

EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

Study: City Schools Need Math, Science Teachers

Urban schools are facing an immediate and growing demand for teachers, with the greatest need for areas in which U.S. students already struggle, a new report says.

The most severe shortages are in science, math and special education—subjects that are unpopular with teachers-to-be, according to the study by Recruiting New Teachers, the Council of the Great City Schools and the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education.

Across grade levels, as much as 97.5 percent of responding districts reported an immediate need for science and special education teachers, and 95 percent said they have a pressing need for math teachers.

"Unlike the gas shortages of the 1970s, we can't solve the problem by asking young people to wait in endless lines for service," said Debbie McLean, vice president for development and communications at Recruiting New Teachers, a Boston-based nonprofit organization.

The 1998-99 survey of urban school districts and teacher education programs was released yesterday in Washington, D.C.

Minority Recruitment

Minority instructors are also needed in many urban districts working to achieve a teaching force that more closely reflects the student population, the researchers said.

Of the responding districts, 72.5 percent reported an immediate need for minority teachers, and 55 percent anticipate such a need in the next five years. Only two school districts—New Orleans and Birmingham, Ala.—said they do not need minority teachers.

Most of the districts—95 percent—recruit from historically black and/or Hispanic colleges and universities, and 70 percent have special recruitment efforts to attract minority teachers.

(more on p. 2)

In This Issue

Vol. 33, No. 12 ■ Thursday, January 20, 2000

ED Probing Legality Of
N.J. School District SurveyPage 3

Calif.: Federal Probe Finds
Misuse Of Adult Education FundsPage 3

Oregon Voc Ed Standards Too Limited, Portland Says

Oregon's unique academic standards, which since 1991 have set forth two separate curricular tracks to prepare students for either work or college, have attracted national attention for their focus on job preparation.

But school leaders in Portland say the state's standards are too limited to measure the full value of education and help students with special needs reach their potential.

They are building on state standards by setting local benchmarks for health, physical education, second languages, and fine and performing arts. And they are setting different standards for students who are gifted, have limited proficiency in English and in special education.

Local leaders developing a long-range plan for the school system say they recognize the value of a uniform system of standards, but more flexibility is needed to help the diverse range of individual students succeed.

"Simply meeting state assessment benchmarks [is] not enough for some students who should be challenged to exceed these measures," said Benjamin Canada, superintendent of Portland schools.

"Likewise, students, who because of a handicapping condition or English language

(more on p. 4)

Study: City Schools Need Math, Science Teachers (Cont.)

After science, special education and math, districts said they have the highest demand for teachers serving limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. Across all grade levels, 72.5 percent currently need bilingual education teachers, and 67.5 percent need teachers of English as a second language.

Suburban schools 'have really become [urban schools]' major competition.

Michael Casserly, executive director
Council of the Great City Schools.

City schools educate 40 to 50 percent of LEP students, about half of minority students and two-fifths of low-income students in the United States, according to the study. These schools also report lower achievement levels, higher dropout rates and disproportionate numbers of special education students than elsewhere in the country.

Teacher preparation programs are also working to recruit more minority students: 86.7 percent of higher education respondents said they actively recruit racial and ethnic minorities, and 55.6 percent offer special support services or incentives for minority education students.

Districts reported a range of general recruitment and retention strategies, including alternative certification; job fairs; on-the-spot contracts; online counseling or job-finding services; and incentives, such as induction programs for beginning teachers and tuition assistance for graduate coursework.

Despite the high need for teachers of math and science, these subjects—along with foreign languages—are among the least popular for

students preparing to be educators. Of the 45 colleges and universities responding to the survey, a majority rated math (55.6 percent) and foreign languages (53.3 percent) as "low interest" for students in their education programs. For science, 44.4 percent of higher education institutions chose "low interest."

Areas of greatest interest to prospective teachers are elementary education/multi-subject (86.7 percent), social studies/history (68.9 percent) and special education (62.2 percent).

Recent studies show that K-12 students' performance in math and science declines as they progress through school.

Although the report does not address this link, it is likely that the difficulty in recruiting math and science teachers is "putting a damper" on student achievement in those subjects, said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

People with math and science expertise often are drawn to higher-paying jobs in other fields, Casserly said. Many who do become teachers are drawn to suburban schools, which typically offer higher pay and fewer challenges than their inner-city counterparts.

These suburban schools "have really become our major competition," Casserly said.

At the time of the survey, the "Great City" colleges and schools included 54 urban areas. Of those, 40 school districts and 45 colleges of education replied, for response rates of 74 percent and 83 percent, respectively.

"The Urban Teacher Challenge" is free from Recruiting New Teachers, 385 Concord Ave., Suite 103, Belmont, MA 02478, (617)489-6000; fax, (617)489-6005; e-mail, rnt@rnt.org. To download the report, access www.cgcs.org or www.rnt.org. —Hannah R. Gladfelter



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January 10, 2000

IN AMERICA / By BOB HERBERT

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It used to be fairly easy to get large numbers of decent teachers for the public schools.

In the 1930's and 40's, young people shaped by the harsh lessons of the Depression were happy to have a steady job that was respectable, even though the pay was low. In the 1950's and 60's, when the baby boomers flooded the schools, women moved en masse into teaching. Few other professional options existed. Women who wanted a career became, for the most part, teachers or nurses.

In the late 60's and early 70's, a wave of men went into teaching. These were young, draft-eligible guys anxious for a deferment that would keep them out of Vietnam. Only one out of five remained in the profession for the long haul, but that 20 percent was a significant boost to the ranks of teachers nationwide.

Those more or less natural sources of teachers have long since vanished, and the U.S. now finds itself in the midst of a teacher shortage that is threatening the viability of school systems from coast to coast.

"This shortage of competent teachers is one of the most glaring problems we face right now," said Senator Charles Schumer, who plans to introduce federal legislation that is designed to encourage more young people to become teachers.

"We've entered a whole new type of economy in which ideas are the generators of wealth, of jobs and growth," Mr. Schumer said in an interview last week. "But the No. 1 storm cloud on the horizon is the lack of a young, high-quality, dedicated group of professionals to teach our children."

Referring to the teacher shortage in a speech yesterday, the U.S. secretary of education, Richard Riley, said, "It's gotten so bad that some schools have been forced to put any warm body in front of a

classroom."

The shortage will only grow worse over the next decade as tens of thousands of teachers reach retirement age. It is estimated that two million new teachers will have to be hired during that period. But how many first-rate teachers can reasonably be recruited when the average starting salary is roughly \$25,000 a year?

Senator Schumer noted that the greatest need for new teachers is in the areas of math and science. School systems find it particularly difficult to recruit competent men and women in those disciplines because they can so easily command much higher salaries and much better working conditions elsewhere.

"The shortages in math and science are desperate in all but the wealthiest districts," said Mr. Schumer. "So of the 40,000 math or science teachers we needed last year, only 3,000 had the necessary math or science training."

The shortage over all is so acute that many school districts are hiring just about anybody with a college degree. "They get into a classroom," said Mr. Schumer, "and they don't know what to do. They don't know how to teach."

A number of states and local districts are offering enticements to young people to go into teaching. Gov. George Pataki of New York has put together a tuition subsidy plan, and Gov. Gray Davis of California is proposing, among other things, cash bonuses and low-interest home loans.

Senator Schumer's proposal, which he is calling "The Marshall Plan for Public School Teachers," would offer a variety of federal incentives to potential teachers across the country. The key elements are as follows:

All undergraduate student loans would be forgiven for anyone who becomes certified and teaches for five years.

The federal government would provide a \$5,000-a-year salary supplement for teachers who pass a special test in math and science given by the National Academy of Sciences.

