

# TEACHER TURNOVER: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS\*

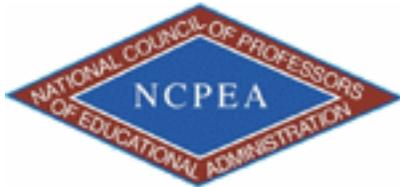
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## Abstract

In this article we reviewed the available literature concerning teacher turnover. The seriousness of this issue was addressed as cause for concern is clearly present. Issues we examined in this conceptual analysis were the federal government's role in public education, the No Child Left Behind Act, teacher turnover, teacher retention, teacher teaching characteristics, and the twenty-first century profession. This publication aligns with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standard 6: "An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal and cultural context."



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## Introduction

In the United States about 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003a). Annually, teachers enter, leave, and move within the K-12 teacher workforce. Movement affects the composition of teachers at these schools, institutional stability, and also the demographics and qualifications of the teacher workforce as a whole (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2005).

States, districts, and schools are forced to devote attention, time, and financial resources to initiatives designed to attract additional candidates to replace those teachers who leave the teaching profession (Voke, 2002). Darling-Hammond (2000a), in her study *Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of*

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State Policy Evidence, indicated that the effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status. Policymakers and school districts have instituted a wide range of initiatives to recruit new teachers to the profession. Even the best efforts at recruiting highly qualified teachers into the profession fail when they enter schools that do not support quality teaching (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2003).

Teacher turnover directly impacts student achievement, teacher quality, and accountability. Moreover, teacher turnover is also a costly phenomenon (NCTAF, 2003). "The most serious consequence and direct disadvantage of high teacher turnover is that it erodes teaching quality and student achievement" (NCTAF, 2003, p. 33). Therefore, it is crucial for school leaders to retain qualified beginning teachers in the profession and support and help them develop into quality professionals.

In this review of literature, the following topics were addressed: teachers, schools, students, and reforms; the No Child Left Behind Act; teacher turnover; teacher retention; teacher teaching characteristics; and the Twenty-First Century profession.

## 1 Teachers, Schools, Students, and Reforms

In the mid-1960s, a John Hopkins University professor, James S. Coleman, led a team of eminent researchers on a project for the federal government to look at teachers, schools and students (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). The Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (EEOS), also known as the Coleman Study, was organized by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1964 to assess the availability of equal educational opportunities to children of different race, color, religion, and national origin (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2000). The Coleman Study revealed that pupil achievement could not be substantially elevated until conditions governed by race, class, and income inequality were rearranged to strengthen the positive role of healthy families (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). This idea rapidly formed a broad consensus and in 1972, Christopher Jencks, sociologist, confirmed Coleman's basic findings in his highly influential book *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Jencks stated, "The character of a school's output depends largely on a single input, namely the characteristics of entering children. Everything else—the school budget, its policies, the characteristics of teachers—is either secondary or completely irrelevant" (Jencks, Smith, Acland, Bane, Cohen, Gintis, Heyns, & Michelson, 1972, p. 256). Suggested in the Coleman Study was that teacher quality did not matter much (Whitehurst, 2003).

As most readers are aware, the National Commission of Excellent Education (1983) report, *A Nation at Risk*, focused national attention on the state of America's schools. Claimed in the report was that American teachers were ill prepared and teacher preparation programs needed substantial improvement; that the professional working life of teachers was unacceptable; that a serious shortage of teachers exists in key fields; and that not enough of the academic scholars were being attracted to teaching (National Commission of Excellent Education, 1983).

With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* rose a series of "educational excellence" reforms designed to change the nature of schools, students, and teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, p. iv). In response to *A Nation at Risk*, the Carnegie Task Force followed up with a report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. Emphasized in the report was that America's "'pursuit of excellence' would [depend] on achieving far more demanding educational standards than we have ever attempted to reach before" (Carnegie Results, 2003b, p. 2). By the 1990s, political, business, and educational leaders realized that the key to successful educational reform was quality teaching. Conversations about teaching and what the nation could do to ensure the preparation of excellent teaching led Hugh Prince (Rockefeller Foundation and later head of Urban League) and Linda Darling-Hammond (then at Columbia University and now at Stanford University) to the establishment of a national commission (Carnegie Results, 2003a). In 1994, the NCTAF was formed with members including Anthony Alvarado, superintendent of New York City Community School District 2; James A. Kelly, president of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards; and North Carolina Governor, James B. Hunt Jr., who chaired the commission.

