



Clark County School District Teacher Attrition Information

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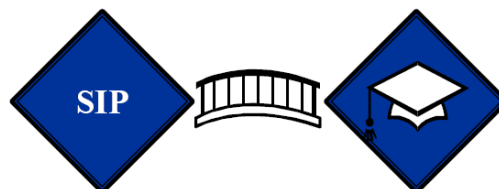
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in conjunction with

**Department of Research & School Improvement
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BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE CAP

It is a challenge for many large, growing, urban school districts to employ and retain the number of teachers that is needed to keep pace with increases in student enrollment. Like similar school districts, *teacher attrition* - the percentage loss of teachers from a school district excluding those who retire or transfer to another school within the district - is an area of concern for the Clark County School District (CCSD). In a national survey, 27% of teachers reported they were fairly to very likely to leave the teaching profession in the next five years (MetLife, Inc., 2006). Teachers leave for a variety of reasons, including health issues, family issues, job dissatisfaction, or conflict with local or central administration. Expectations are that teacher attrition will only continue to rise (Grissmer & Kirby, 2007; Utah Foundation, 2007). This has raised a number of concerns which are discussed in recent educational literature: why are teachers leaving, what are the financial costs, and will the rate of teacher attrition change in the future?

ATTRITION RATES

For the last 5 years, CCSD Division of Human Resources has been tracking the rate of teacher attrition and recently, the reasons why teachers have chosen to leave teaching at CCSD. Human Resources, in conjunction with the CCSD Department of Research, provide the following information based on the data collected. In addition, current information on national teacher attrition, attrition in U.S. western states, and attrition in several large urban school districts are discussed and used for comparison purposes.

Comparison: Nevada and Other Western States

The national rate of teacher attrition for the academic year ending in 2003 was 6.6% (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, Morton, & Rowland, 2007). During that same year, Nevada's attrition rate was 6.3%. This is comparable to the national average as well as the western U.S. region, as can be seen in Table 1 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Table 1. State percentage of teacher attrition for the western US for the academic year ending in 2003.

Western U.S. States	Attrition Rate
California	5.2%
Oregon	5.4%
Idaho	5.5%
New Mexico	6.0%
Nevada	6.3%
Texas	7.1%
Utah	7.4%
Arizona	8.3%
Colorado	8.6%
National	6.60%

In addition, CCSD's teacher attrition has remained relatively stable over the last five years at an average attrition rate of 7.4% (see Table 2)¹. The standard deviation is very small (.005%) indicating the attrition rate stays fairly close to 7.4% each year. While five years of teacher attrition information can indicate general directions and patterns, more attrition information would provide an even more reliable indicator.

Table 2. Total teacher, teacher attrition and attrition rate for CCSD 2004-2008.

Teachers	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of teachers in CCSD	15,202	15,985	16,817	18,046	18,715
Number of teachers who left CCSD	1,035	1,210	1,387	1,329	1,310
Attrition rate	6.8%	7.6%	8.2%	7.4%	7.0%

Comparison: Clark County School District and Other Large, Urban School Districts

The context of the western U.S. states listed in Table 1 may not reflect CCSD's socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Three school districts comparable in size and demographic characteristics have available teacher attrition data for the past two years. From this available data, CCSD attrition rate was 7.6%, while City of Chicago School District was 7.9%. The national attrition rate was 8.4%. For the 2005 year, CCSD appears to be consistent with Chicago and Broward County school districts (Shockley, Guglielmino & Watlington, 2006). In both years CCSD attrition rate was lower than the national average (Marvel, et. al., 2007).

Table 3. Comparison between Large, Urban School Districts, 2005

School District	2005
Broward County School District	7.3%
Clark County School District	7.6%
Chicago Public Schools	7.9%
U.S. National Attrition Rate	8.4%

¹ Clark County School District Department of Human Resources, 2004 – 2008.

CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION LICENSED EMPLOYEE EXIT SURVEY

The recent research on teacher attrition suggests that there are at least several factors that contribute to the rate of teacher attrition (Barnes, et. al., 1987; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Utah Foundation, 2007). These factors include:

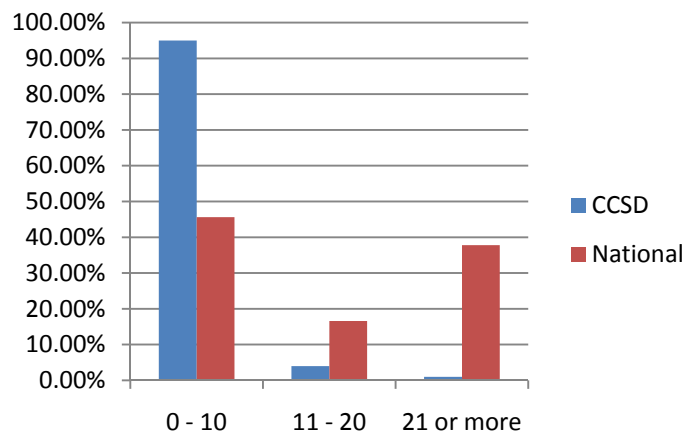
- Teacher's career stage (early or late in their career)
- Teacher's salary
- Teacher's gender
- Teacher's academic ability
- If teaching in a Title 1 school
- If teaching in a high minority school
- If teaching in a low achieving school

During the 2008 academic year the CCSD Human Resources Division conducted a web based survey of teachers who chose to leave teaching within the District. The purpose of the survey was to inquire about the reasons why teachers leave CCSD. The survey provided data on how long teachers taught with CCSD, grade level and content area, satisfaction with benefits and support, and reason for leaving. Of 602 licensed employees who received the exit survey, 280 responded. Items are analyzed in the following section.

Number of Years Worked

For the number of years worked (item #1) a NCEs national survey is available for comparison (Marvel, et. al., 2007). Responses were collapsed for comparison purposes. As can be seen in Figure 1, CCSD teachers are leaving much earlier in their careers, whereas at the national level, teachers are leaving earlier or much later.

Figure 1. Years of teaching prior to leaving



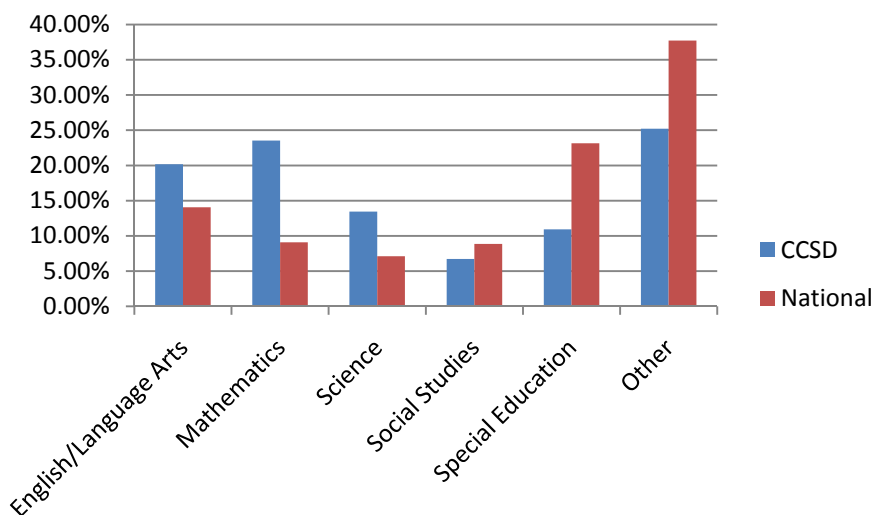
Grade Level

As for the grade level, the percentages between the CCSD survey and the national survey were comparable. For CCSD 58% of teachers leaving were from elementary schools, compared to 52% at the national level. For secondary teachers, CCSD had 38% compared to 47% at the national level.

