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# No Teacher Left Behind: Results of a Five-Year Study of Teacher Attrition

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# NO TEACHER LEFT BEHIND: RESULTS OF A FIVE-YEAR STUDY OF TEACHER ATTRITION

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*Abstract*

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has left many administrators in high need schools scrambling to fill classrooms with "quality teachers" as defined by NCLB. However, redefining "quality teachers" to allow recruitment of inexperienced and under prepared individuals will decrease teacher quality and result in an ever-growing population of preretirement teachers. Any plan to reduce the teacher shortage must also decrease teacher attrition. This study examined (1) reasons for pre-retirement; (2) factors that would influence a former educator to return to teaching; and (3) predictors of teacher attrition. Results indicate income was the most significant factor related to teacher attrition followed by discipline problems, and leaving to raise a family. Increased income, administrative support, and improved workplace were the strongest factors influencing former educators to return to the classroom. Finally, predictors of attrition were little teaching experience, less than $25,000 annual income, and a graduate degree ($p < .05$).*

Ten years ago, one of the greatest concerns about education was the shortage of teachers in the United States. Coupled with the ever-increasing population of school-aged children in need of a quality education and the growing demand for a competent and well-prepared workforce, apprehension was on the rise regarding America's ability to stay competitive and maintain its power position in the global marketplace.

In response to the teacher shortage, needy school districts sought avenues via which teachers could be placed in the classroom more quickly. Many districts created emergency and/or alternative certification programs of their own, eliminating the need for potential teachers to enroll in university-based teacher preparation programs which are considered more labor-intensive, time-consuming and expensive. While this had some impact on the teacher shortage, the horrific events of September 11th had an even greater effect. Economic repercussions created a pool of unemployed or "displaced" professionals, many of whom flocked to school districts seeking employment as classroom teachers. This effectively shifted the teacher shortage problem from one of quantity (not enough teachers) to one of quality (not enough highly qualified teachers) which are two very different issues.

### The Nature of the Teacher Shortage

Unfortunately, federal efforts to improve educational quality have only exacerbated the problem of increasing the pool of highly qualified teachers. Misconceptions on the part of politicians and others about the nature of the current teacher shortage threaten the very educational system lawmakers are presently trying to improve. In particular, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001, which passed in part based on its potential to increase "quality education" in the United States, has resulted in greatly reduced requirements for new teachers. While a bold effort to improve education, NCLB may actually be facilitating a decrease in the quality of student learning. Richard Elmore (2003) an educational policy researcher at Harvard University, cites the NCLB legislation with a number of serious design flaws including:

- Overinvestment in testing
- Failure to include all stakeholders during the design process
- Ungrounded theories of school improvement (i.e., knowledge acquisition is NOT linear as the adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirement demands).
- Inadequate knowledge about how to improve failing schools and
- Linking incentives to quality teachers and student performance without providing schools a roadmap of how to achieve these goals.

### *Ensuring Teacher Quality*

The last of the design flaws cited by Elmore is at the core of this study. If NCLB requires that every classroom have a quality teacher and that they be rewarded if their students "perform", the ramifications for teachers, schools and districts not meeting these requirements are staggering. As is typical in education, focus on how to measure teacher quality has taken precedence over defining what a quality teacher is and creating a process by which such teachers can be effectively prepared. The use of high-stakes standardized test scores as the primary indicators of quality instruction only increase the pressure on teachers to be sure their students perform well on the measures.

For NCLB, the definition of quality *teacher* apparently means a regression to the days of the normal school when teacher training was minimal. The misconception that removing barriers to teacher certification will somehow increase the quality (instead of just the quantity) of teachers is an understood and common misconception of the designers of NCLB.

For example, in Texas (which is often cited as having model alternative certification programs) all secondary teachers *used* to (1) earn a degree in a content field, (2) complete coursework in pedagogy, and (3) demonstrate competency on state exam(s) before receiving a teaching license. Since the implementation of NCLB, The Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) continues to approve large numbers of commercial alternative certification programs around the state. Texas has actually *lowered* the course content bar to 24 hours in a teaching field, representing a decrease of as much as 46 hours in some fields. Education coursework (i.e., instructional methodology, learning theory, and classroom management courses) in Texas have been replaced in some instances with less than 200 hours of weekend and summer workshop training by alternative certification providers not affiliated with a college or university. In addition, much of this training occurs while the untrained teacher is in the classroom as the teacher of record.