## 1.1 National Commission on teaching and America's Future (1996 and 2003)

In 1996, the Commission's focal point of the nation's education reform agenda was the condition of the teaching profession (NCTAF, 2003). The NCTAF (1996) report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* stated, "The single most important strategy for achieving America's educational goals is a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all of America's schools" (p. 10). The goals of the plan were to ensure that all schools have teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to teach effectively so that all students can learn, and all school systems are organized to support teachers.

The NCTAF (1996) report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, and the NCTAF (2003) report, *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*, noted that the most important factor in education reform is having a caring, competent, and qualified teacher for every student. The NCTAF 1996 report proposed a bold goal for America's future. "Within a decade-by the year 2006-we will provide every student in America with what should be his or her birthright: access to a competent, caring, and qualified teaching in schools organized for success" (NCTAF, 1996, p. 10). The Commission realized this goal might be a challenging one for educational leaders and the nation and that the goal might require unprecedented effort but not unprecedented theory. "Common sense suffices: American students are entitled to teachers who know their subjects, understand their students and what they need, and have developed the skills required to make learning come alive" (NCTAF, 1996, p. 10).

The Commission identified a number of barriers to achieving this goal. These barriers included: low expectations for student performance; unenforced standards for teachers; major flaws in teacher preparation; painfully slipshod teacher recruitment; inadequate induction for beginning teachers; a lack of professional development and rewards for knowledge and skill; and, schools that are structured for failure rather than success (NCTAF, 1996, pp. 10-11). Today, more than a decade after this report, the same barriers still exist.

In an effort to overcome these barriers to obtaining a caring and competent teacher for each and every student, the NCTAF (1996) offered five recommendations to address these concerns and accomplish their goal. The NCTAF (2003) acknowledged that implementing the recommendations would be difficult work and that these ideas must be pursued together and build upon the substantial work that had been carried out over the past decade. Key ingredients in the national recipe for school improvement and quality teaching were recruiting and preparing highly qualified teachers and ensuring that every school was organized to support successful teaching and learning (NCTAF, 2003).

The education of our nation's students continues to persist as one of the nation's main policy concerns. The ensuing focus on teacher quality has brought an increase in districts and schools implementing the kinds of reforms that education researchers had been calling for since the 1970s (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). The U.S. Department of Education, International Affairs Office (2004) stated the nation has long struggled with its inability to diminish the achievement gap between rich and poor students and whites and minorities. The No Child Left Behind Act 2001, intended to alleviate the nation's most troubling educational problem, the achievement gap (U.S. Department of Education, International Affairs Office, 2004), holds every state accountable and responsible for overseeing that schools are meeting the needs of every student in their care (U. S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, 2004).

## 2 No Child Left Behind Act 2001

### Accountability

The No Child Left Behind Act requires states, districts, and schools to be accountable for student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). "A major objective of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is to ensure that all students regardless of race, ethnicity or income have the best teachers possible" (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, 2004, p. 19). Researchers (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000a; Hanushek, 1992; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 1998; Rowan, 2002; Sanders & Rivers, 1996) have revealed the clear correlation between teacher quality and student achievement (e.g., NCTAF, 1996; NCTAF, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary,

2004; Whitehurst, 2003). With the passage of NCLB, educators, researchers, and policymakers have focused unprecedented attention to issues of teacher quality.

### **Teacher Quality/"Highly Qualified" Teacher**

The No Child Left Behind Act ensures that teacher quality is a high priority by defining the qualifications needed by teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Title I, of the No Child Left Behind Act, approached the goal of having highly qualified teachers in the classroom by mandating pre-service credentials (Whitehurst, 2003). States are required to develop plans to achieve the goal that all teachers of core academic subjects be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Current federal and state teacher policies and initiatives have focused on two common approaches to ensure that all classrooms are staffed with qualified teachers: improving the qualifications of teachers and increasing the quality of teachers supplied (Ingersoll, 2003a).