The federal government would cover 75 percent of the cost of a cadre of master teachers who would serve as trainers and mentors for new teachers.

Federal employees who retire and go into teaching would be permitted to begin receiving their pensions as soon as they left their federal post. Mr. Schumer said he would encourage local governments and private businesses to adopt a similar policy.

The senator said his program would cost about \$15 billion over 10 years.

"People are beginning to see education as an important issue," he said, "but they don't yet see this teacher shortage as a real crisis. It is."



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Across the Nation

New Teachers Abandon Field At High Rate

By Jeff Archer

This is the second installment of a five-part series about the nation's supply of and demand for qualified teachers. Read "About This Series," below.

**HELP WANTED:
2 Million Teachers**

Read our story, "Riley Outlines Licensure Plan for Teachers," Feb. 24, 1999.

Long Beach, Calif.

For much of last year, Tammy Carsten was on the verge of becoming a statistic. Working with an emergency permit, scant education courses, and no student-teaching experience to her credit, the fledgling educator was at her wits' end soon after stepping in front of her class at Harte Elementary School in north Long Beach.

Struggling just to keep the 1st graders in their seats, she felt completely inadequate to the task of teaching them the elements of reading and arithmetic. Many nights, she went home and cried. Quitting was often on her mind.

"Teaching Partnership Regroups To Define Mission and Survive," Feb. 3, 1999.

Our Quality Counts '99 story, "Zeroing In on Teachers," Jan. 11, 1999, examines how accountability measures affect retention and recruitment efforts.

"Uneven Distribution Contributes to Teacher Shortages, Study Warns," Nov. 4, 1998.

"Report Suggests Alternative Paths as Solutions to Teacher Shortages," Oct. 21, 1998.

About This Series
Part 1: "States: Uneven Teacher Supply Complicates Staffing of Schools," March 10, 1999
Part 2: "New Teachers Abandon Field at High Rate," March 17, 1999
Part 3: March 24, 1999
While the shortage of teachers for most subjects is being felt in pockets across the country, the scarcity of special education teachers is nearly universal. One of the nation's fastest growing districts is cultivating its own supply of special education teachers by paying paraprofessionals' tuition and salaries while they go to school. A Virginia college offers long-distance learning to train teachers for special education.
Part 4: March 31, 1999
Otherwise qualified teachers are routinely assigned to teach subjects for which they have little or no academic preparation, a practice under fire nationwide.
Part 5: April 7, 1999
As standards for students go up, schools are under pressure to reduce the number of people without professional training who are hired to teach.

The findings, which Mr. Ingersoll has yet to publish, jibe well with earlier estimates that as many as 30 percent of new teachers quit within their first five years, he said.

What he has uncovered comes as little surprise to experienced educators, especially in an era when new state standards are demanding more of teachers, when student populations are more diverse than ever, and when more teachers are entering the profession before taking education classes or engaging in practice teaching.

"They're not adequately prepared, and they're put into a situation completely unsupported," said Barnett Berry, who directs the Southeast office of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future.

'Just Heartbreaking'

The California Commission on the Teaching Profession, a task force created by the legislature, realized as much in the late 1980s when it proposed researching better ways to evaluate and support novice educators. The resulting California New Teacher Project spawned dozens of local induction programs that gave added support to novice educators. In 1992, the project's offspring, the Beginning Teacher

Support and Assessment Program, became a permanent state initiative run jointly by the state education department and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Though districts aren't required to operate a program, the offer of state aid has prompted about half of California's systems to start their own or participate in joint ventures with other districts. For districts that take part, the support program promises \$5,000 for each new teacher--\$3,000 coming directly from the state, the other \$2,000 to be raised locally.

Districts, or groups of districts, use their support-program money to subsidize one-on-one mentoring, intensive summer-orientation programs, and training workshops for first- and second-year teachers. The money pays for substitutes, freeing mentor-teachers to conduct model lessons by teaching occasional classes for new recruits. The new teachers also are able to visit the classrooms of veteran teachers in other schools.

Each local program's design is guided by a set of state standards that spell out the knowledge and skills the novices should gain; the guidelines are closely aligned with the new California standards for the teaching

"New Teachers Are
Hot Commodity,"
Sept. 9, 1998.

profession.

"It was a program that was designed to overcome the problems that we know were leading teachers to leave the profession," said Suzanne Riley, a member of the state task force that oversees the support program. "Most people who go into teaching have some sense of mission, and to think that the isolation and the lack of assistance led people to leave when they really wanted to teach is just heartbreaking."

No statewide study has been completed, but Ms. Riley said many local programs report that, after five years, between 85 percent and 90 percent of teachers who have gone through the induction remain in the profession.

"States Raising Bar
for Teachers
Despite Pending
Shortage," March
25, 1998.

Time To Learn

While the support program serves the state's purpose of grooming California's next generation of educators, school leaders say it's a godsend for districts struggling to find new teachers. Each new teacher they can hold on to, they say, is one less that must be hired later.

"It's so competitive to recruit teachers," said Janet Reece, the assistant superintendent of personnel in the 17,000-student Baldwin Park Unified schools in Los Angeles County. "The new teachers coming out are very bright, they know how stressful the job will be, and they want something like a BTSA program."

One of the state's oldest support programs, Baldwin Park's initiative now serves 122 first- and second-year teachers. Along with the mentoring and opportunities to visit other classrooms, the program runs an annual "new teacher academy," a weeklong series of intensive training sessions. Nearly every eligible first-year teacher attends the voluntary training, even though there is no financial remuneration.

The benefits of such training are obvious in the teaching style of novice educator Gabriela Lara, now in her second year at Baldwin Park's De Anza Elementary School.

One recent morning, in the portable unit that serves as her classroom, she had her 20 2nd graders break up into "reading centers," small groups of three to five children who work together on different activities. The popular technique is supposed to encourage children to work cooperatively while freeing their teachers to circulate among groups. But many new teachers say that running reading centers can be like trying to keep 20 marbles from rolling off a pingpong table.

The 25-year-old Ms. Lara pulls it off without a hitch, however. She points to a small paper wheel divided into different colors. Already knowing which one represents their group, the children stand up, gather their materials from around the room, and quietly reorganize themselves into clusters.

"It's a lot of disjointed little parts that have to work all at the same time," Silvia Acevedo-Gilkeson, Ms. Lara's mentor from last year, said as she watched the scene unfold. "But look at them. They're self-directed and self-motivated."

Ms. Lara said she didn't dare try reading centers her first year, but through

In our
Commentary, "The
Real Teacher
Crisis," Oct. 29,
1997, author
Chester E. Finn
questions the
reality of the
teacher shortage,
saying the problem
has "... nothing to
do with quantity
and everything to
do with quality."

For background,
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Issues Pages on
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her district's beginning-teacher support program she got advice from other teachers on the approach, and saw how they managed the technique when visiting their classrooms. "Sometimes you need someone to tell you you don't have to do it all at once," she said. "That if you don't pick it up this year, you can the next."

Growing Pains

Despite its success, the state's support program still finds itself struggling with the realities of teacher recruitment in California--and with state politics. For one thing, the program wasn't intended for new teachers with emergency permits--those, like Ms. Carsten and Ms. Lara, who still need to complete coursework and student teaching before they can earn full credentials.

"The idea was that if you start with people who are fully credentialed, then you are taking them to the next level instead of just giving them survival training," said David Lebow, an Advanced Placement history teacher in the Montebello Unified schools. Montebello, which is also in the Greater Los Angeles area, launched its own support program this year.

But Mr. Lebow, who served on a state committee that pushed for the support program's expansion, also knows that of the 160 new teachers in his district's support program this year, only 19 have regular state credentials. "In this district, we've sort of fudged it a little because of the necessity of our type of hiring," he said.