Is this the way to prepare quality teachers who enter the classroom confident in their ability not only to help their students "pass the test" but to help them achieve to their potential and to discover the joys of learning? If the number of teachers leaving the classroom, some after less than a year, is any indication then the answer is a resounding "NO. Thus the crux of the teacher shortage problem is actually *teacher attrition.* It is not having enough new teachers to hire; rather it is hiring enough well prepared teachers who will remain in the classroom for extended periods of time.

## *Teacher Attrition*

What NCLB fails to seriously consider is that the teacher shortage problem is not a quick, easy, or inexpensive problem that can be solved before the next presidential election. Teacher attrition is an expensive and complex problem to address. Ingersol (2002) compares the process of continually training new teachers without retaining the existing teaching force to pouring water into a bucket with a fist-sized hole in the bottom. We will never fill up the bucket with a continual stream of new under-prepared teachers in the classroom. Ignoring the role of teacher attrition as a significant variable associated with the teacher shortage is a myopic way to view solving the teacher shortage problem.

A number of researchers have provided research-based evidence of the very nature approved by the current administration which indicates that any successful attempt to impact the teacher shortage problem must slow the rate of teacher attrition (NCTAF, 2003; Fuller 2002, Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Research also suggests the teacher shortage is not driven by student enrollment and retiring teachers as the Bush Administration pur-

ports, but by pre-retirement teacher turnover (NCTAF, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002). There are sufficient numbers of certified teachers to fill our classrooms, however, many are not teaching anymore or after receiving a teaching license have never entered the classroom at all (Fuller, 2002). Why have these individuals who spent time and money preparing to teach, not teaching anymore or never started a teaching career at all? This is the type of question that will go unanswered unless lawmakers refocus their attention on teacher attrition. There is imminent danger that teaching will become a revolving door job (not a profession) and experienced "high quality" teachers will disappear from the classroom.

## Influences on Teacher Retention and Attrition

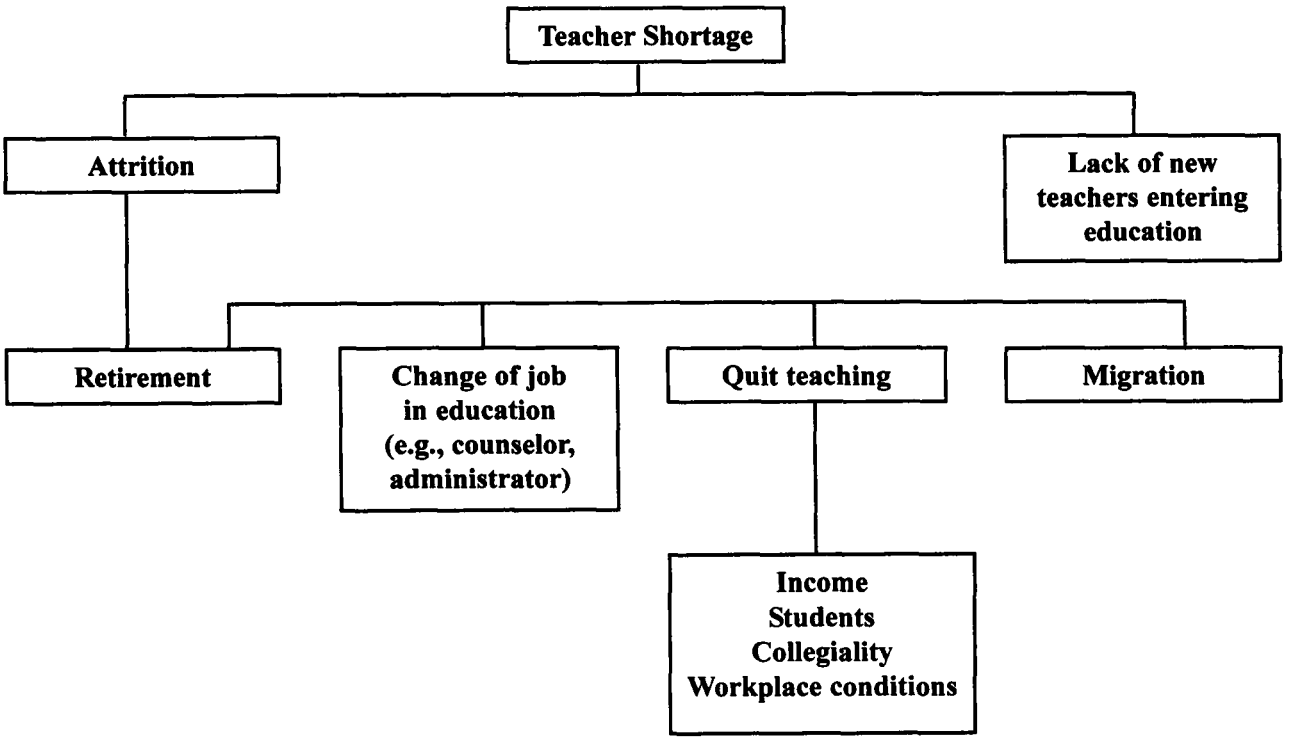
A number of factors have been identified as influencing teacher retention and attrition. As shown in Figure 1 certain facets of teacher attrition are normal. There are teachers who retire after many years of teaching. Some teachers migrate to other positions within the education system (e.g., administration and counseling). Still other teachers migrate to different schools. However, it is those teachers who quit teaching altogether who are the focus of this research.

