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ABSTRACT

A case study of teacher attrition in one southeastern metropolitan school system that employs approximately 4,000 teachers was undertaken to determine which teachers left, why, and where they went. Of the 210 teachers in the system who resigned during the 1983-84 academic year, 16 percent were K-6, 13 percent were special education/speech, 13 percent were math, 9 percent were English, 9 percent were vocational, and 7 percent were science teachers. In terms of grade levels, more junior high teachers left than high school, K-6, or specialist teachers. Reasons for resignation included retirement/health (24 percent), dissatisfactions (21 percent), spouse moves (20 percent), family (15 percent), business opportunity (9 percent), break from teaching (4 percent), teaching elsewhere (2 percent), coaching-related (2 percent), and reduction in force (1 percent). Teachers who left because of dissatisfactions stated poor administration, poor student discipline, little teacher control, large classes, "Mickey-Mouse" duties, uncooperative parents, stressful atmosphere, and the "valuing of mediocrity" in schools as the root of their frustrations with public school teaching. While only 31 percent left for other occupations, even fewer left for higher-paying ones. Findings indicate overall that teachers who left out of dissatisfaction did so more because of frustration with working conditions than because of low salaries or lack of career advancement. Instrumentation for the study is included in two appendixes. (TE)

# OCCASIONAL PAPERS
# IN
# EDUCATIONAL POLICY ANALYSIS

WHY MISS DOVE LEFT AND WHERE SHE WENT

PAPER NO. 414

A CASE STUDY OF
TEACHER ATTRITION IN A METROPOLITAN
SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE SOUTHEAST

Barnett Berry

April 1985





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A case study of teacher attrition in one metropolitan school system* in the Southeast was undertaken to describe which teachers left, why, and where they went. Findings indicate that those relatively few teachers who did leave and the fewer who left because of dissatisfactions are not doing so primarily because of low salaries and lack of career advancement.

The school system under study, located within a major industrial and commerical community with high median family income and resident mobility, employs approximately 4,000 teachers. During the 1983-84 academic year, 210 teachers (20 percent of whom were specialists) resigned. Of these resignees, 16 percent were K-16, 13 percent were special education/speech, 13 percent were math, 9 percent were English, 9 percent were vocational, and 7 percent were science teachers (See text for percentages for other subject areas.) In terms of grade levels, more junior high teachers left than high school, K-6, or specialist teachers. This pattern held for math and science teachers. Of the 210 resignees, 24 percent left because of retirement/health; 21 percent, dissatisfactions; 20 percent, spouse moves; 15 percent, family; 9 percent, business opportunity; 4 percent, break from teaching; 4 percent, teaching elsewhere; 2 percent, coaching-related; and 1 percent, reduction-in-force.

Teachers who left because of dissatisfactions stated poor administration, poor student discipline, little teacher control, large classes, "Mickey-Mouse" duties, uncooperative parents, stressful atmosphere, and the "valu(ing) of mediocrity" in schools as the root of their frustrations with the occupation of public school teaching. However, many teachers who stay cited similar frustrations.

Of the teachers who did leave the system, 69 percent are either teaching, at home** (as a housewife or mother), or retired (and not working); 9 percent are in sales (primarily in real estate and life and health insurance); 7 percent are self-employed (primarily working with their spouses or in a field related to the vocational course they taught in school); 5 percent are trainers in private industry, computer programmers, or bookkeepers; 4 percent are students; 3 percent are school administrators or in management; and 3 percent are in occuptions such as postal service, woodworking, etc. While only 31 percent left for other occupations, even fewer left for higher-paying ones. In fact, the ones who were either pulled or pushed away from teaching tended not to mention money as a primary factor in attracting and retaining quality teachers. For these teachers (and the others), their recommendations mirror their own frustrations with their working conditions as teachers.

*NOTE: This is the first in a series of case studies of teacher attrition in the Southeast.

**NOTE: Many of the teachers who left because of spouse moves or family plan to return to the classroom at a later time.

In summary, the dedicated, committed teacher (Miss Dove) who "loves children" and is "not prepared for the world of business" is still teaching. Because of positive experiences in her own schooling, "she" withstands the poor working conditions of today's schools. While some leave, many stay and remain as alienated teachers and their frustrations are critically affecting the supply of tomorrow's teacher labor market pool: today's public school student.

## INTRODUCTION

As the teacher quality reform movement of 1983 advances into 1985, we continue to hear similar problems, similar causes, and similar solutions. Generally, the problem is that the most academically able do not choose to teach and, if they do, they do not teach for very long (Rosenholtz, 1985). Most researchers and policy makers attribute the cause of the problem to low salaries, few incentives, and the lack of career advancement within the occupation of public school teaching. Utilizing classic, rational economic theory to explain the teacher labor market, Weaver notes that "talent will eventually flow to opportunity" (1983, p. 22). The solution for policy makers over the last two years has been to enact across-the-board pay increases, career ladders, and merit pay plans. However, little research has been conducted to determine if the solution matched the cause or, more importantly, if the solution was related to the problem (Berry, 1984).

To better understand the problems of the teacher labor market and their causes, the Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement commissioned a qualitative study of market patterns of initial career choice, position availability, recruitment and selection, turnover, and mobility of public school teachers. Documents, on-site observations, and 180 in-depth interviews in six universities and six school systems in the Southeast were utilized to analyze these market patterns. Importantly, the 12 institutions varied over economic, geographic, and cultural dimensions, providing a representative sample of universities and school systems in the region. This study, "Miss Dove Is Alive and Well . . . " (Berry, 1984), highlighted the following dynamic variables affecting the teacher labor market in the Southeast:

(1) low turnover rates and no disproportionate turnover in any particular subject area,

(2) divergent (and limiting) mobility patterns of urban and rural teachers,

(3) the importance of role models for career identification in teaching and the occurrence of negative role modeling by present teachers for their students,

(4) limited marketing and recruiting by universities and school systems for education students and teachers,

(5) the need of school systems to select teachers with altruistic characteristics, coaching skills, and those with attitudes and expectations that fit into the community,

(6) the desire of many teachers to have work schedules to fit their family life styles and expectations,

(7) the reentering of former teachers into other school systems after "sabbaticals" due to spouse moves and child-rearing,

(8) the primary importance of student discipline, counter-productive parental attitudes, and little administrative support (not low pay and lack of career advancement) on the present low morale of teachers, and

(9) a committed, yet in many cases, an alienated teacher work force.

These findings, along with the salience of economic, cultural, and social differences betwen urban and rural teacher labor markets, hopefully have begun to lay out a different and more effective framework for analyzing, understanding, and possibly changing the dynamics presently affecting the occupation of public school teaching.

While many categories of individuals involved in educational organizations (including superintendents, principals, teachers, deans, career placement officers, professors, and education students) were utilized as informants in "Miss Dove," one category--<u>teachers who had left their teaching positions</u>--was missing. In fact, this category of individuals has received very little attention in recent survey research regarding the problems and causes of the teacher labor market. Those few survey studies

that have directly researched causes of teacher attrition have noted that teachers cite their inability (due to organizational constraints) to deal effectively with students as the primary factor for their resignations (Bredeson, et al., 1983; Frataccia and Hennington, 1982). Still, little attention is paid to these findings, and the myth that promotions and salary increases will halt teacher attrition prevails (Rosenholtz, 1985).

