

Pursuing a “Sense of Success”: New Teachers Explain their Career Decisions

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March, 2002

This paper was prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 1-5, 2002. The authors are indebted to Susan M. Kardos, David Kauffman, Edward Liu, and Heather G. Peske, research assistants at The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, for their assistance in collecting data and preparing this paper. This research is supported by a grant from The Spencer Foundation, although the analysis and conclusions reported here are solely those of the authors.

Across the country, policymakers and educators are confronting a much-publicized teacher shortage, which will require a projected 2.2 million new teachers within the decade to staff the nation's schools (Gerald & Hussar, 1998). This demand is due to the convergence of a variety of factors—higher birth rates, increased immigration, changes in class size policies, the anticipated retirement of one-half of the teaching force, and the likelihood that one in five new teachers will leave the profession within three years of entry (Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000)

The overall shortage is exacerbated by the movement of teachers from school to school and district to district, as a result of voluntary and involuntary transfers. Richard Ingersoll (2001), who calls this phenomenon “migration,” found that it accounts for one-half of the turnover that schools and districts experience. Predictably, the shortage and the impact of migration are unevenly and inequitably distributed, with schools and districts in high-poverty communities experiencing an inordinate share of the disruption and a steady loss of teachers (Haycock, 1998).

Policymakers and practitioners have rapidly devised strategies to alleviate the shortage, even though its causes and its course are only partially understood. They have revised certification requirements, offered mortgage subsidies, instituted on-line job applications, and funded mentoring programs, all without a clear and complete understanding of teachers' concerns about the profession and their schools. Why do some stay in teaching, while others leave? What factors lead teachers to move to new schools? What programs or conditions enable some schools to retain teachers and ensure that they can do their best work, while other schools repeatedly lose their staff and face the constant task of recruiting and orienting new teachers?

This paper reports on a longitudinal study designed to explore these questions. In 1999, researchers from The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers interviewed a diverse group of

50 new teachers in the Massachusetts public schools. We sought to understand how they experienced their work in a variety of school settings and how they conceived of careers in teaching. In 2001, we conducted follow-up interviews in an effort to track the new teachers' career movement and learn why they had decided to stay in their schools, move to new schools, or leave public school teaching. We wondered whether their plans, experiences and career decisions had been consistent over the first three years of our study, how they responded to different settings, and whether they now intend to continue teaching.

We found that, for our purposive sample, certain characteristics of the teachers—prior career experience, gender, and preparation—seem related to the choices they have made. A first-career teacher, a woman, or someone with traditional preparation and certification was more likely to stay in public school teaching than a mid-career entrant, a man, or someone who had entered teaching through an alternative preparation and certification program. However, such information about the teachers only partially explains their career movement. The respondents' accounts of their priorities and experiences reveal that, more than anything else, they want to be effective as teachers, and they described the many ways in which the conditions in their schools either supported or stymied them in that effort.

What is known about teachers' career decisions

A small, but growing, literature explores the factors that influence teachers' career decisions. Murnane et al.'s 1991 study highlights the importance of understanding why teachers make the choices they do. The authors conducted a quantitative analysis of the career decisions of more than fifty thousand college graduates over three decades—the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's—focusing both on those who decided not to teach and on those who chose teaching.

They found that the supply of teachers among different regions was sensitive to the salary differential between teaching and other jobs, relative working conditions, and the personalization and efficiency of hiring procedures. For those who did enter teaching, Murnane et al found the risk of migration and attrition to be highest during teachers' first few years in the classroom. The authors report trends in who leaves teaching most quickly – high school math and science teachers, young women, people with high standardized test scores – but can only speculate as to why they leave and what might have kept them longer.

Recently, Public Agenda (2000) reported the results of telephone interviews with a random sample of 664 teachers, all in their first five years of teaching. Despite widely held beliefs about teachers' dissatisfaction with their work, researchers found that over two-thirds of their respondents said that they “get a lot of satisfaction from teaching” (p. 9) and three-fourths “view teaching as a lifelong choice” (p.11), this despite the fact that three-fourths also reported that they are “seriously underpaid” (p.18). If given the choice between a school where they could earn a significantly higher salary and a school with well-behaved students and supportive parents, administrators who back them, effective colleagues, or a mission they believed in, Public Agenda respondents consistently said they would choose the school with better working conditions by a margin of three to one (p. 46).

These survey results underscore the new teachers' commitment and the financial concessions they reportedly would make in order to work in a school that supports good teaching. However, the sample, which includes new teachers with one to five years of experience, does not include individuals who left teaching during this time. Since research shows that 20% of new teachers leave within the first three years (Henke & Zahn, 2001), the

concerns of a substantial number of teachers likely are not represented in this study, and the findings may well overstate new teachers' satisfaction and readiness to compromise.

Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin's (2001) study of teacher mobility and attrition in Texas also shows that teachers are influenced by the conditions of their teaching as they decide to move from school to school. The authors found voluntary transfers to be strongly related to student characteristics, concluding, "teachers systematically favor higher achieving, non-minority, non-low income students" (p. 12). The authors point out that their findings, drawn from a large, state-level quantitative data set, leave open the question of whether teachers' preferences are related to the students themselves or to the working conditions and personnel policies in the schools that serve low-achieving, minority, or low-income students. Haycock, who has written about how high-quality teachers regularly leave such schools, suggests that inadequate supplies and "scandalous working conditions" in high poverty schools may explain teachers' unwillingness to staff them (2000, p. 11). Understanding this issue is of great importance in deciding how to address both the teacher shortage and migration, particularly in urban schools. For one would devise a different policy response if teachers were reluctant to teach low-achieving, minority, or low-income students than if they were reluctant to teach in poorly resourced, dysfunctional schools.

Ingersoll, in his 2001 analysis of national survey data, found that 27% of teachers who moved to other schools and 25 % of those who left teaching did so due to "dissatisfaction." While these teachers listed low pay as the primary source of their dissatisfaction, they also cited school-level working conditions, such as inadequate administrative support, student discipline problems, lack of faculty influence in decision-making, and lack of student motivation. However,

Ingersoll did not have access to information about how teachers weighed the relative importance of these factors, which is also important to understand in addressing the problem.

If, as Murnane et al., Public Agenda, Hanushek et al, Haycock, and Ingersoll suggest, workplace conditions are pivotal in teachers' satisfaction with teaching and their ultimate career choices, it is essential to better understand novice teachers' concerns and responses. Otherwise, policymakers and practitioners will introduce what they believe to be promising recruitment and retention strategies, while new teachers continue to abandon schools, districts, and the profession. This study, which relies on in-depth interviewing rather than survey data and tracks teachers' decisions over time, provides an opportunity to achieve a more complex understanding of teachers' career choices.

Our first round of interviews, conducted in 1999 with 50 first- and second-year teachers, suggested that three kinds of factors loomed large in their experiences: their individual conceptions of career, pay and status, and the supports they encountered in their schools. Each set of findings adds a new dimension to our understanding of new teachers' decisions. For example, we found that some teachers entering schools today make a long-term commitment to teaching, while others expect to stay only a few years, contributing to society before moving on to other lines of work. However, among those respondents who were not ready to make a long-term commitment were individuals who were testing teaching as a career and exploring the possibility of staying for a substantial period of time (Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001), suggesting that, if schools are responsive to these teachers needs, they may retain them.

Like the teachers interviewed for Public Agenda, our respondents reported that pay is a crucial concern for them, as is the related factor of prestige. While they are willing to forego higher income for a time, they anticipated that they might not be able to afford to teach long-

term, when their expenses increase and they assume family responsibilities (Liu, Kardos, Kauffman, Peske, & Johnson, 2000). In an effort to understand why more people don't choose teaching, Public Agenda (2000) surveyed 802 adults under the age of 30 who had college degrees but were not teaching, and found that "low pay often tops their list of negatives" (p. 15). These researchers identified a small sub-group called "leaners"—18% of the sample—who would "very seriously consider" becoming a teacher if it paid more. While it is impossible to know how many potential teachers never considered teaching because of the pay, it is clear that low pay affects the career decisions of both prospective and current teachers.

While some of the 50 teachers we interviewed in 1999 worked in schools that were well-organized to ensure that novices receive structured support from experienced teachers, many respondents were simply left alone as they learned how to teach (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). While other researchers have asked teachers about the importance of various factors in their decisions to leave teaching or change schools, they have not explored the role of professional culture in their choices, which our work suggests must be taken into account and may provide leverage in successfully retaining new teachers.

