



Recruitment and Retention: A Literature Synthesis to Inform the TFA Educator Fellows Program

Madeline Mavrogordato, Ph.D.


Katharine O. Strunk, Ph.D.

**Research Assistants: Emma Taylor, Cristina
Stanojevich, Alex Handler**

College of Education | Michigan State University

Overview

- Preliminary considerations
- Background on teacher supply nationally and in Michigan
- Theory underpinning recruitment and retention efforts
- Consider the literature on recruitment and retention using **3 guiding questions:**
 - What strategies have been shown to shape teacher recruitment and retention?
 - What other conditions shape the outcomes of recruitment and retention efforts?
 - What ideas emerge from the recruitment and retention literature that can inform the TFA fellowship design?



What matters most for poverty-dense schools and communities?

A Few Preliminary Considerations

- Successful school reform and educational equity depend on recruiting and retaining high-impact teachers to serve in the lowest performing schools (Dee, 2012; Henry et al., 2020; Papay & Hannon, 2018; Strunk et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2017)
- Expanding educational opportunity for historically (and currently) marginalized student groups depends on having a supply of teachers:
 - in schools that serve marginalized student groups
 - who are high-impact when it comes to serving these particular groups of students
- BUT...we have both a) a shortage of teachers generally, and b) an even greater shortage of teachers in "more challenging" schools and districts
- And...high-performing teachers tend to leave low-performing schools at higher rates than their teacher peers who do not perform as well (Guarino et al., 2006; Hanushek et al., 2004; Hughes, 2012; Redding & Henry, 2018)

Background: Costs of Instability in the Teacher Workforce

- **Student learning costs**

- An insufficient supply of teachers makes it more difficult for students to learn (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Ladd & Sorensen 2016)
- Instability in a school's teacher workforce due to teacher turnover and teacher attrition has a negative impact on student achievement and diminishes teacher effectiveness and quality (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff 2013; Jackson & Bruegmann 2009; Kraft & Papay 2014; Sorensen & Ladd 2018)

- **Economic costs**

- The cost to fill a teacher vacancy is \$21,000 on average (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Learning Policy Institute, 2017).
- About 15 years ago, the total annual cost of teacher turnover was estimated to be \$7.3 billion per year and would exceed \$8 billion now (Carrol, 2007; Strauss, 2017)
- Teacher turnover consumes resources that could be better deployed elsewhere (i.e., through costs of recruiting and training new teachers) (García & Weiss, 2020)

Background: Teacher Supply Nationally

- The gap between the number of qualified teachers needed and the number available for hire in the 2017–2018 school year was about 110,000 teachers (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016)
- There are at least 163,000 teaching positions are being held by underqualified teachers, disproportionately in schools that serve high rates of students of color and poverty-dense schools (Nguyen, Lam & Bruno, 2022)
- All 50 states report shortages, especially in special education, science and math (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023)

Background: Teacher Supply Nationally

- There are strong signals that this problem will only worsen (Darling-Hammond, 2023)
 - Shortages have led districts to shift their operations (e.g., combining classes, cancelling courses, and asking teachers to take on additional duties)
 - Teachers are reporting higher levels of burnout and stress
 - More teachers retired and resigned through the pandemic
 - Pipeline of incoming educators continues to decline, down by 1/3+ between 2008 to 2019

The pandemic has turned a periodic blaze into a five-alarm fire.
-Linda Darling-Hammond et al., 2023



Background: Teacher Supply in Michigan

As an example, if you post a math or science position, you're lucky to get one or two applicants, and that's not typical.
-Superintendent Casey Petz, Suttons Bay Public Schools



We actually are paying for someone's master's degree in special education.
-Superintendent Rick Heitmeyer, Kalkaska Public Schools



