

Supports Associated with Teacher Retention in Michigan

In 2016 the Michigan Department of Education unveiled its Top 10 Strategic Education Plan, establishing Michigan’s education priorities and goals. A focus of the plan was ensuring that all students have equitable access to quality teachers. To meet this objective, the Michigan Department of Education aims to improve the retention of effective teachers, especially in high-poverty, low-performing local education agencies (which include traditional school districts and charter schools, called public school academies in Michigan). This study informs those efforts by identifying teacher supports (30 policies, practices, or programs named in a survey of teachers) that are associated with teacher retention. Associations were determined by correlating teachers’ awareness of supports in their local education agency with its teacher retention rate.

Key findings

- **Teachers’ survey responses indicated that most local education agencies provided supports related to their teacher evaluation systems, such as conducting formal observations or including opportunities for teachers to set goals in their evaluations.** Few teachers indicated that their agency provided financial supports—such as housing or mortgage assistance, or financial incentives for teachers in high-need subjects or schools—besides their salary.
- **Public school academies that offered organized professional development, included opportunities for teachers to set goals in their evaluations, and provided sufficient instructional resources had higher teacher retention.** Public school academies with these supports had retention rates that were 12.0–16.3 percentage points higher than academies without these supports (see table).
- **Traditional school districts with mentoring programs, new teacher orientation, regular supportive communication with school leaders, and annual salary increases had higher teacher retention.** Teachers in districts with these supports had retention rates that were 1.0–1.5 percentage points higher than districts without these supports.
- **Among local education agencies that served large percentages of economically disadvantaged students, those that included opportunities for teachers to set goals in their evaluations and gave teachers annual salary increases had higher teacher retention.** These local education agencies had teacher retention rates that were 3.1–14.4 percentage points higher than agencies without these supports.

The correlational design of this study cannot identify specific supports that cause teacher retention, but the findings can help local education agencies in Michigan prioritize teacher supports for further investigation.

Change in probability that teachers remain when support is present compared with no support

Type of local education agency and support	Percentage point difference
All local education agencies	
Mentoring program	+2.2
Regular supportive communication with school leaders	+1.3
New teacher orientation	+1.4
Evaluation includes opportunities for teachers to set goals	+5.2
Public school academies (charter schools)	
Mentoring program	+6.0
Academy-organized professional development	+12.7
Release time to participate in professional development	+6.2
Evaluation includes opportunities for teachers to set goals	+16.3
Sufficient instructional resources	+12.0
Traditional school districts	
Mentoring program	+1.5
Regular supportive communication with school leaders	+1.1
New teacher orientation	+1.1
Annual salary increases	+1.0
Agencies serving large percentages of economically disadvantaged students	
Evaluation includes opportunities for teachers to set goals	+14.4
Annual salary increases	+3.1

Source: Authors’ analyses of data provided by the Michigan Department of Education.