Is There Really a Teacher Shortage?

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**Abstract**
Contemporary educational thought holds that one of the pivotal causes of inadequate school performance is the inability of schools to adequately staff classrooms with qualified teachers. It is widely believed that schools are plagued by shortages of teachers, primarily due to recent increases in teacher retirements and student enrollments. This report summarizes a series of analyses that have investigated the possibility that there are other factors—tied to the organizational characteristics and conditions of schools—that are behind school staffing problems. The data utilized in this investigation are from the Schools and Staffing Survey and its supplement, the Teacher Followup Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. The
school staffing problems are not primarily due to teacher shortages, in the sense of an insufficient supply of qualified teachers. Rather, the data indicate that school staffing problems are primarily due to a “revolving door”—where large numbers of qualified teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement. The amount of turnover accounted for by retirement is relatively minor when compared to that associated with other factors, such as teacher job dissatisfaction and teachers pursuing other jobs. This report concludes that teacher recruitment programs—traditionally dominant in the policy realm—will not solve the staffing problems of such schools if they do not also address the organizational sources of low teacher retention.

Comments
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