NOVEMBER 2023

KEEPING TEACHERS IN TEXAS CLASSROOMS

LONESTA**RP3**

Education research practice policy **partnership**

Executive Summary

Teachers are leaving Texas classrooms and we need to understand how we can retain them. In 2021-22, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported an **historic high of 13.4% of teachers exiting the profession[1]**. Teacher turnover, especially at high rates over time, can harm organizational stability, instructional quality and, ultimately, students' experiences and outcomes[2].

Researchers from the LONESTA**RP3** Network found that **teacher turnover is caused by a variety of factors**, including principal turnover, educator burnout, low salaries and factors related to caretaking responsibilities at school and within their home[3,12]. However, **some turnover is caused by factors that are more amenable to policy levers**. A recent survey of over 1,200 Texas teachers conducted by the Charles Butt Foundation found that approximately three-fourths of respondents seriously considered leaving the profession[4]. Of those respondents, 97% described **positive work culture and environment as reasons to stay in the classroom**.

In another survey of San Antonio teachers and administrators, 80% of participants considered leaving the profession, describing increased workload demands and low pay as contributing factors[5]. Furthermore, Dallas Independent School District is finding **strategic compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) positively affects teacher retention[6]**. Recent statewide findings from TEA showed that TIA designated teachers were retained in any role nearly 3 percentage points higher compared to non-TIA designated teachers from the 2021-22 to 2022-23 school year[7]. Examining what drives teachers to stay in the classroom enables us to design and implement strategies and policies to ensure that all Texas children have access to high-quality teachers.

Having fair compensation is important, but also feeling supported and valued by my administration is needed. Even just saying, 'you're doing a good job' goes a long way.
Elementary school teacher, South-Central Texas

LONESTARP3 members from across the state share drivers of teacher turnover and retention.

Navigating **dual responsibilities of caregiving at school and at home** are potential consequences for whether Pre-K teachers found it feasible to remain in the profession. *(Paso del Norte Partnership for Education Research)*

Teacher Stress and Well-being

Teacher Demographics

Rural STEM teachers are **less likely to turnover** relative to their peers in urban and suburban settings. *(Texas Tech University, CIRCLE)*

In a survey of San Antonio teachers and administrators, participants described **increased workload demands and low pay** as the drivers for leaving the education profession. *(UTSA Urban Education Institute)*

Working Conditions

Teacher Pay

Dallas ISD's multi-year approach to **strategic compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment** has yielded impressive results with the district retaining over 90% of its most effective teachers. *(Commit Partnership)*

Teacher retention could be improved by **community-engaged teacher preparation models**. *(The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)*

Educator Preparation

Early Career Support

Researchers are exploring the formation of **mentoring relationships** and **mentor learning** in the context of a university-based induction program. *(UT Austin, College of Education)*

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

State Policy

Change school finance formulas so districts can provide positive working conditions and competitive salaries to teachers.

Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)

Develop and refine induction programs to support new teachers through mentoring and coaching.

District Leaders

Build the capacity of school leaders and refine approaches to teacher mentoring and compensation strategies.

Teacher Turnover & Retention: Emerging Research Across the Network

Solving staffing challenges in Texas requires understanding how to increase teacher retention. Multiple variables shape retention, including coaching and mentoring, school culture/leadership, agency/autonomy and teachers' self-efficacy. Additionally, teachers need sufficient preparation in order to ensure retention.

While teacher mobility has been stable for most of the last decade, small increases of movement can be seen starting with the 2020-2021 school year. A recent survey from the Charles Butt Foundation found that 77% of teachers had considered leaving the profession in 2022, an increase of 19% from 2020. Of those considering leaving education, 93% had taken concrete steps toward pursuing other careers. These more recent findings indicate teacher mobility and attrition will increase in the coming years.

Teacher Demographics

Rural STEM teachers are less likely to turnover relative to their peers in urban and suburban settings.

STEM teachers prepared via traditional **university-based preparation pathways have the lowest turnover rates** in the first five years of teaching compared to teachers prepared through other pathways such as alternative certification.

Gottlieb and colleagues (2023), Texas Tech University's Center for Innovative Research in Change, Leadership and Education (CIRCLE)[8]

Teacher Stress and Well-being

PreK teachers interviewed about their stress and well being expressed being burdened by **navigating the dual responsibilities** of caregiving at school and at home as a potential cause for leaving the profession.