About 19,000 of California's 48,000 first- and second-year teachers had emergency permits as of 1996, the last year for which such data were collected, according to the state education department.

The state has now given all the participating districts one year to turn their programs into initiatives geared exclusively for the fully credentialed new teacher. But state officials pledge they won't leave teachers with emergency permits high and dry. While the support program's budget has grown, lawmakers have also increased from about \$8.5 million to \$22.8 million the annual funding for local programs that help new hires who lack the standard qualifications.

Meanwhile, a statewide peer-review plan also could shake up the beginning-teacher support program.

Gov. Gray Davis wants districts to use teacher input in evaluating the performance of veteran educators. Just last week, the California Senate's education committee passed a bill that would withhold money for the support program from any district that failed to implement peer review. With many teachers' unions and their members still uncomfortable with peer review, some local educators are worried the measure could jeopardize support programs for beginning teachers just when they were set to expand.

Interest on the Rise

Despite the support program's growing pains, national observers say California deserves credit for at least having a statewide initiative. Although 27 states had induction programs on the books as of the 1996-97 school year, only seven both mandated and financed them, according to a

two-year survey of such efforts soon to be released by Recruiting New Teachers Inc., a nonprofit group based in Belmont, Mass., that seeks to improve the teaching pool.

But, the group reports, interest is on the rise. Mississippi lawmakers are considering plans for a pilot mentor program this year, and Nebraska education officials are designing a statewide support plan for new teachers. Wisconsin has also just started allocating \$500,000 annually toward training as many as 1,000 veteran educators to mentor new teachers.

"Induction is re-emerging in the late 1990s after a kind of quiet decade," said Elizabeth Fidler, a co-author of the Recruiting New Teachers report. "There is growing recognition of teachers' needs for support and assistance, and there's growing attention to induction as a strategy for reducing attrition, weeding out unfit teachers, and encouraging competent teachers to stay and thrive."

But for such programs to make a significant dent in the teacher-supply problem, the University of Georgia's Mr. Ingersoll argues, policymakers must do more than recognize their importance: They'll have to make them central to their reform efforts.

"Most of the reforms out there are still increased-supply-type approaches, when you could also be decreasing demand by dealing with turnover," he said. "Well-respected, well-supported, well-paid professions never seem to have problems with retention."

On the Web

Facts about the teaching profession from Recruiting New Teachers. Includes: "Teacher Shortages in America" and "Minority Teacher Demand."

Read the executive summary of "What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future," the special report from the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards presents its view on "What Teachers Should Know and Be Able To Do."

In "Teacher Mentoring: A Critical Review," Sharon Feiman-Nemser casts a critical eye at this *en vogue* form of retaining first-year teachers. From the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, where you can also find links to related resources.

PHOTO: Gabriela Lara, in her second year as a teacher at De Anza Elementary in Baldwin Park, Calif., finds she greatly benefited from the intensive training and mentoring programs her district provided to support her.

From left, veteran educator Patty Nagano helps Tammy Carsten learn the ropes at Harte Elementary School in Long Beach, Calif. Gabriela Lara, a second-year teacher at De Anza Elementary School in nearby Baldwin Park, benefited from the intensive training and support that her district provides to new educators.

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Vol. 18, number 27, page 1, 20-21



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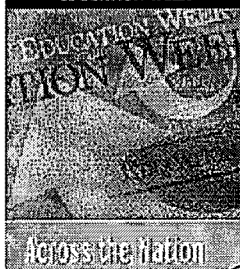
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Baltimore Offering Teachers Housing Bonuses

By Karen Abercrombie

To entice new teachers, the Baltimore district is offering a \$5,000 home-buying grant to assist them with closing costs or down payments for homes purchased in the city. That offer is part of an aggressive strategy to recruit at least 500 new teachers by fall.

Read a related commentary, "Beyond the Salary Carrot," in This Week's News.



O. Albrie Love Jr.

In addition to the housing grants, the district has raised teachers' starting salaries by \$3,000--to \$27,350--and is offering teachers who are moving from another state \$1,200 to help them relocate.

Many school districts offer financial incentives to new teachers; Baltimore may be the only district to offer a housing grant.

"It's another way to attract people to this area and have them become a part of the community," said O. Albrie Love Jr., the director of the district's department of personnel services. "We're going to do whatever we can do to attract teachers because we are in a very competitive area."

The competition the 110,000-student Baltimore district faces is being felt all around the country this spring. Many districts are looking for ways to attract and retain qualified teachers.

Some are offering forgiveness of college loans, tuition reimbursement, and bonuses for signing a contract, according to Elizabeth F. Fideler, the vice president for policy and research at the Belmont, Mass.-based Recruiting New Teachers Inc., a nonprofit organization committed to expanding the pool of prospective teachers and improving teacher recruitment.

Over the next decade, the National Center for Education Statistics, an arm of the U.S. Department of Education, estimates that 2 million teachers will need to be hired because of rising enrollments, accelerating retirements, teacher attrition, and class-size reduction.

Experts say that more math, science, and special education teachers are needed, as are minority and male teachers.

The NCES has found that 22 percent of teachers leave their jobs within the first three years. In urban areas, the attrition rate is between 30 percent and 50 percent over the first five years of teaching.

That is one reason districts are offering incentives that they hope will not only attract new teachers, but also help keep them, particularly in

"Clinton's 100,000-Teacher Plan Faces Hurdles," Feb. 4, 1998.

Our special report, "Quality Counts '98" contains a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing teachers and teacher recruiters in the nation's urban school districts.

Early attrition

For background, previous stories, and related Web links, please see our Issues Page on Teaching as a Profession.

hard-to-staff geographic areas.

It's not cost-effective for districts to recruit people who may leave after the first year or two, Ms. Fideler noted.

Special Needs

From New York City to Los Angeles, public schools are also willing to do a lot to attract minority and bilingual teachers who match their areas' demographics.

For example, the New York schools provide tuition reimbursement for paraprofessionals--particularly minorities--aiming to become teachers, and the Detroit district offers a \$3,000 salary differential for teachers in high-need areas.

In Arizona, Florida, and Texas, scholarships and loans are readily available from districts to entice prospective teachers to go into bilingual education, and the Los Angeles schools offer an extra \$5,000 in salary for people who are bilingual, Ms. Fideler said.

Community Connections

Even in the small, rural districts that can't effectively compete with the larger, more affluent ones, officials are finding creative ways to attract teachers.

For example, in the towns that surround the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area, the smaller districts have a program to "grow their own teachers."

Essentially, they will pay for students' college tuitions if they agree to come back to teach in area schools.

In Baltimore, despite its being a large urban area, administrators are using the housing bonuses to try to connect new teachers to the community.

School officials there want the teachers they hire to live where they work and feel attached to the community they teach in.

The district originally began offering the housing grants to new teachers last August. Since then, 1,200 new teachers have been placed in the city's schools.

A breakdown of those who applied for loans was not available last week.

Although teachers must remain in the district for at least two years to be eligible for the grant, each year they remain, their debt is forgiven 10 percent. If they leave, they must repay the balance.

Recruitment efforts for the city's schools have been tough because the district competes with 24 other districts within Maryland, as well as with districts in the District of Columbia, Virginia, and West Virginia. And it can be more difficult to attract teachers to an urban district.

"Our incentives have leveled the playing field and made us more competitive," Mr. Love said.

Results Pending

A job fair the Baltimore system held last month attracted people from Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

"We created a one-stop shop," Mr. Love said.

Tables were set up for professional development, before-school activities, the Baltimore Teachers Union, the local credit union, moving companies, and the parks and recreation department.

District administrators hope to take their hospitality one step further next year and introduce prospective teacher-recruits to neighborhood residents.