Why do teachers quit teaching altogether? What does recent research suggest to us about reasons for teacher attrition? To begin, four broad categories appear repeatedly in the research literature on teacher retention and attrition: (1) salary and benefits; (2) students; (3) collegial support; and (3) workplace conditions.

## Salary and Benefits

There are a number of studies that relate salary and benefits to teacher attrition (Bobbitt et al., 1994; Murname et al., 1991; Ingersoll, 2003; Stinebrickner, 2000; Theobald and Gritz, 1996; Dolton and van der Klaaw, 1999; Denlinger, 2002). No doubt, better salaries or benefits would make teaching a more attractive career to more professionals (Bobbitt et al., 1994) as historically those teachers receiving low salaries tend to leave first (Murnane et al., 1991).

**Figure 1: Elements Contributing to the Teacher Shortage Problem**



### The Student Variable

According to the National Education Association (NEA, 1992), the main motivation to enter teaching is working with young people. However, a number of negative behaviors have been identified as factors that influence teachers to leave the classrooms and prevent former teachers from returning to the classroom. Tardiness, apathy, safety concerns, and student misbehavior are often cited as variables that interfere with a decision to remain in teaching (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991; Abel, 1999). For those individuals who teach in urban settings, there are additional factors at play. For example, many teachers are emotionally unprepared to deal with issues such as a lack of parental involvement, parent drug or alcohol abuse, racial tension, and students who are unprepared to learn. Poverty, poor health, and nutrition can be daunting factors for teachers who work with low-income students.

### Collegial Support

Shann (1998) and Singh (1996) found the strongest influence on job satisfaction was principal support in that it influences teacher commitment and in turn teacher attrition. New teachers, in particular, often cite reasons for leaving the teaching profession that include: little or no administrative support, assignment to the most difficult to teach students, inundation with extracurricular duties, out of field placement, and isolation from peers (Hope, 1999, NCTAF, 2003). Collegial support and interaction with peers are variable that influence teacher retention. In general, those who teach in low-achieving schools are the most dissatisfied with their collegial relationship with peers. According to Little & McLaughlin (1993) it is important for teachers to be supported by one another as they use and develop a common knowledge base. Opportunities for collegial interaction, professional development, and leadership lead to a better understanding about the nature of quality teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

### Workplace Conditions

Finally, workplace conditions play an important role in teacher attrition (Yee, 1990; Theobold, 1990; Darling-Hammond & Scian, 1996; Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassier, 1998; Abel, 1999). Workplace conditions include factors such as appropriate workload, manageable class sizes, adequate resources, safe working conditions, and a desirable teaching assignment and schedule. Poor workplace conditions make teaching more difficult and the neediest students often have access to the fewest resources (Darling-Hammond & Scian, 1996).