“America faces tremendous challenges as it seeks to reform the nation’s educational system with the goal of leaving no child behind” (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002, p. 1). Although the challenge will be addressed through a variety of strategies and approaches, one of the most critical factors in achieving the goal is the need to attract and retain highly qualified and effective teachers in classrooms (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002). Despite increased awareness of the nation’s teacher-quality challenges and reforms to address national shortcomings, “we are still far from having a caring and competent teacher in every classroom” (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. iii). The main goal of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2001 is to close the achievement gap by having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the 2005-2006 academic year. States and school districts are working toward this goal but have not yet attained it. In fact, one fourth of the United States teachers may not be qualified to teach their subjects (Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2001). The National Commission on Teaching America’s Future (2003) report, *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children*, stated that the issue of having a quality teacher for our nation’s children is in the hands of educational leaders at the state and local levels. One sign of progress has been the creation of new and more rigorous standards for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000b).

Today’s society demands greater knowledge and skill to survive and be successful; therefore, standards for learning are now higher than ever. The relevance of preparing teachers to practice dependable decisions based on a strong base of knowledge is increasingly important in contemporary society (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Definitely among the most important factors shaping the learning and growth of students are the quality of teachers and teaching (Ingersoll, 2003b).

To help educational leaders achieve this requirement, the commission recommended a chain of accountability based on accreditation, licensure, and certification requirements. In the face of the nation’s requirements, the barriers to quality teaching are alarming (NCTAF, 1996). A recent survey commissioned by the Council of Chief State Schools Officers revealed that 84 percent of the 400 winners of the teacher of the year awards responded that respect is important in keeping good teachers in the profession (Danitz, 2000). In the United States, teachers are often considered glorified babysitters and high clerical workers rather than being considered to be professionals. Progress has been made in recent years but in many districts and schools teachers are still poorly paid, micromanaged, and considered as partially skilled workers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Ingersoll (2001a), in his study, *Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools*, suggested that teachers in urban, high-poverty public schools depart because of job dissatisfaction due to low salaries, a lack of support from the administration, student discipline problems, lack of student motivation, and lack of teacher influence in the decision-making process.

### **Teacher Preparation**

Prior to the 1980s educational excellence reforms, individuals seeking a teaching certification had two options. One option was to graduate from a four-year college with a major in education. The second option was to take a certain number of specified education courses before being allowed to teach students. This option was offered in hopes of attracting potentially gifted teachers who have a degree in another field to enter the profession (Finn & Madigan, 2001). Since the early 1980s, in response to serious teacher shortages and teacher quality concerns, a call occurred for new ways to attract new and talented teachers into the

teaching profession.

Concerns with the qualifications and quality of teachers have resulted with reformers in many states pushing for tougher teacher education and teacher certification standards (Ingersoll, 2003b). The responsibility of teacher preparation, recruiting, credentialing, hiring, and structuring the working conditions of K-12 education remains with states and localities; however, over the past decade, the federal government has increasingly been involved in efforts to increase the quality and quantity of teachers (Stedman, 2004).

### **Traditional Route**

Traditionally, the primary source of elementary and secondary teachers has been the college of education. The traditional route to become a certified teacher was to complete a teacher education program at a state approved college or university (Feistritzer, 1999). The minimum proficiency assessment for traditional route certification is contingent upon the completion of a 4-year college degree program, comprised of academic and professional curricula, and the demonstration of competencies in subject matter areas through performance on written examinations, as required by each state or school district (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1991). In the United States, licensing or certification of elementary and secondary teachers is a state's responsibility (National Center for Education Information, 2006a). The approved college teacher education program route is the traditional route for licensing or certifying teachers. National, state and local regulatory agencies and accreditation entities implemented licensure and certification regulations as a means of educational quality control to ensure that these requirements are met (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1991; Wise, 1991). In fact, teacher education is currently experiencing a dynamic transformation (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2006).