## THE SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

To better understand the factors related to teacher resignations and to further illuminate the dynamics affecting the teacher labor market, a survey was conducted of all teachers who resigned from one major metropolitan school system in the Southeast. The school system (hereafter referred to as Metro City) was selected as the site of investigation since (1) it was included in the original study (Berry, 1984) and provided a basis for follow-up and verification; (2) its size provided as many observations as possible in a single setting (the original case study pointed out that turnover was virtually nonexistent in smaller school systems); and (3) it had a reputation for its sophisticated school organization. While this study is limited to one site, it is hoped that it will provide a basis for understanding "what is going on" in one of the "best" and largest public school systems in the region.

Metro City is located within a major metropolitan area with an approximate population of 500,000. The county, which has a median family income of approximately $22,000 (1980), is a major growth site for industrial development and has many universities and colleges in the area. The system's schools are located within urban, suburban, and rural areas

and have approximately 70,000 students of which 60 percent are white and 40 percent are black. Of Metro City's 4,000 teachers (approximately equal distribution of elementary and secondary positions), 70 percent are white, and 30 percent are black with "many holding master's degrees."

Metro City's Personnel Office supplied a list of teacher resignations for the 1983-84 academic year. The Personnel Office did not supply forwarding addresses or telephone numbers for these former teachers, but did provide 1981-82 and 1982-83 Personnel Directories to use in attempts to locate the 210 teachers who had resigned from July 1983 through June 1984. Both elementary and secondary resignation documents provided similar information: names, positions, schools, and resignation dates. However, there were striking differences between the two sets of documents. The elementary document was typed, resignees (resignations) were listed chronologically, and a reason code was provided for each former teacher (see Appendix A for a tabulation of reasons that these teachers offered to the elementary personnel office). On the other hand, the secondary document was handwritten, and names were listed randomly, sometimes repeatedly, and occasionally scratched off the list. Also, the document did not provide reason codes for the resignations. The 210 "teacher" resignations (149 secondary and 61 elementary) included not only classroom teachers, but also central office specialists, counselors, speech therapists, librarians, staff development coordinators, a chool psychologists. After the development of a telephone interview guide to better understand not only teacher turnover and mobility, but also other factors affecting the teacher labor market (see Appendix B), 82 teachers were contacted and interviewed by telephone. The vast majority of the 128 other teachers had disconnected telephone numbers and were mailed a questionnaire that was a condensed

version of the interview guide (see Appendix B). Forty-five (45) former teachers responded to the mail questionnaire. Table A exhibits the resignation interview/survey response rate.

TABLE A

INTERVIEW/SURVEY RESPONSE RATE

| GRADE LEVEL | N | TELEPHONE INTERVIEW | MAIL SURVEY | TOTAL | NOT REACHED | RESPCNSE RATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 61 | 14 | 19 | 33 | 28 | 54% |
| Secondary | 149 | 68 | 26 | 94 | 55 | 63% |
| TOTAL | 210 | 82 | 45 | 127 | 83 | 60% |

Because it was the intent of this study to analyze teacher attrition data qualitatively, no statistical procedures were utilized other than percentages to describe why certain categories of teachers left. (In most cases, because of a small n, counts were utilized.) Unless otherwise indicated, the percentage calculated was based on the sample drawn from the population. The population under investigation was a relatively small set (N = 210). However, because of the nature of this study--teacher turnover, drawing a sample was potentially problematic as one might assume teacher turnover is equated with teacher mobility. Subsequently, "capturing" 60 percent of a potentially elusive population is considered by most survey researchers as a very good response rate. However, because this was a study of turnover and mobility, a sample drawn from a 60 percent response rate is not necessarily representative of the total population. First, 39 percent of the 60 percent sample was interviewed by telephone. These

teachers were contacted by using 1981-82 and 1982-83 telephone directories, and it could be safe to assume that this category is considerably less mobile than their counterparts who could not be reached because of disconnected telephone numbers. In fact, of the 45 teachers who responded to the mail survey (note that they were mailed the survey because of their disconnected telephone numbers), 78 percent (N = 35) had moved away from Metro City (primarily because of "spouse moves"). Subsequently, it would be logical to assume that the 83 teachers (who had disconnected telephone numbers and did not respond to the survey) who were not reached would be more representative of the survey group than the interview group. While the significance of this will be made clearer as findings are revealed, it is important to note now that the sample drawn is probably less mobile than the population as a whole. (Note: This point is made clear by comparing data exhibited in Table F (p. 13) and in Appendix A (p. 42). In Table F, seven of the 18 (39 percent) K-6 teachers who were interviewed/surveyed noted that their resignations were due to "spouse moves." In Appendix A, 18 of the 33 (55 percent) K-6 teachers noted that their resignations were due to "leaving the community.")

Data were analyzed to describe (1) who left, (2) why they left, (3) where they went, and (4) what would it take to attract and retain quality public school teachers. Because of the methodological approach to the problem, these analytical categories were not quite as discreet as one might wish them to be. For example, in describing "why a science teacher left," it was sometimes necessary to complete the story by noting "where he went" and what he believes it will take to "attract and retain quality teachers." However, the thrust of each section corresponded roughly to its title.

Because both the interview and mail surveys elicited open-ended responses, categories were established after individual analysis of the 127 records. While some categories will be more obvious to the reader than others, definitions will be provided as findings are reported.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The reader should be cautioned that this study is limited to one metropolitan school system in the Southeast. However, it is emphasized that this school system was selected because it possesses certain characteristics: major industrial and commercial location, high median family income, and considerable resident mobility. These characteristics would indicate that teachers who teach within this type of community might have more occupational alternatives than their counterparts in less urbanized school systems.

However, this report is the first in a series of teacher turnover studies commissioned by the Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement. In addition to this study of a metropolitan school system, seven (7) other case studies are being designed to capture the diversity that is present in both urban and rural sites in the Southeast.

Unfortunately, this study does not include comparisons of the characteristics of the teachers who leave and the teachers who stay in the school system. Data on teachers who remained with the school system in the 1983-84 academic year were not made available to this researcher. It is anticipated that this data will be made accessible in further studies of teacher turnover.

## WHO LEFT

Of the 210 teachers who left Metro City Schools in 1983-84, 77 percent were female and 91 percent were white. Of the 127 teachers responding, 87 percent were married. With regard to teaching experience, 18 percent had 5 years or less; 37 percent had between 5 and 10 years; 17 percent had between 11 and 15 years; 6 percent had between 16 and 19 years; 9 percent had between 20 and 29 years; and 13 percent had over 30 years. Table B exhibits the number and percentage of teachers leaving by subject area and by the number and percentage of those responding to the survey. Among the total population of resigning teachers (N = 210) 16 percent were K-6, 13 percent were special education/speech, 13 percent were math, 9 percent were vocational, 9 percent were English, 7 percent were science, and 7 percent were physical education/health. Table C exhibits the number of math and science teachers leaving by subject area and school level and by the number and percentage of those responding to the survey. Table D exhibits the number and percentage of teachers leaving by school level.