Wiltshire, C. A., Fields, H., & Kim, S. (2023), Paso del Norte Partnership for Education Research[12]

Teacher Working Conditions

In a survey of San Antonio teachers and administrators, 80% of the respondents reported considering leaving the education profession in 2022, citing increased **workload demands and low pay** as the primary reasons.

Victor and colleagues (2023), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Urban Education Institute[5]

Teacher retention in Texas is influenced by a variety of factors.

Teacher Pay

Dallas ISD's Teacher Excellence Initiative to strategic compensation through the Teacher Incentive Allotment has yielded impressive results with the district **retaining over 90% of its most effective teachers**.

Dallas Independent School District. (2022), Commit Partnership[6]

Teacher Characteristics

A series of studies showed that recruiting teachers with formal training in education is important for teacher retention and is associated with better student achievement, attendance and reduction in disciplinary referral rates, especially for Black and Hispanic students.

Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC), Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University[9]

Educator Preparation

In a recent study that followed teachers over a nine-year period, **university-certified teachers had a 24% higher retention rate** than alternatively certified teachers and students performed better when they had a university-certified teacher.

Texas Educator Preparation Pathways Study (2022), The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education[10]

Educator Preparation

According to the interviews of 32 local educators and community advocates in the Rio Grande Valley, teacher retention could be improved by leveraging **community-engaged teacher preparation** that prioritizes teacher candidates' relationships with students and their families.

Badenhorst and colleagues (2023), The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley[11]

Teacher Turnover & Retention: Emerging Promising Practices from Across the Network

Designing policy and practices that improve teacher retention and reduce teacher turnover is challenging due to the complex nature of the issues. Fortunately, several policy options that are grounded in research suggest working conditions, pay and preparation all play a role in a teacher's decision to stay in the classroom. Depending on the proposed solution, these policies may be incentivized and supported by the legislature or adopted by individual districts and campuses.

"

As a principal, I know that establishing and maintaining high expectations and accountability for teachers is what is needed to ensure students achieve at the highest level possible. While we want to continue to increase capacity in teachers, these pressures can become difficult to balance. Maintaining accountability and expectations while still being in tune with feelings and mindset is key to retaining highly effective teachers.

School Administrator, West Texas

"

Table 1. RP3 members share potential solutions and implications for improving teacher retention across the state.

Teacher Working Conditions

Potential Solution: Shared Governance Models

Implementation Strategy: The **E3 Alliance** is developing a shared governance model with one of their partner districts that aims to positively affect the workplace culture by focusing on designing expectations for teachers. This model could address many workplace satisfaction and school culture issues that teachers cite as reasons to leave a campus or district.

Question to consider: How are these models addressing the workplace satisfaction and school culture issues that teachers cite as reasons to leave a given campus or district?

Teacher Compensation

Potential Solution: Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)

Implementation Strategy: Several network members, including **Texas Tech University's CIRCLE**, are exploring the impact of the HB3 Teacher Incentive Allotment on teacher retention in Texas.

Questions to consider: How do the TIA's effects compare across a more extensive range of school districts?

What is the impact of TIA on student success?

Educator Preparation & Early Career Support

Potential Solution: Induction Programs to Support New Teachers

Implementation Strategy: Dr. Wetzel, Dr. Maloch and colleagues at UT Austin are exploring the formation of mentoring relationships and mentor learning in the context of a university-developed induction program. [13, 14]

Question to consider: How can district and school leaders create positive, supportive conditions for teachers using existing resources?

Take Action:
Network Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Research

Understanding the research and leveraging promising practices that lead to systemic improvement across the state are vital for ensuring teacher retention. Actionable recommendations for state administrators, educator preparation programs, district leaders and researchers for improving teacher retention across the state follow:

Key Recommendations for Retaining Educators

➤ State Policy

Policymakers could consider ways to **ensure that hard-to-staff rural and urban schools have adequate resources and incentives** to recruit and retain effective teachers, which might include scholarship programs, reduced cost for certification exams, incentive pay, housing and travel vouchers, and classroom resources.

State administrators could play a role in **designing, evaluating, and promoting different models of new teacher and principal support**, like required induction and coaching programs found in other states [15], to reduce churn and increase stability, contributing to positive outcomes for schools and students.

State policy and resources could also encourage Education Service Centers to **develop professional learning communities** for school district human resources and talent management administrators to boost the knowledge and skills of these district leaders for recruiting, hiring and retaining effective educators.