But, it's still too early to tell whether the new incentives are working, said Marietta English, the president of the Baltimore Teachers Union.

"I'd like to see the results of how many teachers [the district] attracts," she said, "and how many will remain."

On the Web

Here's what the Baltimore City Public School System has to offer.

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States' Uneven Teacher Supply Complicates Staffing of Schools

By Ann Bradley

This is the first installment in a five-part series about the nation's supply of and demand for qualified teachers. Read "About This Series," below.

HELP WANTED:
2 Million Teachers

Read an accompanying chart, "Teacher Supply and Demand," in This Week's News.

By now, the number has been repeated so often it's become a mantra: more than 2 million teachers. That's how many the U.S. Department of Education estimates schools will need to hire in the next decade.

But the daunting figure doesn't mean the nation is suffering from a teacher shortage. Some Sun Belt and fast-growing states, to be sure, are scrambling to find teachers. Others, though, consistently produce many more than they can hire.

Even within states, the employment picture can differ dramatically. Some districts have hundreds of applicants for every job, while others in less desirable areas and with lower pay scales may have none.

Read an accompanying story, "Technology Eases Teacher Recruitment for School Districts," in This Week's News.

What policymakers clearly must do--given enrollment growth, retirements, and policies such as class-size reductions that are creating demand for teachers--is get a handle on where they stand, experts argue.

"This 2 million scare, so to speak, doesn't help states in looking at what their problems are," said Lynn Cornett, the senior vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta. "You cannot paint one picture across the nation."



Lynn
Cornett

Many states are likely to find themselves not with absolute shortages, but with a dearth of teachers in particular subject areas--such as special and bilingual education, mathematics, and science--and in underfunded schools, particularly in urban and rural districts.

'Be Strategic'

Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor at Stanford University and the executive director of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, agreed: "States need to pinpoint where teachers are needed and in what fields, and be strategic about what incentives to put in place to encourage people to enter the profession."

Read James Nehring's Commentary, "Cure for Teacher Shortage: Let Teachers Teach," Jan. 13, 1999.

Read our story,
"Uneven
 Distribution
 Contributes to
 Teacher Shortages,
 Study Warns,"
 Nov. 4, 1998,
 which discusses
 how geography
 plays a role in
 classroom staffing
 shortages.

"Amid Funding,
 Teacher Shortages,
 Urban Educators
 Find Hope," Oct.
 28, 1998.

"New Teachers Are
 Hot Commodity,"
 Sept. 9, 1998.

About This Series
Part 1: March 10, 1999
Schools will need to hire more than 2 million teachers in the next decade, experts predict. But such demand doesn't mean teachers are in short supply across the board. Technology can help streamline the teacher recruiting process.
Part 2: March 17, 1999
The teaching profession is notorious for turnover, which threatens to undermine schools' best efforts to fill their classrooms with qualified teachers. California, though, is investing heavily to keep beginning educators.
Part 3: March 24, 1999
While the shortage of teachers for most subjects is being felt in pockets across the country, the scarcity of special education teachers is nearly universal. One of the nation's fastest growing districts is cultivating its own supply of special education teachers by paying paraprofessionals' tuition and salaries while they go to school. A Virginia college offers long-distance learning to train teachers for special education.
Part 4: March 31, 1999
Otherwise qualified teachers are routinely assigned to teach subjects for which they have little or no academic preparation, a practice under fire nationwide.
Part 5: April 7, 1999
As standards for students go up, schools are under pressure to reduce the number of people without professional training who are hired to teach.

According to a report released last fall by the National Association of State Boards of Education, such incentives might include: loan-forgiveness programs to encourage people to teach particular subjects or in hard-to-staff schools; recruitment and public-awareness campaigns; special preparation programs with business and the military to attract early retirees and career-changers to teaching; and efforts to help paraprofessionals gain teaching licenses.

Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin consistently produce many more teachers than their schools hire, although some urban districts in those states suffer persistent problems finding qualified teachers. Conversely, California, Florida, Nevada, and Texas generally are straining to hire teachers across the board.

In Wisconsin, a study from last fall showed that only 32 percent of the 3,986 education students who received licenses in 1996-97 were working full time as teachers in public schools in the state by the 1997-98 school year. New York licensed 21,500 teachers in 1996-97, but only 5,900 were hired. Still, New York schools employed 9,000 unlicensed teachers that year, the vast majority in New York City.

Part of the problem in New York is that suburban districts pay veteran teachers as much as 20 percent a year more than New York City, creating a drain on the city's labor pool. Ms. Darling-Hammond and others have called on states to follow Connecticut's example by providing money for districts to equalize teacher salaries.

Many people point the finger at education schools--often called "cash cows" for universities--for training teachers in fields of abundant supply, most often elementary education.

But the NASBE study blamed state accrediting agencies for allowing the practice to continue, particularly when districts are "desperate for specialists in shortage fields."

States that continue to accredit programs and certify unneeded teachers, the report said, are "failing to be accountable for providing districts with the tools they need to bring students to high standards."

Pay and Benefits

Increasingly, states are mulling policies to help alleviate problems of teacher distribution.

In Oklahoma, for example, where the SREB recently completed a detailed study of teacher supply and demand, the problem isn't a lack of mathematics teachers. It's that people certified to teach math--one of the fields in biggest demand nationally--aren't working in schools.

Only 54 percent of college graduates trained between 1994 and 1996 to teach math actually were teaching that subject by 1996, the SREB study found.

The state also has more than 700 certified math teachers who aren't teaching the subject. A likely reason: Starting teachers earn just \$24,060, while math majors can earn \$40,000 to \$50,000 in the computer field fresh out of college.

Oklahoma's regents for higher education are proposing that all teachers' salaries be raised and that teachers of high-demand subjects or working in hard-to-staff schools be paid even more. The regents also want the state to create a loan-forgiveness program to channel teachers into those subjects and geographic areas.

Meanwhile, districts in neighboring Texas--some of which pay signing bonuses to new teachers--are snapping up Oklahoma teachers.

In Nevada, the state Senate is considering a bill that would offer teachers an extra year of retirement credit for every five years they taught in schools classified as "needing improvement." Another measure would allow teachers in rural schools to convert their unused sick leave into up to one year of retirement credit.

And to give Nevada districts a leg up on hiring experienced teachers from other states, a third bill would require the districts to give new hires full credit for their years of experience elsewhere. Most districts now credit teachers with just five years, no matter how long they've been teaching.

But because each change would cost money, and Nevada's budget isn't keeping up with school growth, observers expect the bills simply to permit districts to take such steps.

"Other states are competing with us for teachers," said H. Pepper Sturm, a research analyst for the Nevada legislature. "How are we going to compete?"

As part of a comprehensive teacher-quality initiative, Gov. Gary Locke of Washington is proposing conditional scholarships of up to \$3,000 annually for 200 outstanding teacher-candidates in such shortage areas as math, science, and special education. Recipients would have to maintain a 3.0 or better grade point average and commit to two years of teaching in a public school for every \$3,000 received.

Massachusetts recruiters traveled the nation to drum up 50 outstanding candidates to become public school teachers and earn \$20,000 signing bonuses. The state had 5,000 requests for information and expects to

process about 600 completed applications.

Mississippi offers scholarships, special home loans, low-cost rental housing, and moving expenses for people willing to teach in areas of the state, such as the impoverished Mississippi Delta region, that attract few applicants of any teaching specialty.

"Each state wants to hang on to their best teacher education graduates, but it's going to be a real free-market situation," said Ernest Rose, the dean of education and human services at Montana State University-Billings. "States and districts that have a lighter salary scale are going to end up probably getting people who aren't mobile or aren't the strongest candidates in the pool."



