentages of Leavers Who Return to IPS as Teachers
Five-Year and Return-Adjusted Attrition Rates of New Teachers from Teaching in IPS

Cohort Year

- 5-Year Attrition Rate
- Return-Adjusted Attrition Rate (as of 2006)
- Average 5-Year Attrition Rate
- Average Return-Adjusted Rate (as of 2006)
Five-Year and Return-Adjusted Attrition Rates By School Characteristics

- **Overall**: 27\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 13\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 7\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **CPS**: 26\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 12\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 7\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Non-CPS Urban**: 27\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 9\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Suburban**: 28\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 9\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Town**: 28\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 8\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 7\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Rural**: 28\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 8\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 7\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **CPS Northeast (less CPS)**: 26\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 12\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 11\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Northwest**: 28\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 11\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **East Central**: 29\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 9\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **West Central**: 30\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 9\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Southeast**: 27\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 8\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 6\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Southwest**: 23\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 8\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 8\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **< 10% Low-Income**: 29\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 7\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 6\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **10-49% Low-Income**: 27\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 8\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 8\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **50-89% Low-Income**: 25\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 8\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 8\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **≥ 90% Low-Income**: 25\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 8\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 8\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **≤ 50% Minority**: 28\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 10\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 10\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **50-89% Minority**: 27\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 10\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **90-98% Minority**: 27\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 10\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **≥ 99% Minority**: 27\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 9\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 9\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **Low Minority/Low Low-Income**: 28\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 7\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 7\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.

- **High Minority/High Low-Income**: 26\% return-adjusted attrition rate from the profession, 7\% percentage of new teachers lost to school type, 7\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to same school type, 5\% percentage of new teachers who leave and then return to a different school type.
Five-Year and Return-Adjusted Attrition Rates By Teacher Characteristics

- Overall: 27 (return-adjusted), 13 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 40 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Female: 27 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 41 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Male: 29 (return-adjusted), 11 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 40 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- African American: 22 (return-adjusted), 16 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 38 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Asian: 29 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 43 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Hispanic: 24 (return-adjusted), 12 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 36 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Native American: 24 (return-adjusted), 18 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 42 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- White: 28 (return-adjusted), 13 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 41 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- ≤ 25 at Entry: 28 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 42 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- 26 - 34 at Entry: 30 (return-adjusted), 13 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 43 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- ≥ 35 at Entry: 23 (return-adjusted), 12 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 35 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- BA Degree: 26 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 40 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Graduate Degree: 35 (return-adjusted), 12 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 47 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Elementary/Middle School: 26 (return-adjusted), 13 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 39 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- High School: 31 (return-adjusted), 13 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 44 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- English: 32 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 46 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Math: 30 (return-adjusted), 12 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 42 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Science: 31 (return-adjusted), 12 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 43 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Self-Contained Elementary: 24 (return-adjusted), 12 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 36 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Social Science: 28 (return-adjusted), 10 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 38 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Special Education: 26 (return-adjusted), 15 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 41 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- ACT Composite ≥ 25: 32 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 46 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- ACT Composite 22-24: 27 (return-adjusted), 13 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 40 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- ACT Composite 19-21: 25 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 39 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- ACT Composite ≤ 18: 22 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 36 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- High College Selectivity: 34 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 48 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Medium College Selectivity: 24 (return-adjusted), 14 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 38 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
- Low College Selectivity: 22 (return-adjusted), 12 (percentage of new teachers who leave and then return), 35 (5-year attrition rate without returns)
Key Findings:
Attrition from the Profession

• New teachers’ commitment to the profession has improved and is stronger than conventional wisdom would suggest.

• Roughly 1 in 4 new teachers in Illinois leave during their first five years and do not return, not 1 in 2.

• There exists little variation in new teacher attrition rates by school type.

