

# Montana Educator Survey

A Snapshot of Educator Recruitment  
and Retention

January 2019



# Background

The Montana Rural Educator Recruitment and Retention Task Force and RISE4MT sponsored a survey of all educators in the state to better understand teacher recruitment and retention in Montana schools. The survey was designed by Montana education leaders, and it was administered in spring 2018 by the Center for Research on Rural Education (CRRE) at Montana State University, with support from the RAND Corporation and REL Northwest. These slides supplement a full study that will be released in April 2019 and address the following research questions:

- **What do administrators perceive as the main challenges in recruiting and hiring teachers?**
- **What do educators consider the main factors that influence their decision to accept their current job?**
- **What fraction of educators intend to stay in their current position and school system for the 2018/19 school year?**

## Definitions of locale

**Rural remote:** A census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (NCES code 43). For example, Belfry School District.

**Rural distant/fringe:** Rural distant is a census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster (NCES code 42). Rural fringe is a census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster (NCES code 41). For example, Sun River Valley School District.

**Non-rural:** All urban, town, and suburban areas (NCES codes 11, 12, 13, 21, 23, 31, 32, 33). For example, Great Falls School District.

## Why teachers applied for—and ultimately accepted—their current position



Regardless of locale, region, or experience, the top three reasons educators **applied** for their position were salary, whether they grew up in the community, and forgiveness of student loan debt.



However, reasons for accepting their position did not necessarily align with the reasons they applied. The top reason for ultimately **accepting** a position was whether the school was close to where they lived.

This was followed by a match with grade/subject preference and class size (for rural locales) and salary and match with grade/subject preference (for non-rural locales).

## Areas of need

Similar to the findings in the Critical Quality Educator Shortages report, positions in special education, music, mathematics, elementary education, and science were the most difficult to fill. A composite data element representing career and technical education (CTE) is also presented and shows a high demand for these positions.

The majority of superintendents across all categories report that barriers to filling these positions is much more difficult than it was five years ago.

## How does general teacher satisfaction differ from satisfaction with salary and benefits?



The majority of teachers are generally satisfied with their position, with the only exception being teachers in rural locales who have less than five years of experience. The majority of teachers who are generally satisfied with their position also feel supported and encouraged by their administrators.

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Although the majority of teachers are also satisfied with their benefits, they are not satisfied with their salary, regardless of experience or locale. This is especially true for teachers in rural locales who have less than five years of experience.

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Correlations could be drawn by examining the differences between factors motivating teachers to apply vs. why they ultimately accepted their position, especially when looking at the differences between rural and non-rural locales. They may accept the position, but they're still not happy with their salary. This may be a motivating factor to consider when examining teachers' intent to stay.

## Will our teachers stay in their positions?

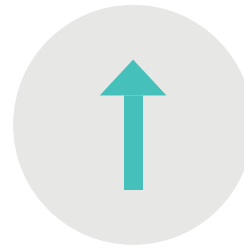
# 80%

The majority of teachers, regardless of locale, do not view teacher turnover as a major problem. Indeed, over 80 percent of teachers with more experience and those working in non-rural locales are planning to stay in their current position next year.

# 20%

However, more than 20 percent of less experienced teachers and those working in rural remote and rural distant/fringe areas report that they are looking for other work in the coming year. This is most pronounced for new teachers with less than three years of experience; almost 40 percent of these teachers are looking for other jobs.

## Using incentives to fill vacancies



The top three incentives most frequently used for recruitment by both principals and superintendents are formal induction/mentoring, offering a higher salary than other districts, and providing opportunities to move up the career ladder.

However, teachers inconsistently report being provided a mentor, except in the AA districts.

When vacancies still exist after recruitment efforts, administrators primarily choose to fill the gaps with teachers who are not fully certified.

Among teachers in more rural locales, proximity to where they grew up was more frequently cited than salary as a reason they accepted their current job. Given this, administrators may wish to continue examining how grow-your-own initiatives can incentivize their own students to become teachers.



# What about our administrators?

Overall, administrators report feeling generally satisfied with their jobs, and much like the perceived impact of teacher turnover, leadership turnover is generally not seen as a large problem.

Superintendents, in particular, feel supported by their staff to do their job, although more than half report feeling like politics and controversy make the job difficult.

Regarding their intent to stay in their position next year, slightly more than 20 percent of principals report looking for new jobs—except in rural distant/fringe locales, where 44 percent are looking for other opportunities. A similar trend is seen with superintendents, with the exception of non-rural superintendents, 30 percent of whom are looking for other opportunities.

