

St. Cloud State University

## The Repository at St. Cloud State

---

Educational Administration and Leadership  
Faculty Publications

Department of Educational Leadership and  
Higher Education

---

10-21-2021

# Welcome to the Profession: Exploring Perceptions of New Teacher Retention Supports

Amy Christensen

*St. Cloud State University*, [amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:amchristensen@stcloudstate.edu)

Michele Barron-Albers

*Saint Cloud State University*, [mbalbers@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:mbalbers@stcloudstate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad\\_facpubs](https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad_facpubs)



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Christensen, Amy and Barron-Albers, Michele, "Welcome to the Profession: Exploring Perceptions of New Teacher Retention Supports" (2021). *Educational Administration and Leadership Faculty Publications*. 1. [https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad\\_facpubs/1](https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad_facpubs/1)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Education at The Repository at St. Cloud State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Administration and Leadership Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of The Repository at St. Cloud State. For more information, please contact [tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu).

**WELCOME TO THE PROFESSION:**  
**EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF NEW TEACHER RETENTION SUPPORTS**

**Dr. Amy Christensen, St. Cloud State University, USA**

**Michele Barron-Albers, St. Cloud State University, USA**

# **EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF NEW TEACHER RETENTION SUPPORTS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is a high rate of teachers leaving the profession in the United States, which is propagating teacher shortages. School districts, faced with annual attrition rates of 8%, are charged with hiring tens of thousands of new teachers yearly to replace the beginning or mid-career teachers who are leaving the field, thus depleting economic resources that could be used in another capacity (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Garcia & Wiess, 2019). It costs the school district, on average, around \$21,000 to fill a vacancy (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Most school districts nationwide struggle with retaining quality teachers due to many factors including low wages, difficult working conditions, and dissatisfaction with administrative support (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Nguyen et al, 2020).

The teacher shortage is detrimental to both students and teachers in the United States' public education system. A students' learning ability is threatened by a lack of qualified teachers. Teacher attrition in disadvantaged socioeconomic school settings leads to a non-equitable education for those students (Garcia & Wiess, 2019), as well as diminished teacher effectiveness (Ronfeldt, et al., 2013; Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009; Kraft & Papay, 2014; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Garcia & Wiess, 2019).

The field of education is constantly under attack. This attack on educational professionalism continues to exacerbate the rate of teacher attrition (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Garcia & Wiess, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

## **FACTORS RELATED TO TEACHER RETENTION**

Borman and Dowling's (2008) meta-analysis on teacher retention focused on two themes: personal characteristics and school characteristics. It found that both personal characteristics and school characteristics are significant predictors of teacher turnover.

In 2020, Nguyen, Pham, Crouch, and Springer expanded on the Borman and Dowling meta-analysis from 2008. Nguyen, et.al. (2020) extended the conceptual framework to suggest personal factors, school factors, and external/policy factors correlate with teacher turnover. Personal factors encompass teacher characteristics and qualifications. School factors consist of school organizational characteristics, resources, and student body characteristics. External/policy factors comprise accountability and workforce (p. 3).

Concerning school factors, Nguyen et al (2020) found that teacher turnover increased at schools with less favorable working conditions and with weaker administrative supports. Teachers that experience induction and/or mentoring and have good in-service professional development are more likely to stay (p. 9). Regarding school resources, a small number of studies found that increased availability of teaching materials decreases the odds of teacher turnover, but further research is warranted. The meta-analysis (2020) added an additional factor which is External/Policy factors, including accountability and workforce. It was noted that accountability has five factors: "teacher evaluation, merit pay, teacher effectiveness, federal or national policies, and principal effectiveness" (p. 9).