Background: Teacher Supply in Michigan

Table 4.1. Mobility and Attrition by Subgroup, Fall 2020 to Fall 2021

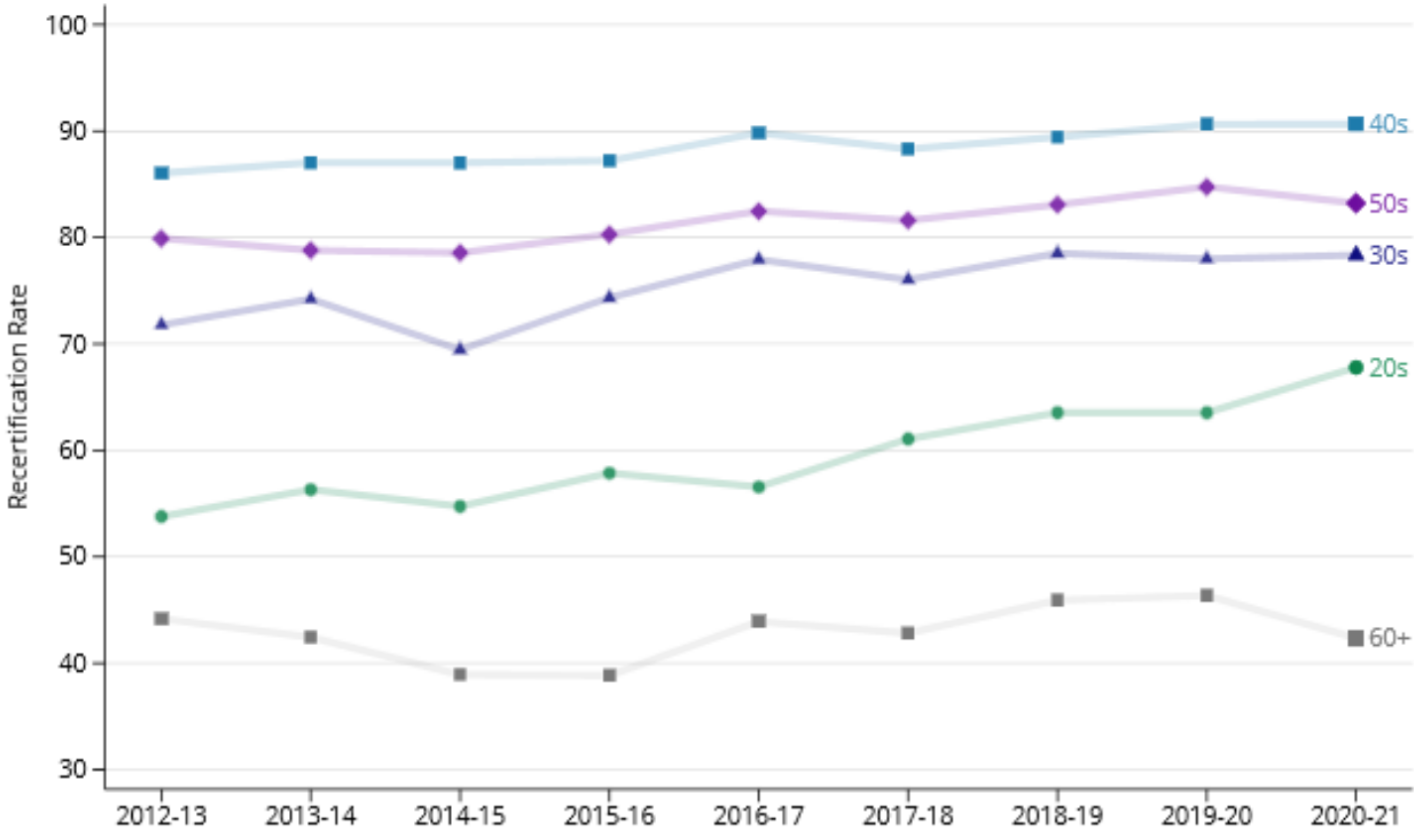
	Percent of teachers who...				
	Exited from teaching	Were in their first year	Were new to their district	Transferred within their district	Transferred to another district
Overall	9.0%	5.2%	7.8%	2.8%	4.3%
BY GENDER					
Female	9.0%	5.2%	7.8%	3.0%	4.4%
Male	9.2%	5.1%	7.7%	2.2%	4.0%
BY RACE/ETHNICITY					
White	8.7%	4.8%	7.4%	2.8%	4.1%
Black	13.7%	8.9%	11.6%	4.1%	5.5%
Latino	10.6%	8.4%	9.5%	2.2%	3.8%
Asian	9.8%	9.9%	12.5%	3.1%	6.8%
Other	8.9%	10.0%	12.6%	2.3%	6.4%
BY YEARS IN PROFESSION					
0-4	11.8%	24.1%	22.9%	2.5%	7.1%
5-9	7.6%	n/a	6.3%	3.0%	6.9%
10-14	6.9%	n/a	4.9%	3.0%	4.8%
15+	8.9%	n/a	2.4%	2.9%	2.0%
BY SCHOOL TYPE					
TPS	8.3%	4.2%	6.7%	3.1%	4.1%
PSA	14.4%	13.5%	17.4%	0.4%	5.5%
BY LOCALE					
Urban	10.2%	6.2%	7.9%	3.1%	3.9%
Suburb/Town	8.5%	4.4%	6.9%	3.2%	4.1%
Rural	9.0%	6.1%	9.0%	1.4%	4.5%

