

What Keeps Teachers in Education

The following information comes through Assemblyman Darrell Steinberg's Assembly Committee on Low Performing Schools (1999).

1. **Decent Salary.** California ranks 44th in the country in terms of the share of the education dollars that are spent on salaries. Though California ranks 19th in the country in terms of the level of beginning teacher salaries, California spends only 44% of the share of education dollars on teacher salaries compared to the more than 50% of the education dollars that are spent on generally across the nation (Source: The Center for the Future for Teaching and Learning). In addition, there are strong disparities in starting salaries for new teachers across the state. For example, Oakland Unified School District, where the cost of living is high, pays their new teachers just \$27,000 a year compared with the neighboring New Haven School District which pays their new teachers \$35,000 annually. Studies show that in states that have equalized salaries across their state, adjusting for cost of living differentials and adjusting for the cost to meet the needs of pupil with different challenges, the result is that there is little disparity with regard to the distribution of credentialed teachers. In addition, those states spend closer to 50% of their education dollars on teacher salaries. Conversely, in California where salaries vary from district to district, there is great disparity with regard to distribution of credentialed teachers. The consequence of this disparity is that our poorest, most vulnerable children are more likely to be taught by our least experienced and emergency permitted teachers.
2. Teachers need to be able to support themselves. Teachers not only need to be able to afford to buy homes, they do not want to drive more than 25 miles to the school where they teach. Salaries in urban/high cost areas do not support teachers well enough to live into the area where they teach.
3. Teachers want to work in a professional environment. Teachers want their environment to be conducive to teaching and learning. Overcrowded facilities and year-round school schedules provide special challenges for attracting and keeping well-trained, qualified teachers. In addition, their workload needs to be manageable. In districts that retain their teachers, beginning teachers are given fewer numbers of preparations, more support, lower number of students and fewer duties.
4. Teachers want to work with other teachers. Many teachers experience feelings of isolation. They do not have enough time in their day to problem-solve with their colleagues. Some schools have successfully altered their schedules to allow up to five hours a week of planning among teachers.
5. Teachers want to work in schools with experienced teachers. There are too few veteran teachers and other support providers to usher novices into the profession, especially in the most challenged schools in the state. Often a school is populated by more than 20% of its staff by unqualified teachers, that the school becomes dysfunctional, or unable to provide the support their teaching staff needs to succeed.
6. Teachers want to work in schools that have highly trained quality administrators. Teachers are much more likely to stay in schools where they are able to have input in professional decisions. Teachers in high poverty schools report less satisfaction with their administrators, willingness to support them in taking risks, their personal interest in the professional development of teachers, and their effort to ensure that teachers have the time and resources to enrich the content or to try new methods or instruction, which are all conditions teachers report as being conducive to thriving professional communities and higher student achievement.