Ernest
Rose

Mr. Rose estimates that this year, 15 percent to 20 percent of his school's graduates will take their first jobs out of state, where they can earn up to \$10,000 more than in Montana and make a good dent in repaying their student loans.

Already, districts in Nevada, Oregon, and Washington state have arranged for Montana State students to do their practice teaching out of state and stay on after graduation.

In Colorado, meanwhile, a booming economy--which is providing high-paying jobs for people who might otherwise teach math or science--hasn't depleted the labor pool for districts with top-notch reputations. The 40,000-student Cherry Creek district has 3,000 applicants on file and between 100 and 200 qualified teachers for every one job, said Gwen Sonnenberg, the district's director of human resources.

Pension Portability

For the most part, teaching remains a parochial field in which many new teachers aspire to work where they grew up. But even teachers ready, willing, and able to relocate face financial and logistical hassles.

As the Nevada bill illustrates, many teachers moving from one district to another don't get credit for all their experience and so are forced to take pay cuts. Teachers' pensions aren't portable, as are those in higher education. And states don't recognize one another's licenses, often requiring veteran teachers to jump through numerous hoops to get fully licensed.

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, in an address last month focused on teacher recruitment and quality, urged state leaders to re-examine long-standing rules governing those issues. "The current maze of disconnected state laws has become a significant drawback to keeping good teachers in the profession in our increasingly mobile society," Mr. Riley said.

In Missouri, one of the states working in partnership with the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, the state is helping St. Louis address its recruitment problems. One barrier is that city teachers have a different pension system from those in surrounding suburban districts, said Celeste Ferguson, the state's assistant commissioner for

urban and teacher education.

The state education department is asking the legislature to allow retired master teachers to teach for two years in St. Louis without adverse effect on their pensions. Teachers would qualify for full pension credit and salaries during those two years.

The Missouri department also is asking the legislature to create a loan-forgiveness program and incentive pay for teachers in urban and rural districts.

In a recent opinion column in *The Washington Post*, Christopher T. Cross, the president of the Council for Basic Education and a former assistant U.S. secretary of education in the Bush administration, proposed a change in national Social Security policy to ease teacher recruitment. Mr. Cross called for Congress to waive the cap on retirement earnings for anyone involved in teaching or school administration, arguing that many newly relocated teacher retirees in Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas would welcome the chance to get back into the classroom.

Eric Hirsch, a senior policy analyst for the National Conference of State Legislatures in Denver, calls the portability of both teachers' experience and their pensions a "huge issue" for teacher recruitment.

Though states are taking steps to recognize one another's licensing requirements and are increasingly giving licenses to teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, few make it easy for the best teachers to move back and forth.

Too few states have an accurate picture of their own teacher supply and demand, said Mr. Hirsch, who is working on such a study for Colorado. Questions of school governance complicate the picture, he noted, because states accredit teacher education programs, but teachers are hired locally.

Teacher quality is "absolutely, if not the top issue, then one of the top issues in virtually all of the states," he said. "States really need to know what their own long-term needs are. States that haven't been gathering that data are going into making policy blind."

On the Web

Some states are trying new ways of certifying teachers in order to fill slots faster. But this study from the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, "[Is Alternative Certification a Viable Way to Increase the Pool of Minority Teachers?](#)," explains there just isn't enough information yet about these programs to find out how well they work.

Teachers.Net offers a [Career Center](#), including a jobs board to post and view available teaching positions.

In a 1998 report, the Columbia Group--a consortium of southeastern states--took a look at quality standards and incentives for teachers and reported "troubling findings." The full text of the report, "[Quality Standards and Incentives for Teachers](#)," is available for free.

New teachers who work in designated shortage areas may be eligible for student loan deferments, as explained by USA Group.



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Delta Blues

By Ann Bradley

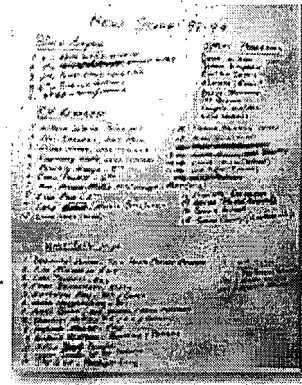
Photos by Benjamin Tice Smith

Webb, Miss.

Read our March/April 1999 special report on the nationwide teacher shortage, "Help Wanted: 2 Million Teachers."

The sheet of white butcher paper tacked to the wall in Reginald Barnes' office says it all.

In neat black marker, the superintendent of Mississippi's West Tallahatchie school district has listed the names and status of the new faces who taught in his schools this year. Some are retired teachers coaxed back into service. Others are long-term substitutes. Still others are brand-new teachers getting their feet wet for a few years. What is certain is that many won't stay.



The 1,500-student district employed 85 teachers this school year, 38 of whom were new to West Tallahatchie. Of those, Barnes estimates that half will be gone by August. Ahead of him stretches a long, hot summer of recruiting, with little to lure teachers to the rural schools but his own energy, commitment, and charm.

From our special report, Quality Counts '99, Mississippi's report card gives scores on several key indicators of accountability. Also read "Keeping Their Promise," an update on education policy in Mississippi.



West Tallahatchie, a struggling district in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, doesn't have much to offer. There are no restaurants to speak of, no entertainment, and nowhere for teachers to live. Many drive 30 or 40 minutes through the cotton fields along Highway 61--the famous route so many blues singers took out of the Delta--to teach here.

When they arrive, teachers find an impoverished community where illiteracy, teenage pregnancy, and welfare dependency are facts of life. For their troubles, they earn \$21,420 to start and, depending on further coursework, top out at \$38,340 after 25 years and a master's degree.

"When you see for yourself what's here--and more importantly, what's not

Our Mississippi
Page includes
articles and
statistics on
education issues
from the past year.

here--you'll see why nobody wants to come here and work," Barnes says. "We are 50 miles from the Mississippi River, and we have kids here who have never seen it--that famous river. These kids are living in Third World conditions."

The entire Delta region suffers from constant faculty turnover and a lack of qualified applicants.

Sad as the situation is in West Tallahatchie, its woes aren't unusual. The entire Delta region suffers from constant faculty turnover and a lack of qualified applicants so severe that last year, the state legislature enacted the Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act. The measure provides scholarships, grants, home loans, and moving expenses for teachers willing to work in the Delta and other designated shortage areas.

The Delta, in the northwest part of the state along the Mississippi River, is actually an alluvial plain of fertile farmland stretching 220 miles from Memphis, Tenn., to Vicksburg, Miss. Once planted mostly in "King Cotton," the land now also yields soybeans and corn. The Delta was home to hundreds of thousands of black sharecroppers, many of whom left for Chicago, Detroit, and other industrial cities after World War I. Today, it remains one of the poorest regions in the nation. The average household income in the West Tallahatchie district, centered in the tiny town of Webb, is \$5,800 a year.

Lawmakers were galvanized to act by reports written by the Public Education Forum of Mississippi, a Jackson-based coalition of business, government, and education leaders. The coalition turned its attention to the state's teacher force in 1996, when a blue-ribbon national panel stressed that teachers were the key to school improvement.

Mississippi faces enormous hurdles, the state panel found, in attracting, supporting, and keeping well-qualified teachers and principals. Among the problems are low salaries, an aging workforce, an undersupply of new teachers, and high levels of attrition among teachers, who complain of poor student discipline and a lack of respect. It doesn't help that Mississippi students perennially score at or near the bottom in national test rankings.

In addressing the crisis, Mississippi has to compete with neighboring states that pay more and are also aggressively tackling teacher-quality issues. At a time when the United States is projected to need more than 2 million new teachers in the next decade, this state is up against the wall.

To fill classrooms, policymakers are now modifying practices that have served as barriers to hiring teachers. Richard Thompson, the state superintendent of public instruction, knows the changes leave Mississippi open to charges of lowering standards.