(Kilbride, Strunk, Rogers & Turner, 2023)



Michigan Teacher Recertification Rates

Figure 4.11. Teacher Recertification Rates by Age, All Certificate Holders



Michigan Teacher Recertification Rate

Figure 4.10. Teacher Recertification Rates by Race, All Certificate Holders

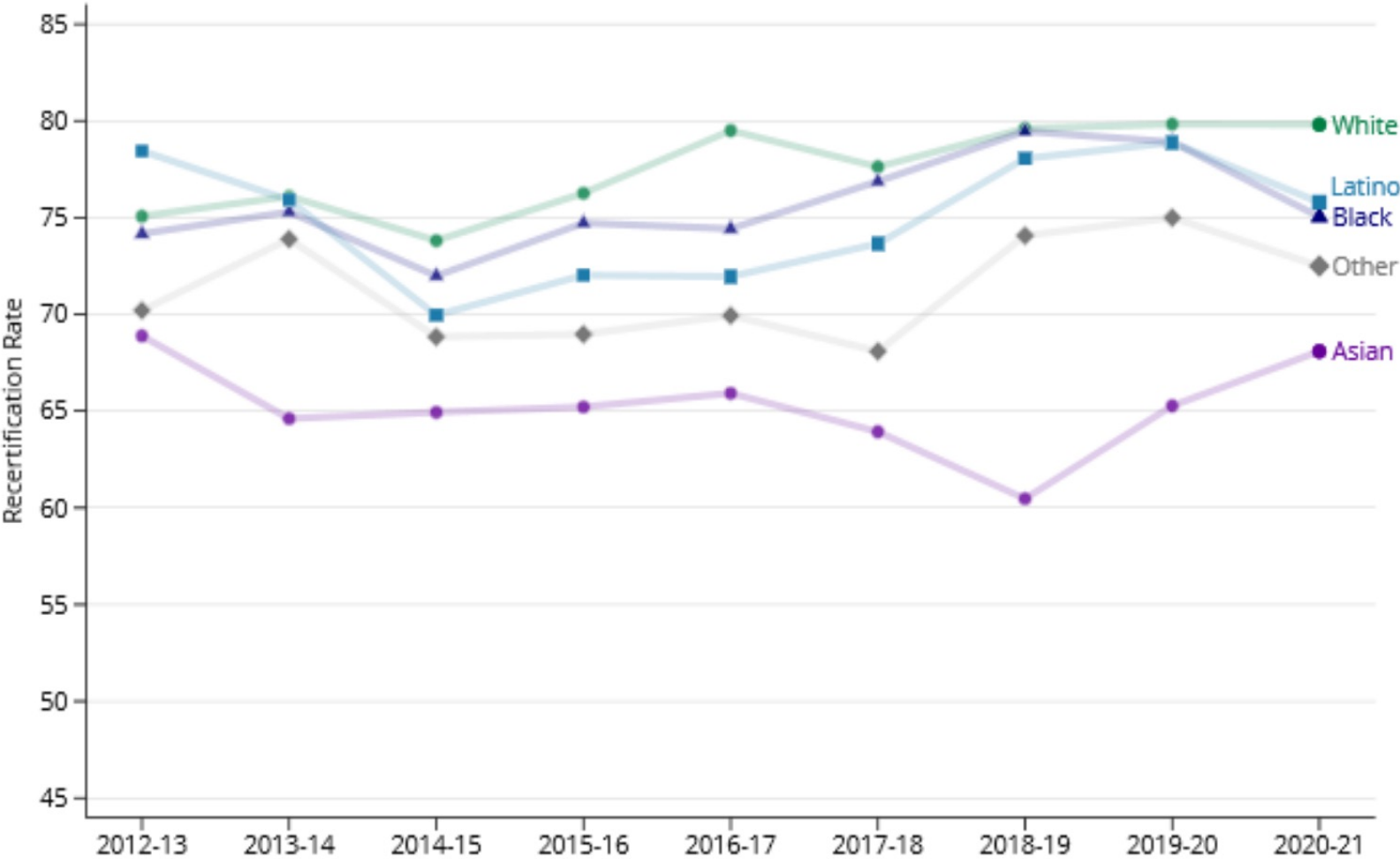
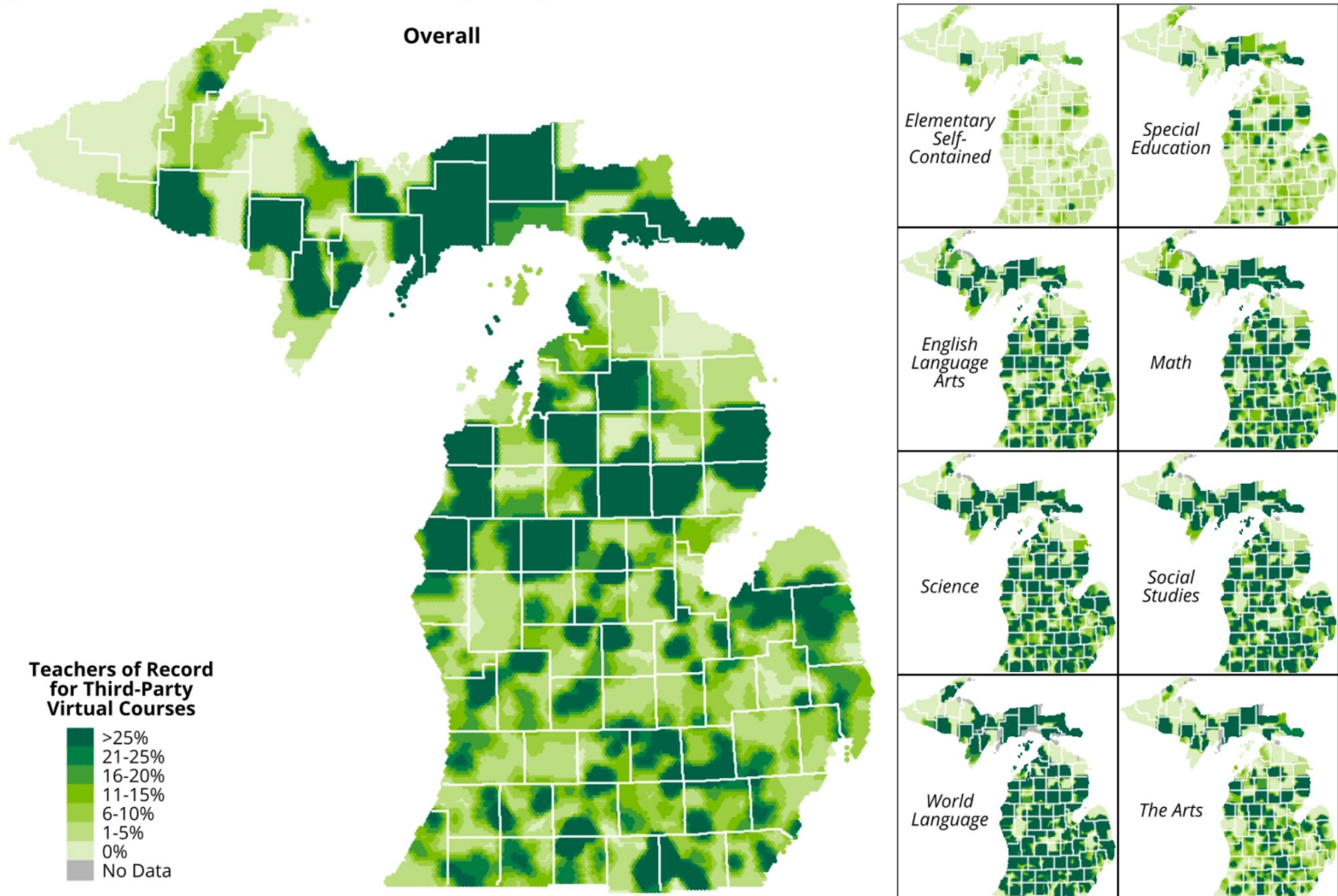