Content Area

For specific content areas at the secondary level, English/language arts was a high loss content area at the District and national level. Mathematics was a high loss content area for CCSD, but not at the national level. At the national level almost one in four of teachers leaving come from Special Education; for CCSD it is closer to one in ten teachers. Percentages of loss at each content area are displayed in Figure 2. The Other category included areas such as arts, music, and computer applications.

Figure 2. Content area for secondary teachers leaving at the district and national level.



Reasons for Leaving

The top three reasons for leaving CCSD, as identified by survey respondents, were:

1. Dissatisfied with current teaching assignment (29.3%)²
2. Family (20.7%)
3. Salary (15.7%)

At the national level the top three reasons provided were: Family/pregnancy (39.1%), career change (25.3%), and tied at third, dissatisfaction with teaching (14.6%) and salary (14.2%). One survey sponsored by the California State University system (CSU) identified three categories of teacher rationales for leaving: inadequate support at the local and district level

² The dissatisfaction with current teaching assignment was combined from two items of teachers seeking a teaching job not in the District.

(too little assistance and materials provided), unreliable bureaucracy (too many meetings, insensible policies and procedures), and salary (Futernick, 2007). The CSU study better parallels CCSD findings than the national study.

While not as important as family, salary is also a noteworthy reason for leaving the teaching profession both within CCSD and at the national level. It is important to note that in the CCSD and Utah surveys, teachers were forced to select only one reason they were leaving. Some of the reasons listed in the other surveys were not options in the CCSD survey (item #4). These percentages were derived from the comments section of the CCSD survey to provide a comparable estimate. The NCES national survey had teachers rate the degree of importance of each item. The national survey percentages will not equal 100%.

Table 4. Listing of key items across three surveys*

Item	CCSD	Utah	National
Dissatisfied with teaching assignment	32.6%	n/a	16.0%
Family	20.7%	43.1%	39.1%
Salary/Expenses	15.7%	n/a	14.2%
Career Change	10.4%	6.5%	25.3%
Contract not renewed	2.5%	20.6%	14.6%
Spousal relocation	< 1%	27.8%	11.2%

*Spousal relocation and contract renewal are based on comments made as opposed to the specific item for CCSD.

Comments

An open-ended question was available at the end of the CCSD Exit Survey. Of the 280 respondents, 117 provided comments. The following analyses are based on the comment items to focus specifically on reasons for leaving CCSD. These comments can then be considered secondary reasons for leaving. Two of the responses were repetitions of how they answered the forced-choice item (#4), inadequate pay. Of the 117 statements 26.5% were not relevant to the analysis. The most common secondary reason for leaving was central office support, as indicated by 31.6% of the comments. Another 17% of the responses cited inadequate pay. Local leadership comprised 8.5% of responses, and 16% provided multiple reasons: again, inadequate pay was a common secondary or tertiary response. Other responses included class size was too large and moving without a specific reason.

Evidence from Other CCSD Data

Based on available employment and separation data collected by the District that is separate from the exit survey, a descriptive trend analysis was conducted. Trends for the top four reasons for leaving are presented in Figure 3 on the following page. Although attrition studies typically exclude retirement from their calculations, this figure includes retirement.

Not only has regular retirement consistently been a top reason for leaving CCSD, but it has notably spiked since 2006. Figure 4 on the following page supports this finding by demonstrating that although the traditionally calculated attrition rate for CCSD has been declining since 2006, the upsurge in the number of retirees greatly affects the separation rate.

Figure 3. Top Four Reasons for Separation from CCSD.