It was reported by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) that teacher attrition in the United States is about twice as high as compared to countries such as Finland and Singapore. In the United States, 90% of vacant teaching positions are created by teachers leaving the field. Around 66% leave education for reasons other than retirement, with most citing dissatisfaction

with the teaching profession. Within the first five years, nearly half of new teachers leave the classroom, this includes 9.5% in the first year alone (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

According to the 2021 Biennial Report: Supply & Demand of Teachers in Minnesota (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2021), data from 2015 – 2020 showed there is “a relatively consistent 11% attrition after one year, 17% after two years, and 22.5% after three years. Nearly a third of new teachers leave teaching within the first five years in the profession” (p. 44). During the 2019-20 academic year, 2300 Minnesota teachers left their previous position. When identifying reasons that these teachers were no longer employed, more than 43% were listed as “unknown” or “personal reasons,” while 31% reported being an educator in a different district (p. 45). Attrition rates and a downward trend in the number of first year teachers in this state exacerbate demand for teachers.

## **PRACTICES AND SUPPORTS TO AID IN TEACHER RETENTION**

Recurrent themes regarding teacher attrition, such as administrative support, professional development, and mentorship program implementation, have been shown to be addressed with induction programs. (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Conley & You, 2017; Hagaman & Casey, 2018). Induction programs are defined as “post-hire, in-service training programs completed during the few years of employment – provide additional support and foster skill acquisition among teachers and administrators” (p. 3) by California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, otherwise known as CCSESA (2016).

Effective induction programs improve the probability that new teachers will remain in the profession. Effective programs include onboarding, professional development, observations and evaluations, classroom instructional practices, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong,

2011). Induction programs in the United States fluctuate greatly from state to state as well as from one district to another. As of 2016, 58% of states require some form of support for new to the profession teachers (Goldrick, 2016, p. IV).

There is no provision currently in Minnesota for induction or mentoring of new teachers. The Teacher Support Partnership worked to create state induction guidelines in 2008. Professional development and induction systems, mentoring, and resources were included. A policy analysis was completed by the New Teacher Center (2015) to determine quality induction program characteristics, review current policies and practices aligned with the indicators, and provide recommendations to increase induction program effectiveness in this state. In 2013, it was reported that 84% of schools offered some form of formalized teacher induction program. Of those reporting schools, in year two only 33% continued, and by year three, it decreased to 18%. Induction related activities, new teacher seminars or workshops, formative assessment training, mentor training, and evaluation measures were the reported activities. Strengths and weaknesses were noted during the review of laws, regulations, and policies. The included strengths were “encouragement of induction, the availability of professional development funding to support district programs, an existing set of induction guidelines, and the publication of the annual staff development report” (p. 7). The included weaknesses for the state were listed as having none of the following: induction program requirement, mentor selection and training criteria, induction activities evaluation, and teacher licensing alignment (p. IV). State Statute 122A.70 (2020) notes that schools are *encouraged* to have teacher mentorship programs.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTS**

A 2017 study by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond found “effective leadership is at the heart of every school and drives high-quality support for new teachers and improved teaching

conditions” (p. 34). Strong correlation was reported by teachers between high levels of teacher turnover and a perceived lack of administrative support. They further noted that teachers who did not feel supported were more than twice as likely to leave the school or the teaching professional all together than teachers who felt supported by their administration. Effective instructional leaders create positive school cultures of high expectations, which helps increase teacher satisfaction. Effective leaders utilize teacher observation and evaluation to provide consistent feedback on teachers’ performance. Conley and You (2017) found that teachers were more apt to stay in the field or noted that they intended to stay in education when they experience more in depth administrative and collegial support.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS**

In a seminal study on teacher retention and attrition, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) noted that teachers show a propensity to leave their positions when they do not feel a “sense of success” (p. 609) and when the working conditions of their school or district do not foster an ability by administrators and mentors to effectively support and serve their students. Research conducted in education policy and leadership over the past decade has demonstrated that appropriate and positive working conditions matter for both teachers’ instructional quality and their ability to effectively and meaningfully promoting student achievement gains (Johnson et al., 2012; Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015).