"It's one of the toughest things in the world," he says during a recent tour of West Tallahatchie's schools. "I know that a qualified, certified teacher in every classroom is the way we need to go. In reality, I've got 420 vacancies."

That's the number of teachers, out of a workforce of 29,000, that

Mississippi schools were short when they opened last fall. Besides the Delta, state officials say, Jackson, the state capital, is also particularly plagued by teacher shortages.

The housing situation here in the West Tallahatchie district is dire enough that the Critical Teacher Shortage Act includes a \$200,000 low-interest loan to a developer for construction of rental apartments for teachers. The apartments, the first of their kind in the state, are to be built this summer on land behind West Tallahatchie High School.

Superintendent Barnes, a well-known agitator for change in the Delta, doesn't spend much time at the district-owned house provided for him. The brick, ranch-style home with peeling trim is adjacent to the high school, next door to a similar dwelling for the high school principal. Nearby is a baseball field that students built themselves.

The energetic superintendent is as likely to be found in bluejeans on a riding mower, cutting the grass around the tidy administration building, as in a shirt and tie. His domain includes the high school and two elementary schools, which will be consolidated this summer when tiny Black Bayou Elementary is closed.



Superintendent Reginald Barnes has to work overtime to lure teachers to his district, where "kids are living in Third World conditions."

Barnes' determination to improve children's lives has paid off during his five years here. In February, after nine years on academic probation, the district celebrated earning a score of 2 under Mississippi's accountability system. The climb from a 1, the lowest score on a 5-point scale, was a major achievement.

Still, the district remains under state oversight and must follow a corrective-action plan.

During Barnes' tenure, the graduation rate has shot up to 75 percent from 43 percent. But only about 10 percent of graduates go on to college, and many of those students are home by Christmas, the superintendent says.

Instead of being able to count on a qualified workforce, Barnes is forced to patch together a makeshift lineup. He drafts retired teachers into service, although they can only work part time without jeopardizing their state pensions. College graduates teach at the high school in exchange for a free master's degree, courtesy of the state's new teacher-fellowship program. Long-term substitutes handle other classes.

And sometimes, teachers arrive from states with tight job markets, looking for a chance to get experience--and perhaps do a little good--before moving closer to home.

When they arrive, teachers find an impoverished community where illiteracy, teenage pregnancy, and welfare dependency are facts of life.

"This critical teacher shortage is more of a problem than people can imagine," says Barnes, who is forced to recruit year round. "It scares me

to death. You cannot stop any academic woes without a certified teacher in the classroom. Where does it stop?"

In December, he lost six teachers, forcing him to spend his entire Christmas break looking for replacements. A few months later, a 2nd grade teacher quit in her first year and went back home to Tennessee, leaving him with a class of 26 children being supervised by a teaching assistant.

Eventually, Barnes found Sandra Conway, who is working under an emergency license, to finish out the school year. A licensed computer teacher who will move to the high school in the fall, Conway had never before taught elementary school.

"I just started calling schools in the Yellow Pages," she says of the job search that landed her at West Tallahatchie's R.H. Bearden Elementary School. Barnes "was like, 'Get down here in the morning.'"

In December, Barnes lost six teachers, forcing him to spend his entire Christmas break looking for replacements.

Conway, the mother of a teenage daughter, lives in Greenwood, a city of 30,000 some 30 miles from the school. "I couldn't stand to live here," she says, lamenting the lack of housing and restaurants in the local community. "It's horrible."

Barnes haunts job fairs, of course, which is where he snapped up Levi Shavers Jr., a former high school teacher in England, Ark.

Shavers, 38, had never set foot in Mississippi, and he knew that the Delta was a world unto itself. Still, he was willing to give it a try. Each weekday, he rises before sunup to drive 30 miles from his apartment in Clarksdale to Bearden Elementary, where he serves as assistant principal.

"At this school, we have some of the finest students," says Shavers, one of 19 staff members who are new this year. "I was very delighted when we got off academic probation."

In addition to Shavers, Bearden has a new principal. Willena White is a veteran, though, of Delta schools and knows how hard it can be for new teachers to adjust.

Take Molly Barton, a 1998 graduate of the Mississippi University for Women. Before she arrived this year, the school had no art teacher. White says she plans to hang on to Barton "like lifeblood," but knows the young teacher isn't accustomed to the culture quite yet.

For one thing, Barton was shocked to see inmates in green- and white-striped pants mowing the lawn and making repairs around the school, which is sorely in need of renovation. The inmates, overseen by the district's maintenance supervisor, are an irresistible source of free labor.

"I didn't expect to work with prisoners," says Barton, a native of Louisville in eastern Mississippi. "It's not like this on the other side of the state."

Still, it was the best job she could find near Cleveland, Miss., where her husband is a physical education teacher.

When asked about the use of prisoners, Superintendent Barnes says he would rather not have such influences around children. But he points out that the inmates are nonviolent offenders who live at satellite sites of the state penitentiary and work for government agencies as part of their transition from prison life.

Paddles also are ubiquitous here. Teachers watch over recess with paddles in hand. White has one on her desk, its handle thickly wrapped with tape.

"If you've got a community with a tradition of paddling, and if you don't paddle, they think they've done nothing wrong," the elementary school principal says of her students. "We had a new teacher from out of state who came to the Delta, and she cried and said, 'I cannot do it.' I said, 'Then they will paddle you.' You have to do it to survive."

Discipline, in fact, appears to take up a large share of teachers' time.

Herma S. Floyd, who retired in 1992 after 31 years of teaching, complains that "the children are out of control." Floyd stepped in to teach social studies, mathematics, and Mississippi history at Bearden in January. Her students had another retired teacher last fall.

"They haven't had a teacher for this class for the whole year," Floyd says. "If you could keep one for the whole year, it would make it better."

The "bat cave" of cardboard and beanbag chairs in Lori Kolbicka's 2nd grade classroom stands out at Bearden as a bright, child-friendly spot where young readers can curl up with good books.

Kolbicka and her husband, a 5th grade science teacher at the school, loaded up a U-Haul last year and drove from Pennsylvania to Webb to teach. They graduated two years ago from King's College in Wilkes-Barre and sent out hundreds of applications, only to meet with rejection in that teacher-saturated state.

"Where we were, everyone put their engagement picture in the paper," Kolbicka says. "People with education degrees were hostesses at Friendly's or working at Wal-Mart. People would sub 10 years with no permanent job."

Determined not to meet the same fate, Kolbicka decided to make an adventure of her first years of teaching. The deciding factor was Barnes, who convinced the young teachers that they could make a difference and hone their talents in the Delta.

The couple beat 10 other interested renters to land a house in Webb. They're planning to stay at least another year before seeking jobs closer to home.



'Because the children are so needy and the turnover is so high, if you are a good teacher, you can be such a part of the school.'

Lori Kolbicka,
2nd grade teacher,
Bearden Elementary School

"Because the children are so needy and the turnover is so high, if you are a good teacher, you can be such a part of the school," Kolbicka says of her time here. "We've had experiences being on committees and going to different training that we never would have had."

One thing Kolbicka would like to change is the play area behind the school. Recess is a dusty scuffle out on the grass--except when rain floods the field. There is no blacktop painted with hopscotch squares, no swings, no basketball hoops, no jungle gyms. Teachers have started raising money to buy equipment, but are daunted by the four-figure price tag.

Her colleague, Margaret Turner, supervises recess with a paddle she calls her warning stick. Turner, whose husband manages a farm in nearby Mentor City, considers herself lucky.

"The only teachers we can keep are the ones who are settled and live in this area," she says. "Teachers from out of the state don't stay."

