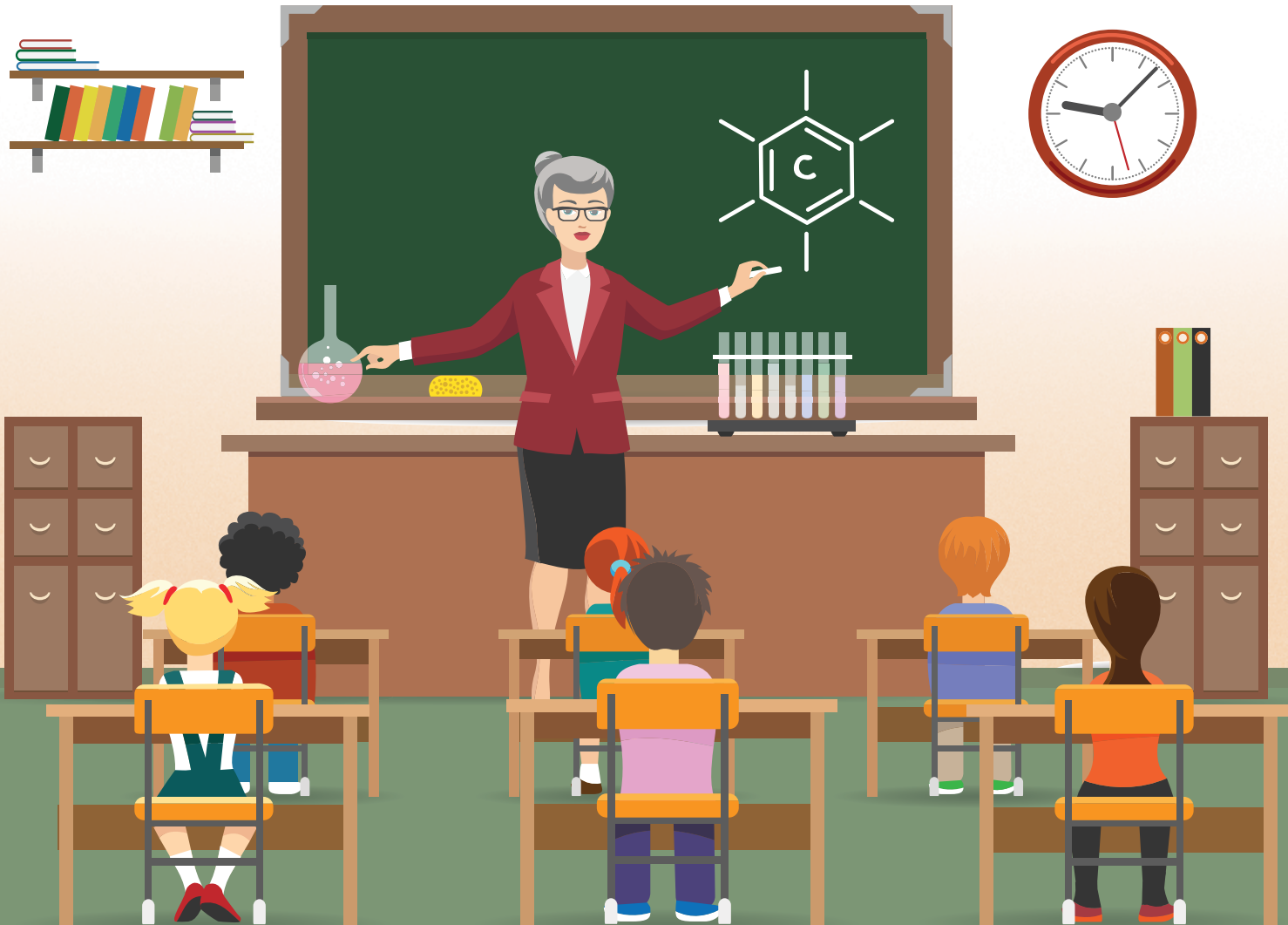


Supply and DEMAND

The Wisconsin Center for Education Research recently released a working paper, “The Role of Place: Labor Market Dynamics in Rural and Non-rural School Districts.” We asked the authors to provide a summary of that report. **You can view the full report at wcer.wisc.edu.**