### **Alternative Route**

Historically, "alternative teacher certification" has been used to refer to every path other than the traditional route to become a certified teacher (Hirsch, Koppich, & Knapp, 2001, p. 10). Alternative teacher certification paths vary from emergency certification to very refined and well-designed programs that focus on the professional preparation needs of the growing population of individuals who already have at least a bachelor's degree along with considerable life experiences (National Center for Education Information, 2006a). Alternative routes provide opportunities for individuals from various educational backgrounds and walks of life to become teachers (Feistritzer, 1999).

Alternative certification programs rose in the 1980s as a response to concerns about teacher shortages and teacher quality problems (Hawley, 1990; National Center for Education Information, 2006b). Yearly since 1983, the National Center for Education Information (NCEI) has polled state departments of education regarding alternatives to the traditional approved college of education program route for licensing teachers (National Center for Education Information, 2006a). In 1985, the State of Texas adopted an alternative teacher certification program to alleviate the projected teacher shortages in the Houston Independent School District. Legislators and policy makers were forced to discourage severe teacher shortages by involving more people into teaching (National Center for Education Information, 2006b).

"Growing numbers of governors, state legislatures, state commissioners of education, deans of education, and other political leaders are stepping forward in favor of alternative certification" (National Center for Education Information, 2006a, p. 6). Many states have now developed alternative routes to teaching in hopes of attracting more candidates to the profession, especially mid-career professionals with bachelor's degrees in subjects that suffer teacher shortages (Voke, 2002). Alternative routes for teacher certification have increased steadily over the last 23 years from only 8 states having some kind of alternative route to teaching in 1983 to 48 states, plus the District of Columbia, having some type of alternative route in 2006. During the last decade, alternative teacher certification has evolved and has produced many new programs that provide excellent preparation and training (Feistritzer, 1999). The National Center for Education Information (2006a) discovered a rapid development of alternative routes at the state level and also an evolving consensus of the important characteristics of an alternative teacher certification program. Unfortunately, not all alternative teacher certification route programs meet the demands of academic rigor (Feistritzer, 1999).

## Teacher Turnover

The NCTAF (1996) report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, offered as the single most important strategy for achieving the Nation's educational goals: "A blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting teachers" (p. 10). The NCTAF (2003) report, *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*, acknowledged that teacher retention has become a national crisis and is the real school staffing problem. In addition, the NCTAF (2003) report confirmed that high rates of teacher turnover and attrition are reducing the nation's efforts to achieve quality teaching for every student.

Yearly, in the United States, the teacher workforce has experienced many teachers leaving (leavers), entering, and moving within the profession to other K-12 schools (movers). This movement affects the composition of teachers at these campuses and the institutional stability of these campuses and also the demographics and qualifications of the teacher workforce as a whole (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). One type of turnover (retirement) is inevitable and expected (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997). Another type of turnover, which results in teachers leaving the profession (leavers), is teacher attrition, which sends a powerful and harmful message to students, parents, and other faculty members (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002). Teachers who move to other schools or districts (migration or movers) represent a third type of turnover. Because employee turnover is expensive, many districts and schools consider employee turnover as a serious problem. According to Ingersoll and Smith (2003), "Employee turnover has especially serious consequences in workplaces that require extensive interaction among participants and that depend on commitment, continuity, and cohesion among employees" (p. 31). Therefore, teacher turnover in schools not only causes staffing problems, but also impacts student achievement and the school atmosphere (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Ingersoll (2001a, 2001b), in an analysis of Schools and Staffing Survey data, argued that "leavers" rather than retirees are contributing to teacher shortages. A high level of teacher turnover implies that an organization has major problems and can cause instability and thus lead to additional problems. The movement of teachers from one public school to another (movers) does not represent a loss to the profession, but it does create recruitment problems for the schools (Boe et al., 1997; Ingersoll, 2001b). After analyzing the best national data available, the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), Ingersoll (2002) stated, "Substantial numbers of schools have experienced difficulties finding qualified candidates to fill openings" (p. 1).