Research further indicated that appropriate working conditions and a positive school climate may, in fact, support teachers’ effectiveness in several ways. Administrators who foster a positive working environment may support teachers in demonstrating their knowledge by creating conditions that support effective instruction (Billingsley & Bettini, 2017). Positive working conditions impact teachers’ ability to provide high quality instruction for all students

(Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017) and may effectively support teachers' mental health, which has been shown to be directly related to the quality and effectiveness of their teaching (McLean, Abry, Taylor, Jimenez, & Granger, 2017).

## **TEACHER MENTORSHIP**

The terms induction and mentorship are often used interchangeably as mentors often manage the induction supports. Reviews of related literature most frequently cited that teacher mentorship roles involve providing of emotional support, including strategies for handling job-related stress integral to the first years of teaching (Gold, 1996; Whitaker, 2000), and facilitation of professional supports, including support with instruction, curriculum alignment to content standards, behavior and classroom management, and understanding school policies (Algozzine et al., 2007).

As novice teachers are at an amplified risk of leaving the profession during their first few years of teaching, the support needs of beginning teachers are of great importance. Beginning teachers' optimism they bring to their work is often quickly abolished by dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the realities of first year teaching. Novice teachers often struggle with countless issues such as classroom management while successfully addressing student behavioral concerns, working with difficult parents, and thriving without sufficient support from colleagues and administration (Gold, 1996).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to analyze educational professionals' reflective writings to expand the insights regarding why teachers leave the field of education. The intent was to

examine the supports provided to beginning in-service teachers and attempt to determine what additional supports would be the most beneficial to aid in retaining new teachers.

## **STUDY SAMPLE**

The study sample consisted of 185 practicing administrators and 70 beginning in-service teachers (within their first three years of teaching) in the state of Minnesota, and 21 student teaching candidates enrolled in the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) School of Education during the Spring 2021 semester.

## **INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA COLLECTION**

For this research study, Qualtrics surveys were created for the three sample groups (pre-service, beginning in-service, and administrators). The three survey instruments were piloted during Fall 2020 with each sample group. The revised Qualtrics surveys were administered to all three sample groups during Summer 2021. The qualitative data provided feedback on the perceptions of the three groups of participants regarding why new teachers are leaving the field, what supports are being provided to new teachers, and supports are desired by new teachers which could impact teacher retention rates.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data gathered in this grounded theory study from the three sample groups were coded to identify what common patterns or themes emerged. This method entails finding ‘plausible relationships’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and is often referred to as ‘the constant comparative method’ of analyzing and making connections from the data. The researchers compiled the data into narrative transcripts, and recurring patterns or themes were identified and coded. These narratives provided descriptive details of each participant’s lived experience.

## RESPONSE RATE

Of the 2021 Spring Semester Student teachers at SCSU, 21 out of 90 completed the online Qualtrics survey for a 23% return rate. For beginning in-service teachers, the Qualtrics survey was completed by 179 respondents. Of those, 70 met criteria of being within the first three years of teaching. There were 185 administrators who completed the Qualtrics survey.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

For the question “**Why Are Teachers Leaving the Field**”, the results, as seen in Table 1 below, suggest that all three groups perceived working conditions, burnout, and support as the top reasons that teachers leave the field.

- Pre-service teachers imagine “large workload with little time to complete it” and “challenging expectations and responsibilities.”
- Beginning teachers note “high demands with low salary” and “The work life balance is impossible and the pay is terrible. We are overworked, over stressed and under paid.”
- Administrators comment “low pay for poor treatment of professional status” and “Demands outweigh the time provided.”

