

# **Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance**

## **Attracting and Retaining Quality Staff**

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*The Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance is a coalition of public school districts in southeastern Wisconsin formed to study educational issues and respond to policy decisions that affect public education.*

#### **Background Information**

The most important variable in student achievement is the quality of the teacher. Therefore, attraction, recruitment, and retention of quality staff are key to delivering a high quality educational program. Since the early 1990's the annual number of teachers exiting the profession has surpassed the number entering by an increasing amount. Less than 20% of this turnover is due to retirement. Annually, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics, an estimated 30% of educators leave their positions within the first five years of teaching due to poor working conditions and lack of professional development programs (Welgado, 1999 and Darling Hammond, 1998). Nationally, nine percent of all new teachers leave before completing the first year of public school teaching (Fideler and Haslelkorn, 1999). Teacher turnover hovers at 50% in high poverty/urban schools (Darling Hammond, 1998).

#### **Key Issues**

The average Wisconsin teacher possesses 16 years teaching experience, down from 17.5 years experience reported 5 years ago. (WEAC Status of Wisconsin Public School Teachers, 2000-2001). Additionally, 48% hold a Bachelor's degree, 52% hold a Master's degree or above, and 2% report they presently have or are attaining National Board Certification. In Wisconsin, several factors affect attraction, recruitment, and retention of staff. These include:

- Lack of available graduates from teaching colleges in many certification and geographic areas. Fourteen percent of math students, 16% of science students and 12% of English students in high poverty schools in the United States are taught by teachers without a major or certification in their assigned field. This compares with 7% of math students, 5% science students and 4% of English students in low poverty schools. (NCES 2004)
- Teacher induction programs, critical for attracting prospective teachers to the profession.
- Challenging work conditions in urban and rural schools. Annual teacher turnover is 22% higher in high poverty urban schools and 16.4% in high poverty rural schools compared to 12.8% in low poverty schools. (R. Ingersoll, 2004)
- Net loss of college graduates who choose to stay in Wisconsin, opting instead to live in areas perceived to be more desirable.
- Increasing number of retirement eligible teachers. Thirty-four percent of Wisconsin teachers will retire between 2001 and 2010 (WEAC, Status of Wisconsin Public School Teachers, 2000-2001). In MPS alone, according to the 2002 DPI, "Supply and Demand," document, 2,800 + (over 40%) teachers will be eligible to retire in the next 15 years.
- Salary and benefit compensation trends. In the past 10 years, the ranking of Wisconsin teachers' average salary dropped from 15<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. In 2002-03, the average salary in Wisconsin (\$42,871) was below the national average of \$45,822. (NEA Rankings of the States, 2003). When compared to neighboring states (Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota and Iowa) only Iowa has lower average teacher salaries. (Odden, 2005) Additionally,

according to U.S. Census Bureau data for 1999-2000, when measured on a per-pupil basis, Wisconsin ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in overall compensation (salaries plus benefits) for instruction, 13<sup>th</sup> for salary only, and 4<sup>th</sup> for benefits only.

### **Recommendations**

- Staff performing at extraordinary levels of performance should receive recognition. Provide incentives from new money allocated outside the state's current funding commitment for pay-for-performance initiatives, and Master Educator status. Participation in pay-for-performance initiatives should be local policy and bargaining decisions.
- Fully fund PI 34. Professional development is critical for maintaining high quality educational staff. PI 34 provides a sound conceptual framework for professional development, including professional growth plan, staff development activities, and mentoring. However, funding is critical to successful implementation.
- Annual teacher compensation increases must respond to market forces and be balanced with revenue cap restrictions under current law.

### **Research**

- New teacher induction programs facilitate success of new staff and increase the probability they will stay beyond their third year of employment (Ingersoll, 2001).
- New teachers who have the support of a mentoring program are more likely to stay in the profession (Gold, 1996). Interactions and emotional support from mentors and colleagues are part of the teacher retention puzzle (Kim & Loadman, 1994; Billingsley, 1993; and Odell & Ferraro, 1992).
- Professional educators seek opportunities for growth. Collegial learning opportunities develop collaborative relationships and encourage risk-taking, reflection, and enable staff to grow in their skills. Supportive working conditions, including colleague interaction, professional development, and participation in decision-making, contribute to teacher retention (Yee, 1990).
- School characteristics and organizational conditions, including administrative support, salary, student discipline and motivation, class size, and planning time have significant effects on teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001).
- Staff members seek to work in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and supported with classroom management policies and procedures. Findings of The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) indicate teachers are more likely to leave the profession if student motivation and discipline are problems in their schools.
- The quality of parental partnership influences the attraction and retention of staff. Staff members seek opportunities to work in organizations that place a priority on productive partnerships with parents (Shann, 1998, Billingsley, 1993).
- A crucial aspect of teacher retention is involving teachers in the improvement of teaching and learning in the district (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).
- The demand for new teachers comes about primarily because teachers choose to move from or leave their jobs at far higher rates than do professionals in many other occupations (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998).
- Teachers indicate that professional challenge and autonomy (Shann, 1998; Kim & Loadman, 1994) as well as opportunities for advancement (Kim and Loadman, 1994)

were related to job satisfaction. Teachers who control the terms of their work are more likely to feel committed to the field of education (Andermann, Belger, & Mith, 1991; Fullan, 1992; Blasé & Kirby, 1992; and Yee, 1990). Because teacher retention strategies are often expensive, states and districts often search for high impact non-monetary and easy to implement teacher retention strategies (Chapman, et. al., 1993). These can include greater collaboration between teachers and involving teachers in decisions, common planning time, and team teaching opportunities.

- Competitive teacher compensation promotes recruitment and retention of high quality staff. Insufficient compensation is perceived to be the primary reason teachers leave the profession (Retaining Quality Teachers, Certo, Janine L., 2002). Low salary is linked to higher rates of teacher attrition (Darling Hammond, 1999, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). Teachers also identified salary as the second most common reason for leaving the profession (National Center for Educational Statistics Study, 1997). Teachers' decisions to remain in teaching are most influenced by comparison of teaching with non-teaching salaries (Gritz & Theobald, 1996).