According to Ingersoll (2001b), noted consistently in the literature is "the premise that employee turnover is important because of its link to the performance and effectiveness of the organizations" (p. 504). Effective organizations endorse a limited degree of turnover to eliminate teachers who are below par. Low levels of employee turnover are "normal and effective in a well-managed organization," however, "high levels of employee turnover are both cause and effect of ineffectiveness and low performance in organizations" (Ingersoll, 2001b, p. 505).

The nation's inability to support high quality teaching in many schools is driven by too many teachers leaving and not by insufficient numbers of teachers entering the profession (Ingersoll, 2002; NCTAF, 2003). In recent years, educational researchers and policymakers have focused increased attention to teacher turnover (Guin, 2004). For policymakers, evaluation of the competing policies regarding issues of teacher shortages, teacher attrition, and teacher quality is important to understanding the dynamics of such change in the teacher workforce (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). Ingersoll (2001b) described the inability of schools to staff classrooms adequately with qualified teachers is one of the pivotal causes of inadequate school performance according to contemporary educational theory.

Many researchers have shown that salary and poor working conditions influence teacher attrition (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002; Martinez-Garcia, Slate, & Tejada-Delgado, in press; NEA, 2003). In a 2004 study, Luczak documented that several teacher and school-level characteristics influenced attrition, including teacher gender, whether or not teachers had a graduate degree in a subject area, the percentage of minority students in a teacher's school, and salary, as compared with the cost of living. In a 2004 study, Scott examined the past history of teacher turnover during the 2001-02 academic year by utilizing data from all public school systems in the State of Texas. Average teacher salary, average years of experience teachers have with a district, percentage of minorities to total staff within a district, the number of students per teacher, the percentage of minorities in the student population, and the percentage of students with

disciplinary placements were described as factors related to teacher turnover (Scott, 2004). The NCTAF (2003) stated that teachers in high poverty areas have higher overall teacher turnover rates.

Education analyst Richard M. Ingersoll examined the data from the Schools Staffing Survey (SASS) and its supplement, the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) performed by the National Center for Education Statistics, documented salary and student discipline to be major factors related to high rates of teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001a, 2001b, 2004). Student discipline was a factor influencing teacher turnover in affluent, poor, urban, rural, large, and small schools. Ingersoll (2004) investigated factors tied to the characteristics and conditions of schools and focused on the kinds of schools deemed most disadvantaged and the most needy—those serving rural and urban, low-income communities.

### **Who is Most Likely to Leave or Move?**

Many beginning teachers leave the profession early in their careers (Stedman, 2004). Researchers and education experts concur that, in general, new teachers need from three to seven years in the field to reach proficiency and maximize their student's achievement (Claycomb & Hawley, 2000). "Generally, beginning teachers (those with 3 or fewer years of teaching experience) are not as effective as teachers with more years of teaching experience, with brand-new teachers typically being the least effective teachers" (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005, p. 5; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 1998). Rivkin et al. (1998) reported that beginning teachers make "important gains in teaching quality in the first year and smaller gains over the next few career years" (p. 449).

### **Teacher Shortages**

Elementary and secondary teacher shortages and teacher recruitment initiatives have been around since the mid 1980s (Ingersoll, 2003a). Across the United States, educators and policymakers are confronting the dilemma of teacher shortages, which will require a projected 2.2 million new teachers within the decade to staff our nation's schools (Gerald & Hussar, 1998). From a national and state perspective, teacher attrition is the most bothersome aspect of teacher shortage. Researchers claimed that increasing student enrollment, new laws requiring smaller class size, and imminent retirements meant that the United States would need to attract more teachers over the next decade (NCTAF, 2003; Voke, 2002); however, Ingersoll (2001a, 2001b) disagreed with retirement being a major factor causing teacher shortages. The initial prediction made during the 1980s and 1990s that the nation would need as many as two million teachers over the next decade has raised questions. Voke (2002) and Wayne (2000) stated that there is and will continue to be a shortage, but not as severe as earlier reports calculated.