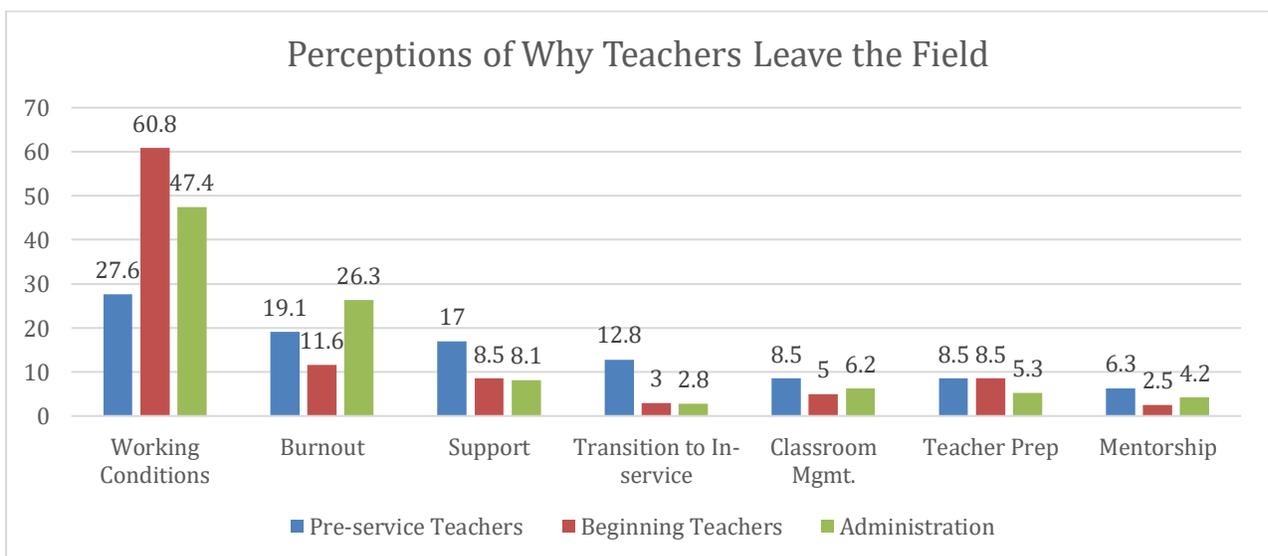


Table 1

For the question “**What Induction/Mentorship Supports Are Being Provided To New Teachers**”, the results, as seen in Table 2 below, indicate having a mentor as the top support provided to new teachers. For beginning teachers, 29.4% relayed it as a negative mentor experience, while 25% commented on a positive mentor experience.

- Pre-Service teachers envision that they will “have a mentor teacher in the district that I can go to if I have questions and/or concerns.”
- Beginning teachers commented “Observation, constructive critique, an open door for any issues.” Others noted “A waste of time” and “a mentor who was overworked and too busy to help.”
- Administrators noted “A mentor teacher within the school building. This is often a teacher who is within the same grade level or team.”