Finally, a surprising number of these 50 respondents reported in the 1999 interviews that they had little curricular support in deciding what to teach or how to teach it (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002). Many districts were unprepared for the state's introduction of standards-based reforms and high-stakes tests, leaving new teachers to fend for themselves and rely on curriculum frameworks and lists of topics, rather than well-developed curricula. Overall, the first round of interviews revealed how many factors come into play as teachers consider whether to remain in teaching, and they underscored the role of school-site conditions in teachers' ultimate career decisions.

Subsequent interviews conducted during Summer 2001 have enabled us to track these individuals' experiences and choices and to explore how the new teachers weighed various factors in deciding whether to leave public school teaching, move to new schools, or stay where they are.

Methodology

Our original sample included 50 first-year and second-year teachers who work in a wide range of Massachusetts public schools—urban and suburban; elementary, middle and high; large and small; conventional and charter. In selecting our sample of 50, we sought to maximize diversity on a wide range of measures and, thus, identified four sources of potential respondents, which together would enable us to learn about the experiences of a wide range of teachers. These sources included private college and university teacher education programs; public university teacher education programs; charter schools (both state-sponsored and within-district); and the 1999 list of recipients of the Massachusetts \$20,000 Signing Bonus, participants in a state-sponsored alternative certification program.¹

In each case, we sought variety within the source groups as well, including, for example, teacher education programs focusing on both undergraduate and graduate preparation, charter schools offering different kinds of instructional programs, and Massachusetts Signing Bonus recipients who came from various professional backgrounds. We selected both first-career and mid-career entrants to teaching. We contacted charter schools directly, either through the heads

¹ The Massachusetts Signing Bonus Program recruits individuals who have never taught in public schools by offering an extra stipend of \$20,000 over the course of four years (\$8000, \$4000, \$40000, \$4000), as well as a six-week summer training program that leads to a provisional teaching certificate, the same credential held by graduates of teacher education programs. Since the year of this study, the program has been redesigned and renamed the Massachusetts Institute for New Teachers (MINT). Currently, only some participants receive the signing bonus, but all receive summer training, accelerated certification, and immediate access to teaching jobs.

of these schools or through individual teachers working there. We contacted recipients of the Signing Bonus Program directly, using a list of names and schools provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Of all the teachers we contacted, only two teachers we contacted chose not to participate in the study.

Table 1: Summary of Sample Composition Illustrating Total Number and Percentages of New Teachers in Sample by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Age, Career Stage, and Experience Level, (n=50).

Gender			Race			Age			Career Stage			Experience Level		
Female	33	66%	White	35	70%	22-29	30	60%	First – Career	26	52%	1st Year	36	72%
Male	17	34%	Person of Color	15	30%	30-39	14	28%	Mid-Career	24	48%	2 nd Year	14	28%
						40-49	4	8%						
						50-54	2	4%						
Total	50	100%		50	100%		50	100%		50	100%		50	100%

We built this sample gradually and purposively, seeking to attain variation in the gender, race, ethnicity, and age of the individuals and the types of schools in which they worked. The respondents, who were assured confidentiality and anonymity in any written reports, are identified by pseudonyms throughout this paper.

Table 2: Summary of Sample Composition Illustrating Total Number and Percentages of New Teachers in the Sample by School Characteristics, (n=50).

Level			Setting			School Type		
Elementary	22	44%	Urban	30	60%	Traditional Public	37	74%
Middle	15	30%	Suburban	20	40%	Charter	13	26%
High	13	26%						
Total	50	100%		50	100%		50	100%

The first round of data collection, in 1999, involved one tape-recorded, in-person interview (1½ to 2½ hours) with each respondent; the interview protocol is included in Appendix A. During the summer of 2001, we conducted follow-up interviews with 47 of the original 50 respondents. These interviews lasted 20-40 minutes and were completed by telephone or in person. (One respondent who had left the U.S. replied by e-mail.) Two members of the original sample did provide updates on where they were working, but did not respond to our subsequent request for an interview. One additional participant could not be located, having left the state to pursue another line of work. Interview questions for this second round, which are included in Appendix B, focused on the respondents' career decisions. Have they stayed at the same school, moved to another school, or left teaching altogether? How do they explain their choices? We sorted the respondents according to their career decisions and levels of satisfaction, attaching descriptive labels such as "Leaver," "Mover," or "Stayer" to different sub-groups². We then engaged in a rigorous analysis of the transcript data, verifying the coding categories and seeking detailed explanations for the respondents' decisions. We reviewed the respondents' initial interviews for further insight into their choices. Finally, in refining the concepts, we relied on an iterative testing process, moving back and forth from the factors we had identified to the details of the interview data and the thematic summaries. The purposive sample of teachers we interviewed precludes us from generalizing to all new teachers in all settings, or even to all new teachers in similar settings. However, the respondents' accounts and appraisals are nonetheless informative, provocative and cautionary. They can assist policymakers and practitioners as they contemplate the needs of the next generation of teachers and assess competing strategies for recruiting them and supporting the early years of their work. The accounts can also guide the way for further research.

² The descriptors "Stayers", "Movers" and "Leavers" are borrowed from Richard Ingersoll (2001).

Career Decisions: Where the 50 are three years later

The following discussion first summarizes the patterns of career movement observed in this sample, noting the number of respondents who, after three years, have left teaching (the Leavers), have changed schools (the Movers), or remain in their schools (the Stayers). It then considers those groups by individual characteristics, comparing those for whom teaching is a first career with those who are mid-career entrants, as well as those who entered teaching through traditional and alternative routes. In the following sections, we present representative cases of Leavers, Movers, and Stayers, focusing on how they explain their career decisions. Finally, we consider important cross-cutting themes that emerge from this analysis of cases and can inform both policy and practice.

Interpreting patterns of responses

Three years into the study, 11 of our original sample of 50 teachers are Leavers, having left public school teaching altogether—six after their first year, four after their second, and one after her third. Notably, over half of them did so after their first year in the classroom. (Because our original sample included 15 second-year teachers, a retention rate for first-year teachers cannot be inferred from these data. The second-year teachers whom we included in our sample from the start were necessarily those who had chosen to stay in the profession after the first year.)

Eleven of the original 50 are Movers, three having changed public schools involuntarily, and eight voluntarily. Six of the Voluntary Movers also changed districts in the process. Two of

the Involuntary Movers were bumped from their positions by more senior teachers, while one teacher, whose contract was not renewed, found a job at a new school.

Twenty-eight respondents are Stayers, still working in the same school where they began teaching. Of those 28, however, more than half (15) are not satisfied with their schools or with the career of teaching, and there is evidence that they may change schools or leave teaching in the near future.