If only the number of qualified candidates and the number of job openings are considered, there is an overall surplus of trained people (Darling-Hammond, 2000b; Voke, 2002). However, one-third to two-fifths of the qualified candidates who graduated from college "fully qualified to teach" do not enter the teaching profession immediately after earning their degree (Feistritzer, 1999, p. 2). Ingersoll (2001b) concluded that school staffing problems are primarily due to excess demand resulting from a revolving door. The NCTAF (2003) report *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children* report stated, "We are losing teachers faster than we can replace them" (p. 22). Ingersoll (2001b) indicated that schools with high poverty levels (greater than 50% poverty) have significantly higher rates of turnover than do more affluent public schools (less than 15% poverty).

Teacher shortage may not affect all schools in the same way but initially strikes the most severely underprivileged neighborhoods (Dossier of Education, 2001). Many school districts serving the urban and rural schools, especially those districts with a majority of minority and low-income students, have a difficult time filling positions and certain certification areas lack qualified teachers. Voke (2002) noted that there are not enough teachers who are both qualified and willing to teach in urban and rural schools or particularly those schools serving economically disadvantaged students. Similarly, Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, (2005) stated that teacher shortages are due to high attrition rates of beginning teachers and unequal distribution of teachers across schools, districts, and regions whereas some places experience surpluses and others experience shortages.

Throughout the United States, school districts are either experiencing or anticipating a teacher shortage

in certain areas. Mainly, substantial numbers of those schools with teaching openings have experienced difficulties finding qualified candidates to fill their positions (Ingersoll, 2003a). The failure to staff classrooms with qualified teachers has received national media coverage and has motivated a growing number of reform and policy initiatives (Ingersoll, 2001a). Hoping to attract more candidates to the profession, particularly mid-career professionals with bachelor's degrees in subjects that suffer teacher shortages (e.g., math and science), many states have now developed alternative routes to the classroom (Voke, 2002).

Policymakers, states, and school districts have instituted a wide range of initiatives to recruit new teachers: career-change programs designed to entice professionals into mid-career switches to teaching; alternative certification programs to allow college graduates to postpone formal education training and begin teaching immediately; recruitment of teaching candidates from other countries; and such financial incentives as signing bonuses, student loan forgiveness, housing assistance, and tuition reimbursement (Hirsch et al., 2001). In response, dozens of initiatives to increase the supply of available teachers and to lure the best and brightest to the fields have been started by an array of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including Troop-to-Teachers and Teach for America (Ingersoll, 2002). Although these strategies may increase the supply of new teachers, they provide no guarantee of retaining beginning teachers in the profession. The NCTAF (2003) report, *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*, concluded that "'teacher shortage' will never end and that quality teaching will not be achieved for every child until we change the conditions that are driving teachers out of too many of our schools" (p. 3).

### **Teacher Retention**

The NCTAF (2003) noted that teacher retention is the answer to staffing all the nation's classrooms with a highly qualified teacher. "Our inability to support high quality teaching in many of our schools is driven not by too few teachers entering, but by too many leaving" (NCTAF, 2003, p. 8). The nation's neediest schools, which are usually located in the urban, rural, or poor school districts, need to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Teacher retention is a necessary component in addressing school staffing problems and improving the chances of success for the neediest students. Ingersoll (2003a) revealed that teacher recruitment programs traditionally common in the policy area would not solve the staffing problems of the schools if they do not also address the organizational sources of low teacher retention.

### **Teacher Support Programs**

Recently, the NCTAF (2003) report indicated that "many schools are becoming revolving doors; losing as many teachers as they hire each year" (p. 9). In response to the NCTAF (2003) challenge of increasing teacher retention rates by 2006, the commission proposed three strategies for meeting this goal: organize every school for teaching and learning success; insist on high quality teacher preparation, accreditation, and licensing; and build a high quality teaching profession (NCTAF, 2003, p. 18)

With the current focus on the importance of having a highly qualified teacher for every classroom, many researchers have focused their attention on teacher retention through the use of teacher support programs to enhance the retention rates of teachers new to the profession. The U.S. Department of Education, which oversees the NCLB, suggested several potential strategies to ensure teacher quality and teacher retention. The strategies were: new teacher induction and mentoring programs; reduced class schedules that serve to lessen the teaching responsibilities of new teachers; performance-based pay; and the development of multiple career paths that involves the creation of differentiated positions that qualified teachers can choose to pursue while remaining in the classroom (U.S. Department of Education, International Affairs Office, 2004, p. 61)

### **Mentor Programs**

Prior to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), very little consideration was given to providing structured induction or mentoring support for beginning teachers entering the profession. During the 1980s, mentoring "revolved around mentor teachers who worked as support personnel in induction programs for first-year teachers" (Odell & Huling, 1998, p. 73). The mentors' role was to ease the "reality shock" that beginning teachers face during the transition from being university students to full-time teachers in the classroom (Odell & Huling, 1998, p. 73).