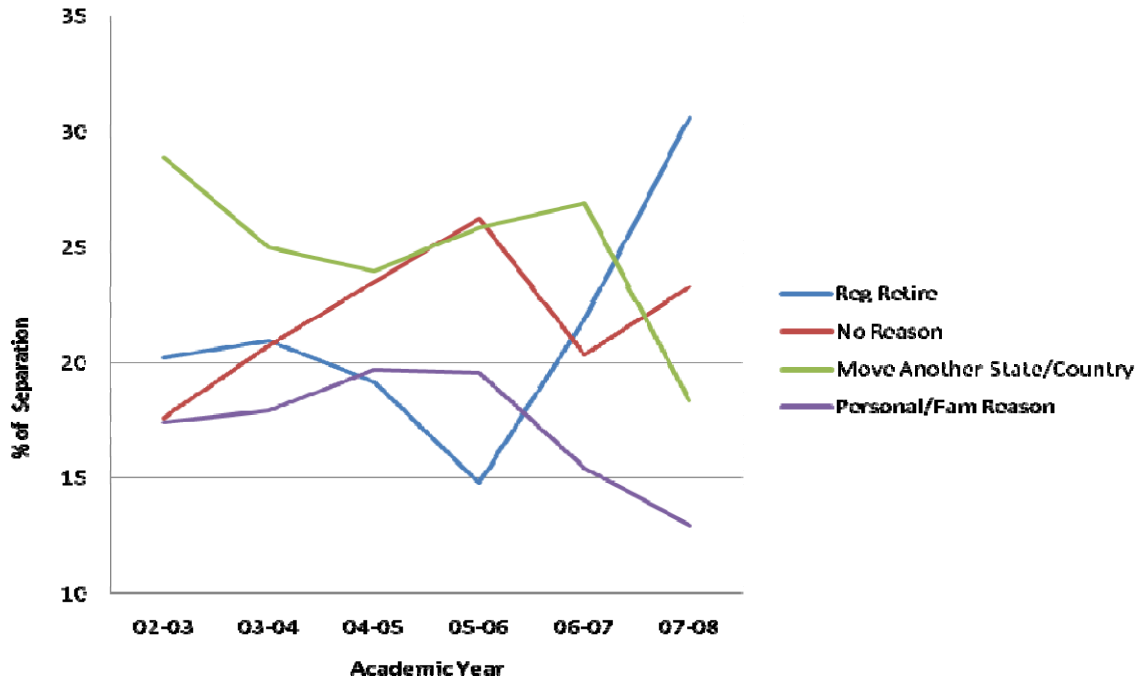
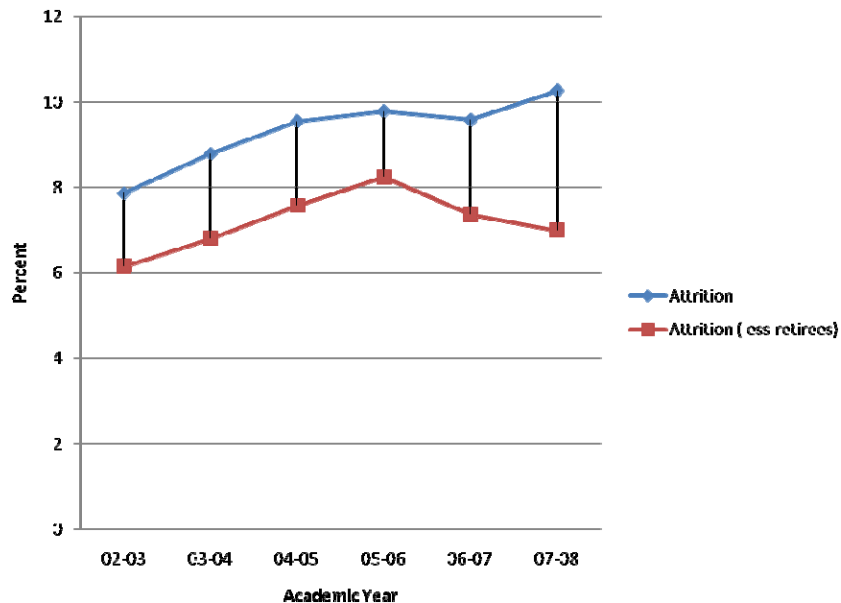


Figure 3 above also illustrates that “Moving to Another State” remains a primary reason for leaving CCSD, capturing approximately one-third of the responses. However, this reason appears to be decreasing in percentage of total responses. Family and personal reasons is the second largest rationale, and it also exhibits a decreasing trend in the data.