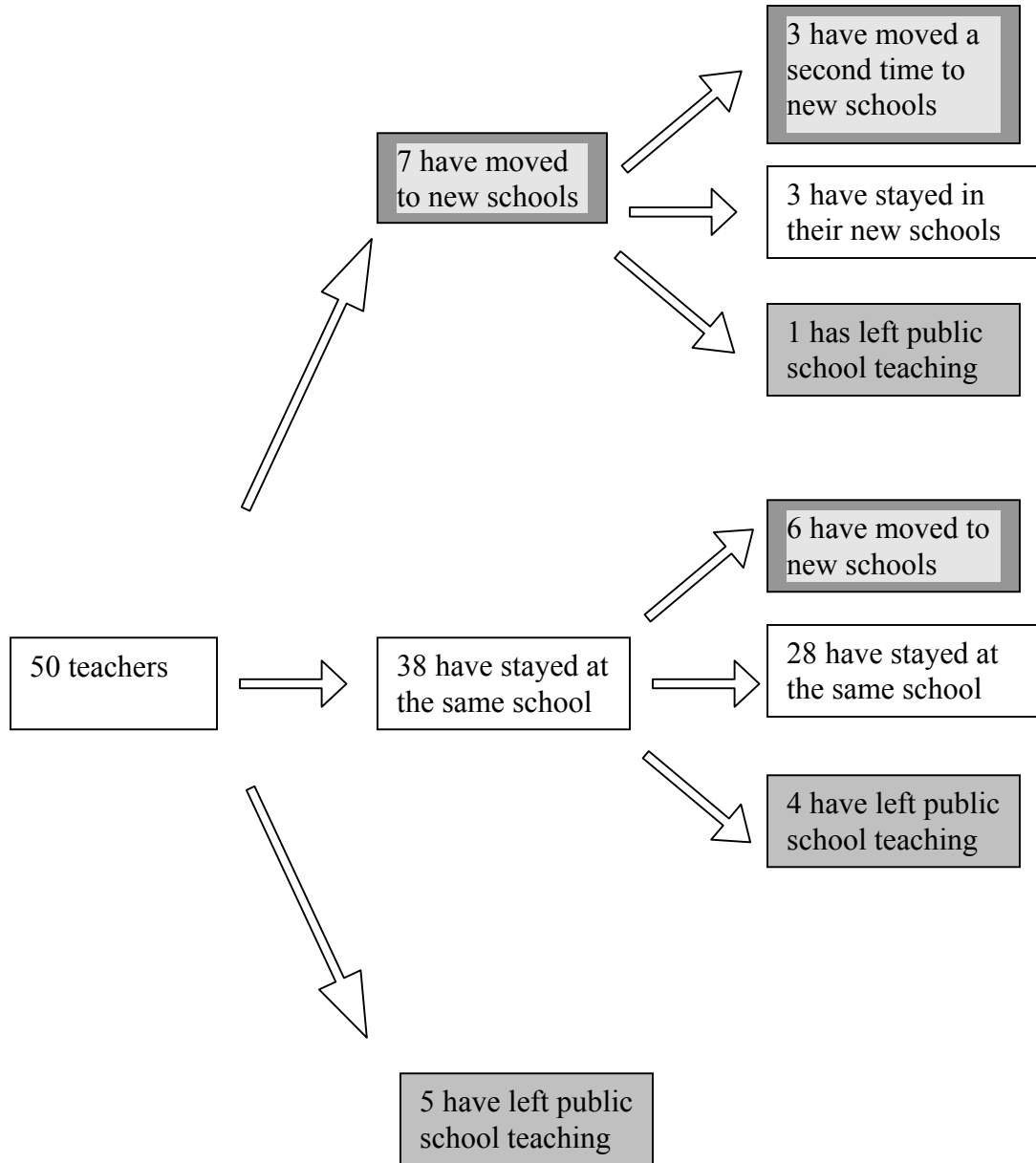
The flowchart below summarizes the movement of teachers during their first three years of teaching. Because the original sample included 14 teachers already in their second year, we asked those respondents whether they had moved after their first year of teaching and incorporated that information into the flowchart as well. Although the information is not presented on this flow chart, we also know about the career decisions these 14 teachers made after their third year of teaching, since we conducted our follow-up interviews between their third and fourth years. One had decided to leave public school teaching, ten had signed on to stay at their original schools, and three, who had previously moved, planned to teach again in their new schools.

Early Career Movement of the Teachers in Sample (n=50)

Year 1 of teaching

Year 2 of teaching

Year 3 of teaching



Examining the teachers' career movement reveals certain patterns related to the characteristics of respondents (See Table 3). It is important to recognize, however, that these patterns must be interpreted cautiously. For example, mid-career entrants were more than three times as likely to move from one school to another than their first-career counterparts. This could suggest that, as a group, they were indecisive or flighty. Alternatively, it may be that those with prior career experience—often in higher-status, more stable and better resourced lines of work—were less tolerant of schools that did not support good teaching. Having already made one career move—often taking a cut in pay and status as a result—they may be prepared to move again in search of a work environment where they can succeed.

Table 3: The Percentage of Teachers from Each Career Stage, Route and Gender Who Stayed at The Same School, Moved or Left Teaching. (n=50).

	Career Stage at Entry		Route to Teaching		Gender	
	First Career Entrants (n=26)	Mid-Career Entrants (n=24)	Traditional Certification (n=38)	Alternative Route (n=12)	Females (n=33)	Males (n=17)
Stayed	66% (17)	46% (11)	61% (23)	41% (5)	57% (19)	53% (9)
Moved Voluntarily	8% (2)	25% (6)	16% (6)	17% (2)	18% (6)	12% (2)
Moved Involuntarily	8% (2)	4% (1)	8% (3)	0% (0)	9% (3)	0% (0)
Left Public School Teaching	19% (5)	25% (6)	16% (6)	42% (5)	15% (5)	35% (6)
Total (may be off due to rounding)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Similarly, one would quickly note that respondents who had entered teaching through alternative routes (either the MA Signing Bonus Program or a charter school) left

public school teaching in higher proportions than those who had received certification through traditional programs. Of the 12 teachers who were not traditionally certified, 5 (42%) left public school teaching within three years, while only 6 (16%) of the 38 traditionally-certified teachers left during that time. However, it would be a mistake to draw hasty conclusions about the mid-career entrants or alternative certification programs on the basis of these numbers alone. A substantial proportion of mid-career entrants in our study (29%) were participants in the Massachusetts Signing Bonus Program, which had serious weaknesses during its first year of operation, which coincided with the first year of our study. Especially important is the fact that the program failed to provide job placements for participants, even though directors had promised to do so. As a result, the teachers in this program found their own jobs late in the summer, often settling for positions that did not match their expertise and interests. It is possible that the movement of mid-career and alternatively certified entrants to new schools reflects the poor fit between these teachers and their first jobs. Therefore, while the numbers reveal certain important patterns of responses among the 50 teachers, the interview data tell us much more about what was behind the patterns of movement than we see in the numbers.

The Importance of Efficacy

Of central importance in all of the teachers' explanations of their decisions to stay in their schools, move, or leave teaching was whether they believed they were achieving success with their students. Overall, teachers had tempered expectations. For example, when we asked Jerry, a mid-career entrant, what it would take to keep him in teaching, he said: "I'll need a sense of success, not unqualified constant success, because I know

that's completely unrealistic. But, overall, you know, on average, that I'm making more of a difference for kids and that they're learning from me. . . ." Our respondents reported that achieving success in their teaching largely depended on a set of school-site factors—their assignment and teaching load, student behavior, the role of the principal and colleagues, the availability of curricula and resources, and the school's relationship with parents. In deciding whether to stay or leave, teachers weighed these factors and judged to what extent shortcomings with one or more of them compromised their chances of teaching effectively.

The Leavers: Stories of Frustration and Failure

There are two themes in the stories of the Leavers—those teachers who are no longer teaching in public schools. One theme is about career orientation, that is, whether the individual regarded teaching as a short-term or long-term commitment. The second theme is about success in the classroom.

Three of the Leavers in our sample—all of them young men—said from the outset that they would stay in teaching only a few years. They saw themselves as short-term contributors to the profession, and each planned to pursue another career after a short stint in the classroom. Yet, none of them worked in a school that was supportive for new teachers, and all three struggled to get by. One taught for three years before taking an administrative job; the other two left teaching even earlier than they had planned. The school-site factors that compromised their success in teaching hastened, but did not determine, their plans to leave teaching. Kareem, who taught only one year, explained,

“A better experience may have delayed my decision to leave, but I doubt it would have changed it.”

Eight of the Leavers, however, had entered public school teaching open to the possibility of a longer-term commitment. They sought to do meaningful work, but all experienced great frustration or failure. These teachers left because they were overwhelmed by the demands of the job, and saw few prospects for improvement or success, either in their schools or in other public schools. The Leavers repeatedly listed the same set of factors that drove them out, though they weighed these factors differently in their decisions to leave. They described principals who were arbitrary, abusive, or neglectful and they spoke with disappointment of colleagues who failed to support them as they struggled to teach. They felt at a loss dealing with disrespectful and disorderly students. They were overwhelmed by inappropriate teaching assignments or excessive work loads, and they resented the lack of curricula and resources. Pay and prestige figured into the decisions of some who left public school teaching, but for others, these were secondary irritants. In fact, two who moved to private schools took pay cuts. Some Leavers might have endured the difficulties of low pay and the indignity of low status if teaching had been intrinsically more rewarding. The stories of Ranya and Derek illustrate these themes.

The Stories of Leavers: Ranya and Derek

Ranya, a highly-educated research scientist, was 39 when she decided to teach. She wanted to contribute to society by teaching students who did not find school easy: “I thought, if you could help, maybe—the bright kids are not the ones that are going to need

you, actually. It is the middle kid or the not-doing-so-well kid. If you can help them along somehow to be successful, then that would be meaningful to me. That is what I thought.” Ranya also thought the schedule of teaching would allow her to spend more time with her own children. Lacking formal preparation, she participated in the Massachusetts Signing Bonus Program’s summer training, before beginning work as a full-time science teacher in a suburban high school.

