



How well prepared and supported are new teachers? Results for the Northwest Region from the 2003/04 Schools and Staffing Survey



Summary





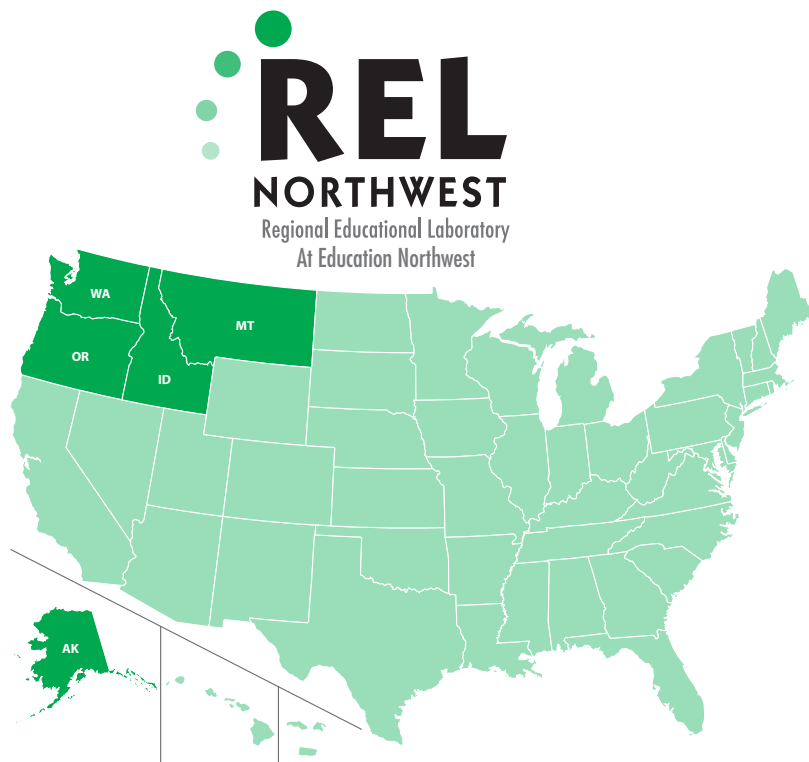
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Summary

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This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

How well prepared and supported are new teachers? Results for the Northwest Region from the 2003/04 Schools and Staffing Survey

This study provides descriptive statistics on the preparation and support of public school teachers in Northwest Region states and nationally. It summarizes information from teachers on the coursework and practice teaching they completed before they began teaching, how prepared they felt for their major classroom roles, and the kinds of support they received in their first year of teaching.

In recent years researchers, the media, and policy groups have voiced concern about teacher turnover, especially among new and early-career teachers. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007) estimates the cost of teacher turnover in public schools at more than \$7 billion a year. Different studies produce different estimates of the rate at which new teachers leave the profession; however, studies concur that early-career teachers are more likely to quit teaching than are more experienced teachers. High turnover among new teachers may diminish cohesion, reducing a school's effectiveness (Ingersoll 2003). Research also has identified specific forms of support that help keep teachers in their schools after their first year of teaching, including access to mentors in the same subject area and participation in induction activities, such as planning and collaboration with other teachers (Smith and Ingersoll 2004).

This study summarizes survey responses by teachers in Northwest Region public schools concerning coursework they completed in preparation for teaching, the support they received during their first year, and their preparation for essential classroom roles and compares responses to those at the national level. The study draws its data from the 2003/04 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) administered by the National Center for Education Statistics on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education. The SASS sample is representative of teachers in public schools at both the national and state levels. The study analyzes SASS results for public school teachers who began teaching between 1999 and 2003, excluding teachers in charter schools, special-purpose schools, and Bureau of Indian Affairs–administered schools. The results of the study thus generalize to the population of public school teachers who began teaching in 1999–2003, except teachers in the excluded categories of schools.

The study yields a wealth of descriptive information, summarized in table S1, figure S1, and table S2. The purpose of the study was to report descriptive statistics, not to test hypotheses about differences between the country as a whole and the Northwest Region or hypotheses about differences across the

TABLE S1
What coursework and practice teaching did teachers report completing in preparation for teaching, 2003/04? (percentage of all teachers)

Item	United States	Northwest Region
Education		
Holds bachelor's degree from a college, school, or department of education	68	64
Hold's master's degree from a college, school, or department of education	19	34
Coursework, observation, and formal feedback		
Completed coursework on selecting and adapting instructional materials	90	93
Completed coursework on learning theory or psychology appropriate to the ages of their students	93	97
Observed other classroom teachers and received formal feedback on their own teaching	90	96
Number of completed courses in teaching methods/strategies		
0–2	29	17
3–4	26	27
5–9	27	28
10 or more	19	28
Completed all courses before beginning to teach	55	52
Weeks of practice training		
4 or less	18	5
5–11	19	23
12	64	72

Source: Author's analysis of 2003/04 Schools and Staffing Survey teacher data.

Northwest Region states in teacher preparation and support. For this reason, total numbers, percentages, and standard errors are reported but inferential statistics are not.