## METHODOLOGY

The University of North Texas (UNT) is the fourth largest University in Texas with an enrollment of over 32,000 students. UNT is historically a teacher's college presently ranking second in the state for teacher production and offering a board array of certification options for both undergraduates and graduates. Since teacher attrition is a significant variable to consider with regard to alleviating the teacher shortage problem, four research questions were used to focus our investigation of teacher attrition:

(1) What percentage of teachers certified through the University of North Texas between 1995 and 2000 have remained in teaching?
(2) What are the most common reasons certified teacher cite for pre-retirement?
(3) What factors would influence respondents who have left teaching to reenter teaching?
(4) Which personal demographic variables are predictors of teacher attrition?

The research study employed survey methodology using a self-report instrument that was developed from a review of related literature, and used a panel of three education experts to establish content validity for the instrument. The survey instrument consisted of information related to demographics (e.g., certification and years of teaching experience), fourteen Likert Scale statements about reasons for leaving teaching, and one open-ended question related to what factors would influence a former teacher to return to the teaching profession (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Teacher Retention Survey**

| TEACHER RETENTION SURVEY<br>*Funding Provided by The University of North Texas* | |
|---|---|
| SECTION 1 | TEACHING PROFILE |

**What grade levels are you certified to teach? Circle all that apply.**

1 All level
2 Secondary
3 Elementary
4 Early Childhood
5 Other (*please specify)* _____

**If you are certified in a content area, please identify the content area(s). Circle all that apply.**

1 Language Arts
2 Social Studies
3 Science
4 Kinesiology/Health
5 Mathematics
6 Other (*please specify)* _____

**Years of early childhood/elementary/middle and/or secondary teaching experience.**

1 None
2 1-5
3 6-10
4 11-15
5 16 or more

**If you are currently teaching in early childhood/elementary/middle and/or secondary teaching, please skip to question #17.**

**If you have left teaching, please indicate how important each of the following reasons were to your decision to not remain in teaching.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Income** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **2. Discipline problems with students** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **3. Problems with parents** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **4. Problems with in-school administrators** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **5. Problems with district administrators** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **6. Left to raise a family** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **7. Lack of resources in school** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **8. Fear of violence in school** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **9. Out of field teaching assignment** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **10. To teach at community college/university** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **11. Student teaching experience** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **12. Collegiality with peers** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |
| **13. Lack of Mentoring** | Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 | Extremely important. |

14. **To enter school administration** Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 Extremely important.

15. **Other** *(please elaborate)*

_____

16. **If you were to re-enter teaching, what factor(s) would most influence your decision?**

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

17. **If you have remained in early childhood/elementary/middle and/or secondary teaching, please list up to five reasons why.**

1) _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

| SECTION 2 | DESCRIBE YOURSELF |
|---|---|

18. **Gender**
1 male
2 female

19. **Marital status**
1 married
2 single

20. **If you do not teach, what occupation best describes the work you do?** *Circle one number.*
1 professional/managerial
2 clerical
3 service industry
4 homemaker
5 retail
6 other (*please specify*) _____

21. **What is your age group?** *Circle one number.*
1 21-30
2 31-40
3 41-50
4 51-60
5 61 and above

22. **Do you have children?**
1 Yes
2 No

23. **What is your ethnic/racial background?** *Circle all that apply.*
1 Asian/Pacific Islander
2 African American
3 White (non-Hispanic)
4 Hispanic
5 Other (*please specify)* _____

24. **What is your approximate *annual household income*?** *Circle one number.*
1 $24,999 or less
2 $25,000 to $49,999
3 $50,000 to $74,999
4 $75,000 to $99,999
1 $100,000 or above

25. **What is the highest degree that you have earned?**
1 Bachelors
2 Masters
3 Doctorate