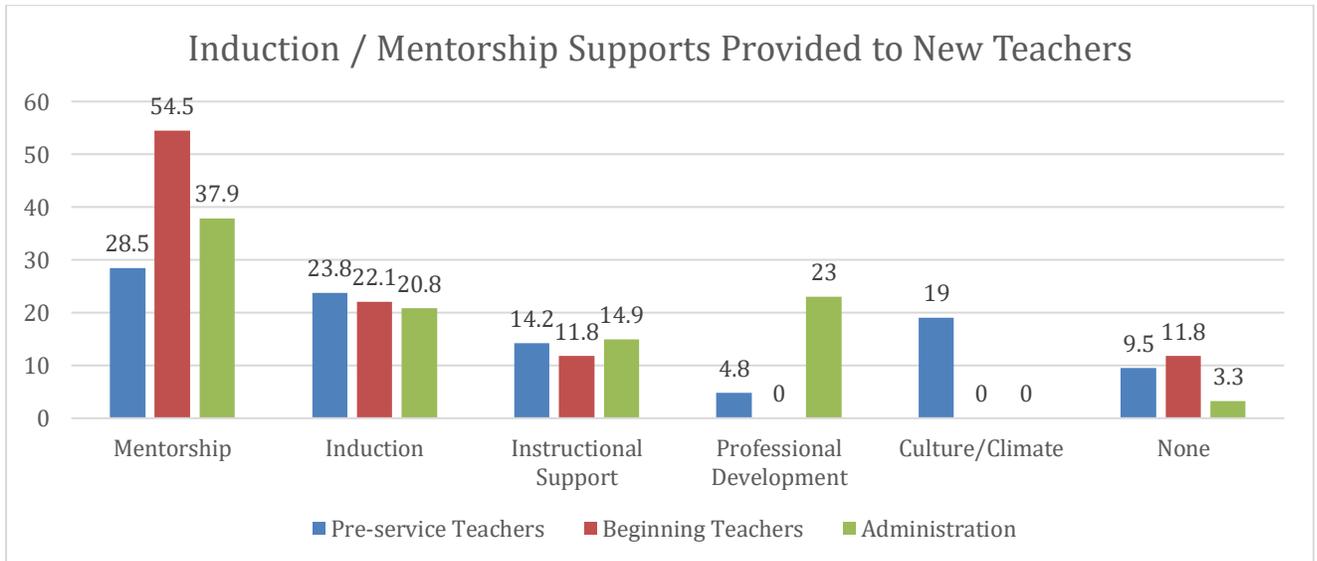


Table 2

For the question “**What Induction/Mentorship Supports Do You Wish Would Be Provided To New Teachers**”, the results, as seen in Table 3 below, indicate induction/mentorship supports they wished for was effective mentorship and support.

- Pre-Service teachers hope for “a mentor who is open to me asking a lot of questions, someone who will provide directive feedback, guide me in due process, and help me in being reflective on my own teaching practices” and “strong relationships with other staff, support of colleagues.”
- Beginning teachers reported “time to observe other teachers, more help in the classroom, help with classroom management” and “someone to work closely with.”
- Administrators noted “The most powerful ones are where the new teachers find the person they connect with, trust, and build a relationship with” and “that has taught the same grade or subject as the teacher they are mentoring. I would like to see this person assigned to one building” and “principals more involved with mentoring our new teachers through a structured principal mentoring program.