Analysis is limited without utilizing the total numbers of each category of teachers employed in the school system. However, these tables exhibit that high school teachers, generally, and math and science teachers, specifically, are <u>not</u> leaving Metro City classrooms in disproportionate numbers. There is a tendency to assume that high school teachers, because of their more advanced academic coursework in college and the present emphasis on science and technology in the work place, have more career opportunities than their counterparts in other grade levels and subject areas. The descriptions in this section begin to question the well-accepted assumption that <u>high school</u> math and science teachers are

TABLE B

TEACHER RESIGNATIONS
(BY SUBJECT, RESPONSE RATE)

| SUBJECT | 1983-84 RESIGNATIONS | 1983-84 RESIGNATIONS (PERCENT) | NUMBER SURVEYED | RESPONSE RATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| K-6 | 33 | 16 | 18 | 55% |
| SE/Speech | 28 | 13 | 20 | 71% |
| Math | 28 | 13 | 16 | 57% |
| English | 19 | 9 | 13 | 68% |
| Vocational | 19 | 9 | 17 | 89% |
| Science | 15 | 7 | 9 | 60% |
| PE/Health | 14 | 7 | 9 | 64% |
| Music/Art | 13 | 6 | 5 | 38% |
| SSS/GT | 11 | 5 | 5 | 45% |
| Foreign Language | 7 | 3 | 3 | 43% |
| Business | 6 | 3 | 2 | 33% |
| Counselor/Staff | 5 | 2 | 4 | 80% |
| Librarian | 5 | 2 | 3 | 60% |
| Social Studies | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0% |
| DE/ISS | 3 | 1 | 3 | 100% |
| TOTAL | 210 | 98 | 127 | 60% |

CODE: SE = Special Education
PE = Physical Education
SSS = Specialist, School Psychologist
GT = Gifted and Talented
Staff = Staff Development
DE = Driver's Education
ISS = In-School Suspension

TABLE C

MATH/SCIENCE RESIGNATIONS
(BY SCHOOL LEVEL)

| GRADE | SUBJECT | 1983-84 RESIGNATIONS | NO. SURVEYED | RESPONSE RATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HS | Chemistry/ Physics | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| HS | Biology | 6 | 3 | 50% |
| HS | Math | 7 | 5 | 71% |
| JH | Math | 21 | 11 | 52% |
| JH | Science | 7 | 4 | 57% |

CODE: HS = High School
JH = Junior High School/Middle School

TABLE D

RESIGNATIONS
(BY GRADE LEVEL)

| GRADE LEVEL | 1983-84 RESIGNATIONS | PERCENT |
|---|---|---|
| Junior High | 72 | 34 |
| High School | 64 | 30 |
| K-6 | 33 | 16 |
| Elementary Specialist | 28 | 13 |
| Secondary Specialist | 13 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 210 | 100 |

leaving in droves. However, junior high resignations, especially those in math and science, appear to be more significant than those in senior high schools. The factors influencing teacher attrition (e.g., having to deal with the turbulent maturation stage of junior high students) and where teachers go after they resign (e.g., not IBM or DuPont) in the next sections begin to refute the well-accepted assumption that high school math and science (and other) teachers leave their classrooms primarily because of the lack of monetary incentives and career advancement.

## WHY THEY LEFT

Teachers of Metro City Schools indicated nine categories of circumstances (reasons) that influenced them to resign during the 1983-84 academic year. These reasons and the percentage of teachers resigning for each are indicated in Table E (p. 12). Table E exhibits that while teacher dissatisfaction plays a significant role in teacher turnover, other categories such as retirement, spouse moves, and family are just as significant or, in some cases, more so. Before elaborating fully on each of the nine categories of teacher turnover, Table F exhibits which teachers (by subject area) left and why.

Table F (p. 13) exhibits that while 4 of the 9 (44 percent) former science teachers retired, 2 (22 percent) "needed" a break from teaching. One (11 percent) of the science teachers left because of dissatisfaction. On the other hand, 9 of the 16 (56 percent) of the math teachers left because of dissatisfaction. However, presently 3 of the 16 (19 percent) are teaching elsewhere. Six of the 17 (35 percent) vocational education teachers left because of dissatisfaction. This was a relatively high

TABLE E

WHY THEY LEFT

| REASON | n | PERCENT |
|---|---|---|
| Retire/Health | 30 | 24 |
| Dissatisfaction | 27 | 21 |
| Spouse Move | 25 | 20 |
| Family | 19 | 15 |
| Business Opportunity | 11 | 9 |
| Break from Teaching | 5 | 4 |
| Teach Elsewhere | 5 | 4 |
| Coaching Related | 3 | 2 |
| Reduction-In-Force | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 127 | 100 |

number of dissatisfaction. On the other hand, a relatively high number of K-6, English/foreign language, and special education teachers left because of spouse moves and family. In fact, 13 of the 18 K-6 respondents left for these reasons. This may be accounted for by the higher percentage of females who teach these subjects/grade levels.

However, when one examines the experiences and beliefs of all of the teachers who left Metro City in the 1983-84 academic year, it becomes apparent that the subject taught does not necessarily influence the circumstances under which teachers leave.

TABLE F

WHO LEFT AND WHY?

| SUBJECT | n | RETIRE/ HEALTH | DISSAT- ISFIED | SPOUSE MOVE | FAMILY | BUSINESS OPPORT. | BREAK FROM TEACHING | TEACH ELSE- WHERE | COACHING- RELATED | RIF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Science (N = 15) | 9 | 4 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| Math (N = 28) | 16 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 3 | - | - |
| K-6 (N = 33) | 18 | 3 | - | 7 | 6 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Business (N = 6) | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Vocational (N = 19) | 17 | 5 | 6 | 2 | - | 1 | 2 | - | - | 1 |
| English/ Foreign Language (N = 27) | 16 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| SE/Speech/ SS/GT (N = 39) | 25 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | - | - | - | - |
| PE/Health/ ISS/DE (N = 17) | 12 | 6 | - | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - | 2 | - |
| Art/Music (N = 13) | 5 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Counselor/ Lib./Staff (N = 10) | 7 | 1 | - | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - |
| TOTAL | 127 | 30 | 27 | 25 | 19 | 11 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| PERCENTAGE | 100% | 24% | 21% | 20% | 15% | 9% | 4% | 4% | 2% | 1% |

Retirements and Health

Twenty-four percent (n = 30) of Metro City's turnover resulted from either the retirements or health problems of teachers. While over one half (n = 16) of the retirees "put in [their] 30 years," many (n = 9) decided to retire early because the rewards and pleasures of teaching were outweighed by student apathy and their high failure rate, paperwork, and too many duties. While one English teacher asserted, "I would have taught better if I didn't have to raise $8,000 for the Junior-Senior [dance]," a junior high science teacher lamented:

> I left after 23 years because of discipline, discipline, discipline. I was called a W-G-D-S-O-B one too many times . . . . I was just too old to put up with it. My principal could do very little about it. He was called on the carpet [by central office] if our school had too many suspensions.

When asked what it would take to attract and retain quality teachers, she responded:

> You have to have a principal there [at school], mine wasn't . . . . You have to have one that does discipline, mine didn't . . . . You have to get the drugs out of school.

Many teachers noted that early retirement was brought on by "the apathy of students" (high school chemistry); others pointed to the "pressure of constantly disciplining children" (elementary), "the lack of administrative support," and the conditions of their immediate teaching environment. A speech teacher asserted, "I was stuck in a broom closet." In summary, although retirees were the most prominent turnover category, the attitudes and concerns of "these veterans" indicated significant problems in the work life of the public school teacher.