For the past two decades, induction and mentoring programs have been developed at the state, school districts, and university level (Odell & Huling, 1998). The State Board of Education formed the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) in 1999. The Texas Beginning Educator Support System's major goal is to encourage new teachers to remain in the profession by offering mentoring, instructional guidance, and support to new teachers (State Board for Educator Certification, 2002). "The program provides training and support to new teachers as they enter the challenging profession" (SBEC, 2002, pp. 2-3). Mentor programs assist new teachers in making a successful transition into the profession by relying on the expertise of the experienced teachers to provide a real-world training process (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). According to traditional knowledge, mentors should assist and not assess their mentees (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). Unfortunately, only a few state-mandated induction programs offer funding for mentor training (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore, 2003; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

### **Induction Programs**

The fact that many beginning teachers leave the profession early in their careers is a challenge and concern for school districts and schools. Many school districts and states have implemented formal induction programs to introduce beginning teachers into the profession with support and guidance (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999), although the funds schools and school districts are able and willing to allocate to beginning teacher support varies (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Because no single approved way exists to develop a successful new-teacher induction program, states and school districts can learn from other successful models in the United States and out of the country (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002). The systems in California, Texas, and Ohio are successfully retaining their teachers and empowering them, helping to ensure that all students graduate from high school after meeting rigorous academic standards and becoming adequately prepared for college (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002).

According to Griffin et al. (2003), some researchers have conceptualized induction broadly. For example, Serpell (2000) suggested a broad based view of induction as a support system, which begins with the beginning teacher signing a teaching contract, continues through orientation, and the development of the teacher as a professional. Gold (1996) stated that induction should be provided to beginning teachers and should include instructional and psychological support. Teacher induction programs offer the kind of support needed for many beginning teachers if they are to remain in the profession and develop into educators who are capable of teaching today's high standards and accountability (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

### **Leadership**

The NCTAF (1996) report, *What Matter Most: Teaching for America's Future*, started with three simple premises. The second premise, "recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving schools," is the responsibility of school district leaders and school leaders (p. 10). The third premise, "school reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions in which teachers can teach, and teach well," stressed the importance of teacher working conditions, which coincides with teacher turnover (NCTAF, 1996, p. 10). For example, Ingersoll (2003a; 2003b) stated that "the working conditions identified by teachers as factors in their decision to leave teaching—lack of administrative support, poor student discipline and student motivation, and lack of participation in decision making—may offer a more effective focus for improvement efforts" (Ingersoll, 2003b, p. 33). Administrative leadership—or lack of leadership often influences whether teachers are satisfied with their work and workplace (Johnson, Harrison-Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) commented that teachers are influenced by the conditions of their teaching as they decide to move to other schools. Working conditions play an important role in teachers' decisions to move to another school or district or to leave the profession (Darling-Hammond, 1997; NCTAF, 2002). The NCTAF (2003) concluded that "the teacher shortages will never end and that quality teaching will not be achieved for every child until we change the conditions that are driving teachers out of too many of our schools" (p. 3).

Brock and Grady (2000) in their book, *From First-Year to First-Rate: Principals Guiding Beginning Teachers*, noted that beginning teachers want both interaction and affirmation from their principals. "The

relationship between teacher and principal is one of major importance in a teacher's work life. For beginning teachers, the climate created by the principal will be a factor in their success or failure" (Brock & Grady, 2000, p. 41). Singh and Billingsley (1998) indicated that "principal leadership/support influences commitment... when principals communicate clear expectations, provide fair evaluations, and provide assistance and support, teachers experience greater professional commitment" (p. 234). Principals who support teacher learning promote a positive school climate (Johnson et al., 2005). On the other hand, lack of principal support can create an environment of helplessness, frustration, and turnover. Principal support seems to be important to teachers' well-being (Singh & Billingsley, 1998).