As a first-year teacher, Ranya was assigned to teach five heterogeneously-grouped earth science classes, a course load that she called “horrendous.” She had expected good resources in this suburban school, only to discover that no one had ordered books or supplies: “[N]othing is there. Nothing is set up for anything, lab-wise, nothing—no textbooks for a month and a half. Within that time, we had two parent conferences. So here I was, a new teacher, no textbook. It was hard.” Ranya’s assigned mentor also was responsible for evaluating her, and even when Ranya was overwhelmed with discipline problems, she didn’t ask her mentor for help for fear of a negative evaluation. Ranya had made her needs known early to the administration: “I told them clearly, even before I accepted the job, I said, ‘I have no experience and I would need some help with this, this, and this.’” But help was not forthcoming, even when she asked several colleagues for assistance.

Ranya felt that she had failed as a teacher. At the end of her first year, when her contract was not renewed primarily due to her problems with classroom management, she did not look for a new job. She later explained, “I am afraid, at this point, to go out there and fail one more time. I really can’t handle that at all.” Given that she had little preparation, a challenging teaching assignment, no prior experience, minimal collegial

support, and no books or supplies for the first six weeks of school, it is hardly surprising that Ranya felt like a failure and chose not to try again.

Derek, 26, is the son of teachers. He always wanted to “make a difference in [his] community” and thought teaching was the “logical” way to begin his career, although he only expected to teach for a few years. While completing his master’s degree in education, he student taught at an urban high school, and subsequently took a job at a community-based charter school where he would have autonomy and influence as a teacher. Despite his year of graduate training, Derek still felt unprepared for the classroom, lacking the “bag of tricks or the firm foundation” that a veteran would have. He found his charter school unequipped to support his growth as a teacher, largely because most of his colleagues were novices, with fewer than five years of experience. “Nobody is treated like a new teacher at [this school]. . . . The reason you don’t feel like a rookie is because you’re just as confused as everybody else.” After his first year, he considered leaving, “primarily because I don’t think I was making the difference that I wanted to make.”

During his second year, Derek worked hard, experienced more success in his teaching, and was excited and proud to be part of his school. By his third year, though, things at the school began to unravel. The principal suddenly abandoned a plan for improving the school that he had encouraged the teachers to develop. Tensions grew about curriculum and autonomy, leading 11 of 16 staff members to leave at the end of Derek’s third year.

Derek also would have left the school out of frustration, but the principal urged him to take an administrative job, and Derek accepted the chance to revive the school by

establishing much-needed systems and procedures to support new teachers. Although he thinks that the administrative experience will look good on his résumé, he doesn't expect to stay in the role more than one year, and he's not sure what he will do next. He doesn't intend to return to teaching.

Money and status figure prominently in Derek's career decisions. After his second year, he said "[I]f this profession offered more money, I'd stay here forever, but it doesn't." He would like "to have a family and, you know, live a little better than I live now. So I'm going to have to leave." Part of his reason for accepting the administrative job is that it will bring a pay increase of nearly twenty percent. Derek speaks angrily about how teachers' low pay reflects others' low regard for them and their work: "The way people outside the profession view teachers makes me sick."

Derek's concern about the low status and pay of teaching is consistent with concern voiced by many of the men in our sample. In general, they expressed more dissatisfaction about money and status than did the women. This concern seemed to have heightened their desire to realize intrinsic rewards quickly, and may have led to less tolerance for unsatisfying situations. The men in our sample were more than three times as likely to leave public school teaching during the first three years of their careers than the women. They were also much more likely to be unsettled in their roles³, interested in moving to administrative positions, or planning to move out of education entirely in the future.

³ 33% (11) of the women in our sample have stayed at the same school since 1999 and indicate that they are happy in their schools and roles, while the same is true for only 12% (2) of the men did. 41% (7) of the men in our sample have stayed at the same school but indicate a significant level of dissatisfaction, true for only 24% (8) of the women.

There are important differences in the stories that Ranya and Derek tell about why they chose teaching, how they prepared to teach, what their schools offered, how they fared with students, and why they decided to leave teaching. Derek enjoyed work with his novice colleagues and felt that he became more effective in his teaching, while Ranya, who felt no such camaraderie and had minimal support, regarded herself as ineffective. Neither thought his or her school was organized to ensure the success of new teachers or their students. Both felt inadequately respected and rewarded for their efforts.

The Voluntary Movers

The Voluntary Movers—those teachers who chose to transfer to other schools or districts—told stories that echoed many of the Leavers’ accounts. They did not feel effective in the classroom, and they attributed most of their trouble to the shortcomings of their schools. What distinguishes them as a group, however, is that they did not regard the problems as inevitable or endemic to a career in public school teaching. Thus, instead of leaving, they chose to find different schools where they could give teaching another chance. Jerry reflects this orientation in discussing his career plans: “I’d like to reconsider my long-term plan based more on my general attitude and relationship with teaching and with students, not so much on my particular fit with one school or another, because I know that I can always improve that.”

The extent to which there was a good “fit” between the new teacher and his or her school proved to be important in the teacher’s eventual satisfaction. Some of the Movers had been hired for their first jobs late in the summer, in an abbreviated hiring process that provided little opportunity for them to discover if their new school would be a good place

for someone with their skills and interests. When they decided after one or two years that their first schools did not measure up to their expectations, they became far more deliberate in their search for a better placement.

First and foremost, the Voluntary Movers were looking for schools where they could be successful in the classroom. Their accounts reveal that they moved from schools where teachers worked in isolation and novices were left to sink or swim, and transferred to schools offering organized support for new teachers and school-wide, collegial interaction. They left schools where student disrespect and disruption were viewed as inevitable and moved to schools that had well-established norms about respect, effective discipline systems, and deliberate approaches to parental involvement. They left schools where teachers could be told to accept any assignment or load (and new teachers routinely got the worst), and moved to schools where assignments were fairly distributed and appropriate to teachers' knowledge and experience. The schools they left often had non-existent or contradictory curricular guidelines and scant resources; the schools they chose typically had more resources, and curricula that were well-conceived and flexible. Prominent in the accounts of the Movers were stories of principals who were absent, punitive, or controlling. In seeking better work settings, the teachers looked for administrators who understood the challenge of being a new teacher, were fair and encouraging, and created structures of support and interaction among the school's teachers.

One of the most striking features of the data is that all of the Movers transferred to schools serving wealthier populations of students than their original schools did. The average change in student eligibility for free or reduced priced lunch from the Movers'

first schools to their second was 46 percentage points. Sometimes this change involved moving from the inner city to the suburbs; sometimes it involved moving from one low-income, urban school to another that served less-impooverished students. These teachers' accounts provide additional insight into the findings of Hanushek et al, who could document teachers' movement to higher-wealth schools, but did not have sufficient information to explain that movement. The Movers in our study made it clear that they were not transferring in search of wealthier students, but rather, were seeking schools organized for the success of both students and teachers. Such schools were stable and had the capacity to initiate and sustain improvement efforts. They provided support for new teachers' learning and sufficient resources to promote good teaching. The schools that were effectively serving low-income students also assembled additional supports and services, so that the teachers could concentrate on instruction. That these schools tended to exist in less impoverished communities likely says more about the inadequacy and inequity of public education in the U.S. than it does about the preference of teachers to work with wealthier students.

The Stories of Movers: Keisha and Mary

Keisha worked as an administrator in higher education for five years before deciding to become an elementary teacher. Her interest in teaching had been piqued by the prevalence of literacy problems among the college students with whom she worked. After completing her master's degree in elementary education, she took the first job she was offered, a second grade class of 25 students in an inner-city elementary school.

Keisha described her work during the first year as “doing the best you can with what you have,” which “is not good enough for me.” Although the teachers at her school were friendly, they rarely worked together, and didn’t provide Keisha with the kind of advice and support she looked for: “They weren’t where I needed them. All of them weren’t, as a whole, where I needed for them to be for me professionally.” The school was regimented in discipline and curriculum, making Keisha feel “really stifled.” The teachers whom the administration regarded as “stellar” had their “kids in rows” and still went “from page to page and page to page” in math books. Keisha felt a lot of pressure from the frequent classroom visits of her principal, who was very demanding and quick to criticize her. “Discipline appeared to be more important than academics to him.”