Dissatisfactions

Twenty-one percent (n = 27) of the turnover resulted from the dissatisfactions of teachers with their teaching jobs. Of the teachers in this category, 12 were high school, 12 were junior high, 2 were elementary, and 1 was a specialist. Furthermore, 9 were math, 6 were vocational, 6 were speech education, and 1 was a science teacher (for other subject areas see Table F on p. 13). The dissatisfactions reported had very little to do with low salaries and the lack of career advancement within teaching. In fact, only two teachers (both high school, business and art) strongly mentioned "money" as the root of their dissatisfaction. Interestingly, both of these teachers were male, had taught for 12 years, had two children under the age of five, and were now in "sales." But, their frustrations go beyond dollars and cents. Describing in depth his reason for leaving, the high school art teacher asserted:

> There were inadequate pay increases . . . I had low self-esteem . . . . I could not support my family, and I was embarrassed for people to know what I did.

Circumstances related to the everyday work life of the classroom teacher lie at the root of these teachers' dissatisfactions. For three math teachers, these circumstances included:

> I had to teach six 55-minute classes with no planning period . . . lack of disciplinary support, negative atmosphere, too many responsibilities, inadequate supplies, too much afterschool work . . . . I had gotten to my maximum growth, wasn't happy with the administration, and I was disturbed over the value of mediocrity [in the school and system].

Two speech teachers noted they "were stuck [had to teach] in a broom closet," and one vocational teacher asserted that "in the four years I was in the school system I never had a classroom . . . [in fact], I had to teach in the same room with another teacher while she taught another

class."

Many teachers noted that continuous responsibility for minors was a major source of their dissatisfaction. A high school biology teacher noted "the constant pressure of dealing with 35 different kids per hour." Teachers felt that "once they hit campus, you are a slave," with very little time for oneself. As one asserted, "Sometimes I wish I could just sit in an office and work." A high school math teacher who left because of "burnout due to the lack of rewards or pats on the back" noted that she had to "keep the computer lab open before and after school, during lunch, and at break." Subsequently,

> It was not the money . . . . The reason goes much deeper. I wasn't valued or appreciated . . . . If the school system appreciated the job I did, I would go back (female, junior high math, 29 years old, presently in insurance sales, has no children).

A junior high special education teacher corroborates:

> Salary is not the issue . . . . Demands, parents, and students--an emotional wipeout. Because I did a good job, I got more responsibility (female, 26 years old, presently selling real estate, has no children).

A "general frustration with the administration" and "no hope for changes" were also major sources of dissatisfaction. Many noted "the lack of disciplinary support." Teachers attributed the poor discipline in the schools to the fact that "administrators and teachers are afraid of kids," and one "has to be an attorney to get a student in trouble." For some, though, "it is just not educators and politicians . . . but parents . . . the second television is more important than a tutor." While some noted that they would "go a month at a time without seeing the principal," others said that they "were unhappy with other staff," and they "did not have enough power to make important decisions."

With regard to the competence of her peers, a junior high math teacher

stated that a major advantage of selling health and life insurance is that her new "colleagues are more intelligent, success-oriented, and self-disciplined." Furthermore, she claimed that if she "had been more lax [e.g., letting her students sleep in class], [she] would have fit in better at her school and would have been more appreciated by [her] principal." For a high school calculus teacher of 14 years, dissatisfactions arose because she "didn't want to work for someone who has the backbone of a jellyfish." Importantly, this teacher is "seriously considering teaching elsewhere--possibly in a private school." Even though she "dosen't have to work" (her husband is a vice-president of a steel corporation), she would like to return to the classroom after "spending some time with [her] two young children." However, she "is not going into industry" because she "could not work 8-5 until [her] children are grown." She "still loves teaching," despite her "disenchantment with [her] school and principal."

In summary, since these teachers left because they were "treated like children" (high school math teacher, presently a trainer at a bank), required to do "never ending paperwork" and other "Mickey-Mouse" duties, the "money [was] not as important as the personal degradation" they felt as teachers. Furthermore, poor student discipline, poor leadership from the principal's office, and the lack of proper parental support alienated these teachers--many who thought of themselves as good teachers and wished the conditions were better so they could return to the classroom.

Spouse Move

Twenty percent (n = 25) of Metro City's turnover resulted from spouse moves. All of these teachers were female and generally were married to either managers (n = 14), salesmen (n = 4), or engineers (n = 3). While

the majority of these teachers reported that they presently are teaching in other school systems (n = 15), others were housewives or mothers (n = 9). One former teacher is now a graduate student in education, working on a doctorate in curriculum and instruction (her husband is an attorney). The majority of these teachers (n = 20) had made previous "spouse moves." In fact, one elementary teacher had made five moves, even though she had taught for only seven years. It appears that a considerable amount of teacher attrition results from women following their husbands in their career moves. Importantly, many continue their teaching careers in another city, sometimes after a brief stint at home as a full-time mother. Because the sample drawn is most likely overrepresentative of those who do not move, the 20 percent of the turnover in Metro City accounted for by "spouse moves" may be understated. Therefore, teacher attrition data, in general, may be overstated since a high percentage of teachers who leave eventually teach elsewhere. Since many of these teachers' husbands have upper-middle-income managerial occupations, many saw their teaching salaries "as gravy." Subsequently, these teachers have "the option" of staying home because their teaching income is secondary. However, this category of teachers is concerned also about the poor administration of public schools. One junior high science teacher, who had "moved three times with her husband," noted that student behavior was a problem in all three school systems where she worked. However, she asserted, "It was a joy to work for a principal who enforced discipline." This science teacher of 16 years, who was interviewed on the day the "movers [were] at [her] home," noted:

> I sure would like to teach again . . . . You know, it gets in your blood. However, I am not sure about the teaching certification requirements [in the state to which she is moving]. If I don't teach, I'll do volunteer-type of work.

Family

Fifteen percent (n = 19) of the turnover resulted from family-related circumstances. In most of the cases (n = 15), these female teachers plan to teach again after spending some time at home with their young children. While some "can't wait to get back," others "plan to teach again when the youngest is in the second grade." As a junior high math teacher, whose husband is in sales, noted, "It [the teaching occupation] has good working hours for a family." A few are unsure and "may return" after they have "more children." However, two former teachers who left for family reasons are disgruntled and "will not return to the classroom." An elementary school psychologist, whose husband is in a "well-paid managerial position," noted she "will be a full-time mother until her child is in school." Because she was called "you old white bitch one too many times" and was told continually that "my mama will sue," she asserted that when she does return to the world of work, it will "probably be a sales position." The other former teacher in this category, an elementary librarian, realized that after ten years, "the public schools were not for [her]." This teacher, whose husband is a dentist, plans to work part-time at a small local college in the audio-visual department.

In summary, there appears to be another category of teacher attrition that is temporarily out of the labor market. In fact, of spouse move and family turnover (n = 45), 73 percent are presently teaching or planning to teach again in the future. Most of those who are not teaching or will not teach in the future have husbands who earn sufficient income for their families.

Business Opportunity

Nine percent (n = 11) of the turnover resulted from business opportunities that arose for these former teachers. In these cases, the pattern was that these teachers tended to be pulled rather than pushed away from teaching. In other words, opportunities more often arose from their "husband's work," a "summer job that turned into a full-time position," or from "finishing their masters." Ten of these eleven teachers were female, and eight of the nine married teachers had husbands who were either managers, engineers, or self-employed. Similarly, seven had parents who were managers or professionals (in fact, of these seven, four had "professional" mothers). Three of these teachers taught less than 5 years, five between 6 and 10 ten years, and three between 11 and 20. These teachers made "their breaks" at various stages of their career.