Key findings include the following:

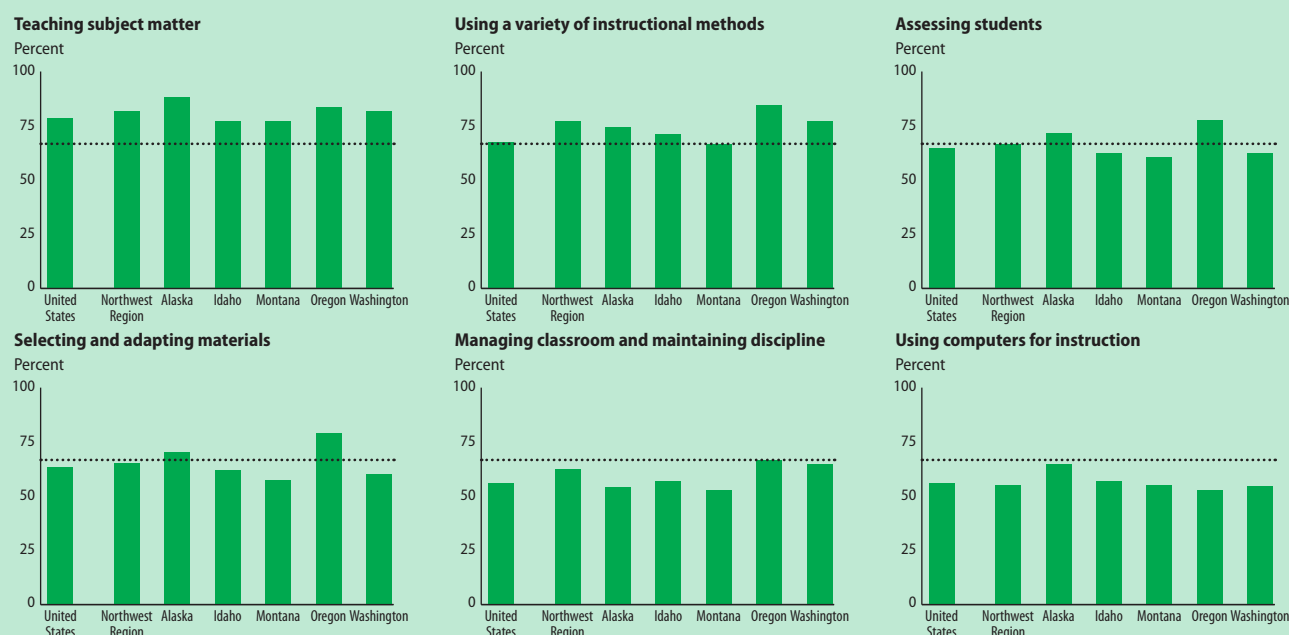
- An estimated 24 percent of surveyed teachers in the Northwest Region had no

more than five years of teaching experience in 2003/04, compared with about 26 percent nationally.

- As part of their preparation for teaching, 93 percent of teachers in the Northwest Region had completed coursework on selecting and adapting instructional materials, 97 percent had completed coursework on learning theory or psychology appropriate to the ages of their students, and 96 percent observed other classroom teachers and received formal feedback on their teaching.
- Some 17 percent of teachers in the Northwest Region completed no more than 2 courses in methods and strategies, and 28 percent completed at least 10 courses.
- In all Northwest Region states, at least two-thirds of teachers reported being well prepared or very well prepared for teaching subject matter and using a variety of instructional methods. In all states except Oregon, less than two-thirds of teachers reported being well prepared or very well prepared for classroom management and discipline. In no state in the region did two-thirds of teachers describe themselves as well prepared for using computers for instruction.
- Teachers reported receiving various forms of support during their first year of teaching, including induction programs, reduced teaching schedule, reduced number of preparations, common planning time, classes or seminars for new teachers, classroom assistance, and supportive communication.

FIGURE S1

How do teachers describe their degree of preparation for their major classroom roles? (percentage of teachers reporting that they were well prepared or very well prepared in 2003/04)



Note: The horizontal line indicates 67 percent, which is the median percentage of teachers who reported being well prepared or moderately well prepared in similar areas in Levine (2006)'s study of teacher preparation.

Source: Author's analysis of 2003/04 Schools and Staffing Survey teacher data.

TABLE S2

What kinds of support did teachers report receiving in their first year of teaching? (percentage of teachers, 2003/04)

Area	Induction programs	Reduced teaching schedule	Reduced number of preparations	Common planning time	Access to classes or seminars for new teachers	Classroom assistance	Supportive communication
United States	67.7	5.7	8.2	48.8	67.6	27.1	79.0
Northwest Region	59.2	3.9	5.7	35.1	60.1	23.1	68.2
Alaska	38.0	3.3	4.0	25.9	40.8	27.0	65.2
Montana	30.1	6.4	4.0	23.5	33.9	26.0	70.2
Oregon	43.6	4.4	6.3	38.7	46.5	24.3	63.4
Washington	73.6	3.3	5.4	35.9	74.4	21.4	68.7

Source: Author's analysis of 2003/04 Schools and Staffing Survey teacher data.

Since this study began, results from the 2007/08 administration of the SASS have become available. This study provides a baseline against which to interpret the 2007/08 results.

The study responds to specific questions posed by officials in Northwest Region states concerning

the preparation and support of new teachers in public schools. It is also relevant to concerns by teacher educators and education officials about the quality of teachers' preparation and the structure of their first year in the classroom.