• The teaching profession (along with health occupations) is more stable than other occupations.
Attrition from Schools
Status of New Teachers After One, Two, and Five Years Following Entry

After One Year:
- Movers: 16%
- Leavers: 14%
- Stayers: 70%

After Two Years:
- Movers: 22%
- Leavers: 22%
- Stayers: 56%

After Five Years:
- Movers: 27%
- Leavers: 37%
- Changers: 3%
- Stayers: 33%
Stay Rates of New Teachers in Initial School
By School Characteristics

Note: All calculations, except for ISAT categories, are based on data from the 1987 through 2001 new teacher cohorts. The ISAT results are based on data from the 1999 through 2001 cohorts.
### School-Level Percentages of New Teachers Who Stay in Their Initial Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Percent of New Teacher Stayers By School Type After Two Years</th>
<th>Percent of New Teacher Stayers By School Type After Five Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th Percentile</td>
<td>50th Percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CPS Urban</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast (less CPS)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>52.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10% Low-Income</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 49% Low-Income</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 89% Low-Income</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 90% Low Income</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 50% Minority</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 89% Minority</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 – 99% Minority</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 99% Minority</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Minority/Low Low-Income</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Minority/High Low-Income</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>58.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 25% Meets/Exceeds ISAT</td>
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<td>54.5</td>
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<td>25 – 45% Meets/Exceeds ISAT</td>
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<td>46 – 64% Meets/Exceeds ISAT</td>
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<td>65 – 70% Meets/Exceeds ISAT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 77% Meets/Exceeds ISAT</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All calculations, except for ISAT categories, are based on data from the 1987 through 2001 new teacher cohorts. The ISAT results are based on data from the 1999 through 2001 cohorts.
Stay Rates of New Teachers in Initial School
By Teacher Characteristics

[Bar chart showing stay rates by teacher characteristics, including overall, gender, ethnicity, experience at entry, degree level, school level, subject, ACT scores, and college selectivity.]

Legend:
- = After One Year
- = After Two Years
- = After Five Years
### New Teachers’ Stay Rates in Low Minority/Low Low-Income Versus High Minority/High Low-Income Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>L/L = Low Minority/Low Low-Income</th>
<th>H/H = High Minority/High Low-Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female L/L, Female H/H</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male L/L, Male H/H</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American L/L, African American H/H</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian L/L, Asian H/H</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic L/L, Hispanic H/H</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White L/L, White H/H</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% at Entry L/L, 25% at Entry H/H</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26% - 34% at Entry L/L, 26% - 34% at Entry H/H</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 35% at Entry L/L, ≥ 35% at Entry H/H</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Degree L/L, BA Degree H/H</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree L/L, Graduate Degree H/H</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elem/Middle School L/L, Elem/Middle School H/H</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School L/L, High School H/H</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>English L/L, English H/H</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math L/L, Math H/H</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science L/L, Science H/H</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Contained Elem L/L, Self-Contained Elem H/H</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science L/L, Social Science H/H</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>Special Education L/L, Special Education H/H</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT Composite ≥ 25 L/L, ACT Composite ≥ 25 H/H</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>ACT Composite 23-24 L/L, ACT Composite 23-24 H/H</td>
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<td>ACT Composite 18-21 L/L, ACT Composite 18-21 H/H</td>
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<td>ACT Composite ≤ 18 L/L, ACT Composite ≤ 18 H/H</td>
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<td>Medium College Selectivity L/L, Medium College Selectivity H/H</td>
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<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low College Selectivity L/L, Low College Selectivity H/H</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings: Attrition from Schools

• On average, over 4 out of 10 (44%) and 2 out of 3 (67%) new teachers leave their initial school during their first two and five years, respectively.

• More variation in new teacher stay rates within school type than across school type.

• The sorting of new teachers across schools helps explain the modest differences across school type.
Teacher Movement and the Academic Characteristics of New Teachers in Schools

Compared to Stayers…

• Leavers have higher average academic qualifications, regardless of school type.

• Out-of-District Movers also tend to have higher average academic qualifications.

• Within-District Movers generally have similar or lower academic qualifications.
Average Characteristics of Initial Versus Receiving Schools For New Teacher Movers

• Out-of-District Movers: Move to schools with lower percentages of minority, low-income, and low-performing students.

• Within-District Movers: Move to schools with similar or slightly lower percentages of minority, low-income, and low-performing students.
Key Findings: Teacher Movement

- Out-of-District moves facilitate a sorting process.
  - Teachers with stronger academic qualifications move to seemingly more attractive schools.

- Within-District moves facilitate a shuffling process.
  - Teachers with similar or lower academic qualifications move to schools with similar or slightly better student characteristics.
Implications of Study

• The teaching profession in Illinois is not in crisis.
• It may be difficult to reduce overall new teacher attrition.
• Conditions in disadvantaged schools will have to change if they are to keep more academically skilled new teachers.
• School conditions other than those considered in this study appear to strongly influence new teachers’ decisions to stay in a school.