➤ Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)

Work with district partners to develop induction programs that are more attentive to the unique contexts and working conditions of nearby schools and to ensure teachers are not only Day 1 ready but are also coached and mentored during their initial years in the profession.

Partner with principal preparation programs to ensure administrators are aware of innovative practices to induct teachers and create healthy working conditions.

➤ District Leaders

District leaders can create opportunities to retain and support teachers though **engaging in continuous improvement techniques** to collect evidence on and then refine approaches to new teacher mentoring and compensation strategies.

Build capacity of school leaders (e.g., principals, instructional coaches) to create positive working conditions and deliver targeted, ongoing support to teachers.

➤ Researchers

Using longitudinal data, identify districts and schools with high rates of teacher retention and student achievement outcomes for **more in-depth qualitative analysis** to understand positive working conditions.

Researchers can conduct teacher **turnover studies that are more attentive to locale and context** to provide greater insight into how geographic location, student demographics, and other district and school variables influence teacher retention.

Examine whether teachers are being tasked with additional roles and responsibilities, including counseling, substitute teaching and bus driving. Shining a light on these patterns matters because it helps leaders, reformers, advocates and researchers understand teacher working conditions as well as labor market issues across the state's numerous contexts.

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Authors

Dr. Jessica Gottlieb,
Texas Tech University

Jessica Gottlieb is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Leadership, & Counseling. Dr. Gottlieb previously worked as a classroom teacher in Los Angeles, CA. Her research focuses on how educational policy can be used to improve access to high-quality education opportunities through a focus on teacher preparation and teacher retention.

Dr. Sarah Woulfin,
The University of Texas at Austin

Sarah Woulfin is an associate professor of educational leadership and policy at the University of Texas at Austin and a fellow of the L.D. Haskew Centennial Professorship in Public School Administration. Her research uses lenses of organizational theory and qualitative methods to understand how district and school leaders implement instructional reform.
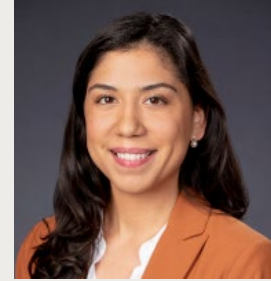
Dr. Laura Torres,
The University of Texas at Austin

Laura Torres serves as director of data analytics, assessment and translational research and is an assistant professor of instruction in the College of Education at the University of Texas at Austin. Her work focuses on improving the accessibility and use of data and research to advance equitable policy and practice in education.

Contributors

Leah Ballard | Commit Partnership
Han Bum Lee | UT San Antonio
Ralph Carlson | UT Rio Grande Valley
Lizzy Cashiola | Houston Education Research Center
David DeMatthews | UT Austin
Mark Eddy | UT Austin
Priscilla Flores | E3 Alliance
Amy Havard | E3 Alliance
Holly Heard | Texas 2036
Carolyn Lande | UT Austin
Sandra Musanti | UT Rio Grande Valley
Erin Philip | Educate Texas
David Rardon | Commit Partnership
Annelies Rhodes | E3 Alliance
Johannes Strobel | UT El Paso
Melissa Wetzel | UT Austin
Kim Wright | National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships

▶ Founding Members

- ★ Commit Partnership
- ★ E3 Alliance
- ★ Educate Texas
- ★ Houston Education Research Consortium
- ★ Philanthropy Advocates
- ★ Texas 2036
- ★ Texas Tech, Center for Research In Change, Leadership, and Education
- ★ UT Austin, College of Education
- ★ UT El Paso, Paso del Norte
- ★ UT Rio Grande Valley, College of Education
- ★ UT San Antonio, Urban Education Institute

▶ Strategy Members

- ★ Texas 2036
- ★ Philanthropy Advocates

▶ Agency Partners

We'd like to acknowledge the expertise and data contributions of the following agencies:

- ★ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- ★ Texas Education Agency
- ★ Texas Education Research Centers

▶ How to Cite This Work

Gottlieb, J., Woulfin, S.L. & Torres, L.G. (2023). Keeping Teachers in Texas Classrooms. Report and recommendations from the Texas Education Research-Practice- Policy Partnership Network.

Let's Connect

We aim to include partners who engage in long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations that promote the production and use of research and data to solve educational problems of practice in their regions.

LONESTARRP3 is a statewide network that brings multiple perspectives together—inviting the many voices involved in education. Our partners design, generate, and translate research into accessible and actionable solutions. Our collaborative approach produces research with clear and immediate use in both classroom teaching and policymaking.

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