

About This Series

“What We Know: How Teacher Preparation Affects Teacher Retention” is one in a series of statements from AACTE on topics of major interest to the educator preparation profession. Each statement summarizes findings from rigorous research on the stated subject and/or provides examples of exemplary practices that address the issue. “What We Know” statements are created or modified as new research warrants.

About AACTE

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) is a national alliance of educator preparation programs dedicated to the highest quality professional development of teachers and school leaders in order to enhance PK-12 student learning. The 800 institutions holding AACTE membership represent public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam. AACTE's reach and influence fuel its mission of serving learners by providing all school personnel with superior training and continuing education.



1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005-4701
Tel: 202.293.2450
Fax: 202.457.8095
www.aacte.org

Research clearly supports the importance of high teacher retention and the critical role of quality teacher preparation in assuring it. Retention is important for many reasons, including the fact that teachers' effectiveness is enhanced with experience—particularly in their first few years—and thus teachers who stay in teaching longer have increased positive effects on student learning.¹ Retention is also important in avoiding the multiple negative effects of its opposite: teacher attrition. These include the large financial costs of faculty hiring, replacement, and retraining; the loss of expertise to both students and faculty from the absence of departed teachers; the reduction of learning time as new teachers adjust to their new environment; and the diminished sense of community and continuity felt by students and staff when teachers leave. Teacher attrition may have an especially adverse impact on low-income and language-minority students, as well as on students with disabilities, who are already experiencing multiple challenges and for whom stability of adults in their lives is particularly important.

Multiple studies, highlighted below, have concluded that well-prepared teachers are likely to stay longer in teaching than those with inadequate or no preparation. Research also indicates that traditionally prepared teachers remain in teaching longer than those who are alternatively prepared.

- In a special analysis conducted for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future,² Richard Ingersoll reported that “strong academic preparation for teaching” and “extensive clinical practice,” among several critical teacher preparation program dimensions, were responsible for significantly reducing beginning teacher attrition. Teachers whose preparation encompassed those characteristics—typical of traditional teacher preparation, but not of fast-track alternative preparation forms—were reported as more likely to remain in teaching.
- A 2011 comparison study of Teach for America (TFA) and traditionally prepared teachers in Texas found that after the TFA teachers had completed their 2-year program commitment, their retention rates dropped to a range of 42% to 56%, compared to non-TFA teachers in the comparison group, whose retention rates ranged from 76% to 81%.³
- Findings from two 2006 longitudinal studies in New York—those of Boyd et al.⁴ and of Kane, Rockoff, and Staiger⁵—found that New York Teaching Fellows left at rates just over 50% by their 4th year, at which point 80% of TFA recruits, but only 37% of college-prepared teachers, had left teaching.
- A 2005 study of teachers in Houston by Darling-Hammond et al.⁶ revealed that an average of 80% of TFA teachers left their jobs by the 3rd year; and in the Chicago Public Schools, which hires about 100 TFA teachers each year, fewer than half remained in teaching for a 3rd year.⁷

- A 2002 symposium on teacher retention reported that better prepared teachers stay in teaching at higher rates—particularly those who complete well designed, lengthier programs—than teachers hired through alternative routes that offer only a few weeks of training. Considering the attrition costs to states, universities, and school districts of preparation, recruitment, induction, and replacement, the cost of lengthier preparation would be significantly less than that of preparing a greater number of teachers in shorter-term programs who are less likely to stay. Further, the report said, alternative approaches that bypass the student teaching and mentoring from skilled veterans, and approaches that do not adequately provide methods for teaching challenging content to diverse learners, typically breed a sense of failure in their recruits. The report concluded that a lack of adequate preparation leads to teacher discouragement and burnout.⁸
- Earlier national data from the *Baccalaureate and Beyond* survey revealed that 49% of uncertified entrants left teaching after 5 years, compared to only 14% of those who entered teaching fully prepared.⁹

A lack of adequate preparation leads to teacher discouragement and burnout.

Better prepared teachers stay in teaching at higher rates—particularly those who complete well designed, lengthier programs—than teachers hired through alternative routes that offer only a few weeks of training.

Endnotes

- 1 Heilig, J. V., & Jez, S. J. (2010, June). *Teach for America: A review of the evidence*. Boulder, CO, and Tempe, AZ: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. Retrieved from <http://epicpolicy.org/publication/teach-for-america>
- 2 National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003). *No dream denied: A pledge to America's children*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/no-dream-denied_summary_report.pdf
- 3 Ware, A., LaTurner, R. J., Okulicz-Kozaryn, A., Garland, M., & Klopfenstein, K. (2011, January). *Teacher preparation programs and Teach for America research study*. The University of Texas at Dallas, Education Research Center.
- 4 Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2006). How changes in entry requirements alter the teacher workforce and affect student achievement. *Education Finance and Policy*, 1(2), 176-216. Retrieved from http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/portals/1/pdfs/how_changes_in_entry_requirements_alter_the_teacher_workforce.pdf
- 5 Kane, T. E., Rockoff, J. E., & Staiger, D. O. (2006, March). *What does certification tell us about teacher effectiveness? Evidence from New York City*. Working Paper 11844. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/edfp.2006.1.2.176>
- 6 Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D., Gatlin, S. J., & Heilig, J. V. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(42). Retrieved from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/147/273>
- 7 Glass, G. V. (2008, May). *Alternative certification of teachers*. East Lansing, MI: Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice. Retrieved from http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Glass_AlternativeCert.pdf
- 8 National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2002). *Unraveling the 'teacher shortage' problem: Teacher retention is the key*. A symposium of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and NCTAF State Partners, August 20-22, 2002. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ncsu.edu/mentorjunction/text_files/teacher_retentionsymposium.pdf
- 9 Henke, R., Chen, X., & Geis, S. (2000). *Progress through the teacher pipeline: 1992-93 college graduates and elementary/secondary school teaching as of 1997*. NCES 2000-152. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000152.pdf>