



Growing Teacher Shortage Ahead, Analysis Predicts

A new report estimates that, if current market trends persist, **U.S. schools could be short by hundreds of thousands of teachers** within the next few years.

Analysis Projects Growing National Shortfall of Teachers

Education Week by **Madeline Will**, September 14, 2016

Already faced with worrisome hiring gaps, the country is on the precipice of a dramatically widening shortfall of teachers, a new analysis warns.

In a **package of reports** released Wednesday, the Learning Policy Institute, a California-based think tank led by Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond, **digs into federal data sets to gauge** the state of teacher supply and demand, and what it means for school staffing and diversity in the near future. The trend lines are far from encouraging, according to the group, though not all education experts are convinced of an impending widespread national shortage.

During the 2015-16 school year, there was a national shortage of about 60,000 teachers, the LPI estimates. The shortage was most pronounced in special education, with 48 states and the District of Columbia reporting a shortage in that field **to the U.S. Department of Education**.

Forty-two states, plus D.C., reported teacher shortages in mathematics, and 40 states, plus D.C., reported shortages in science. More than 30 states reported high shortage levels for teachers of English-language learners. Across the country, half of all schools, and 90 percent of high-poverty schools, have experienced a teacher shortage, the report concludes. If current trends persist, the group estimates that annual shortfall could grow to 112,000 teachers by 2018, with the need for more educators continuing to grow well into the 2020s. The shortages are being driven by both an increase in demand and a decrease in supply: Schools are beginning to lower student-teacher ratios and reinstate classes that were reduced or eliminated in the 2008 recession. But teacher attrition rates are high, and teacher-preparation program enrollments have fallen 35 percent nationwide in the last five years, the report says.

Teacher shortages themselves aren't new, the report's authors stressed in a media call Tuesday. There have been reported shortages of math and science teachers, for example, dating back to the Sputnik era, said Darling-Hammond on the media call.

But "unlike some other countries, the United States has not put in place a set of policies to address these problems, so we get these recurring waves of shortages," she said.

In addition to a high price tag attached to teacher-replacement costs—estimated at \$8 billion annually—the shortages have led to stopgap policy solutions like hiring teachers with emergency or temporary credentials, increasing class sizes, or using short-term substitutes.

Such measures hurt student learning, Darling-Hammond said.

The '4 Percent Solution'

In the report, the LPI offers what it sees as more long-term, stabilizing solutions to potential teacher supply gaps. They include: more competitive compensation packages; targeted training subsidies, like forgivable loans and scholarships for those who commit to teaching in a high-needs field or location for a certain period of time; improved new-teacher mentoring and induction programs; and initiatives to create a more national teacher-supply market, with greater support for teacher mobility across state lines.

Darling-Hammond said these proposals could get to what she called the "4-percent solution." The annual attrition rate for U.S. teachers is currently at 8 percent, about twice as high as teacher attrition rates in high-performing countries like Finland and Singapore. If it was halved, she said, the significant reduction in hiring needs would virtually eliminate teacher shortages and allow for increased selectivity in hiring, which could improve teacher quality.

But the LPI's conclusions about the general severity of expected teacher shortfalls have been met with some skepticism.

Kate Walsh, the president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, expressed concern about "allowing anecdotes and hearsay to drive a national agenda."

"Nobody has any national data that is justification for declaring a teacher shortage," she said.

"Everyone is going off anecdotes."

For its study, the LPI used data from the National Center for Education Statistics, including the [Schools and Staffing Survey](#) and [Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study](#).

Walsh noted that the NCES data is several years old, making it "useless in our ability to do any real-time measurements of shortages."