26. **Are you currently working toward an advanced degree?**
1 Masters in content area (*Please specify:*_____)
2 Masters in education
3 Doctorate in content area (*Please specify:*_____)
4 Doctorate in education

27. **Would you be interested in working toward an advanced education degree if it was offered on-line via the Internet?**
1. Yes
2. Maybe
3. No

***Thank you!***
***Please return this survey using the envelope provided.***

A total of 2,388 surveys were mailed to all individuals who had been certified through our institutions between 1995 and 2000. A postage paid return envelope was included with a letter of explanation and survey instrument in an effort to improve the response rate to the survey. Each survey was numbered for identification purposes and to provide confidentiality for the respondents during the analysis. A second survey instrument was mailed after sixty days to individuals not responding to the initial survey instrument or whose initial survey instrument was returned due to incorrect address information. A total of 1,031 surveys were returned (43% return rate).

Descriptive statistics for fourteen statements using 6-point Likert Scale data were analyzed using SPSSÒ software. Teachers were asked to indicate how important each of the statements were to their decision to not remain in teaching using a Likert Scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being "not at all important" and 6 being "extremely important."

Individuals who had left teaching were asked the following open-ended survey question, "If you were to re-enter teaching, what factor(s) would most influence your decision?" Qualitative responses were imported into Microsoft WordÒ. Each word of the open-ended responses was listed one word per

line. Words that provided no information about a decision to leave the teaching profession (e.g., and, I, the, so) were eliminated. The remaining words were imported into SPSSÒ and used to create frequency word counts for pre-retirement teachers. A panel of three experts used the frequency word counts to determine categories related to reasons for leaving the teaching profession (e.g., salary and administrative support). A list of categories from each expert was compiled and redistributed to the panel. Some categories were combined, while others were eliminated. Resulting categories represent agreement between at least two of the three experts on the panel. Finally, a logistic regression analysis using SPSSÒ software was used to analyze the contribution of ordinal and nominal data to the dichotomous dependent variable, whether or not a teacher remained in the teaching profession.

## RESULTS

*What percentage of teachers certified through the University of North Texas (UNT) between 1995 and 2000 have remained in teaching?*

Descriptive statistics were determined using SPSSÒ software to provide information about Research Question 1. Results indicate a total of 816 (79.1%) of the 1031 respondents continued to teach, while 215 (20.9%) individuals left the teaching profession.

*What are the most common reasons certified teacher cite for leaving teaching?"*

Research Question 2 asked, "What are the most common reasons certified teacher cite for leaving teaching?" SPSS©y software was used to analyze the 6-point Likert Scale data from fourteen statements in an effort to provide a second level of analysis for those 215 respondents who left the teaching profession for reasons other than retiring after a long career in teaching. Mean responses and standard deviations for each of the fourteen statements are shown in Table 1. Of the top four reasons given for not remaining in teaching, income was cited most often, followed by discipline problems, leaving to raise a family, and problems with parents. Additional information about the frequency and percent of respondents' answers to each of the fourteen statements is provided in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, 64% of respondents ranked income as 4, 5, or 6 in level of importance to their decision to leave teaching, while 19% ranked income as not at all important to their decision. Only 16.2% ranked income as 2 or 3 in importance. Over half of the respondents who did not remain in teaching ranked discipline problems with students as 4, 5, or 6 in importance to their decision to leave teaching which is consistent with other research findings (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991; Abel, 1999). 85.1% of respondents rated leaving to raise a family as not at all important (46.5%) or extremely important (36.6). Finally, just under half of those individuals no longer teaching (43.7%) indicated problems with parents to be an important contributor to a decision to leave teaching.

The data also suggest several unusual findings. Mentoring is often mentioned as an important factor associated with successful induction into teaching. However, this research shows over half of respondents rank lack of a mentor as "not at all important" with regard to their decision to remain in teaching. Indeed, 72.5% of respondents ranked lack of a mentor as a 1, 2, or 3 in level of importance in their decision to leave the teaching profession. Similarly, problems with district administrators (74.4%) and collegiality with peers (80.9%) were ranked as a 1, 2, or 3 in level of importance with regard to a decision to leave the teaching profession. Since administrators, especially a building level principal are thought to be key factors related to teacher attrition (Shann, 1998; Singh, 1996; Hope, 1999; Blasé & Kirby, 1992) and collegiality with peers has been cited by a number of researchers as influencing teaching retention (Shann, 1998; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1994) this finding may not be applicable to other populations.

