



SCHOOL DISTRICTS PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

**K-12 Education: Reviewing Issues Related to
Developing and Retaining Teachers and
School Principals**

Executive Summary

**A Report to the Legislative Post Audit Committee
By the Legislative Division of Post Audit
State of Kansas
July 2006**

Legislative Post Audit Committee

Legislative Division of Post Audit

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July 11, 2006

To: Members of the Kansas Legislature

This executive summary contains the findings and conclusions from our completed performance audit, *K-12 Education: Reviewing Issues Related to Developing and Retaining Teachers and School Principals*.

The report also contains appendices showing survey results of Kansas principals on teacher attrition, Kansas teacher migration information, and average teacher salaries and rankings of all 50 States and the District of Columbia.

If you would like a copy of the full audit report, please call our office and we will send you one right away. We would be happy to discuss these recommendations or any other items in the report with you at your convenience.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara J. Hinton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara J. Hinton
Legislative Post Auditor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
LEGISLATIVE DIVISION OF POST AUDIT

**Overview: National Teacher Turnover Rates and Areas With
Teacher Shortages**

About 16% of all teachers change jobs each year. At the *national* level, page 3
half of all turnover is caused by teachers who move between schools, while the other half is caused by teachers who leave the profession entirely. According to the education literature, attrition among younger teachers is an especially large problem, with one out of every three teachers leaving the profession within their first three years of teaching.

Shortages of qualified teachers exist for certain subjects and in certain types of schools. page 4
Subjects such as vocational education and math are harder to fill with qualified teachers than others. In addition, schools with high poverty have greater turnover than schools with low poverty (20% and 13%, respectively), which means they have a higher proportion of positions to fill each year.

**Question 1: To What Extent Does Kansas Have a Teacher Shortage,
And Why?**

Statewide, almost 6% of all teaching positions are vacant or not filled by a fully qualified teacher. page 6
Since 1999-00, total demand for teachers has remained steady at about 34,000, but there have been shifts in the types of teachers needed and in the locations where they're needed. Kansas' teacher shortage is characterized primarily by teachers who teach "out-of-field" (5.4% of the total), rather than actual vacancies (0.5%). Out-of-field teachers are those who don't have a valid teaching license or the proper teaching endorsement for their assignment.

Teacher shortages are worse in certain regions and types of districts, and for certain subjects. page 7
The most severe teacher shortages are in high-poverty districts, where 8.6% of all teaching positions are vacant or filled by teachers who are teaching out-of-field. Regionally, southwest Kansas has the greatest shortages (8.5%). Teacher shortages are worse for certain subjects, such as special education (17.2%) and foreign language (11.2%). Finally, teacher shortages are greater for high schools (8.1%) than for middle schools (4.8%) and elementary schools (4.0%).

About 16% of all Kansas teachers change jobs each year. page 10
Almost 9% of Kansas teachers leave the public school system, while more than 7% move between schools each year. Teacher attrition is worst among high-poverty districts, where the attrition rate is nearly 10% compared to other districts at 8%. Teachers who change districts tend to move from west to east, and away from rural and high-poverty districts. Other than retirement, principals most frequently cited non-work-related factors as reasons for why teachers move or leave.

The number of teachers who will be eligible for retirement will increase in the near future. page 12
The share of teachers over 50 years of age increased from 27% in 1999-00 to 34% in 2004-05, and almost 24% of all teachers will be eligible to retire in the next five years. Northwest Kansas has the highest share of teachers who are or will be eligible for retirement in the next few years (29%), which is likely to worsen the current teaching shortages in that region.

The number of potential new teachers hasn't increased significantly over the last six years. page 14
The number of students earning bachelor degrees in education has increased slightly over the past six years—from 1,200 to about 1,350—while the number of new teaching licenses the Department of Education issues has remained flat at about 3,000 licenses per year.

Because of the large amount of data presented in this question, this table provides a summary of the major findings concerning teacher shortages, turnover, age, retirement, and supply.

Question 1 Conclusion. *In Kansas, almost 6% of all teaching positions currently are vacant or filled by an unqualified teacher. This situation has remained relatively stable, because there haven't been significant changes in the number of teaching positions, teacher turnover, or teacher supply over the last six years. That situation is likely to change in the near future, as the teaching force continues to age and the number of teachers who are eligible to retire continues to grow.*

Unless the State is better able to attract new teachers or retain current teachers, the pending growth in retirement is likely to exacerbate the current teacher shortage, especially in those regions of the State that already are struggling to fill positions with qualified teachers.

Summary of Kansas Teacher Shortages, Turnover, Age, Retirement, and Supply (1999-00 and 2004-05)		
	School Year	
	1999-00	2004-05
TEACHER SHORTAGES		
Vacancies	186 0.6%	154 0.5%
Teaching a Class They're Not Fully Qualified to Teach (Out-of-Field)	1,508 4.5%	1,828 5.4%
Fully Licensed	31,934 95.0%	31,837 94.1%
TEACHER TURNOVER (a)		
Teachers Leaving Kansas Schools	3,034 9.1%	2,806 8.4%
Non-Retirees	2,444 7.3%	2,061 6.2%
Retirees	590 1.8%	744 2.2%
Teachers Moving Between Kansas Schools	2,434 7.3%	2,574 7.7%
Total Turnover	5,468 16.4%	5,380 16.2%
TEACHER AGE AND RETIREMENT		
Percent of Teachers Over the Age of 50	26.7%	33.7%
Percent of Teachers Eligible or Soon To Be Eligible To Retire	18.3%	23.9%
TEACHER SUPPLY		
Educational Bachelor Degrees Awarded	1,200	1,347
New Teacher Licenses Issued	3,272	3,063
(a) Data on teacher turnover are from 1999-00 and 2003-04. Source: LPA summary of findings		

Question 2: How Do Kansas Teacher Salaries Compare With Other States, And What Does the Research Literature Show About the Relationship Between Statewide Salary Levels and Student Outcomes?