Available [federal projections](#) can

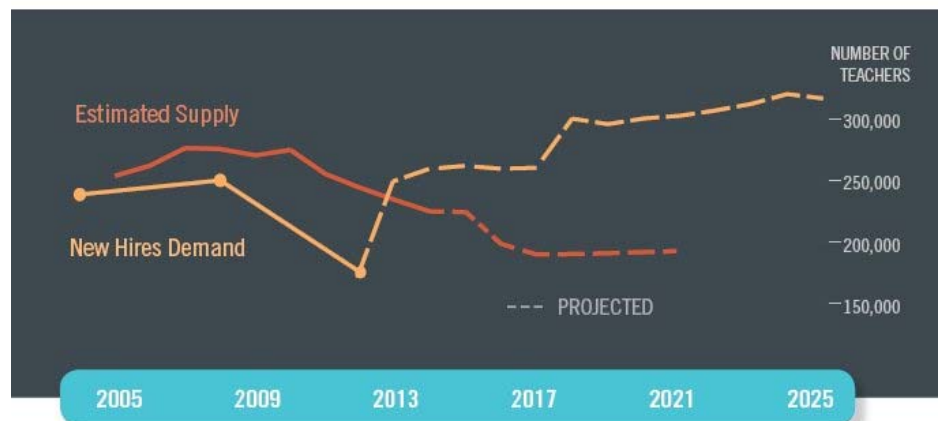
also be read to suggest that the overall supply of teachers will increase over the next several years in conjunction with decreases in student-teacher ratios.

There could be a teacher shortage, Walsh said, but there's not enough firm data to say for sure, and headlines are driving other headlines.

"States get worried, people get worried—hysteria sets in," she said.

TEACHER SUPPLY AND DEMAND PROJECTIONS

The Learning Policy Institute calculates that, if current market trends persist, U.S. schools could face an estimated shortfall of 112,000 teachers by 2018, with demand continuing to grow into the 2020s.



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SOURCE: Learning Policy Institute, interpretation of U.S. Department of Education data, 2016.

Why Teachers Leave

Only about one-third of teacher attrition is due to retirement, the LPI report notes. The most common reasons for leaving the profession are unsatisfactory teaching conditions (like class sizes and salaries), unhappiness with administrators, and policy issues, like high-stakes testing and accountability pressures. And teachers of color leave both schools and the teaching profession at particularly high rate, with a turnover rate of 18.9 percent in 2012-13, compared to 15 percent for white teachers, according to the report. A companion report released by LPI notes that black and Hispanic teachers report autonomy and influence on school decisions to be the strongest factors for staying in the profession—more so than salary, useful professional development, or the availability of classroom resources.

Math teachers also point to a lack of classroom autonomy and discretion as a main factor for leaving the profession, said Richard M. Ingersoll, a professor of education and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania and an author of the LPI report on minority teachers, during Tuesday's media call.

"You can have standards and goals, you can even have standardized textbooks, but if you go a step further and micromanage and script how teachers have to do it, that becomes a source of complaint," he said. "That would not take money to fix, that is an issue of management."

He also noted an "unheralded success" with improving the numbers of teachers of color in the profession. Only 18 percent of teachers are not white, which has spurred national, state, and local efforts to **better recruit and retain teachers of color**.

The LPI minority teacher report found that the growth of Hispanic, black, and Asian teachers has outpaced the growth in the number of nonwhite students and was over twice the growth rate of white teachers, signaling success in recruitment efforts. But those efforts have been undermined by the high turnover rate of teachers of color.

State Rankings

LPI researchers also used available federal data to assign states "teaching attractiveness ratings," which are meant to indicate how supportive the state is of teacher recruitment and retention, and "teacher equity ratings," which show the extent to which students, particularly students of color, are assigned uncertified or experienced teachers.

Arizona, a state that has battled severe teacher shortages, received the lowest teaching attractiveness rating, due to factors like a low average starting salary, large class sizes, and high attrition rate.

Meanwhile, Oregon received the highest rating, with a high degree of teacher autonomy and other positively ranked working conditions, and a low percentage of teachers who are not certified.

Colorado had the lowest teacher-equity rating, with about 21 percent of teachers in high-minority schools holding emergency or temporary certifications, compared to 4.5 percent of uncertified teachers in low-minority schools.

And Vermont had the highest teacher-equity rating, with a low ratio of the percentage of both uncertified and inexperienced teachers in high-minority versus low-minority schools.

In conjunction with the report, the LPI produced an **interactive 50-state map** to better examine the states' ratings and the varying conditions that influence the supply of teachers.

Coverage of policy efforts to improve the teaching profession is supported by a grant from the Joyce Foundation, at www.joycefdn.org/Programs/Education. Education Week retains sole editorial control over the content of this coverage. Article Source: http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/09/14/analysis-projects-growing-national-shortfall-of-teachers.html?r=1438658979&cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1-RM&preview=1&user_acl=0