By late winter of her first year, Keisha had begun to think about moving. When her principal said he wanted her to teach the fourth grade, where she would have to learn a new curriculum and prepare her students to take the state test, she decided it was time to leave. “I just felt that that was a really unreasonable thing to ask of me in my second year of teaching. . . . That was kind of the straw that broke the camel’s back.”

Keisha chose her second school, a within-district charter school, much more carefully than her first. She visited several times, meeting with the principal and teachers, observing classes, and attending a special activity for parents. Her interviews with both the principal and teachers covered a wide range of topics and gave her a good sense of what it would be like to teach at the school. Because she recognized that she would, “in essence,” be a “first-year teacher again,” Keisha asked “What are the support systems in place for folks like me . . . new people to the profession, new people to the school? What

are the professional development opportunities?” She was encouraged by their responses and accepted the principal’s job offer.

Keisha found the professional culture of her new school “really inviting and really supportive.” She didn’t experience “the stigma” of being a novice— where “these are the newbies.” However, she was confident that she wouldn’t be left to struggle alone.

“There is an expectation that you’re a professional and you’re going to do the best job that you can possibly do. If you need help, we’re here to help you and support you.” In her new school all teachers are part of a team, and Keisha works closely with her veteran and novice colleagues. Each week’s schedule sets aside 4½ hours for team meetings, when “we have the opportunity to sit down and actually plan and work together. We plan curriculum together, we implement curriculum together. . . . No one is quite working in isolation.”

Unlike Keisha, who sought more flexibility in her second school, Mary looked for more structure. She had found her first assignment frustrating, largely because her charter school was seriously lacking in order and resources. Like other mid-career entrants, Mary had chosen to teach after considerable thought. In her earlier work, she had counseled women in crisis, and she wanted work that would be more “preventive.” Yet, as a new teacher in a new charter school, she wasn’t making the kind of difference with her students that she had hoped. Teachers were responsible for getting all materials for their classes and there was no curriculum. There were no established ways of doing things. Mary realized that she “needed a more sane environment” if she were to continue teaching. When she considered leaving teaching entirely, another teacher urged, “You

really need to work in another environment. Don't give up on this, because you're a good teacher. Don't give up on teaching yet."

Like Keisha, Mary looked for a second position systematically. "I knew I needed more structure, but I was also at the same time really nervous about being in a super-traditional setting. . . . But at the same time, I knew I needed less craziness, if I was going to be an effective teacher." She interviewed at several schools and chose her current suburban middle school, even though it would mean a \$5000 pay cut. She was convinced that the school would be well-organized, provide a solid curriculum, and offer the kind of professional support she needed. She said, "Even though I'm an older teacher coming in, I really needed supervision, and I wasn't getting supervision where I was." Regular meetings with her new supervisor have been important: "He meets with new teachers almost every week at the beginning, and then every other week. And I never felt like I was getting off track. I always felt like I could be very open with him. And so I never got to a point where—which I had at my previous school—that 'this is not working, these kids are failing, and I don't know how to fix it.'" While she misses the energy and diversity of the faculty at her charter school, she is happy to feel effective in her work: "I feel like the way the school is structured, I can successfully teach. I'm not always successful, but I'm mostly successful, versus being successful ten percent of the time."

For Movers such as Keisha and Mary the feeling of success that they experienced at their new schools was critical to keeping them in the profession. As another Mover, Katie, explained, "this particular year was necessary to affirm that [teaching is a good fit for me]. Last year was difficult and discouraging at times, and I needed a change like this in order to maintain that confidence."

The Stayers: “Settled” and “Unsettled”

In our sample of 50 teachers were 28 Stayers who, in year three of our study, were still teaching in their first schools. (Eighteen were in their third year of teaching, 10 were in their fourth.) However, transcripts of their interviews reveal that they were not all satisfied with their roles or their schools. We distinguished, therefore, between two sub-groups of Stayers. There were 13 “Settled” Stayers (8 third-year and 5 fourth-year) who expressed satisfaction with their schools and with their roles and, therefore, are likely to continue where they are for some years. The remaining 15 we called “Unsettled” Stayers. Ten, who were moderately satisfied with their schools, expressed doubts and reservations about the career of teaching. All said that they value their work with students, but are variously dissatisfied with low pay, the lack of public respect for teachers’ work, students’ lack of seriousness about school, the exhausting demands of teaching well, the absence of a career path, and/or their greater interest in alternative lines of work. It seemed unlikely that these teachers would search for other schools, since their complaints centered primarily on the role or the career of the teacher, which they see as being constant across the profession.

However, five Unsettled Stayers were dissatisfied with key aspects of their schools, and in many ways, their accounts sounded like those of the Voluntary Movers. They told of exhausting or unworkable assignments, ineffective or intimidating principals, unhelpful colleagues, inadequate curricula, the lack of an effective discipline policy, and little effort by the school to involve parents. But, each also listed satisfactions

with their schools, and the weight of dissatisfaction had not yet caused them to leave, although all spoke of considering other schools.

Interviews with Unsettled Stayers suggest that individuals in this group will likely make changes during the next several years, with some leaving teaching altogether, and others moving on to new schools.

Settled Stayers: Stories of Success and Growth

By contrast, the 13 Settled Stayers spoke positively about both their schools and their careers, and often it was clear that their favorable views about those schools enabled them to look beyond their reservations about teaching as a profession. Most notably, they were confident about being effective teachers, and as they gained confidence and competence, they found frequent opportunities for growth and development. Most had colleagues with whom they collaborated regularly and principals who supported and encouraged them, both explicitly and implicitly. Most said that, within their school, some combination of teachers and principal took responsibility for developing coherence throughout their school. Such school leaders arranged schedules that accommodated team planning, developed and maintained effective relationships with parents, coordinated sources of external assistance, and administered school-wide discipline systems that kept the school centered on student learning.

The Stories of Settled Stayers: Valerie and Amy

Valerie revived a long-time interest in teaching after leaving her first career in technology to raise young children. Having completed a master's program in teacher

education, she accepted a position as a part-time kindergarten teacher in the suburban school where she had done her student teaching. She is now convinced that she will stay in teaching—“I’ve found my niche”—although she acknowledges that her husband’s salary subsidizes this choice; she laughs as she says, “I pay for the groceries.”

Valerie finds great satisfaction in both teaching and her school: “The kids are wonderful. The parents are wonderful,” and the “teachers are probably the strongest part of the school.” She described a group of 6 to 8 colleagues who “run workshops for the rest of us, who are still trying to figure things out.” In her first year, Valerie’s curriculum consisted only of a list of topics to cover during the year. Since then, the teachers have worked with a curriculum coordinator to align their math, science, and health programs. “So if I’m doing the unit on living and non-living [things], I just pull the binder out, and everything I need is right there.” Although Valerie worries that the ambitious content may be developmentally inappropriate for 5-year olds and that the scope of coverage may be unrealistic for a half-time kindergarten program, she understands what she is expected to do and has access to plenty of ideas about how she might approach it.

As a mid-career entrant, Valerie finds that people assume she has teaching experience simply because she is older: “Even the curriculum coordinator will be like, ‘This is what we need to do,’ and I’m like ‘What is she talking about?’ Sometimes I need to remind her that I don’t understand what [she’s] saying.” But Valerie also enjoys the increasing opportunity to exercise leadership within her school. Her principal treats her as the unofficial leader of the kindergarten team, sending the parents of prospective students to observe her class: “I take that all favorably. As a whole, I think we all kind of share, but I try to pull the team together.”

Amy, another Settled Stayer, is in her third year teaching second grade in a racially diverse, low-income, urban school. Having worked with children since she was young, Amy studied to be a teacher as an undergraduate, and now is convinced that she will teach long-term. Success during her first two years of teaching reinforced her belief that teaching provides a good match for her as a career. When Amy searched for her first job, she used a two-pronged effort, inquiring both through the district's centralized personnel department, and directly with several principals whose schools interested her. She considered several options, and was drawn to her current school in part by its reputation as a place where students do well and teachers are committed to professional growth.

