

New Teachers Make Up a Significant Segment of Profession

Education Week by [Stephen Sawchuk](#) and [Anthony Rebori](#), October 4, 2016

Everybody involved in K-12 education knows that new teachers tend to need a lot of extra support. What they may not fully grasp, however, is just how many new teachers are out there.

As a segment of the total U.S. teaching force, their representation appears to be considerable.

Nationally, 12 percent of all public school teachers are in their first or second year, according to an *Education Week* analysis of new data from the U.S. Department of Education's office for civil rights. And in some states, that figure is more than 15 percent (29% in **Florida** or over 50,000, 14% in **Texas** or over 52,000, see chart posted below).

The data, while still under review, are consistent with other recent research pointing to a "greening" trend in teaching over the past 20 years. They also raise questions both about the overall stability of the teaching force and the ability of school systems to provide adequate support to so many novices.

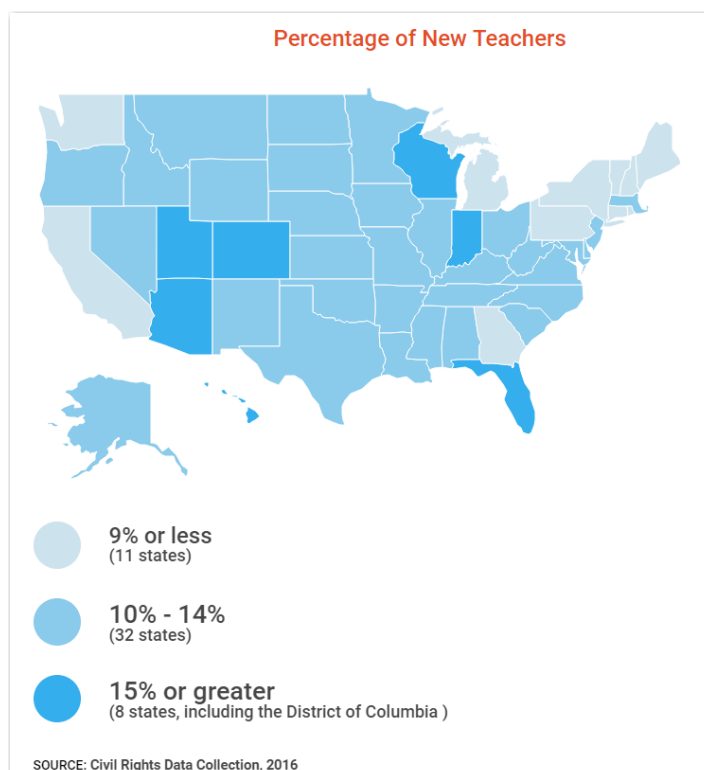
"It's a really substantive and serious issue when a district or school is dealing [with an influx of new teachers]," said Susan Moore Johnson, a professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The office for civil rights, which gathers a wide range of information from schools in order to monitor education equity, added years of teacher experience to its collection in 2010-11. It now has data on levels of teacher experience across states, districts, and even individual schools.

The most recent collection, from 2013-14, shows that in most states, more than 10 percent of the teacher corps is made up of new educators.

Experts point to various explanations for the seemingly high proportion of novices in classrooms, including school-hiring increases in a period of economic recovery, population changes, and teacher-retention challenges.

Nation of New Teachers



In most states, more than 10 percent of the teaching force is made up of up educators in their first or second year in teaching, according to an Education Week Research Center analysis of data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's office for civil rights. The analysis used 2013-14 data released this past spring by the OCR. Nearly every district and school in the nation submitted information for the mandatory survey. The analysis did not include juvenile justice facilities.

New teacher levels highest in the U.S. in the following 15 states:

Florida 29%	North Carolina 14%
Colorado 18%	Illinois 14%
Utah 16%	New York 14%
Iowa 15%	Maine 14%
West Virginia 15%	Missouri 13%
Arkansas 15%	Louisiana 13%
Texas 14%	Kansas 13%
	Oklahoma 13%

For interactive map go to: <http://infogr.am/fa3a06c7-1153-49bb-b574-34708aa5325f>

Classroom Challenges

However, the prevalence of inexperienced teachers varies significantly from state to state and district to district. And experts caution that the problem is often pronounced in particular schools, so it may be, in effect, more of a local than a national issue.

According to *Education Week's* analysis of the OCR data, Florida reported the highest proportion of novice teachers in the country, with about a quarter of its teachers in their first or second years. The District of Columbia and Colorado, both with nearly 18 percent of their teaching forces qualifying as new, also came in at the top of the list.

The states with the lowest percentages of new teachers, according to the analysis, were New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Washington, and Georgia. They each reported new teachers making up less than 7 percent of their teaching force.

But because OCR data are reported by individual schools up through their districts and states, and then to the Education Department, the figures can be subject to error—including possible undercounting.

For example, nearly 20 of Georgia's districts reported having no first- or second-year teachers. Queried about the data, officials at the Georgia Professional Standards Commission said they couldn't verify their accuracy.

However, Richard M. Ingersoll, a professor of education and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania who studies teacher-employment trends, said in an email that, overall, the national data are in line with his own research on the demographics of the profession.

In studies for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Ingersoll has tracked proportional increases in beginning teachers going back some 20 years, allowing for a slight slowdown in the trend resulting from school-hiring declines after the 2007-08 recession.