A look at the teacher labor market and the factors impacting supply and demand

Peter T. Goff, Bradley Carl, and Minseok Yang

This report presents a portrait of the teacher labor market in Wisconsin in recent years, using current and historical data to establish key features of this market for the purpose of guiding policy. The report builds upon a series of previous reports commissioned annually by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) from 1998-2008, which documented key trends in the supply and demand for teachers across the state — but were significantly limited in terms of the availability of data needed to examine teacher supply and demand in a comprehensive manner.

A second motivation for resurrecting the teacher supply and demand report series is the 2011 passage of the “Budget Repair Bill,” also known as Act 10, which all but eliminated collective bargaining for Wisconsin public employees (including teachers), and made substantial changes to compensation, retirement, and health benefits as well. Much commentary and speculation in the ensuing years has focused on the impacts of Act 10 on the teaching profession in Wisconsin, alleging that this and other policy changes would be a leading cause of teacher shortages.

In this article, we pose key questions related to teacher supply and demand in Wisconsin that the report addresses, and provide a summary of main findings for each question.

■ What are prevailing trends in teacher mobility and attrition?

A substantial increase in teacher mobility is observed following Act 10, with approximately 3 percent of teachers moving between districts annually starting in 2011 (compared to less than 1 percent immediately prior to Act 10). Most of this mobility is occurring within seven geographic areas we have identified as “educator labor networks,” meaning that most of the mobile teachers are moving to districts close by.

Teacher mobility may be fundamentally different in post-Act 10 Wisconsin than before, however, as financial rewards to teachers who change districts are four to five times greater than if they changed schools within their districts or remained in their current positions. Hidden within overall teacher mobility rates, furthermore, are substantially higher rates for certain kinds of teachers; for example, mobility rates are almost twice as high (approximately 5 percent annually) among teachers in traditionally low-supply fields (see below).

Rates of non-retirement attrition among Wisconsin teachers, by contrast, witnessed a substantial one-time increase immediately following Act 10, but have subsequently returned to pre-Act 10 levels. Again, however, overall rates of non-retire-

ment teacher attrition mask differences among teachers, with much higher rates for low-supply vacancies and minority educators (with the latter in particular exacerbating state and local efforts to diversify the state’s teacher corps).

We also note that neither attrition nor mobility by themselves are inherently problematic; instead, the key to discerning between healthy and failing labor markets lies in knowing more about who specifically is coming and going in terms of educator quality and effectiveness. Wisconsin, as is the case for most states, is several years into a substantial redesign of its teacher evaluation process (which remains a hybrid state/local matter), and the inclusion of teacher quality measures in future years would greatly enhance the utility of attrition and mobility analyses.

■ What is the current supply of teachers?

For most teaching vacancies in Wisconsin, there are two “external” applicants (new to the Wisconsin public school teacher labor market) plus one “internal” applicant (someone who is currently teaching in a Wisconsin public school). We categorize both teaching vacancies. Among low-supply positions, these proportions approach a 1:1 ratio of external to internal applicants. External applicants can be further subdivided into different categories, with the largest group consisting of what we have called Novice teachers who are both from Wisconsin and completed their teacher training at

a Wisconsin educator preparation program (EPP).

By each of three key measures of teacher supply (total enrollment in the state's 40+ EPPs, the total number of licensure endorsements produced by Wisconsin EPPs, and the number of unduplicated program completers), recent trend data show declines; particularly noteworthy has been the 36 percent decline in EPP enrollment between 2010 (the last year prior to Act 10) and 2016.

Perhaps even more noteworthy, however, is that the most common types of teacher licensure endorsements continue to represent a mix of fields that we classify as high supply (as defined by the average number of applicants per vacancy; we define high supply as fields with three or more applicants per vacancy) and low supply (fewer than two applicants per vacancy).