The turnover makes Rosemary Wolfe's job as a lead teacher all the more important.

Wolfe, a 21-year veteran who came to work at Bearden Elementary this year from a neighboring district, observes classes, helps teachers, and provides professional development.

"When you put things in place and then teachers leave," she says, "that's just like starting all over again."

One staff member who won't be back next year is Chris Powell, 26, who has been at Bearden just one year. Powell, an English teacher from Jackson, is heading for law school, where he won't have to contend with the tree frogs, mice, and wasps that invade his classroom here.

To him, the solution to Mississippi's teacher blues is simple: Raise their pay.

"It really pisses me off that these folks around here talk about accountability, and that these kids aren't getting educated because we're not holding the teachers accountable," Powell says as his students plow through J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. "These same folks believe so strongly in basic economics and supply and demand. Yet they can't see that if you raise the pay, you will get more than enough teachers--enough so you can fire folks you don't want."

If retired teachers provide the glue that holds Bearden Elementary School

together, then West Tallahatchie High School's equivalent is its teacher-fellows. The college graduates, teaching in the fields in which they majored, are earning free master's degrees in exchange for working in the Delta.

Erica Brusselars, 22, a math major from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, found herself counting the remaining weeks of school. Still, teaching is much easier than it was in the fall, she says, because most of the real troublemakers have been expelled or dropped out.

Brusselars was game to live in rural Mississippi, especially if she could get experience and earn a master's in curriculum and instruction from the University of Mississippi. She shares a quaint white farmhouse, owned by a local judge, with Lori Trussell, 24, a Vicksburg native who earned a communications degree from Tulane University.

The young women lived in Clarksdale--"that just killed us," Brusselars says--before lucking into their rental arrangement in February.

On weekends, when they're not taking classes, the two keep themselves busy baking, gardening, and reading. They laugh as they argue about whether Brusselars recently "trimmed" the shrubs or mowed them down.

Luck also befell a social studies teacher at the high school, a former police officer. She was living in a trailer in Philipp before Lenagene Waldrup, West Tallahatchie's tech-prep coordinator, offered to rent the teacher her deceased mother's house. "I need to tell Reggie [Barnes] I'm doing my part to keep teachers," Waldrup quips.

For Jay Gee, 31, accommodations aren't an issue. He lives with his family, who run Gee's grocery store on the main road. Gee, who went to college at 16 and has a doctorate in biochemistry, says he returned home to teach for personal reasons.

Superintendent Barnes is thrilled to have him. Gee, who teaches French 1 and Spanish 1, is the high school's only foreign-language teacher. West Tallahatchie High offers some 46 courses, including all those required for college entrance, but it's a paltry menu compared with better-off districts, whose high schools boast as many as 170 courses.

"It's been kind of tough struggling with discipline and dealing with adolescents, but I'm picking that up," Gee says.

He sticks to a basic routine in class of vocabulary and grammar drills. The Spanish textbook is out of print, and there aren't enough French books for students to take them home. Nor is there a lab where the Delta residents could hear a native speaker pronounce the languages.

"My Spanish was pretty rusty," admits Gee, who has traveled extensively. "But I decided to try it."

Short of encouraging students here to consider careers in teaching--an effort that is just beginning--it isn't clear how West Tallahatchie and Mississippi's other isolated, rural districts will attract and keep qualified teachers.

The Mississippi Teacher Center does its share by running a World Wide

Web site listing vacancies throughout the state and helping to match applicants with districts. The teacher center, a division of the state education department, also administers the programs created by the teacher-shortage act.

Currently, 50 teachers from 27 districts are pursuing master's degrees in exchange for teaching in a shortage area for three years. Another 278 students have received college scholarships in exchange for a commitment to teach where they're needed most, also for three years.

In addition, the legislature this spring approved an 8 percent raise for teachers, part of an effort to make salaries competitive with those of other Southern states. The state already pays teachers who become certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards an extra \$6,000 a year--the biggest such incentive offered by any state.

But the state still faces an "enormous challenge," says William Lewis, the executive director of the Public Education Forum of Mississippi.

Through a series of reports, the forum is "trying to build that awareness of the critical state we've gotten ourselves into," he says. "The overriding concern, over and over again, was the severe deficit that we have in our compensation for teachers and administrators."

The average teacher salary in Mississippi is \$27,720 a year, the forum found, compared with \$32,947 for the Southeast and \$38,611 nationally.

Mississippi historically has invested little in teachers and is now taking "remarkable" steps to turn around that neglect, says Barnett Barry, the director of the Southeast office of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. That panel's report three years ago underscored the crucial importance of teacher quality.

"You don't pull yourself out of a deep hole in one fell swoop," Barry says. "The state is real close to building a nice set of strategies that can work over the long haul."

But more needs to be done, he says, including providing intensive training for teachers working outside their fields of licensure and raising the pay of teachers willing to work in the Delta.

Meanwhile, Mississippi policymakers are taking a hard look at rules that they believe contribute to the shortage.

State law prohibited districts from paying uncertified teachers with state money, which forced them to dip into scarce local funds. During the 1995-96 school year, Barnes spent \$111,000 of local money--or one-fifth of his budget--on long-term substitutes. The West Tallahatchie district has such a meager tax base that it can offer teachers only a \$275 annual supplement above the state's base pay. Wealthier Mississippi districts add up to \$5,000 more.

At the same time, the state's accountability rules require districts to spend a specified amount on their libraries and other facilities.

"It's like slapping you on the wrist and then slapping you in the face," Barnes says.

Correction: The name of the director of the Southeast office of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future was misspelled. The correct spelling is Barnett Berry.

Thompson, the state superintendent, says the policy forbidding payment of uncertified teachers with state money forced districts to turn away trained teachers who had failed to pass the state licensing test by just a few points. Now, with the approval of the state board of education, districts in shortage areas may pay unlicensed teachers with state money, provided the teachers have college degrees.

Similarly, Mississippi had required its teacher colleges to ensure that 90 percent of their students passed the licensing test--one of the highest standards in the country. Colleges were postponing student teaching to get people over that hurdle, Thompson says, which wasn't sound practice. Now, he says, the standard is being "adjusted" to 80 percent.

Finally, the education department is asking the legislature to consider allowing retired teachers to work a full year without losing pension benefits. Also under way is a pilot teacher-mentoring program; the mentoring program already on the books is unsubsidized.

In a state with hundreds of vacancies, 560 long-term substitutes, and 700 emergency licenses, the changes seem to make sense.

"We don't think we're lowering the standards," Thompson says. "We're dealing with the reality of the situation."

For his part, Barnes calls the state's efforts to recruit more teachers "no guarantee."

"I'm wanting to be optimistic," the West Tallahatchie superintendent says, "but I am forced to look at things differently than districts that don't have a problem recruiting certified people."

On the Web

Read the report, *Teachers Teaching in the Southeast*, from the Columbia Group, a partnership of eight organizations focused on school reform in the Southeast. Includes "The Status of Teaching in the Southeast Today: Where Are We?"

Also from the Columbia Group, information about the Public Education Forum of Mississippi, including information on the Educator Pipeline Initiative.

Scholarships are available from the Mississippi Teacher Fellowship Program in exchange for employment in Mississippi's geographical shortage areas. From the Mississippi Teacher Center.

Read Fall 1998 Mississippi statewide testing data, from the Mississippi Department of Education. Also read criteria and procedures for licensure in Mississippi.

A synopsis of the Mississippi Board of Education Proposed Assessment and Accreditation System.

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Vol. 18, number 37, page 24-29



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125 teacher bonuses proposed

State expands recruiting effort

By Associated Press, 10/19/99

The state plans to offer 125 signing bonuses of \$20,000 to qualified new teachers next year, up from 59 bonuses offered to those who began teaching in Massachusetts classrooms this fall.