The occupations that pulled these teachers away included teaching in government, a clinic, and a private franchise (3); self-employment (3); sales (1); bookkeeping (1); private industry training (1); computer programming (1); and carrying mail (1). While these teachers generally were pulled away from teaching, their comments about their new occupations and their lives as teachers were quite illuminating (in fact, one teacher responded to the survey with six pages of comments). Their comments included:

> I work much more during the season, but I don't have to call in sick (bookkeeper) . . . . The job doesn't go home with me at night and there are no long waits for signs of success (computer programmer) . . . . I can eat lunch without having to work (teacher at the clinic).

The former teacher of 17 years, who is now a trainer, emphasized that she is "now working with adults" after she realized that she "personally wanted a new career" and "did not want to pursue a principalship or the

traditional career [administrative] path in education." While six of these teachers indicated that they were presently earning more money (generally a 10-15 percent increase), three mentioned they were earning about the same, and two indicated they were earning less (for the teacher in the private school and the computer programmer). However, the teachers who were earning less indicated that they would earn more in the years to come in their new careers.

In summary, these former teachers tended to come from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds and have spouses with similar occupations. Perhaps this background may have influenced their inclination to make a "break" from teaching. While the distribution of their teaching experience corresponds roughly with all other resigning teachers in Metro City, they left primarily because of "an interest in another career." While their opportunities generally arose because of "their husbands," a "second job," or "friends," on one occasion, it was "just luck". As the junior high physical education teacher described:

> I put my application in at the Post Office on a lark . . . . I had no idea I would be accepted as a mail carrier. When I was, I said 'why not?' . . . more pay, less hours, and no work at night. Maybe, one day I'll be an administrator with the postal service.

Break from Teaching

Four percent (n = 5) of the turnover resulted from teachers desiring a break from teaching. While these teachers indicated dissatisfactions with their previous jobs, they specifically indicated they would teach again after their respite. Table G describes some of their characteristics.

The junior high vocational teacher, who left for a supervisory position in a state education agency, "needed a break, but plans to return."

TABLE G

CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS WHO WILL RETURN

| GRADE | SUBJECT | SEX | TEACHING EXPERIENCE | PRESENT OCCUPATION | SPOUSE OCCUPATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JH | Vocational | F | 8 | Administration Education Agency | Professor |
| JH | Vocational | F | 9 | Self-Employed | Self-Employed |
| E | 4th Grade | F | 10 | Mother | Banker |
| HS | Science (Biology) | F | 13 | Student (Community College) | Self-Employed |
| JH | Science | F | 13 | Teacher-Private | Engineer |

This teacher of 8 years did not teach while rearing her children and also moved in and out of two teacher labor markets while following her husband's career path. She admitted that she had "missed her students, but has enjoyed the luxury of calling in sick when needed (in her administrative position)."

The other junior high vocational teacher asserted that "the older teachers told me to get out when I could (she is 33 years old)." She noted:

> I was a good teacher and I wasn't unhappy . . . but, my husband set me up in a lighting fixture business . . . . I am really working long hours now . . . . If I ever had children, teaching would be a good job to have again.

The fourth grade teacher noted that she "was tired of the fact that I never knew what I'd be teaching." She described the administration in her school in a word--"inept." She is presently taking care of her two

children (both under 8 years of age), but she noted that she would "like to go back . . . maybe as an aide."

The high school biology teacher (of 13 years) asserted that "teaching is stressful," and she "needed to get away from it." Although she is presently in a computer science program at a community college, she noted that she "would love to teach again."

Finally, the junior high science teacher who is presently a part-time biology teacher at a museum emphatically asserted:

> If my boss (her principal) could have said I would cut your class size and give you a $2,000 raise, I would have stayed.

Because of her frustrations with "large classes," the "lack of necessary equipment," and "student discipline," this science teacher has left public school teaching twice, but still plans to return. In the first case, she left her high school chemistry/physics position after 10 years to become a "chemist at Piedmont Power." However, she quickly noted that her tenure as a chemist lasted not even a year. She earned a salary of $24,000 and had very good fringe benefits, but her "fantasy about being a chemist in a white lab coat was just that--a fantasy." She described it as "dirty, dirty work . . . I just didn't like it." However, her return to the public schools was frustrating because the "first opening" was at a junior high school, and she "wasn't prepared to deal with that age group."

Perhaps at this juncture it is important to note a significant difference between the work lives of high school chemistry/physics teachers and their counterparts in junior high who teach general science. Beside the "tumultuous" behavior of early adolescents in junior high, general science teachers must teach students who do not necessarily desire to be in their classes. On the other hand, high school chemistry/physics teachers

teach students who select their class or are selected by their parents/ counselors because of their advanced academic standing.*

Blaming the problems and demands of junior high teaching and the "many, many hours" she devoted to her school work, this science teacher "became a dull person" and decided to teach part-time at a museum "in an environment that [she] loves." Importantly, for her, this meant that she works in an environment that "still caters to children," and the job requires "no tests to grade and none of all that paperwork." She asserted that the children "love the programs," but, best of all,

> They come--I teach--I'm through--They lea.-I'm gone.

But, much like her counterparts in this category of teacher attrition, she misses the "close relationships" that teachers develop with their students in the public schools and plans to return. However, her return will be to teach at a specific high school. She noted:

> I'm waiting for a position . . . . A high school chemistry teacher at a school one mile from my house will retire in another year. I am looking forward to taking over for her.

In concluding our conversation, this dedicated, committed science teacher (who was accepted to medical school 15 years ago, but chose teaching) had one more telling comment about the state of the teacher labor market in the Southeast:

> You know, I understand that principals are not given the power or discretion to barter individually with teachers . . . . This is a state system, and everyone

---

*Interestingly, this dilemma was corroborated by a former high school chemistry/physics teacher who is now teaching the same subject in a military school. He noted that discipline was much less of a problem in the public schools because in the military school all students were required to take chemistry and physics.

> is supposed to be treated equally. I really understand this . . . . But you know what, they [principals and central office administrators] barter with coaches.

In summary, this small group of former teachers appears to encapsulate the attitudes and behaviors of those presently leaving the teacher labor market. These teachers "love children," are confident of their abilities as teachers, and are still committed to teaching despite frustrating working conditions centered on poor administration and student discipline and the lack of teacher autonomy. As the science teacher who tried a stint with the "white lab coat" asserted, "Money is not the problem." While this group has other career options (in fact, these teachers readily admitted that they "didn't have to work"), other teachers remain in the classroom because they "feel trapped" or "locked in." A former junior high math teacher noted that this phenomenon was made evident to her when she was a member of Metro City's Teacher Advisory Council. She stressed that "frustrated" and "trapped" teachers who remain in the classroom are having a very negative effect on the future of the teacher labor market. As she asserted, "Look at the impact that these teachers are having on today's [public school] students."

Teach Elsewhere

Four percent (n = 5) of the turnover resulted from teachers desiring either to teach closer to their home, teach at a high school, or teach at a community college. Three junior high math teachers resigned because they desired to teach in a school system closer to their home. A junior high foreign language teacher who "had enough of seventh graders" and "could not get a transfer" resigned to teach in a high school (in a nearby school system). Finally, one central office staff development coordinator

resigned to teach in a community college because she "was being groomed for administration, but wanted to teach." Interestingly, this "teacher" of 15 years (who is married to an attorney and the daughter of educators) "worked as a trainer at a bank for 6 months, but didn't like it." While this teacher has not liked the work world outside of the classroom, she asserted that her two young children "were being groomed to be self-sufficient . . . you know, doctors and lawyers."