During her first year, Amy did not have a mentor or the steady advice of experienced colleagues. She believes she would have benefited from having a strong mentor, but she did find some support in collaborating with another novice teacher. Amy recognized that her teacher education program had not been "practical," and so she responded to her principal's suggestions that teachers attend professional development sponsored by the district. When she felt unprepared in literacy, she took a course on Guided Reading and reorganized her classroom so that she could use the techniques. She also pursued professional development in math, and by the end of her second year was chosen as math coach for her school as it implemented a new curriculum. During her second year, she served as an informal mentor for four other less-experienced teachers, while also answering the questions of experienced teachers who sought assistance with the new curricula.

Amy is very proud of her school—“the best school” in the district—and increasingly confident about her success as a teacher. She has been evaluated favorably by her principal, who often brings visitors to her classroom, a fact that Amy interprets as evidence of her approval. As her school experiences rapid turnover and new teachers replace veterans, Amy is moving quickly from being an uncertain novice to an increasingly confident expert. She enjoys the exchange with her colleagues, and relishes the opportunities for learning that mentoring provides.

Valerie’s and Amy’s situations are very different: Valerie teaches in a suburban setting, while Amy is committed to her urban school. Valerie came to teaching as a second career, Amy as a first; Valerie enjoys the support of veteran colleagues, while Amy, who lacked the opportunity to collaborate with experienced colleagues, now mentors other novices. Yet both have found enough support to feel successful with students. Each thinks she has the respect of her principal, and each sees opportunities to assume leadership in her school. These two women will likely stay in their schools as long as they can grow professionally, and as long as they find opportunities to feel successful and valued.

Responding to the Staffing Challenge

While there is obviously no single strategy for attracting and retaining strong and committed teachers in all schools, there is also no mystery about what new teachers seek and expect. The teachers in our study had been attracted to teaching by the prospect of working successfully with students, and each had chosen to teach believing that it would be important and rewarding work. The stories of respondents such as Derek, Keisha, or

Valerie are at once unique and typical of others' accounts. Although each relied on a personal calculus in making career decisions, they shared similar concerns. First and foremost, they wanted to be effective teachers. They wondered whether their schools would provide essential support as they learned to teach, establishing the conditions that make good teaching possible. They expected their principal to see that the school was well-organized and stable, and they looked to their experienced colleagues for guidance and feedback about how to teach well.

Second, although they had accepted, for now, a paycheck that barely covered the bills, the new teachers in our sample wondered whether they could afford to teach over time or tolerate the public disrespect that low salaries imply. Several respondents' incomes were subsidized by a spouse's larger paycheck, a personal inheritance, or accumulated wealth from prior, more profitable, employment. For them, the issue of pay figured less prominently in their decisions than it did for respondents who were paying off college debts, were (or expected to be) their family's sole wage earner, or who were dismayed that they could not live comfortably on a teacher's salary.

Third, many questioned whether a career in teaching, as it is currently conceived, would provide sufficient opportunities for professional learning and growth to sustain them over the long term. Although some found all the variety, challenge and reward that they needed with their students in their classrooms, many others anticipated becoming restless doing the same job year after year, and wanting to have a wider impact on schooling.

Providing higher pay and ensuring greater public respect are long-term challenges. Improving pay for teachers will require that policymakers and the public

recognize the impact of pay on public education—that what teachers earn, both on entry and over time, determines who considers teaching, who gives it a try, and who ultimately stays. Similarly, it will be a longer, more complex task to develop a career in teaching that offers differentiated roles and alternative paths of influence, both inside and outside the classroom. For new teachers, however, the immediate challenge is to succeed with their students day by day, and it is at the school where they must be supported if they are to achieve that success. Fortunately, there are many ways in which teachers, administrators, and other school officials can make that happen now.

Incorporate hiring into the induction process

Although induction logically begins when a new teacher accepts a job, in fact, it often starts when the new teacher learns about the school during the hiring process. In districts where applicants interview at the school site with principals, teachers, and/or parents, they can begin to understand the school's mission, curriculum, and students. At the same time, those at the school who are sizing up the candidate can convey what it would be like to teach there and what kind of support they can offer the new teacher. A recent survey of first- and second-year teachers in New Jersey (Liu, 2002) revealed that two-thirds had been hired in a somewhat-decentralized or highly-decentralized process that made school-site interviews possible. However, Liu also found that schools made only partial use of this opportunity; in most cases job candidates interviewed only with the principal, and had few interactions with other school personnel. Liu argues that a hiring process that provides for the rich exchange of information can serve both the school and the candidate, first, to ensure that there is a good match between the two, and

second, to provide the novice with a clear understanding of the school's priorities and practices.

Many of the teachers in our sample were quick to take the first jobs they were offered, and some accepted positions in schools where they were still student teaching, without looking anywhere else. Surprisingly few had conducted a systematic job search or waited to decide on one position until they had heard about others. The cases of Mary and Keisha provide an informative contrast, however. Their experiences were typical of other Movers who, in considering a second school, tended to look more widely and inquire more deeply. They variously made more than one visit to schools that interested them, observed classes, did sample teaching, met with teachers and parents, and shared their teaching portfolios. As a result, when they began working at their new school, they were confident in understanding what would be expected of them and what they could count on. This suggests that it is in the interests of both the new teachers and the schools to have a decentralized, information-rich hiring process. Often in a school's rush to find teachers or a candidate's urgency to land a job everyone takes shortcuts, depriving both sides of important information that could prevent mistakes and better ensure success.

Granting novice status to new teachers

Successful teaching is hard work, and many teachers' workloads are very heavy. A high school assignment may include 150 students, several preparations, hall duty each day, and meetings after school. New teachers who are just getting a handle on classroom management, learning new curricula, and navigating district paperwork are often overwhelmed by the demands of teaching a full load. Yet, rarely do schools grant new

teachers novice status, in which they have reduced teaching loads, fewer administrative duties, or graduated expectations for improving their pedagogy.

We were struck by the number of our respondents who had been assigned the most challenging courses or students in their schools, when arguably they should have had the least challenging. During the first year of our study, for instance, 19 of 50 respondents (38%) had been assigned to teach grades and subjects where the new state assessment (MCAS) would be administered. Apparently, experienced teachers had chosen other grades and courses, perhaps expecting that the pressure of preparation would disrupt their teaching or that they might unfairly bear responsibility for low scores. Moreover, few of our new teachers had curricula for most or all of the subjects they were assigned, and in our first round of interviews, they described with some distress the “mad scramble” of finding materials, developing units, and aligning their teaching with the state assessments (Kauffman et al. 2002). As with both Keisha and Ranya, teachers who decided to change schools or leave teaching often mentioned that their teaching assignment or workload was a key factor in their decision.

There are schools that formally grant new teachers novice status by, for example, releasing them from one or more courses or arranging internships with experienced teachers. However, tight budgets and a growing number of new teachers make such arrangements unusual. Nonetheless, it is possible for schools to plan systematically for the needs of new teachers, making visible the established ways of doing things, and providing collegial support as they begin the hard work of learning to teach. For example, our respondents often spoke of having no orientation to their school and, therefore, no idea about such things as how to take attendance, find curricular resources, prepare lesson

plans, or submit grades. Providing new teachers with accurate, written information—preferably coupled with a personal explanation—is one way to help them successfully navigate the rapids of school routines.

While such efforts explicitly recognize new teachers' novice status, the teachers who were most happy in their schools also described an implicit, school-wide recognition that they were still getting their bearings. These teachers spoke of principals who acknowledged continuous improvement and colleagues who encouraged them to set reasonable goals for themselves. Several chose not to join committees or take on extra duties during their first year, with the knowledge that colleagues supported that choice. Others gave themselves permission not to cover every topic in the curriculum, knowing that they would become more efficient in their teaching as the years progressed. One respondent, Tanya, recalls her principal telling her, "You're a first-year teacher. You are going to fall on your face. That's okay... we will deal with it." Teachers who were not granted such understanding often felt like failures, embarrassed that they were unable to cope with the demands of this very complex job as successfully as their more experienced colleagues.

Establish an effective mentoring program

Increasingly, states and districts have instituted formal mentoring arrangements, which pair novices with experienced teachers. While this design makes sense, it seldom delivers what most new teachers imagine it will—personal encouragement, assistance in curriculum development, advice about lesson plans, and feedback about teaching. In fact we found that, while almost all of our respondents had been assigned paid mentors, these

pairings were often inappropriate (different subjects, grades, or even schools), personalities only occasionally clicked, and schedules rarely allowed for observing each other's classes. Kardos (2002) surveyed new teachers in New Jersey and found that, although 74% of the new teachers had mentors, only 17% had been observed teaching by their mentors. Classroom instruction was a peripheral, rather than a central, focus of their interactions. Therefore, our work suggests that schools would do better to rely less on one-to-one mentoring and, instead, develop school-wide structures that promote the frequent exchange of information and ideas among novice and veteran teachers.