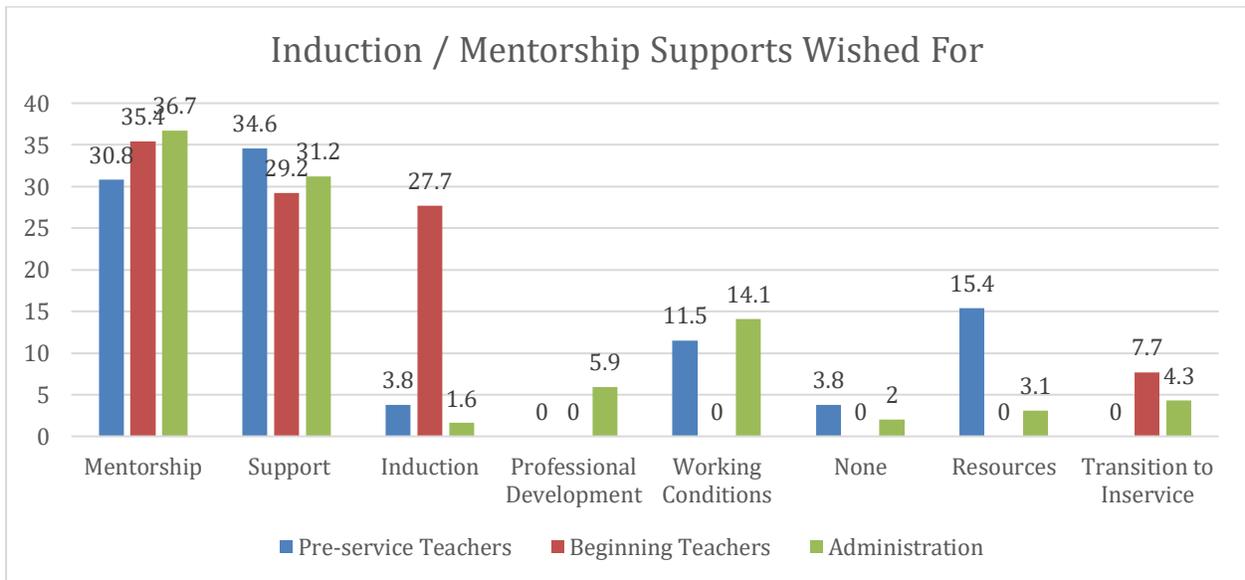


Table 3

## CONCLUSIONS

All three groups perceived working conditions, burnout, and supports as the top three reasons why teachers are leaving the field. Our findings indicate that working conditions such as pay, challenging expectations, and unrealistic time commitments add to teachers’ decisions to leave the field. This aligns to the findings of working conditions in related literature (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017;

Nguyen et al, 2020). Regarding burnout, our findings indicate that conditions such as high levels of stress, feelings of being overwhelmed, and a sense of not being supported as a new teacher contribute to new teachers' decisions to leave the field. Concerning supports, respondents indicated a lack of support from experienced teachers, administrators, parents, school districts, and communities as a reason new teachers decide to leave the field. Related research often focuses on administrative support for beginning teachers (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017; Conley & You, 2017), with little exploration into experienced teacher, parental, school district, and community-based supports.

All three groups reported the top induction support provided to new teachers as mentorship. Out of the 54.5% of beginning teachers that cited mentorship as the top induction support, 29.4% conveyed it as a negative experiences, based on not being helpful, lack of availability over the course of the school year, and providing minimal effective support. Our findings suggest a disconnect between related research on effective mentorship (Goldrick, 2016; Weinberg, 2021) and mentorship practices reported by beginning teachers in the field.

Two of the three groups reported the top induction support they wished would be provided to new teachers as mentorship. Beginning teachers conveyed the desire for the provided mentors to demonstrate effective mentoring skills. Examples of this include observation opportunities, providing help in the classroom, guidance on instructional support and classroom management. Administrators stated the need for scientifically-based, on-going mentorship models, which would be implemented with fidelity and centered around quality, skilled mentor teachers. Pre-service teachers reported support as their top wish as new teachers. They noted academic supports including curriculum assistance and lesson planning as well as social supports including strong relationships and social groups with colleagues. This aligns to findings of new

teacher supports as noted in related research (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; McLean, Abry, Taylor, Jimenez, & Granger, 2017).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Results of the study has led the researchers to several recommendations.

- Pre-service teachers need to have realistic notions of what the field of education really entails and assistance in transitioning from pre-service to in-service. The recommendation is for a more intentional collaboration between institutions of higher education and local school districts to better support new to the field teachers to help alleviate the theory to practice gap.
- Beginning teachers expect effective mentorship. They want mentors who are committed, willing to build relationships and to be their support system. The recommendation is to employ effective mentorship programs within each school ensuring that the mentors and mentees work in the same building and that mentors are readily available. With current technological capabilities, further research is warranted into the efficacy of virtual mentorship.
- Beginning teachers also want support from colleagues, parents, the school district, and the community. The recommendation is for more intentional engagement of all stakeholders at these different levels to provide needed supports to beginning teachers.
- A positive working environment is extremely important. Administrators need to provide working conditions that support their new teachers. The recommendation is to give new teachers appropriate assignments and sufficient resources for teaching. Administrators need to provide conditions to create a stable school, where new teachers can rely on their colleagues for advice and support.