Coaching-Related

Two percent (n = 3) of the turnover resulted from coaching-related changes. As in most school systems in the Southeast, Metro City combines both coaching and teaching assignments in their employment contracts. One physical education teacher accepted a football coaching job in another system. Another physical education teacher "resigned" from his coaching position and was transferred to an "in-school suspension (ISS)" classroom. This assignment was "very difficult" because he received very little cooperation from either administrators or other teachers. A teacher of 18 years, he is now a manufacturer's representative selling gift items. He noted that it was "much easier to communicate with people [in the business world] as opposed to those in the public schools." Finally, "the story" of a high school chemistry/physics teacher reiterates the importance of coaching as a significant variable in the teacher labor market. This teacher of five years described his leaving:

> I was dissatisfied working as a coach and in Metro City if you give up your coaching, they terminate your contract.

Upon his termination he returned to his home town, but there were "no openings in chemistry or physics [in his local school system]." He is

presently teaching at a military school where he is paid 25 percent less, but is given a housing allowance. He is considering moving to the mountains to teach or possibly "open a ski shop." He is "finding teaching less desirable" since "standards are too low" (in both public and private settings), but, more importantly, there is "not enough emphasis on learning."

Reduction-In-Force

One percent (n = 2) of the turnover resulted from a vocational teacher "being riffed" and an English teacher being displaced by the return of a teacher who was on maternity leave. The vocational teacher taught graphics and subsequently opened his own print shop. However, he noted that he is "looking to teach again" as business is "pretty iffy." The English teacher is presently "substituting" and also would like to find a full-time position.

## WHERE THEY WENT

The previous section describes why teachers left Metro City during the 1983-84 academic year. To better understand the circumstances which influenced them to leave, some description was provided regarding where they went. Table H (p. 28) describes where each of 127 teachers (by subject area) are presently employed.

Table H exhibits that 88 (69 percent) of the teachers who did leave are either teaching, at home (as a housewife or mother), or retired (and not working). Eleven (9 percent) of these teachers are in sales--primarily in real estate and life and health insurance. Two of these former teachers had retired and are now working for an educator-oriented insurance company.

TABLE H

WHO LEFT AND WHERE THEY WENT

| PRESENT OCCUPATION | SUBJECT AREAS: SCIENCE | MATH | BUSINESS | VOCATIONS | ENGLISH/ FOREIGN LANGUAGE | SE/ SPEECH/ SSS/GT | K-6 | PE/ HEALTH/ ISS/DE | ART MUSIC | COUNSELOR/ LIBRARIAN/ STAFF | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher | 3 | 5 | - | 2 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 33 |
| Housewife/Mother | 1 | 3 | - | 2 | 3 | 6 | 11 | 2 | - | 4 | 32 |
| Sales | - | 3 | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | - | 3 | 1 | - | 11 |
| Self-Employed | - | - | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 9 |
| Trainer, Book-keeper, Computer Programmer | - | 3 | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 6 |
| Student | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 5 |
| Administration/ MGT | 1 | - | - | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 4 |
| Contractor, Auto Mechanics | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Mail Carrier/ Security Guard | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 2 |
| Retired - Not Working | 2 | 1 | - | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | - | *23 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 16 | 2 | 17 | 16 | 25 | 18 | 12 | 5 | 7 | 127 |

*This figure excludes those 8 teachers who retired and are working elsewhere.

Nine (7 percent) are self-employed. Their businesses include a pool and spa shop (retired physical education), a print shop (graphics, reduction-in-force), a lighting fixtures store (vocational), woodworking (vocational), a private practice of speech therapy (speech), and four women who are now working with their husbands. Six (5 percent) are trainers in private industry (n = 3), computer programmers (n = 2), or a bookkeeper (n = 1).

Five (4 percent) are students--either in business (n = 2), education (n = 2), or in a community college computer programming curriculum. Both business students are interested in working in customer service or in instructional training in private industry. While money was a significant factor for these two females (both were single), both emphasized "class size" and the fact there was "not enough emphasis on teaching" as reasons for their resignation.

Four (3 percent) are either administrators in education or in management. A former junior high vocational teacher is now a divisional manager for a computer manufacturer (citing better money and administration in his new job); the other manager runs a health club (high school biology teacher who also coached). One school administrator is planning to return to the classroom. The other, a school psychologist, is now the director of pupil services in another school system (she recently completed her doctorate in education).

In summary, only 39 (31 percent) of the 127 teacher respondents who left moved into occupations other than teaching. This figure is even more significant when one realizes that of the 4,000 teachers employed in the 1983-84 academic year, the few who did leave the teaching occupation are now primarily selling insurance and real estate, working in bookkeeping and

training, doing computer programming, carrying mail, contracting, and working on cars. Furthermore, the teachers who are assumed to have higher-paying career alternatives (i.e., math and science teachers) are <u>not</u> leaving for the "high-tech" occupations in overwhelming numbers. No math or science teacher left to work at "IBM" or "DuPont." Three of the seven math teachers are in related fields (bookkeeping, computer programming, and graduate student in business); one is now a trainer; and three are in sales (either real estate or life insurance). Similarly, the <u>two</u> chemistry teachers who left Metro City in 1983-84 are teaching elsewhere. None are earning (or plan to earn) significantly more income in their new occupations, and most typically attribute their leaving to "lack of disciplinary support, negative atmosphere, too many responsibilities, inadequate supplies, and too much after-school work" (male, junior high math, one year experience) and "low morale . . . not the money" (female, junior high math, 7 years experience). In fact, the experiences, beliefs, and behaviors of Metro City teachers suggest that teacher labor market analysts should be asking if dissatisfied math teachers are <u>actually</u> leaving for "IBM" and science teachers for "DuPont." Furthermore, the high percentage of those teachers who leave and become teachers in other school systems (because of spouse moves, staying home with young children for a few years, etc.), suggests that teacher attrition studies are overestimating actual turnover in the profession.

This study reveals low turnover rates and very few teachers leaving for higher paying career opportunities. In fact, even those teachers who were <u>pushed</u> or <u>pulled</u> away from teaching do not necessarily move into occupations which would be considered a "step up" from teaching.

## ATTRACTING AND RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS

As Table I exhibits, 43 (34 percent) of the teachers left Metro City because they were either pushed or pulled away from teaching. However, this figure is even significantly lower (n = 29, 23 percent) when occupations such as teaching, housewife/mother, contractor/auto mechanic, and mail carrier are excluded. The experiences and beliefs of these 29 former teachers, now in alternative occupations, are utilized to describe factors related to attracting and retaining quality teachers. A description of these experiences and beliefs (by the present occupational categories of the teachers: sales; self-employed; trainer, etc.; student; and administrator/manager) follows:

### Sales

For these eight teachers (6 were males, 7 were junior high, 3 were math), money was an important reason for leaving, but it was not the primary factor. In fact, only three of the eight mentioned "more pay" as the most important variable in attracting quality teachers. For most, "salary is not the issue," but it was the fact that "schools expect way too much of teachers." Because of "discipline problems" and "no teacher authority," schools need to establish "stanuard and stricter discipline policies" to attract and retain teachers. While "higher pay across-the-board" was important to these teachers, "respect" was a more salient factor.