In our earlier work (Kardos et al., 2001), we identified three types of professional culture based on our respondents' accounts of their schools, departments, clusters, or grade-level teams. In "veteran-oriented professional cultures," such as the one that Ranya encountered, the modes and norms of professional practice were said to be determined by, and designed to serve, veteran faculty members; these norms emphasized privacy and professional autonomy, and new teachers generally remained on the margins without induction into the professional life of the school. By contrast, "novice-oriented professional cultures," like those experienced by Derek and Mary in their charter schools, were dominated by new teachers and featured youth, idealism and inexperience. Although new teachers remained at the center of such professional cultures, the absence of experienced and expert peers meant that they received little professional guidance about how to teach. Finally, integrated professional cultures, like those Valerie experienced and Keisha found in her second school, were organized to engage teachers of all experience levels in collegial and collaborative efforts.

Not only did our respondents report greater satisfaction working within integrated professional cultures, but after their first year of teaching, a higher proportion of those who worked in integrated professional cultures remained in public schools (89% versus 83% for novice-oriented, and 75% for veteran-oriented cultures). More striking, we found that 83% (15 of 18) of the respondents who had worked in integrated professional cultures during their first year were still teaching in the same school during the second year, compared with only 55% (11 of 20) of those who began work in veteran-oriented cultures and 67% (8 of 12) who worked in novice-oriented cultures.

Similar confirmation of the value of integrated professional cultures can be found in observing who left or moved by the third year of the study. Of the 11 Leavers, only two had worked in integrated professional cultures, while four had worked in novice-oriented cultures and five had worked in veteran-oriented cultures. Similarly, only one of the nine Voluntary Movers had worked in a professional culture that we identified as integrated, while six had been in veteran-oriented and two in novice-oriented cultures.

When a school's faculty or teaching team assumes joint responsibility for mentoring novice teachers and deliberately creates paths and structures for exchanging information, sharing views, offering aid, and developing new ideas, new teachers are more likely to find success. However, the benefits of such arrangements are not limited to new teachers, for experienced teachers, too, learn from discussing their work, and such learning likely benefits students.

Create school-wide conditions that support student learning

It is often reported that students' disrespect and lack of interest in learning drive teachers out of the classroom. While fewer respondents than one might expect complained of disruptive and rude students, Ranya was not alone in listing this as a serious problem. Often teachers said that their school had no standards for student behavior or that there was no consistent approach to discipline. As a result, disorder spilled into their classrooms, forcing them to spend inordinate amounts of time regaining control and refocusing students on learning. Some, like Keisha, told of schools where discipline and order seemed to be all that mattered, and these settings could be as problematic for real teaching as ones where students were out of control. However, some teachers described schools where there were well-established norms and expectations about the importance of maintaining an orderly, respectful learning environment.

In many schools, particularly those serving low-income communities, the challenge of creating and maintaining such environments requires more than agreeing about a code of behavior. Principals, teachers, and parents must together develop, not only responses to misbehavior, but also preventive strategies to engage students in their studies. In some cases, additional social, health, or psychological services for students and families are provided through the schools, thus addressing the personal needs of students while allowing teachers to focus more time on instruction. Several teachers working in urban schools observed that concerted efforts by a school to engage parents in the learning of their children and the life of the school would increase the likelihood that they could be more effective teachers.

Conclusion

The challenge of attracting, supporting, and retaining new teachers to staff the nation's schools will require a comprehensive strategy, one that addresses the full range of new teachers' concerns. The detailed accounts of teachers in this study remind us that recruiting promising teachers is no more than a preliminary step in meeting this challenge. Similarly, induction programs that orient new teachers to their districts and schools can be useful, but cannot alone ensure that teachers have the support they need to teach well, much less secure their continued commitment to teaching.

As this analysis has made clear, creating the conditions that support teachers in their classrooms is no simple matter. At a minimum, this involves ensuring that new teachers have an appropriate assignment and manageable workload, that they have sufficient resources with which to teach, that their principals and fellow teachers maintain a stable school and orderly work environment, and that they can count on colleagues for advice and support. Our interviews with the Leavers and Movers in this study reveal how often schools fall short in meeting these basic conditions and how many disappointments new teachers experience as they try to do the work they were hired to do. If these respondents make one thing clear, it is that most new teachers' career decisions hinge on whether they feel successful in teaching. If they do not, teaching, for many, will be nothing more than a brief career excursion.

Ideally, schools would also acknowledge new teachers' novice status, providing concentrated support as well as opportunities for increasing responsibility. From the Stayers we learned about the value of reduced teaching assignments, regular feedback about classroom teaching, high-quality, targeted professional development, and graduated expectations for instructional improvement. As competition for teachers intensifies, job

candidates are likely to become increasingly savvy in locating districts and schools that provide for eased entry and steady growth. One-time incentives, such as signing bonuses, will lose their appeal when compared with a work setting that promises novice status and sustained support for all new entrants. Unfortunately, the schools and districts that do offer such assistance are not likely to serve the students who need these teachers most, and thus, migration will continue to plague schools serving low-income and minority communities.

While we found that school-site conditions are absolutely crucial in order for new teachers to achieve “a sense of success,” broader professional concerns about pay, prestige, and career opportunities continue to figure into individual teachers’ choices. Even the most supportive, well-organized schools will still lose individuals such as Derek, who cannot make enough money as a teacher to support a family, or Keisha, who does not see the possibility of professional growth in the teacher’s career as it is currently configured.

Therefore, while school administrators and veteran teachers can take actions immediately to scaffold new teachers’ development and to enhance their experiences in schools, policymakers at all levels must take seriously the long-range challenges of increasing teachers’ pay and developing differentiated careers that reward expertise and encourage advancement. Carefully structured career ladders that engage expert teachers in work such as mentoring new teachers, developing curriculum, or providing professional development, can serve both the new teacher in need of support and the experienced teacher with knowledge and skills to share. Differentiated pay structures that are aligned with such roles can do a great deal to enhance the career of teaching, both in

substance and reputation. Without such changes, able, committed people will continue to turn away from teaching, and students will ultimately suffer as a result.

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Appendix A
Interview protocol from interviews conducted in December, 1999

1. Before I get into the specific questions, I would like to get a general sense of your experience. How's it going?
2. Has teaching been what you expected? Why? Why not?
What did you expect before you entered?
3. How would you describe your school—the people and programs—to someone who doesn't know it? How many teachers teach here?
4. What is it like to teach here?
5. I understand that your assignment is to teach X. Beyond that, what other responsibilities do you have?
6. How did you decide to teach?
First-Careers:
 - What other career options did you consider?
 - Did your parents influence you? What do/did your parents do?
 - Why did you decide to reject those other careers?Mid-Careers:
 - What did you do before you decided to teach? Why did you decide to make the career change?
7. People come to teaching by different pathways. What type of teacher preparation have you had?
 - Are you certified by the state?
 - How did you come to teach at this school?
8. Can you describe the type of support you've received as a new teacher, either within the school or the district?
 - Did you have a mentor?
 - Is the support you received what you needed?
9. I am interested in the contact that you have on a regular basis with other teachers, both formal and informal.
 - Can you tell me how often you talk with other teachers, in what kinds of situations, and what you talk about?
 - Do you watch other teachers teach?
10. Is what you just described typical of other teachers in this school?
 - How would you characterize the way they work together?
11. Is there a common sense among teachers of what teachers in this school should do in their work? Are there certain norms and expectations?

YES

- Could you describe these norms and expectations
- Where do these norms and expectations come from?
- How do you know/how did you learn what is expected of you?
- Do you share these norms and expectations?

NO

- Why do you think this is the case?
- Are there groups within the faculty that have certain norms and expectations?

12. How does it feel to be a member of this faculty?

13. Principals take on different roles in different schools. I am interested in understanding how you see your principal. What role would you say he or she plays?

- Is this what you think a principal should do?

14. Do you have a curriculum that you are expected to follow?

YES

- What kinds of things does it specify? (general goals, specific topics, specific lessons, how to use time?)
- In your view, is it a good curriculum? Why? (depth, structure, support, ideas, resources, creativity, results, consistency). Do you like using it? Does it work well for your students?
- Does anyone check to see that you're following the curriculum?
- Some people think that their curriculum provides too little freedom and some think that their curriculum provides too little structure. What do you think?