## REFERENCES

- Algozzine, K., & Algozzine, B. (2007). Classroom instructional ecology and school-wide positive behavior support. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 24*(1), 29–47. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J370v24n01\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J370v24n01_02)
- Billingsley B, Bettini E. Special Education Teacher Attrition and Retention: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research.* 2019; 89(5):697-744. <https://doi:10.3102/0034654319862495>
- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher Attrition and Retention: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review of the Research. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(3), 367–409. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308321455>
- California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (2016). Best Practices in Teacher and Administrator Induction Programs. Retrieved from <http://ccsesa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Best-Practices-in-Teacher-and-Administrator-Induction-Programs.pdf>
- Carver, C. L. (2003). Chapter 4. The Principal's Role in New Teacher induction. In M. Scherer (Author), *Keeping good teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). The trouble with teacher turnover: How teacher attrition affects students and schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 27*(36). <https://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3699>
- Conley, S., & You, S. (2017). Key influences on special education teachers' intention to leave: The effects of administrative support and teacher team efficacy in a mediational model. *Educational Management, Administration, and Leadership, 45*, 521–540. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215608859>
- Garcia, E. & Weiss, E. (2019). The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought. *Economic Policy Institute*. Retrieved from [The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought: The first report in 'The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market' series | Economic Policy Institute \(epi.org\)](http://www.epi.org/publication/the-teacher-shortage-is-real-large-and-growing-and-worse-than-we-thought-the-first-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/)
- Gold, Y. (1996) Beginning teacher support, attrition, mentoring and induction, in J. Sikula, T. Buttery & E. Guyton, eds., *Handbook of research on teacher education*, (pp. 548-559). New York: Macmillan.

- Goldrick, L. (2016). Support from the start: a 50 state review of policies on new educator induction and mentoring. Retrieved from [2016CompleteReportStatePolicies.pdf \(newteachercenter.org\)](https://www.newteachercenter.org/2016CompleteReportStatePolicies.pdf)
- Hagaman, J.L., & Casey, K.J. (2018). Teacher attrition in special education: perspectives from the field. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 41(4), 277-291. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406417725797>
- Ingersoll, R.M. & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: a critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323>
- Jackson, C., & Bruegmann, E. (2009). Teaching students and teaching each other: the importance of peer learning for teachers. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1(4), 85-108. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25760183>
- Johnson, S.M. & Birkeland, S.E. (2003). Pursuing a “sense of success”: new teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal* (40)3, 581-617. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312400035810>
- Kraft, M.A., & Papay, J.P. (2014). Can professional environments in schools promote teacher development? Explaining heterogeneity in returns to teaching experience. *Educational Effectiveness and Policy Analysis*. 2014:36(4):476-500.
- McLean, L., Abry, T., Taylor, M., Jimenez, M. & Granger, K. (2017). Teachers' mental health and perceptions of school climate across the transition from training to teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 65(1), 230-240. Elsevier Ltd. Retrieved September 10, 2021 from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/202905/>.
- Minnesota Legislature Office of the Revisor of Statutes, Teacher Mentor and Retention of Effective Teachers, 122A.70 (2020).
- Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (2021). 2021 Biennial Report: Supply & Demand of Teachers in Minnesota. St. Paul, MN: PELSB. Retrieved from [https://mn.gov/pelsb/assets/Supply%20and%20Demand%202021\\_Final\\_tcm1113-463801.pdf](https://mn.gov/pelsb/assets/Supply%20and%20Demand%202021_Final_tcm1113-463801.pdf).
- New Teacher Center (2015, February). Strengthening teacher induction policy in Minnesota. Retrieved from [MinnesotaInductionReport.pdf \(newteachercenter.org\)](https://www.newteachercenter.org/MinnesotaInductionReport.pdf)
- Nguyen, T.D., Pham, L.D., Crouch, M. & Springer, M.G. (2020). The correlates of teacher turnover: an updated and expanded meta-analysis of the literature, *Educational Research Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100355>

- Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4–36.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212463813>
- Sorensen, L. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2020). The hidden costs of teacher turnover. *AERA Open*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420905812>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Teacher Support Partnership (2008). Minnesota educator induction guidelines. Retrieved from [11-8-11 TSP MN Educator Induction Guidelines ACC.pdf](#)
- Weinberg, A. (2021, July). 3 Strategies for Productive Teacher Mentoring. *Edutopia*. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/3-strategies-productive-teacher-mentoring>
- Whitaker, S. D. (2000). Mentoring Beginning Special Education Teachers and the Relationship to Attrition. *Exceptional Children*, 66(4), 546–566.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290006600407>