But does it matter that the teaching force, at least in many places in the country, is increasingly "green"?

From qualitative and school-equity perspectives, the answer is almost certainly yes. **Studies consistently show that new teachers face a steep learning curve** and that educators generally improve dramatically over their first few years on the job. And recent research has found that teachers get even better as they gain additional years of experience.

New teachers face a variety of challenges all at once that can make it difficult to perform optimally, notes Roxanna Elden, a former teacher and an author who provides resources for beginning teachers. There are the practical challenges of the new job, such as managing grades for the first time, coordinating lessons, learning the school's computer system and administrative processes, and developing relationships with colleagues.

Then there are the classroom-management and pedagogical challenges that, no matter how well-prepared a teacher is, crop up in the first year on the job, Elden said, recalling one of her own early misadventures as a teacher.

"I had no idea how kids were going to respond to the 'falling star' classroom-management system I had," she said, referring to a positive-behavior-rewards framework. "Well, they didn't respond at all, and then I was just in a room with 30 students."

New teachers often report feeling unprepared for the realities of the classrooms. Indeed, the New Teacher Center, a nonprofit that provides mentoring services, characterizes a solid chunk of a typical teacher's first year as given over to phases of "survival" and "disillusionment."

The challenges facing new teachers can be taxing on schools and districts as well.

"With a large number of new teachers, it can be really problematic," said Johnson, who is the director of Harvard's **Project on the Next Generation of Teachers**. **"They may not know the curriculum,** the practices, or what's expected of them."

Without adequate support, she said, new teachers can often feel "lost in the shuffle" and in turn become part of a school's turnover cycle. High annual turnover can be "organizationally costly," both in terms of recruitment expenses and student learning, Johnson said.

Investing in Training

Gregory K. Adkins, the superintendent of the Lee County, Fla., district, understands what school systems are up against.

According to the OCR data, about 39 percent of the county's teachers in 2013-14 were in their first or second year of teaching—a figure that Adkins says reflects his experience in recent years.

Adkins points to several factors that have contributed to the trend. Lee County is a growing district, with perhaps 2,000 new students a year. And a state law enacted in 2002 sets strict limits on class sizes, generating a need for more teachers.

Beyond that, he said, Florida just has a lot of transplants, and teachers are no exception.

"What that means for us is that, first of all, we're in constant hiring mode," Adkins said. By mid-August this year, he said, the county had hired 400 teachers and had another 100 or so in the hiring process.

The second implication is that the district spends a lot of time training—or retraining—the teachers who join the district every year.

"We're investing more in professional development and support for our new teachers, because I think the old model of, 'Here's the keys, the classroom is over there, here's page one of what you're supposed to be covering,' just doesn't work anymore," Adkins said.

In Florida, as in many other states, mentoring programs for new teachers remain a piecemeal affair.

Florida requires mentoring only for teachers who are entering into the profession through an alternative-certification program, although some of the state's largest districts, such as Duval County, which includes Jacksonville, and Miami-Dade County, provide it for all new teachers.

Lee County's bid to expand supports has largely been the result of a five-year, \$45 million federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant it won under Adkins' predecessor. The district has been using the grant to put into place a teacher-support system and career-ladder framework that it's hoping will not only ease the transition into teaching, but give teachers a sense that staying offers them opportunities to advance in the future.

While that kind of budget may not be available in many districts, experts say that increased investment on some level—coupled with increased focus—is typically needed to ensure that new teachers can thrive.

There's now a solid body of research showing that induction, mentoring, and other support programs can be effective in boosting new teachers' capabilities and improving their retention rates, Ingersoll said. While questions remain about the precise components needed, he stressed that such programs "can't be thin and short. The more comprehensive the program, the better. And then the price tag goes up."

Harvard's Johnson said administrators should see new-teacher support programs as extending all the way back to the hiring stage.

"Having a very careful hiring process is often neglected during shortages, but it's really important," she said. "So that teachers are carefully interviewed and given opportunities to demonstrate instruction, ideally in the school."

If the hiring process is not done well, she said, new teachers may feel "unknown" and not have a strong context for their work in the school.

Once on board, Johnson said, teachers should be given regular classroom observations by instructional coaches or administrators. "New teachers ought to be observed every couple of weeks, with feedback," she said.

Gauging Potential

That kind of rate is far from the norm. "But in schools that are doing well [with new teachers], there is some provision for these frequent observations. It reflects a serious commitment on the part of the school," Johnson said.

Daniel Weisberg, the chief executive officer of TNTP, a nonprofit that helps districts recruit and train teachers, said that influxes of new teachers should prompt school systems to work more closely with local teacher-prep programs to ensure that educators are graduating with the "foundational skills" needed to take over a classroom.

"If they know how to use time well, how to establish norms and expectations, and how to engage kids, they have a good chance of a success," he said.

But Weisberg also emphasized the importance of intensive coaching in the first year. "It's really important for new teachers that they are getting feedback and have someone they can go to for guidance," he said.

Such practices can also help administrators in shaping the school's staff.

Said Weisberg: "It should be really important for principals to assess whether someone has the ability to be a successful teacher."

Article source: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/10/05/new-teachers-make-up-a-significant-segment.html>

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