Although these former teachers are "enjoying their freedom," their hours are longer in sales. Even though they have to "work on Sundays," they appreciate "the flexibility" and the fact "there is no one to report

TABLE I

WHY THEY LEFT AND WHERE THEY WENT (EXCLUSION OF RETIREES)

| REASON | SALES | TEACHER | SELF-EMPLOYED | HOUSE-WIFE/ MOTHER | TRAINER, BOOK-KEEPER, COMPUTER PROGRAMMER | STUDENT | ADMINIS-TRATION/ MANAGER | CON-TRACTOR/ AUTO MECHANICS | MAIL-CARRIER | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dissatisfaction | 7 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | - | 27 |
| Break from Teaching | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 5 |
| Business Opportunity | 1 | 3 | 3 | - | 3 | | | | 1 | 11 |
| SUBTOTAL | 8 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 43 |
| Teach Elsewhere | - | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 |
| Coaching Related | 1 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |
| Family | - | 1 | - | 19 | - | - | - | - | - | 20 |
| Spouse Move | - | 14 | - | 10 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 25 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 30 | 7 | 32 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 96 |
| Not Working/ Retired | | | | | | | | | | 31 |
| | | | | | | | | | | 127 |

to." Although the "money is questionable" in their new jobs and most "hope to [just] make their teacher's salary this year," they see themselves earning "more money down the road." More often than not, they are not sure what their income will be, but these teachers like the idea that they will determine what they will earn. This is something they could not do as teachers.

Self-Employed

For these seven teachers (6 were female; 3 high school, 1 junior high, and 3 elementary), "general frustrations" with their school environment were the primary factors in their leaving. Most cited "autonomy" as a benefit of working either with their husbands or in their own business. For most, because of their spouse's income, they "didn't need a steady income," and, therefore, there was "no risk" in starting their own business. For the former speech teacher, working 20-30 hours per week "out of my house" as a private speech therapist was better than "teaching in a broom closet." "Better administration," "more teacher control," and "better discipline" were cited as changes needed to attract and retain quality teachers. Although the pay for teachers is "not good down the road" (about 12 years), these teachers tended to see "treating teachers like professionals" and "hiring aides for the Mickey-Mouse things that need to be done" as more important factors in retaining quality teachers. But the experiences and advice of a former elementary special education teacher, who wrote six handwritten pages as an addendum to her survey responses, were even more illuminating. In describing her experiences as a high school (3 years) and elementary (1 year) teacher, she noted:

> I was an LD teacher with many extracurricular assignments (letter girl advisor, after school practices and

> games . . . including out-of-town with no compensation) . . . however, working with learning-disabled students--this opportunity to work with "top-notch" achievement-oriented students was a good balancing agent--I enjoyed teaching [at the] high school level. The switch to elementary was to discover what it was like to teach children. College training emphasized elementary; then, a student teaching experience on high school level led me to take job at a high school. Elementary levels did not particularly appeal to me.
>
> Truthfully, teaching, for the most part, was an enjoyable and rewarding occupation. The respect and friendliness of the students, the comradery of fellow teachers, the knowledge that for all one's efforts, there really was some good resulting, kept me for four years. My opportunity to change careers was perhaps more unusual than most--working for my "to-be" husband in his own organization. Now that I think about it, I would have stayed in education probably one or two more years--I knew early on I would not make a life-long teacher. It was not a financial reason but a need for more achievement and more variety.

In large part her frustrations grew from an inept administration and lack of adequate support services. She noted:

> My main source of frustration stemmed from the fact that there was no curriculum from which to work. In addition, our system made no provisions for textbooks - perhaps because there were few or none available.
>
> Therefore, I had to develop three levels of vocabulary/spelling lists, make as many as 40 individual lesson plans for my students (this was daily/weekly classroom lessons--not including I.E.P.'s), go to a warehouse and literally dig out old books no longer under adoption so that my students could at least carry hard-backed books and so that I could "water down" the information to their levels.

When addressing what it would take to attract and retain quality teachers, she adamantly asserted that the schools must "glean the system . . . as too many bad apples make the others seem bad." Her story continues:

> Teaching school . . . once considered a most notable and desirable occupation--in categories with ministers, community leaders, etc. Now, although there are still good and great people in the field, there are also a lot of poor excuses in the classrooms "teaching" our youth.

The NTE, the personnel interview "downtown" at the Ed. Center (a "joke"), principals' evaluations, advisory committees, student 'popularity' contests . . . perhaps all of the above are necessary to some extent--but most are ineffective means to an end: good, conscientious, productive, teachers. How to fairly evaluate people before turning them loose to influence children's minds and attitudes? No simple answer!

Salaries in many instances are justified (in some cases--too much income; in others--couldn't pay them enough!). However, the scale of incomes needs examination. People who choose to make teaching their life's career and work hard at it should be compensated proportionately. Those who do not do their job well should not receive yearly upgrades in their salary and should be closely scrutinized--if their performance is not satisfactory, they should be "terminated."

In the "REAL WORLD" (teachers, especially, refer to this!!), businesses who expect to succeed do not employ people who are not assets to their organization. Surely, there will be mistakes and someone unfit for the task will be hired . . . . If it becomes apparent that the person is not performing up to standards (what are those?!!), the employee is fired. Why is it that teachers are "protected" from this process? It seems to take an Act of Congress to fire a teacher. The grounds have to be along the lines of severe abuse of students, countless absences from school, or alcoholism on the job.

There are no great solutions--sure-fire, quick, and easy--to improve the plight of teachers. Strong leadership from administrative personnel to principals is necessary. Personally, I had the opportunity to work under the direction and guidance of four different principals. Only one would be a successful leader in the business community. The others lacked communication skills (no eye contact with adults - only with the children!), professionalism (was too friendly and giggly, slap-on-the-back type), and leadership (tried to please any and everyone) qualities.

A strong principal is vital . . . one that expects, demands, encourages, praises, involves, reprimands, and fires!

Trainer, Bookkeeper, Computer Programmer

For these six teachers (all female, 4 were high school, 3 in math), money was not a major factor in their leaving. However, three noted "more pay" as essential in attracting quality teachers. For the other three, "morale," "lack of respect," a "success orientation," and "treating teachers as adults and professionals, not as other children to be supervised" were key variables to attract and retain. While "higher salaries" were important, "changes in atmosphere," "environment" and "discipline" were essential ingredients as well. For one computer programmer, her new job "pays less," and there are "fewer benefits." However, it was important to her that the "job doesn't go home with [her] at night." For the other computer programmer, her new job "doesn't have as much pressure or require the responsibility" that her high school math position did. Because of the "value of mediocrity" that is prevalent in the public schools, it was not uncommon for these teachers to note that they took their new jobs because they "needed the challenge," "wanted the chance to shine," or "would be given true demands and true rewards."

Students

For these four teachers (all were female, three junior high, one high school), money was a factor in only one resignation. For this former junior high English teacher of 11 years, "the pay wasn't keeping up with her friends." Presently a graduate student in business, she plans to go into accounting or possibly work in a liaison/customer service position in private industry. While "money" is important for attracting teachers, "small class is essential" for keeping them. She noted:

> I guess I spent too many nights for too many years grading way too many English papers.

For a graduate student in education, it would be necessary to "have more rigorous undergraduate programs, greater opportunity for teachers to make decisions, and more money to attract professional people" to attract and retain quality teachers. But the most important factors appeared to be the pervasive belief espoused by this former junior high math teacher:

> There has got to be a change in attitude toward education . . . . Teachers have to be respected. Merit pay might be important, but there must be a renewal of emphasis on teaching in the public schools.

