

PROJECT SUMMARY AND STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Title: Turnover’s Impact on Montana Students: Does professional learning for teachers reduce learning loss for students?

Competition: Using Longitudinal Data to Support State Education Policymaking (84.305S).

Project Summary

Purpose: Data on educator mobility is impacted by teachers’ perceptions and attitudes culminating in the choice to leave. This choice has a variety of impacts, including the costs to students evidenced by changes in student outcomes. Perceptions and attitudes of educators are, in part, influenced by the support an educator feels they have within the school community. One area of support is the instructional coaching provided to teachers and the unique role of the principal as coach/mentor. This can and does have an impact on an educator’s choice to leave (an important teaching behavior). We will investigate conditions in schools with large numbers of economically disadvantaged (disadvantaged) students.

The logic of these relationships is as follows: we should investigate if educators that receive more support from their school community are more likely to stay. If they leave, there may be a differential impact on students (the cost to the student) as seen in the variation in student outcomes because of turnover. This condition, acknowledged to be a learning loss, is a permanent fixture of the education system; however, there are important spatial, temporal, and economic components that show that turnover has increased costs to students in different geographies, points in time, and among schools classified as Title I.

Analysis of turnover is a policy priority of the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) insofar as it frames our educator coaching, retention, and recruiting efforts. Understanding the outcomes of mobility, and its impact on students, is the first step to identifying effective coaching, recruitment, and retention policies with a system-wide impact.

We gain feedback from teachers, instructional coaches, and school leadership. The problem — the impact turnover has on student learning and how instructional coaching and mentorship may mediate it — will be explored through four research questions using a quasi-experimental approach confirmed by a mixed-methods protocol:

1. What is the landscape of educator turnover in Montana? (*descriptive/predictive evidence*)
2. To what extent does teacher turnover impact student outcomes in Montana? (*predictive/casual evidence*)
3. Does instructional coaching and mentorship lessen the impact of teacher turnover on student outcomes by influencing the decision to leave? (*descriptive/predictive evidence*)
4. How may research findings inform emerging needs of policymakers? (*sustainability*)

Project Activities: Our research will be completed in three stages. The first phase was presented to the Education Interim Committee in June 2024 as supporting evidence for the discussion about teacher salaries. The second stage of the dissemination will occur following the analysis of the FY18 – FY24 teacher cohort data during Year 1 of the grant (landscape). The third stage will involve finalizing the analysis and reporting in Year 3.

Products: We propose three final products for this research study: a technical report and white paper submitted by the SLDS to the Legislature, OPI leadership, and the National Center for

Education Research (NCER); practitioner or research peer-reviewed articles produced by the SLDS and research partners; and technical presentations to a variety of research and practitioner audiences.

Structured Abstract

Setting: All schools in Montana are included in the study, with a focus on comparisons within disadvantaged school communities. We look at trends in neighborhood poverty as an indication of spatial and economic differentiation.

Population/Sample: School level analysis is important when analyzing turnover for teachers in small schools. In small schools, a teacher is often not assigned to a specific grade. Grade-level analysis will focus on grades three through eight. Turnover trends will be analyzed based on each school's Identified Student Percentage (direct certification).

Comparisons: Data will be analyzed based on time in the profession and position. The impact of turnover for teachers who report that they felt supported by instructional coaching will be compared to teachers who report that they did not feel supported by instructional coaching. The incidence of principal turnover will be compared for two populations: those principals who reported they intensively engaged in instructional coaching and those that did not.

Key Measures: Student proficiency and achievement scores (by school and grade level), attendance rates (days present/days enrolled), discipline (in school and out of school suspensions), and promotion rates will all be measured. Educator status, including licensure, endorsements, endorsement in subject area tested, time in position, time certified in Montana, highest level of education obtained, and salaries will also be noted.

Data Analytic Strategy: In a quasi-experimental model, we examine the association between educator mobility and variations in student outcomes. A mixed-methods approach will explore data from leadership, teachers, and instructional coaches in Title I schools to better understand the educator shortage phenomena and its impact on student learning.

Related IES Projects:

Kraft, M. (2017). *Exploring Competing Theories of How Teacher Accountability Reforms Affect Teacher Labor Markets and Student Achievement*.

<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=2072>.

Wang, M. (2022). *COVID-19 Adapted Schooling and Adolescents' Academic and Socioemotional Adjustment*. <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=5781>.

Wyckoff, J. (2014). *Examining the Effects of IMPACT on Students Achievement: DCPS-UVA' Research Partnership*. <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=1486>.