*If you were to re-enter teaching, what factor(s) would most influence your decision?*

Data for Research Question 3 was compiled using responses to the following open-ended question, "If you were to re-enter teaching, what factor(s) would most influence your decision?" The open-ended question serves to identify factors not

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation for Likert Scale Statements.

| Variable related to decision not to remain in teaching | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|
| Income | 4.00 | 1.90 |
| Discipline problems with students | 3.67 | 2.00 |
| Left to raise a family | 3.33 | 2.34 |
| Problems with students' parents | 3.24 | 1.90 |
| Problems with in-school administrators | 2.85 | 1.82 |
| Lack of mentoring | 2.40 | 1.79 |
| Problems with district administrators | 2.37 | 1.64 |
| Lack of resources in school | 2.36 | 1.63 |
| Fear of violence | 2.32 | 1.67 |
| Collegiality with peers | 1.97 | 1.57 |
| Student teaching experience | 1.84 | 1.57 |
| Out of field terracing assignem4tn | 1.49 | 1.14 |
| To teach at community college/university | 1.40 | 1.16 |
| To enter school administration | 1.29 | 1.05 |



included as part of the Likert Scale statements as well as to compare findings associated with the Likert Scale statements. The final categorization of responses is shown in Figure 3 and displays the seven most commonly referenced factors that would influence an individual to re-enter the teaching profession. Higher income was referenced most often (39%) followed by administrative support (22%) good workplace conditions (21%), improved student behavior (8%), parental support (4%), collegiality (3%), and safety (1%).

*Which personal demographic variables are predictors of teacher attrition?*

Of the 1031 respondents who had left teaching, 54 did not completely answer the demographic questions. The 54 incomplete surveys were classified as missing cases, and excluded from the logistic regression analysis. The demographic variables used as predictors of attrition or retention and the results of the logistic regression analysis are shown in Table 3 and Table 4. Out of a total of 206 leavers, 47 were predicted to be leavers and 159 were predicted to be stayers. The percentage of predictions of leavers that was made correctly was 22.8%. Of the 206 leavers, 47 were predicted to be leavers and 159 were predicted to be stayers. The total number of stayers was 771. The percentage of predictions of stayers that was made correctly was 98.7%. Specifically, 761 of the stayers were predicted correctly while ten were predicted to be leavers.

Six of the demographic variables had a p-value of .05* or less indicating they are possible predictors of attrition or retention (Table 3). A positive B value indicates the variable was a predictor of attrition,

Table 2. Frequency and Percent of Respondents to 14 Variables Related to a Decision Not to Remain in Teaching

