

Education Minnesota

Report shows challenges ahead for recruiting and retaining Minnesota teachers

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ST. PAUL, Minn. Feb. 2, 2017 – A new state report shows the teacher shortage in Minnesota is growing more serious and that policymakers must take action to ensure every student is taught with the commitment and professionalism Minnesotans have come to expect from their public schools.

The “2017 Report of Teacher Supply and Demand in Minnesota’s Public Schools” was released Wednesday afternoon by the Minnesota Department of Education. The report shows several trends which threaten the quality of education in Minnesota’s public and charter schools.

- The number of teachers reported as leaving their positions has increased 46 percent since 2008-09. Resignations for personal or unspecified reasons are by far the most common reason teachers leave their jobs, surpassing retirements, promotions, transfers to other schools, layoffs or terminations for performance.
- A competitive job market and low salaries for teachers are considered the two biggest barriers to retaining teachers, according to school hiring officials.
- Hiring officials report the limited number of applicants for job openings is a larger barrier to hiring qualified teachers than licensure standards.
- Schools are finding it more difficult to hire short-term and long-term substitutes than reported in recent years.
- The most difficult to hire positions continue to be in special education, math, science and rural schools.
- The number of the non-licensed “community experts” working in Minnesota schools has more than doubled from 367 in the 2011-12 school year to 861 in the 2015-16 school year. Schools may hire “community experts,” who are not legally required to have a college degree, when an appropriately licensed teacher is not available.

“The shortage of qualified teachers has gone from an issue, to a problem, to a crisis, in only a few short years,” said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. “We are losing too many great teachers because they can’t make ends meet, they feel disrespected by politicians and they’re incredibly frustrated by excessive testing and other policies that limit their ability to do the jobs they love – teaching students. At the same time, the private sector needs well-educated, hard-working people with strong communication skills – and it is willing to pay for them.”

“It’s time for policymakers in St. Paul to face the crisis and react,” Specht said. “Districts won’t hold on to great new teachers if those teachers keep coming up short every month after paying for health insurance, housing, living expenses and their student loans. More experienced teachers won’t stick around if they can’t afford to save for college for their own kids. And all educators are tired of being ignored on school policies and crushed by redundant paperwork, especially in special education, and increasing demands with decreasing supports. Everyone loses when passionate and professional educators are forced to choose between their obligations to their families and the responsibilities they feel for Minnesota’s students.”

“One bright spot in this new report is the slight increase in diversity of state’s teaching corps, and that nearly 8 percent of newly licensed teachers are teachers of color,” Specht said. “The progress is too slow, but we’re moving

in the right direction of attracting and retaining more teachers who look like the students in Minnesota classrooms. But we can't ignore how the factors which make it difficult to attract and retain all teachers are often especially damaging to efforts to recruit more teachers of color so the educator workforce more accurately reflects the shifting demographics of our students.”

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota's members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota's public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota's community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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