

Indicators of Successful Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Oklahoma Rural Schools

Relevance to Oklahoma

- ▶ There is a teacher shortage in Oklahoma.
- ▶ Teacher recruitment and retention is an issue in many rural schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the patterns of teacher mobility in rural and nonrural school districts in Oklahoma?
2. Which factors predict the successful recruitment (completing a probationary period of employment in a single district for three years and obtaining tenure in the fourth year of teaching) of teachers at rural school districts in Oklahoma?
3. Which factors predict the continued retention of tenured teachers at rural school districts in Oklahoma?

Analytical Strategy

- ▶ Explore patterns of teacher job mobility in rural districts using descriptive statistics and survival analysis.
- ▶ Separate analysis of successful recruitment (= teacher completes 3-year probationary period and obtains tenure) versus retention of tenured teachers.
- ▶ Identify individual indicators associated with the likelihood of successful recruitment and with the duration of employment.
- ▶ Examine the relative importance of the three groups of factors: teacher-level, district-level, and community-level.

Results

- ▶ Teachers at Oklahoma rural schools have a 70% chance of reaching their fourth year of teaching in the same district and thus of achieving tenure, this study's definition of successful teacher recruitment; this rate is slightly lower than the rates for teachers in nonrural areas.
- ▶ Teacher-level indicators dominate among the predictive factors for successful recruitment and retention; teacher indicators contributed 78% to the explained variance for recruitment and 58% to the explained variance for retention. All variables included in the analysis explained just under 18% of the total variance for recruitment and retention.
- ▶ Indicators had similar relationships to outcomes across recruitment and retention. One notable exception is that higher teacher workload has a positive association with successful recruitment but a negative association with retention.
- ▶ Teachers who are male, have higher postsecondary degrees, and have more teaching experience are harder than others to recruit and retain in rural schools.
- ▶ For teachers in rural schools, higher total compensation and increased responsibilities in job assignment are positively associated with successful recruitment and retention.

Variable	Recruitment Model		Retention Model	
	Association	Significance	Association	Significance
Teacher level				
Teacher age at time of hire	+	***	NA	
Teacher gender: Male	-	***	-	***
Similarity of student and teacher demographics (on a scale from 0–1) (proportion of students of the same race/ethnicity)	+	**	ns	ns
Attended a regional college in Oklahoma	+	*	ns	ns
Attended an out-of-state college	-	*	-	***
Degree level when hired	-	***	+	**
Nonteaching assignments [teacher had nonteaching duties in this period of employment (any year)]	+	***	+	***
Teaching workload (average full-time equivalent during this period of employment)	+	***	-	***
Total compensation	+	***	+	***
Whether teacher is experienced at time of hire	-	*	+	***
District level				
Student-to-teacher ratio	ns	ns	+	***
Staff-to-teacher ratio	ns	ns	-	*
District size: Total number of students in district	+	***	+	***
District financial information: Per-pupil expenditure	ns	ns	+	***
District financial information: District property value per student	ns	ns	+	***
Student absenteeism	ns	ns	-	***
Average student performance	+	**	-	***
Student demographics: Percentage of Hispanic students	ns	ns	+	*
Student demographics: Percentage of American Indian students	ns	ns	-	***
Student demographics: Percentage of Black students	ns	ns	-	***
Student demographics: Percentage of special education students	ns	ns	+	***
Teacher characteristics: Average years of teaching experience	+	***	+	***
Teacher characteristics: Percentage of teachers with advanced degree	ns	ns	-	*
Highest grade offered in district	-	***	-	***
Parent engagement	ns	ns	+	***
Note:				
* Significant at p < .05 ns is not significant				
** significant at p < .01 - = negative correlation				
*** significant at p < .001 + = positive correlation				

Conclusion

Successful recruitment and retention of teachers at rural schools is related more to teacher indicators than to district indicators or community factors. The factors identified in this study as related to better recruitment rates can potentially be improved or supported by initiatives that target individuals or subgroups of teachers. Identifying these malleable indicators could inform future efforts to study and evaluate new recruitment and retention policies. Determining community-level contextual factors could help policymakers target districts that would benefit from additional resources.

References

Lazarev, V., Toby, M., Zacamy, J., Lin L., & Newman, D. (2017). *Indicators of successful teacher recruitment and retention in Oklahoma rural schools* (REL 2018–275). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