Figure 3.4. Third-Party Virtual Teachers by Geographic Location and Subject Area



Theoretical Underpinning: Using Economic Incentives to Respond to Teacher Staffing Problems

- **Theory of “compensating differentials”**

- This theory suggests that additional compensation can offset otherwise unattractive job characteristics associated with the teaching field or working in a particular district or school and, as a result, entice teachers to take positions they might not typically accept (Milanowski et al., 2009).
- Example: schools with poor working conditions such as undesirable locations or high concentrations of students who may be viewed as difficult-to-teach may need to offer teachers additional compensation to overcome these barriers.
- Likewise, teachers with employment opportunities outside of education also may require additional compensation to fully account for the opportunity costs associated with teaching as opposed to another career.

Types of Economic Incentive Policies

Incentive Categories	Example Policy Types
Salary schedule modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-mandated minimum salary levels • Across-the-board salary increases • Alternative salary schedules • “Frontloaded” or “backloaded” salary schedules
Salary enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary credits • Additional pay for teaching in geographic-or subject-shortage areas • Additional pay for certifications or credentials • Additional pay for extra responsibilities • Tax waivers and credits • Transportation subsidies
Limited duration incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing bonuses • Relocation incentive • Credential or certification bonus • Performance-based rewards • Loan forgiveness • Home ownership assistance
Education-and training-related incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition subsidies and remission • Pre-service teacher scholarships and stipends • Alternative routes to teacher certification • Tuition tax credits
In-kind incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing assistance • Subsidized meals • Access to local amenities
Retirement benefit waivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return-to-work policies • Deferred retirement