Administrator/Manager

For these four teachers (two males), money is a necessary, but not sufficient, factor in attracting and retaining quality teachers. For example, a former high school vocational teacher, now a manager for a computer company, stated that it will take "salary, benefits, growth opportunities, administration, materials, funds, supplies to do the job, etc., etc." This manager noted "more pay and better administration" as present conditions of his new job; the other manager (health club) noted "a nice, easier job, a little more money." One school administrator was planning to return to the classroom; the other one (a former elementary school psychologist) was just starting her new position after completing her doctorate. For her, "more autonomy for teachers" was essential in attracting and retaining quality people in the classroom.

## CONCLUSIONS

Much like the findings suggested in "Miss Dove Is Alive and Well (and Teaching Math, Sponsoring the Yearbook, and Coaching Softball) . . ." (Berry, 1984), the variables affecting teacher attrition in the Southeast are far more complex and subtle than most researchers, analysts, and decision makers may believe, and ensuring an adequate supply of competent teachers may involve more factors than providing higher salaries and career ladders. Therefore, if the solution to the problems of the teacher labor market is higher salary and career ladders, then this study of teacher attrition finds very little evidence to support the notion that this solution is related to the problem, much less the cause.

This case study has demonstrated that those relatively few teachers who leave and the fewer teachers who leave because of dissatisfactions are not doing so primarily because of low salaries and lack of career advancement. This pattern holds for those teachers that are assumed to have more varied and lucrative opportunities (i.e., secondary math and science teachers). However, those who teach math, especially those at the junior high level, leave teaching because of dissatisfactions more so than any other subject area teachers. Significant turnover is attributed to spouse moves and family (child rearing) whereby teachers continue teaching in other states, in other school systems, or in the same system after a stint as a "full-time mother." However, much like their counterparts who "leave teaching for good," these teachers are not without their frustrations. In fact, their recommendations for attracting and retaining quality teachers mirror their frustrations--better administration, better discipline, more teacher control, smaller classes, fewer "Mickey-Mouse" duties, less paper

work, more cooperative parents, less stress, positive atmosphere, and the beginning of the "valu(ing) of success" in schools. Although school administrators are willing and able to provide "perks" and class scheduling concessions for coaches, they are not willing or "able" to do the same for chemistry teachers. While coaches are valued, teachers seemingly are not. Disregarded for their human resource potential, teachers are more likely to be treated as an interchangeable part in an everlasting machine. This bureaucratization of teaching in Metro City is illuminated by a secondary personnel administrator, who, due to numerous internal constraints, likened his office to an "employment agency" (see Berry, 1984). Because the secondary personnel office interviews 90 percent of all applicants (approximately "3,500" on file), little effort is spent documenting and understanding which teachers leave, why they leave, and where they go.

As indicated earlier (Berry, 1984), perhaps school systems have what they really want in teachers. Subsequently, without systemic organizational changes that reflect the need to regenerate a new occupation of public school teaching, today's teacher reform movement may be for naught--at least in terms of attracting and retaining quality teachers. The important question that this study now poses is not "Why do teachers leave?" but "Why do teachers stay?"

Yes, the dedicated, committed teacher (Miss Dove) who "loves children" and is "not prepared for the world of business" is still teaching. Because of positive experiences in her own public schooling, "she" is well-prepared to withstand the onslaught against "her" dignity that many of today's teachers are facing in the public schools. However, these indignities are becoming more difficult to withstand. Therefore, in some cases, "Miss Dove" leaves (in many cases to work with her husband or to sell life

insurance). Still, she wants to teach (except on the junior high level).

For those who do go back and for those who "feel trapped," their frustrations are critically affecting the supply of tomorrow's teacher labor market pool: today's public school student. The prevalence of the fact that teachers "now recruit their students away from teaching" (high school chemistry teacher, in Berry, 1984) is quite disconcerting. As the junior high science teacher (who worked as a chemist with Piedmont Power and "didn't like it") noted:

> I sponsored a science club when I taught chemistry. I had a career day. I took the students to surrounding universities and their science departments. I brought in speakers. You know, I never brought in a teacher.

But, maybe the problem runs deeper. This same science teacher (who was influenced by her parents to be a teacher and now is married to a "very successful" engineer) related her career expections for her 12-year-old son:

> Who knows (what he will be) . . . . I don't think it will be in education. Now, it is not because of me. He's not a people person . . . just like his daddy.

## REFERENCES


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## APPENDIX A

### METRO CITY ELEMENTARY RESIGNATIONS 1983-84
### (REASON BY GRADE/SUBJECT AS INDICATED BY CENTRAL OFFICE)

Metro City Reason Code:

I AM RESIGNING BECAUSE:

(1) I am leaving the community.
(2) I am dissatisfied with my job.
(3) I am taking other employment.
(4) I am going to school.
(5) I have found a position with better pay.
(6) My health will not allow me to continue.
(7) My family needs me at home.
(8) Other _____

| GRADE/SUBJECT | N | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K-6 | 33 | 18 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | 7 | 2 |
| SSS | 8 | 6 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| SE | 4 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Speech | 4 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Library | 4 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | - |
| GT | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Art | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| PE | 2 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| Counselor | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Music | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL | 61 | 32 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 13 | 4 |
| PERCENT | 100 | 52 | 5 | 10 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 21 | 6 |

## APPENDIX B

## RESIGNATION STUDY-INTERVIEW GUIDE

May I speak to _____. My name is _____ and I am a research associate with the SRCEI. The Council is a policy research organization that is directed by the CSSOs of 12 southeastern states.

We are presently surveying a sample of teachers who have recently resigned from school systems in the Southeast and I would appreciate it very much if you would answer a few questions about your teaching career. All of your responses will be held confidentially.

1. Can you tell me how you first became interested in public school teaching?

2. How many years have you taught?

3. How many school systems (and schools) have you taught in? (What accounted for your moves?)

4. How would you characterize the school(s) you have taught in?

5. Tell me a little about your last teaching position (number of classes, subjects taught, coaching, and/or extracurricular assignments).

6. What were the circumstances that influenced you to leave your most recent teaching position?

7. Can you tell me what you are doing now? How do working conditions in your present position compare to those in public school teaching? (salary/autonomy/support)

8. What do you see yourself doing in 2 years/5 years/10 years?

9. What will it take to (1) attract and (2) retain quality public school teachers? (What would it take for you to return to the public school classroom?)

10. Could you tell me a little about your family and educational background?

    A. Home town
    B. Parents' Occupations
    C. College(s), Degrees, Dates
    D. Married?, If so, Spouse's Occupation
    E. Number of Children (ages)

APPENDIX B (continued)

RESIGNING TEACHERS SURVEY FORM

1. How many years did you teach? _____

2. In how many school systems have you taught? _____
If more than one, describe the reason(s) which prompted you to move.

_____

_____

3. Describe your last teaching position.
Grade level _____
Subject area _____
Extracurricular assignments _____

_____

4. What were the circumstances that influenced you to leave your last teaching position? _____

_____

_____

_____

5. What is your present occupation? _____
If not teaching, describe how your present working conditions compare to those of classroom teaching (in terms of following categories).

Type of Responsibilities: _____

_____

Degrees of Supervision: _____

Hours of work/week: _____

Salary and Fringe Benefits: _____

6. What should be changed to attract and retain quality teachers to the public school classroom? _____

_____

7. Please provide the following demographic information.

Race _____ Sex _____ Age _____ Martial Status _____
Parent's Occupation: Father _____ Mother _____
Spouse's Occupation: _____
Number of Children (ages) _____