The signing bonus, considered the most aggressive state teacher-recruitment campaign in the country, went into effect with a \$60 million endowment in August 1998.

Last year, 800 people from 36 states and four countries applied for the bonus program. Forty-one percent of the first year's bonus recipients were mid-career professionals entering teaching for the first time. They came from fields including law, engineering, journalism, and television production.

Recruitment for the new group has already begun. State officials traveled to California last week and were heading to Delaware and Pennsylvania this week.

Recruitment sessions were also planned for the University of Massachusetts at Amherst today at 5 p.m. and for UMass-Lowell Thursday at 6 p.m.

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The bonus program for new teachers has also been expanded to include another 125 individuals. While they won't be eligible for the cash, they will be given scholarships to a seven-week training program. Another 250 qualified candidates will be admitted to the \$2,500 training program, the cost of which can be paid by the candidate or a sponsoring school district.

The state is looking to recruit up to 500 new teachers, especially math, science, and foreign-language educators.

"There is an impending shortage of outstanding teachers, and the Massachusetts Department of Education is on the national trail to find the most outstanding candidates to strengthen our teaching force," said David Driscoll, education commissioner.

To be eligible for the bonus, applicants need to meet at least one of the following criteria: ranking in the top 10 percent of the graduating class; a minimum 3.5 grade point average in the major; a minimum 3.5 grade point average overall; ranking in the top 10th percentile in a nationally recognized exam; or nomination by the dean of the college or university they attend.

Mid-career professionals and leaders are eligible based on work experience.

Sections

PAGE ONE

NATION | WORLD

METRO | REGION

BUSINESS

SPORTS

LIVING | ARTS

EDITORIALS | OP-ED

Weekly

[Health | Science \(Mon.\)](#)

[Food \(Wed.\)](#)

[Calendar \(Thu.\)](#)

[At Home \(Thu.\)](#)

[Picture This \(Fri.\)](#)

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[South Weekly](#)

[West Weekly](#)

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[NorthWest Weekly](#)

[NH Weekly](#)

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[Archives](#)

[Book Reviews](#)

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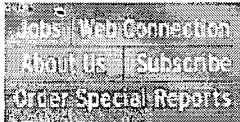
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[Weather](#)

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March 2000

Salaries: Us Vs. Them

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"[The Salary Gap.](#)" from *Quality Counts 2000: Who Should Teach?*

Education Week analyzed U.S. Census Bureau earnings data and confirmed what's long been suspected: Teachers make less than other college-educated workers—a lot less. From 1994 to 1998, for example, the average salary for teachers with a master's degree climbed all of \$200, after adjusting for inflation. During that time, the average pay for other workers with the same credentials jumped \$17,505.

Here is *Education Week's* state-by-state comparison of the salaries of teachers—both public and private—with other workers. The pay of teachers and nonteachers with a bachelor's degree is compared first, then the salaries of those with a master's. In each case, we've added a ranking, assigning "1" to the state where the salary gap between teachers is the smallest, based on percentage differences.

	Bachelor's degree			Master's Degree		
	Teachers	Others	Rank	Teachers	Others	Rank
Alabama	\$32,104	\$44,391	25	\$37,041	\$65,699	43
Alaska	\$29,113	\$33,850	5	\$41,666	\$51,850	2
Arizona	\$28,106	\$43,051	43	\$37,771	\$60,808	35
Arkansas	\$27,572	\$38,942	29	\$37,035	\$59,433	34
California	\$30,332	\$39,673	19	\$37,274	\$57,740	25
Colorado	\$24,475	\$41,138	47	\$37,579	\$59,895	32
Connecticut	\$33,086	\$37,818	3	\$42,516	\$61,424	15
Delaware	\$28,929	\$42,456	37	\$42,489	\$55,668	18
D.C.	n/a	\$31,485	—	\$36,973	\$54,026	3
Florida	\$31,645	\$41,801	21	\$39,034	\$62,403	33
Georgia	\$31,011	\$44,422	33	\$38,730	\$63,226	38
Hawaii	\$26,445	\$29,903	1	\$25,132	\$45,137	44
Idaho	\$27,733	\$39,973	35	\$35,813	\$54,707	35
Illinois	\$30,519	\$45,391	40	\$43,258	\$64,146	19
Indiana	n/a	\$43,484	—	\$45,309	\$65,641	16
Iowa	\$30,296	\$39,137	16	\$40,306	\$65,077	36
Kansas	\$27,819	\$41,745	41	\$39,434	\$61,667	29
Kentucky	\$26,568	\$45,036	48	\$39,324	\$73,201	49
Louisiana	\$26,612	\$46,058	49	\$32,270	\$67,880	50
Maine	\$27,214	\$38,444	30	n/a	\$53,200	—
Maryland	\$28,980	\$42,326	36	\$40,905	\$58,045	11
Massachusetts	\$28,075	\$38,438	22	\$36,362	\$56,587	27

Michigan	\$36,359	\$46,643	15	\$51,562	\$68,794	5
Minnesota	\$31,599	\$41,657	20	\$47,756	\$65,360	7
Mississippi	\$27,606	\$40,917	39	\$34,810	\$58,116	39
Missouri	\$26,889	\$38,471	32	\$36,502	\$55,221	21
Montana	\$28,341	\$32,105	2	\$39,496	\$43,417	1
Nebraska	\$28,174	\$39,577	28	\$40,197	\$57,891	14
Nevada	\$29,989	\$41,731	26	\$40,802	\$63,387	26
New Hampshire	\$31,352	\$40,747	18	\$34,849	\$55,400	31
New Jersey	\$34,567	\$42,814	13	\$43,375	\$62,042	13
New Mexico	\$25,796	\$37,105	34	\$33,518	\$54,343	37
New York	\$30,400	\$41,851	23	\$41,831	\$60,887	17
North Carolina	\$26,149	\$40,185	44	\$31,860	\$58,387	47
North Dakota	\$26,830	\$32,937	9	\$36,349	\$55,425	23
Ohio	\$32,410	\$44,961	42	\$34,710	\$62,922	41
Oklahoma	\$29,886	\$44,961	42	\$34,710	\$62,922	45
Oregon	\$32,978	\$40,399	8	\$41,011	\$56,613	9
Pennsylvania	\$35,218	\$42,596	6	\$45,692	\$67,894	20
Rhode Island	\$31,734	\$39,131	11	\$40,389	\$57,342	12
South Carolina	\$29,812	\$46,123	45	\$38,594	\$60,590	30
South Dakota	\$27,091	\$35,140	17	\$38,267	\$58,103	22
Tennessee	\$29,167	\$46,740	46	\$37,665	\$69,545	48
Texas	\$32,390	\$47,804	38	\$41,420	\$75,136	46
Utah	\$29,464	\$41,283	27	\$36,203	\$61,090	40
Vermont	\$30,409	\$34,891	4	\$37,490	\$50,602	6
Virginia	\$30,660	\$43,644	31	\$39,048	\$67,442	42
Washington	\$33,172	\$40,839	10	\$40,050	\$56,116	10
West Virginia	\$30,994	\$39,131	14	\$37,328	\$58,261	28
Wisconsin	\$34,839	\$43,141	12	\$48,057	\$65,881	8
Wyoming	\$29,109	\$35,384	7	\$36,910	\$48,596	4
U.S.	\$30,074	\$43,075	—	\$40,703	\$63,483	—

Data in the table are averages from annual surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau 1992-99. All figures have been adjusted using a cost of living index developed by the American Federation of Teachers.

Education Week worked on this analysis with Martha Scobee of the University of Louisville's Kentucky Data Center.

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Vol. 11; number 06; page 27