One area of concern is when no reason is provided. A significant percentage of teachers leaving are not providing justifications for their separation, and this trend is increasing—from 26.8% in 2004 to 34.1% in 2008. While it could be inferred that this lack of response may emanate from dissatisfaction with the District, there is no data available to confirm or deny such an assertion. Changes in how this data is collected would provide answers in how to best support teachers.

Figure 4. CCSD Trends in Attrition Rates.



Contrasting District separation data with the Exit Survey data, family/personal reasons and moving to another state have high correspondence between the two data sources. Changes in career are cited at similar rates in both data sources, but this is a very small percentage of the responses when compared to the other two reasons provided. The Exit Survey indicates that salary and the cost of living are important factors; however, there is no correspondence with the District data.

Financial Costs

Recently a number of studies have attempted to determine the financial cost to school districts of replacing teachers who leave the profession. As an example, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) determined that teacher attrition cost the state of Nevada approximately \$12,830,603 in 2003. Estimates for Chicago Public Schools determined that teachers leaving cost between \$13,650 and \$21,950 per teacher (this number includes transfers between schools) who left in 2003 (Chicago Tribune, 2007). Using the U.S. Department of Labor approach, the financial cost for CCSD based on the 2008 figures would approximate \$14,867,962. According to another proposed model (Breux & Wong, 2003) the financial cost for CCSD for the same year would be \$86,729,779.

Both of these models are based on percentages of teacher salary. The CCSD estimates were weighted based on years of experience from the Exit Survey (item #1). Barnes and colleagues (Barnes et. al., 2007) suggested a more detailed analysis based on the actual funds dedicated to factors such as recruitment, incentives, induction or new hire professional development, administrative processing, teacher characteristics (such as years of experience and gender), and school characteristics (student population, achievement level). Such an analysis would provide a more accurate cost per teacher lost but requires more detailed data.

Projected Loss

The Utah Foundation (2007) projected teacher attrition for the state would increase from 6.3% in 2004 to 13.6% by 2014. These percentages include retirees. Trends show an increase in the attrition rate could be between 13.4% and 36.4% by 2014 based on national figures. For CCSD, the attrition rate by 2014 could be between approximately 7.5% and 9.0% based on available data. With the increases in retirement, teacher replacement could be between 10% and 13%. While these rates appear high, Grissmer and Kirby (1987) point out attrition rates have already been as high as 17% in the late 1960's. Furthermore, these projections are very rough estimates based on only a few pieces of data, and they ignore teacher and school characteristics that directly affect teacher attrition. Local and national market conditions are not included in this analysis.

Conclusion

CCSD teacher attrition rates remain below the national average. They are also below the rates calculated for comparable school districts. However, projections suggest both national and CCSD teacher attrition rates will rise, assuming no intervention or changes in the local and national economy. Research suggests that reducing the teacher attrition rate may be possible (Glazerman et. al. 2008).

Higher teacher attrition areas appear in English/language arts, mathematics, science and special education. Historically, mathematics, science and special education areas have had consistent high rates of teacher attrition (RAND, 1987). Correspondence between CCSD and current national data occurs among English/language arts. The significant loss among early career teachers suggests the need to evaluate induction, mentoring or other related programs.

The highest percentage of responses for leaving was dissatisfaction with current teaching assignment. Family and personal reasons also account for a significant percentage of responses. Salary or insufficient pay also was voiced frequently. The same reasons occur with similar frequency at the regional and national level. However, research suggests that approximately one-third of teachers will return to teaching at a future point (DeAngelis & Presley, 2007).

This analysis indicates that teachers from CCSD are not more likely to leave teaching at a higher rate than the national and regional averages. The Division of Human Resources will continue to collect this data to achieve a high degree of accuracy and reliability to track teacher attrition and to make projections for future years. In addition, the actual cost of teacher attrition is difficult to determine and cannot be done based on currently available information. The Division of Human Resources in conjunction with the Department of Research at CCSD hope to continue to examine the reasons for teacher attrition through the analysis of available data, and create the capacity to forecast teacher attrition rates in the future.

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