| Distribution of Likert Scale Responses by Percentage | | | | | | Variables | Frequency Distribution of Likert Scale Responses | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19.5% | 07.4% | 08.8% | 14.0% | 18.1% | 32.1% | Income | 42 | 16 | 19 | 30 | 39 | 69 |
| 24.2% | 11.2% | 12.1% | 09.3% | 12.5% | 30.7% | Discipline problems with students | 52 | 24 | 26 | 20 | 27 | 66 |
| 46.5% | 03.3% | 02.3% | 05.6% | 03.7% | 38.6% | Left to raise a family | 100 | 07 | 05 | 12 | 08 | 83 |
| 27.4% | 16.3% | 12.6% | 13.5% | 09.3% | 20.9% | Problems with students' parents | 59 | 35 | 27 | 29 | 20 | 45 |
| 37.2% | 14.0% | 10.7% | 15.3% | 10.2% | 12.6% | Problems with in-school administrators | 80 | 30 | 23 | 33 | 22 | 27 |
| 53.0% | 09.8% | 09.8% | 08.8% | 08.8% | 09.8% | Lack of mentoring | 111 | 21 | 21 | 19 | 19 | 21 |
| 47.4% | 14.4% | 12.6% | 12.6% | 05.1% | 07.9% | Problems with district administrators | 102 | 31 | 27 | 27 | 11 | 17 |
| 48.8% | 12.6% | 13.5% | 09.3% | 10.7% | 05.1% | Lack of resources in school | 105 | 27 | 29 | 20 | 23 | 11 |
| 52.1% | 11.2% | 10.7% | 12.1% | 06.5% | 07.45 | Fear of violence | 112 | 24 | 23 | 26 | 14 | 16 |
| 66.5% | 05.6% | 08.8% | 08.8% | 04.2% | 06.0% | Collegiality with peers | 143 | 12 | 19 | 19 | 09 | 13 |
| 72.6% | 05.6% | 05.6% | 05.1% | 04.2% | 07.0% | Student teaching experience | 156 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 09 | 15 |
| 79.1% | 07.4% | 05.6% | 02.8% | 03.3% | 01.9% | Out of field teaching assignment | 170 | 16 | 12 | 06 | 07 | 04 |
| 86.5% | 03.3% | 02.8% | 01.9% | 02.3% | 03.3% | To teach at community college/university | 186 | 07 | 06 | 04 | 05 | 07 |
| 90.7% | 02.8% | 00.9% | 00.9% | 01.4% | 03.3% | To enter school administration | 195 | 06 | 02 | 02 | 03 | 07 |



while a negative B value indicates that the variable was a predictor of retention. Three demographic variables emerged as predictors of attrition: (1) little experience in the classroom; (2) income of less than $25,000; and (3) having a graduate degree.

## CONCLUSION

Salary and benefits, students, collegial support, and workplace conditions are all important factors that have been linked to teacher attrition. In this study, income was the most significant factor related to teacher attrition as shown in the results from both the Likert Scale data and open-ended response question. Teachers leave the profession due to a lack of money and would most likely return for more money. Clearly, any policies directed toward fully staffing schools with high quality teachers must consider this factor. Results of the logistic regression analysis show teachers with an annual household income of $24,999 or less are more prone to attrition. Unfortunately, state budget shortfalls continue to plague small and rural schools that pay teachers the state minimum salary. Without a significant commitment to raise teacher salaries, it is unlikely that the teacher shortage problem in small and rural schools will be alleviated in the near future. After

**Table 3. Predictions of Status Based on Logistic Regression**

| Actual Status of Respondent | Number of Respondents Predicted to be Leavers | Number of Respondents Predicted to be Stayers | Percentage of Correct Predictions |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leaver | 47 | 159 | 22.8% |
| Stayer | 10 | 761 | 98.7% |