To address demand, at least in the short term, Wisconsin districts appear

Learn More at Convention

Bradley Carl, co-director of the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative housed within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, will be presenting a session at the State Education Convention on program models focused on school district improvement. Learning through Strategic Evaluation: Key Considerations for District and School Leaders, Thursday, Jan. 18, 10:45 am, Room 101CD.

to be using emergency credentials (licensure and permits) at a rapidly increasing rate. Some districts, in fact, use emergency credentialing at rates five to 10 times greater than their faculty population would predict. The number of teachers who continue teaching under emergency credentials beyond the intended one-year timeframe has also increased substantially; we speculate this trend may be related to recent changes in Wisconsin's required exams for teacher licensure. Our evidence also suggests use of emergency creden-

tialing that appears incongruous with policy intent, as district leaders report using this tactic to fill 30 percent of high-supply vacancies.

■ What is the current demand for teachers, and how are districts responding to staffing challenges?

Accurately measuring the demand for teachers in Wisconsin public schools is substantially more challenging than most policymakers likely realize since our analysis identifies that not all vacancies, nor the



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“There are sometimes substantial differences between **perception and reality** on the part of Wisconsin school districts when it comes to teacher supply and demand...”

pool of candidates who apply for them, are created equally. While some vacancies are filled by new entrants into the Wisconsin teacher labor market (which we label “external” applicants), others are filled by what we have termed “internal” applicants, who are already teaching in Wisconsin public schools (and whose acceptance of another position simply creates another vacancy to be filled).

We also argue that there are sometimes substantial differences between perception and reality on the part of Wisconsin school districts when it comes to teacher supply and demand, particularly when district leaders’ perceptions of quantity are coupled with their perceptions of applicant quality.

District leaders responding to the DPI staffing survey, for example, categorize some types of teaching vacancies as being in low supply, even when they get 15 or more applications. This is entirely reasonable when these leaders have been accustomed to getting even larger numbers of applications in the past, but does not necessarily represent an objective view of supply and demand.

District leaders also voiced notable concern over the quality of the applicants on the market; for example, 83 percent of applicant pools for low-supply positions, 64 percent applicant pools for middle-supply positions, and 50 percent of applicant pools for high-supply positions were seen to be largely filled with low-quality applicants.

■ Is there a teacher shortage in Wisconsin?

We conclude with this intentionally provocative question. The supply data show that there is a net excess

of applicants across nearly all positions. However, this is tempered by variation in teacher preferences, where some districts receive more applications than do others, as well as by substantial and longstanding differences in the number of applicants for teaching positions in certain fields (secondary math and science vs. elementary education) and locations (suburban vs. rural and urban). Simply looking at supply and demand, without consideration for the quality of applicant pools, muddies the picture even more.

Policies focused on addressing the labor supply, we argue, must be targeted to increase the quantity of teachers in low-supply positions while concurrently ensuring that the quality of teachers produced is high as well.

In order to develop policies that are more aligned to the needs of the teacher labor market in Wisconsin, we must do better than making sweeping, across-the-board, proclamations of teacher shortages since the reality is much more complex. We also argue that policies which aim to increase labor supply by opening the flood-gates to teaching via a reduction or elimination of licensure do nothing to address the quality dynamic of the staffing challenges. It is entirely likely, rather, that these policies exacerbate inequality among districts since more affluent districts have fewer staffing challenges to begin with. ■

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Strang, Patteson, Renning, Lewis & Lacy, s.c. is pleased to announce that Attorney **Jenna E. Rousseau** has been promoted to a Shareholder of the firm. Jenna practices primarily in the areas of School and Higher Education Law, Municipal Law, Labor and Employment Law, and Civil Litigation. Jenna earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Marquette University, *cum laude*, and her Juris Doctor Degree from Marquette University Law School, *magna cum laude*.



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