



Memorandum

TO :	House and Senate Education Committees
FROM:	Policy Analysis and Research Section of the Bureau of Legislative Research
DATE :	March 11, 2014
SUBJECT :	District and School Survey Questions Related to Teacher Compensation
PROJECT #	14-001-32a

As part of the 2014 adequacy study, the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) conducted surveys of all 238 school district superintendents and a randomly selected, representative sample of 74 school principals. The district-level survey was conducted using an online instrument. The school survey was conducted through interviews with principals conducted during site visits to the selected schools by BLR staff. The district survey allowed the BLR to collect specific, quantitative data from all districts, while school survey asked open-ended qualitative questions. To elicit the most candid responses, district and school staff were assured their responses would not be individually identified, therefore responses are provided only in aggregate. The questions and responses described in this memo are those related to the teaching workforce. Responses to other survey questions will be presented in related reports later in the adequacy study process.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

School Survey Question: What are the most significant faculty recruitment and retention issues facing the school?

The following data provides a summary of the responses school officials provided to this question. This question was open-ended; interviewees were not provided answers from which to choose. The schools' responses to this question were coded into the following types of answers. Schools could give more than one answer to this question.

Issue Cited	Number of Schools
No problems with recruiting or retaining teachers	33
Comparatively low salaries	17
Recruiting/retaining teachers in certain specialties	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Education: 6 • Art: 5 • Math: 3 • Science: 3 • Music: 2 • Physical Education: 1 • Vocational: 1 • Middle School: 1 • Language Arts: 1
Small pool of applicants or small pool of qualified applicants	11
Remote or out of the way location/community quality of life	8
Difficulty retaining new teachers	6
Recruiting minority teachers	3
Teachers leaving for bigger/neighborhood district	2
Impoverished student population	2
Low student achievement	1

Issue Cited	Number of Schools
Poor benefits	1
Burnout and feeling overwhelmed by barrage of new initiatives	1
Long-term retention	1
Small student population	1
Student behavior	1
Salary reductions due to fiscal distress designation	1
No retention incentives	1

District Survey Question: Rank in ascending order the following barriers for **recruiting** high quality teachers to your district, with 1 being the most significant barrier?

The data below show the responses from 204 districts. The 34 other districts either 1.) indicated that none of the issues provided were barriers for teacher recruitment or 2.) did not provide usable data. The numbers for each column below represent the number of districts that ranked each barrier as indicated. Numbers highlighted in **yellow** below show where the highest number of districts ranked each given barrier.

	Rank #1	Rank #2	Rank #3	Rank #4	Rank #5	Rank #6	Rank #7	Not an issue for the district
Difficulty in offering competitive salaries	95	42	25	11	2	3	1	25
Cost of health insurance	10	29	36	46	13	13	1	56
Retirement benefits	2	6	16	21	47	13	27	72
Isolated or rural location of district or individual school	28	54	37	22	17	4	7	35
School reputation or school improvement label	0	4	14	22	22	36	28	78
School or district-level leadership	10	3	0	6	20	45	45	75
Scarcity of appropriately licensed personnel	57	46	39	15	7	3	4	33

District Survey Question: Rank in ascending order the following barriers for **retaining** high quality teachers in your district, with 1 being the most significant barrier?

The data below show the responses from 196 districts. The 42 other districts either 1.) indicated that none of the issues provided were barriers for teacher retention or 2.) did not provide usable data. The numbers for each column below represent the number of districts that ranked each barrier as indicated. Numbers highlighted in **yellow** below show where the highest number of districts ranked each given barrier.

	Rank #1	Rank #2	Rank #3	Rank #4	Rank #5	Rank #6	Rank #7	Not an issue for the district
Difficulty in offering competitive salaries	122	28	17	7	2	2	0	18
Cost of health insurance	11	37	36	39	7	11	2	53
Retirement benefits	1	4	23	24	43	9	25	67
Isolated or rural location of district or individual school	27	52	23	27	21	5	6	35
School reputation or school improvement label	0	6	9	18	22	38	31	72
School or district-level leadership	7	3	6	5	21	46	39	69
Scarcity of appropriately licensed personnel	26	42	46	16	7	5	11	43

Teacher Termination

District Survey Question: How many certified teachers were separated from the district as a result of performance issues in the past three school years (2010-11 through 2012-13)?

The 231 districts that responded to this question reported terminating a total of 415 teachers for performance issues over the past three years. The following table indicates that more than half of the districts have not terminated any teachers due to inadequate performance in the last three years.

	Districts
0 Teachers	125
1-5 Teachers	84
6-10 Teachers	15
11-15 Teachers	4
16-20 Teachers	1
21-30 Teachers	2
No response	7

For each district, the average annual terminations was calculated. That number was used to determine the percentage of distinct classroom employees who are terminated for performance issues. The following table shows the number of districts in each percentage category.

	Districts
<1%	187
1-2%	25
2-3%	8
3%+	11
No response	7

Teacher Absences

District Survey Question: How many regular (K-12) classroom teachers (core and elective) were absent 10 or more days in 2012-13? Classroom teachers are those who lead a class and for whom a substitute would be required. Do not include absences due to professional development or other work-required activities.

The 225 districts that responded to this question counted a total of 10,406 teachers who were absent 10 or more days in 2013. Data submitted by school districts to the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) indicates that those districts had a total of 30,813 distinct classroom employees, for a total of 34% of teachers with at least 10 absences. Arkansas statute §6-17-1204 requires districts to provide teachers at least one day of sick leave per month that the teacher is contracted at full pay. State law does not require districts to provide other paid days off, but some districts may provide additional days.

% of all Classroom Teachers	Districts
0%	5
>0-10%	28
>10%-20%	27
>20%-30%	43
>30%-40%	57
>40%-50%	39
>50%-60%	18
>60%+	8
No response	13

Because this question solicited non-standardized, self-reported data, there may be variations in the way respondents interpreted the question and in the type of employees included in the response. However, the finding that 34% of the state’s classroom teachers are absent 10 or more days is consistent with data collected at the national level. A November 2012 Center for American Progress report examined teacher absenteeism data collected by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR)¹. According to the report, 36% of teachers on average were absent more than 10 days during the 2009-10 school year. One concern voiced about the OCR data was whether it included absences for professional development along with other types of personal absences. The Arkansas adequacy survey attempted to eliminate this issue by asking school districts to exclude absences for professional development and other work-related activities.

¹ Miller, Reagen (2012). Teacher Absence as a Leading Indicator of Student Achievement, retrieved from <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/TeacherAbsence-6.pdf>