NO

- **How do you decide what to teach and how to teach?**
- In your view, does this process of deciding what to teach and how to teach it work well for you? Do you think this works well for your students?
- Does anyone monitor what you're teaching?
- Some people think that their curriculum provides too little freedom and some think that their curriculum provides too little structure. What do you think?

15. Are there tests you are required to give to your students?

- How closely are they tied to what you teach?
- How are the results used?
- Do the tests affect what and how you teach?
- Does MCAS affect what you teach and how you teach it?

16. Do you feel sufficiently prepared to teach in the way you're expected to teach here?

- Where do you go for information or advice about what and how to teach?

17. We are interested in incentives and rewards for teachers. What is your salary and how is it set?

- What benefits do you get? Are there any other perks?
- Was there any way to negotiate your salary when you started?
- How are your raises determined?
- Can you take on additional responsibilities for extra pay? Do you?

- Do you supplement your pay with additional work outside the school?
 - Can you cover your living expenses on what you make?
Midcareer: How does your salary compare with what you made in the past?
Firstcareer: How does your salary compare to what you'd be making if you pursued your second choice career?
18. What do you think of the idea of salary being based on performance?
19. Do you know anything about national board certification?
- NO: It's a national process of identifying master teachers and paying them more.
What do you think about this?
YES: What do you think about this?
20. What do you think about the Massachusetts signing bonus program?
- Recipient: What would you have done if you had not received the bonus?
21. There have been some efforts to create a structure, sometimes called a "career ladder" where a teacher would take on different responsibilities and earn more pay. Is that of interest to you?
22. Does teaching offer you a "good fit" as a career?
23. How long do you plan to stay in teaching?
- Will family influence your plans?
If respondent plans to leave teaching:
 - What would it take to keep you in teaching longer?
 - If a career ladder were in place, would that affect your decision to remain in teaching?
24. These are the four topics we are researching: Teacher Careers, Professional Culture, Curriculum and Assessment, and Incentives and Rewards. Given these topics, is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix B

Interview Protocols for Follow-up Interviews. Summer 2001

(Separate protocols for Stayers, Movers, and Leavers)

Stayers Protocol

NOTE: Throughout the interview, probe for comparisons between

- a. expectations and actual experience;
- b. this and prior year(s); and
- c. current and prior school(s).

1. Did you have any doubts that you would be back at the same school this year?

- Did you think about changing schools?
Yes: What would you have been looking for? Why did you decide to stay at this school?
- Did you think about changing to another job other than teaching?
Yes: What would you be looking for? Why did you decide to continue teaching?

2. What do you like about teaching there? Are there things you dislike?

Probes related to professional culture (use if respondent raises topic)

Is the way you interact with other teachers helpful to you as a new teacher?

- What GROUP of teachers do you work with most? Novices? Veterans? Or a mix?
- About how many first- and second-year teachers were in your school?
- How does this year compare to last year?

Probes related to curriculum (use if respondent raises topic)

Are your curriculum guidelines and materials helpful to you as a new teacher?

- Do you have the guidance and materials you needed for the curriculum you are expected to teach?
 - ⇒ What do you have that you found useful? Where do you get it?
 - ⇒ What do you most need that you do not have?
- Did you feel that your curriculum offers you the right balance between structure and autonomy in deciding what to teach and how to teach it?
- Do you spend more or less time preparing for teaching this year compared to last? Why?

Does the MCAS affect your work? If so, how?

3. Now that you are a _____-year teacher, is your role in the faculty or the expectations others have of you any different? How?

- Role and opportunities outside of the classroom
- Expectations for work inside the classroom.
- Do you have a mentor? Are you a mentor?

- What do you think of this?
- Do you feel that you were treated as a new teacher this year? [Be careful if you ask this question. Respondents might interpret “being treated as a new teacher” as a bad thing.]

4. What was your salary this past year?

5. *What are your plans for the future?*

- Short-term: What are your plans for next year?
- Long-term: How long do you expect to stay in teaching?
- Is teaching a good fit for you as a career? Why or why not?
- [Probe for distinctions between classroom teaching and other educational roles.]

Movers Protocol

NOTE: Throughout the interview, probe for comparisons between

- a. expectations and actual experience;
- b. this and prior year(s); and
- c. current and prior school(s).

1. What prompted the move to a different school this year?

Voluntary Movers:

- **TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR DECISION TO CHANGE SCHOOLS.**
- What were you looking for in a new school?
- Did you ever think about changing to another job other than teaching?
- At what point in the year did you decide to change schools?

InVoluntary Movers:

- **TELL ME MORE ABOUT WHY YOU HAD TO MOVE.**
- What were you looking for in a new school? [Only if they chose the new school.]
- At what point in the year did you find out that you had to change schools?

Movers who changed districts:

- Was there something in particular about this district that appealed to you? What?
- How does your salary here compare to what you would have made in your old district? Was that a factor in your decision?

2. How did you end up in your present school?

- What was the hiring [**or** transfer] process like?
- Did you consider other schools?
- Did anybody interview you at your new school? If so, who? What sorts of things did you discuss?
- Did you get an accurate sense of the school and what it would be like to work there before you took the job?

3. Are you more satisfied at your new school? Why or why not?

- Are there things at the new school that are better?
- Are there things from your other school that you miss?

Probes related to professional culture (use if respondent raises topic)

Is the way you interact with other teachers helpful to you as a new teacher?

- What GROUP of teachers do you work with most? Novices? Veterans? Or a mix?
- About how many first- and second-year teachers were in your school?
- How does this year compare to last year?

Probes related to curriculum (use if respondent raises topic)

Are your curriculum guidelines and materials helpful to you as a new teacher?

- Do you have the guidance and materials you needed for the curriculum you are expected to teach?
 - ⇒ What do you have that you found useful? Where do you get it?
 - ⇒ What do you most need that you do not have?
- Did you feel that your curriculum offers you the right balance between structure and autonomy in deciding what to teach and how to teach it?
- Do you spend more or less time preparing for teaching this year compared to last? Why?

Does the MCAS affect your work? If so, how?

4. Now that you are a _____-year teacher, is your role in the faculty or the expectations others have of you any different? How?

- Role and opportunities outside of the classroom
- Expectations for work inside the classroom.
- Do you have a mentor? Are you a mentor?
- What do you think of this?
- Do you feel that you were treated as a new teacher this year? [Be careful if you ask this question. Respondents might interpret “being treated as a new teacher” as a bad thing.]
- [Distinguish between differences based on experience level and differences between the two schools]

5. What was your salary this past year?

6. What are your plans for the future?

- Short-term: What are your plans for next year?
- Long-term: How long do you expect to stay in teaching?
- Is teaching a good fit for you as a career? Why or why not?
- [Probe for distinctions between classroom teaching and other educational roles.]

Leavers Protocol

NOTE: Throughout the interview, probe for comparisons between expectations and actual experience.

1. Could you tell me why (and how) you decided not to teach this year?

- Tell me more about your decision.
- When did you decide not to return?
- Would anything have kept you in teaching longer?
- Did you consider changing positions, schools, or districts instead?

Probes related to professional culture (use if respondent raises topic)

Was the way you interacted with other teachers helpful to you as a new teacher?

- What GROUP of teachers did you work with most? Novices? Veterans? Or a mix?
- About how many first- and second-year teachers were in your school?

Probes related to curriculum (use if respondent raises topic)

Were your curriculum guidelines and materials helpful to you as a new teacher?

- Did you have the guidance and materials you needed for the curriculum you are expected to teach?
 - ⇒ What did you have that you found useful? Where did you get it?
 - ⇒ What did you most need that you did not have?
- Did you feel that your curriculum offered you the right balance between structure and autonomy in deciding what to teach and how to teach it?
- Did you spend more or less time preparing for teaching this year compared to last? Why?

Did the MCAS affect your work? If so, how?

2. **What are you doing now?**

3. **How do you like what you're doing now? How does it compare with teaching for you?**

- What were you looking for in a new line of work? Did you find it?

4. **What was your salary this past year?**

5. **What are your plans for the future?**

- Short-term
- Long-term
- Do you think you will return to teaching one day?
- Is there anything in particular that would bring you back to teaching?