According to Colley (2002), "principals have three major roles (instructional leader, culture builder, and mentor coordinator) in supporting and retaining novice teachers" (p. 22). Both principals and teachers appear to gain from schools that work better for students and for adults (Lieberman, 1988).

School leaders need to end the era of solo teaching in isolated classrooms. Johnson et al. (2005) described that teachers' growing interest in collaboration seems to result from two developments- the school reform movements of the mid-1980s, which continues today, and the phenomenon of turnover in the teaching workforce. "If we know learning improves when it is community-centered, we should put this principle into action by creating supportive learning environments made up of teams of teachers and school leaders working together toward student success" (NCTAF, 2003, p. 49).

The days of the principal as the "Lone Ranger" of school improvement are also outdated (NCTAF, 2003, p. 50). The classical top-down leadership collides with the needs of 21st century learning places. When led by a principal who works with the members of that school community in building and supporting a shared vision of success, schools succeed (NCTAF, 2003). Autonomy and shared decision-making are encouraged as viable alternatives to the top-down management style. A good principal's attributes include his or her capability to share leadership responsibilities with teachers (Learning First Alliance, 2005). Successful school leaders acknowledge that "professional development serves as the bridge where prospective and experienced educators are now and where they will need to be to meet the new challenges of guiding all students in achieving higher standards of learning and development" (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, p. 1).

### **Student Demographics and Teaching Characteristics**

In 1996, 16% of the United States' school aged children lived in homes where the annual income in the prior year was below the poverty level (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Students in school districts in central cities were more likely to be poor in comparison to students in other types of communities, such as urban fringe and rural areas (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003).

According to Ingersoll (2002) and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary (2004), many classrooms and schools, especially schools with economically disadvantaged students, have disproportionately more teachers who teach out-of-field or are not fully qualified in the subjects they teach. "Nationally, classes in high-poverty secondary schools are 77% more likely to be assigned an 'out-of-field' teacher—a teacher without experience in the subject they will teach—than classes in 'low-poverty' schools (where about 15 % or fewer qualify for free and reduced-price lunch)" (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan, 2002, p. 6). Schools with low income and minority students are challenged with higher teacher turnover and students tend to be taught more frequently by novice teachers (Hanushek et al., 2004). Ingersoll (2004) in his study of the national database (SASS) noted that schools in urban and rural high-poverty communities were far more likely to have had hiring problems than schools serving low-poverty communities. Hard-to-staff schools are faced with an inadequate supply of effective teachers who can successfully promote student learning for all students, including high-poverty and minority students (Education Commission of the States, 1999).

High teacher turnover rates and the reasons teachers give for leaving point to a problem that has the potential to be resolved. In many cases our schools are not carefully designed to support today's educational goals (NCTAF, 2002). Our knowledge-base economy and pluralistic society have created new expectations for teaching (NCTAF, 2002).

### **Summary**

The high rates of teacher turnover directly impact student achievement, teacher quality, and school/school district accountability and are a costly occurrence (NCTAF, 2003). The impact of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors such as poverty, language background, and minority status (Darling-Hammond, 2000a). Title I of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), addressed the goal of improving student achievement for disadvantaged student by ensuring qualified teachers in the classroom (Whitehurst, 2003). The No Child Left Behind Act's major goal was to guarantee that all students, regardless of ethnicity, race, or income, have the best teachers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, 2004). The NCTAF (1996) report *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* stated, "The single most important strategy for achieving America's educational goals is a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all of America's schools" (p. 10). Additionally, the NCTAF (1996, 2003) reports noted that the most important factor in education reform is having a caring, competent, and qualified teacher for every student. Unfortunately, teacher turnover directly impacts the teacher workforce and student achievement (NCTAF, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial for school leaders to retain qualified beginning teachers in the profession and support and help them develop into quality professionals. To retain highly qualified teachers in the profession, school districts and schools need to support quality teaching (NCTAF, 2003).

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