**Figure 3. Factors Referenced as Influencing Leavers to Return to the Classroom by Percentage**

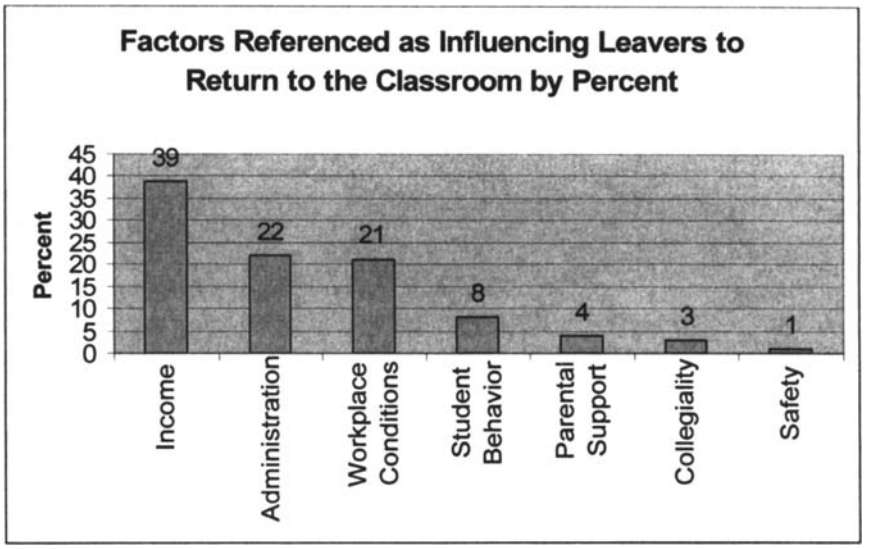



**Table 4. Demographic Variables as Predictors of Individuals Attrition or Retention.**

| Demographic Variable | B | Wald | p-value | Exp(B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Graduate Degree | .696 | 6.659 | .010 | 2.005 |
| No Teaching Experience | 4.241 | 47.051 | .000 | 69.463 |
| 6 to 10 Years Teaching Experience | -.524 | 2.093 | .148 | .592 |
| >10 Years Teaching Experience | -1.287 | 5.574 | .018 | .276 |
| Gender | -.015 | .004 | .952 | .985 |
| Unmarried | -.305 | 1.096 | .295 | .737 |
| 31 - 40 Years Old | -.085 | .125 | .723 | .919 |
| 41 - 50 Years Old | -.720 | 4.767 | .029 | .487 |
| Older than 50 | -1.068 | 3.733 | .053 | .344 |
| Having Children | -.971 | 19.543 | .000 | .379 |
| African American | -.309 | .294 | .587 | .734 |
| Hispanic | -.015 | .001 | .972 | .985 |
| Other Ethnicity | .871 | 3.672 | .055 | 2.390 |
| $24,999 or Less *annual household income* | 2.001 | 24.726 | .000 | 7.394 |
| $50,000 - $74,999 *annual household income* | .099 | .125 | .724 | 1.104 |
| $75,000 - $99,999 *annual household income* | .202 | .446 | .504 | 1.224 |
| $100,000 or More *annual household income* | .611 | 3.368 | .066 | 1.843 |

income, negative student behaviors were identified by former teachers as factors that would prevent them from returning to the classroom. Tardiness, apathy, safety concerns, and student misbehavior were often mentioned as interfering with a decision to remain in teaching.

Results of this study indicate administrator support and collegiality may be less important with regard to a decision to leave teaching, but administrator support may prove to be an important factor that influences a teacher's decision to re-enter teaching. It is possible respondents who have left teaching have a clearer understanding about what they could expect from an administrator and this knowledge could be used to select a desirable teaching position at a later time. It is also important to consider that teachers certified through UNT are provided extensive mentoring throughout their teacher preparation program, and in all Texas public schools the law requires a site-based mentor be assigned to a new teacher. Perhaps this system of support provides an arena in which collegiality as a reason to leave teaching ranks low in importance compared to other factors. However, since administrative support was ranked second as a reason to *return* to the classroom, the administrator may be key to a decision to re-enter the teaching profession.

Workplace conditions were not considered highly important factors related to a decision to leave teaching with approximately 1/5 of former teachers ranking workplace conditions third (21%) behind income (39%) and administrative support (22%) as impacting a decision to return to teaching. Resources, manageable class size, a safe school environment, reasonable teaching assignments, limited extracurricular activities, scheduling, and workload represent variables listed by respondents as contributing to improved workplace conditions.

Finally, predictors of attrition include (1) little experience in the classroom; (2) less than $25,000 annual income; and (3) having a graduate degree. While the model predicts stayers with 98% accuracy, leavers were predicted correctly only 22.8% of the time. These results indicate the logistic regression model has limited use in predicting who will leave teaching and the results of the logistic regression analysis when used to predict leavers should be viewed with caution.

It is evident that teacher preparation and sustained professional development are needed to increase the pedagogical knowledge necessary for teachers to be successful *before* and *after* entering the classroom. If teachers are well prepared, then they will have the necessary experiences needed to create positive learning environments for students and become successful experienced teachers. It is then in everyones' best interest to create a context that fosters retention of experienced teachers and increasing teacher salaries is one way to retain teachers. Individuals do not expect to spend four years of time and money to obtain an undergraduate degree with teacher certification only to be paid at a level well below what they could find in alternate careers. Until teacher salaries are substantially increased, attrition will continue to be a problem, and obtaining advanced degrees may actually provide some teachers with a stepping-stone to new careers outside of education further decreasing the teacher workforce.

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