In 2004-05, Kansas' teacher salaries ranked 33rd nationally after adjusting for regional cost differences. page 17
Kansas' average teacher salary rank peaked at 23rd in 1998-99 and 1999-00, but fell to 32nd by 2003-04. Kansas' teacher salary ranking may improve in future years because of the significant funding increases passed during the 2005 and 2006 legislative sessions.

Kansas' starting salaries rank 6th nationally, but salaries for experienced teachers rank only about 36th. page 19
This may indicate that the long-term earning potential for Kansas teachers is limited.

Kansas' average teacher salary ranked in the middle of 10 competing states in 2004-05. page 20
Among those competitor states, California ranked first and Texas ranked last. However, select cities from Texas paid much higher teacher salaries than metropolitan areas of Kansas.

Annual salaries for teachers are low compared to similar professions, but hourly pay is comparable. page 21
Nationally, the annual salary for new teaching graduates of \$29,733 is the lowest among 12 types of bachelor degrees. In the Kansas City area, teachers' hourly wages of about \$30.00 per hour are competitive with professions that have similar education requirements.

Researchers have found a positive relationship between salaries and retention, but not between salaries and student performance. page 22
While increasing teacher salaries appears to increase teacher retention, those findings should be interpreted with caution because researchers also have found that other factors—such as working conditions—may have a stronger effect on retention, and using salaries to reduce attrition may be very costly. Researchers haven't found a strong association between teacher salaries and student performance, because of the complexity of the relationship and other methodological problems that make it difficult to study.

Question 2 Conclusion. *Kansas ranks very low in national comparisons of teacher salaries. Even after adjusting for regional differences in labor costs, Kansas teacher salaries still rank in the bottom half of all states. For many people, the State's low ranking may raise concerns that teacher salaries in Kansas aren't adequate to attract and retain enough quality teachers, and in the end this may hurt student performance. It's reasonable to think that salary levels play a key role in attracting and retaining teachers, and there's fairly strong evidence that increasing teacher salaries will improve teacher retention. However, because there's no clear evidence linking teacher salaries to student achievement, across-the-board salary increases are unlikely to be an efficient means of improving performance.*

Question 3: What Are the Best Practices for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining High-Quality Teachers and School Principals In Different Types of School Districts?

To attract teachers, the literature cites the following four best practices:

- Improve salary and benefits by raising beginning salaries, restructuring salary schedules, paying health insurance, and increasing retirement benefits. page 27
- Offer or improve other financial incentives, such as providing signing bonuses, tax credits, on-site day care, and housing aid.
- Use innovative recruitment strategies, such as implementing “grow-your-own” teacher programs, partnering with universities, and aggressively marketing the teaching profession.
- Reduce barriers to becoming a teacher by streamlining the hiring process and allowing alternative licensing options.

To improve teacher retention, the literature cites the following three best practices:

- Create high-quality preparation and transition programs by requiring education students to go through hands-on programs in diverse settings, and by implementing mentoring programs for new teachers. page 32
- Improve teacher working conditions by allowing teachers more autonomy within their classroom and by promoting interaction among teachers.
- Increase earning potential by increasing maximum salaries and offering longevity bonuses.

To develop teachers, the literature cites the following three best practices:

- Commit adequate resources to professional development by earmarking funds for training, paying advanced education training costs, and offering more time for development. page 35
- Provide targeted professional development by linking development to assessments and by giving schools greater control over professional development. page 37
- Provide a variety of professional development opportunities such as conferences, in-house training, and using technology to facilitate development.

To attract principals, the literature cites the following three best practices:

- Use innovative recruitment strategies such as building partnerships with universities, providing field-based internships, or using “grow-your-own” principal strategies.
- Provide financial incentives including higher salaries, tax credits, and relocation assistance.
- Reduce barriers to becoming a principal by allowing candidates who demonstrate the appropriate skills to become a principal, even if they don’t have any teaching experience.

To develop principals, the literature cites the following three best practices:

- Provide practical training, such as training on budgets, case studies, and problem-solving. page 37
- Include opportunities for peer support and leadership coaching, such as support groups, training with peer principals, and supervisor walk-throughs.
- Offer development through a variety of providers, such as outside agencies, university personnel, or national conferences.

Question 3 Conclusion. As discussed in Question 1, Kansas currently is facing a shortage of qualified teachers, and the pending retirements of the baby boom generation are likely to make the situation worse. To address future shortages, Kansas would benefit from a comprehensive plan that includes both State- and district-level strategies to attract, retain, and develop teachers.

The best practices we've compiled in this question provide policymakers with a list of ideas suggested by education experts or implemented in other states. Unfortunately, while there are lots of ideas, few of them have been demonstrated to be effective through sound empirical research. Evaluating the long-term effectiveness of any strategies will be an important component as the State moves to address teacher shortages.

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This audit was conducted by Katrin Osterhaus, Allen Bartels, Dan Bryan, and Heidi Zimmerman. Scott Frank was the audit manager. If you need any additional information about the audit's findings, please contact Ms. Osterhaus at the Division's offices. Our address is: Legislative Division of Post Audit, 800 SW Jackson Street, Suite 1200, Topeka, Kansas 66612. You also may call us at (785) 296-3792, or contact us via the Internet at LPA@lpa.state.ks.us.