Typology for Understanding Teacher Preferences for Teaching Positions

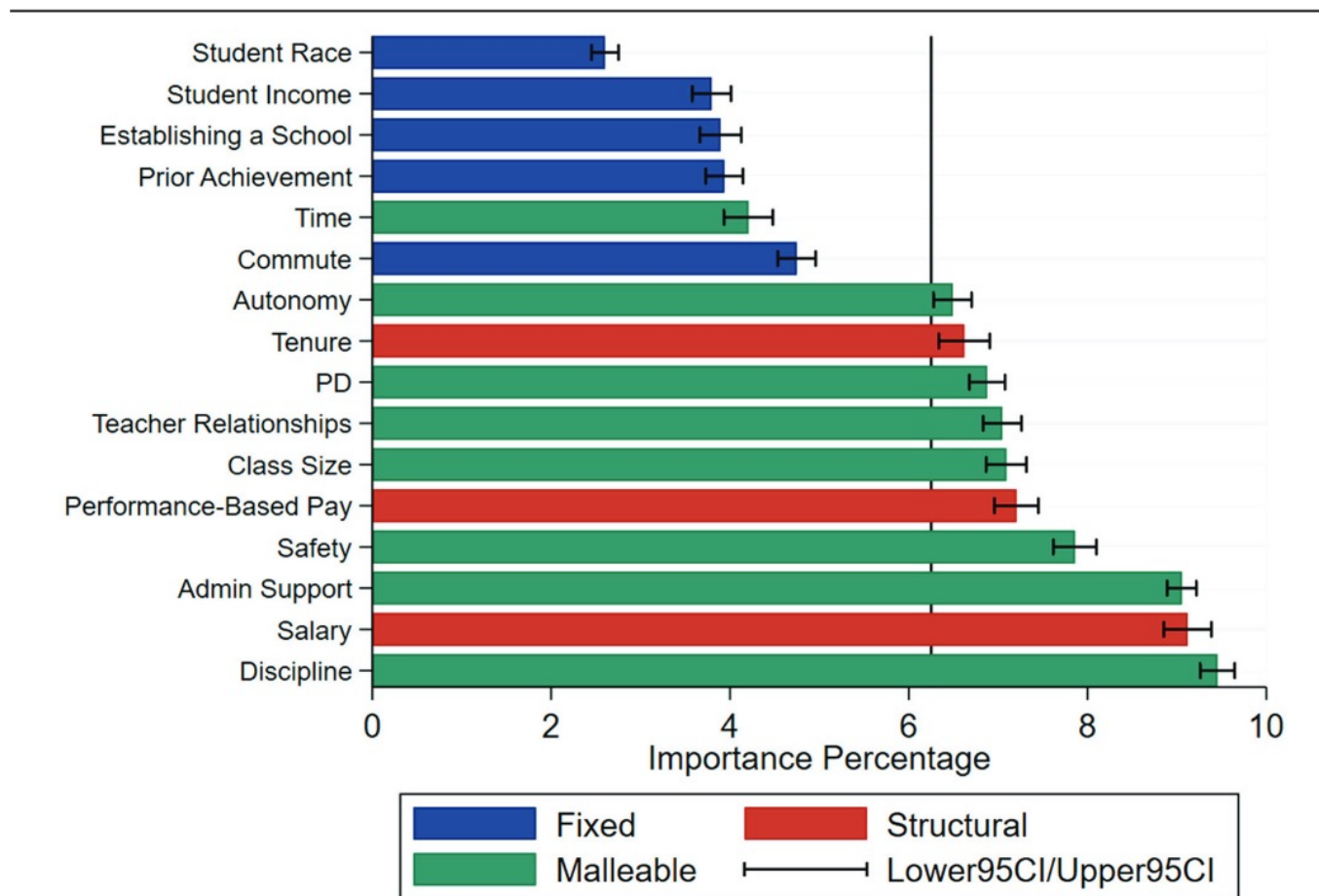
- 3 types of school factors that may attract or repel teachers from certain schools or teaching positions:
 1. **Fixed school characteristics:** Include less readily-altered features that can only be changed over a longer time frame by changing attendance zones or altering student and parent choice mechanisms (e.g., student composition or commute times).
 2. **Structural features of teachers' employment:** Include salary, tenure, and performance-based pay and are generally set for longer periods. These are often subject to regulations and are likely applied to all schools managed by the same organization (e.g., all schools in the same school district).
 3. **Malleable school processes:** Factors for which the locus of control is expected to be within the school and under the control of school administrators. Malleable factors can be changed by school administrators in the short term (e.g., consistent enforcement of student discipline policies).

Teacher Recruitment

- **What strategies have been shown to shape teacher recruitment?**
 - **Financial incentives**
 - Salary enhancements: \$20K incentives (paid over a 2-year period) to get high value-added teachers to transfer and remain in low-performing schools succeeded in recruiting teachers in multiple states (Glazerman et al., 2013)
 - Scholarship: \$20K in scholarships money (\$5,000 per year over 4 years) to attract and retain academically talented, newly licensed teachers to low-performing schools in CA had significant effect on teacher recruitment but did not differentially affect retention among recipients (Steele, Murnane & Willett, 2010)
 - Salary schedule modification: A salary increase (\$500-\$6,300) improved SFUSD's attractiveness within the local teacher labor market and increased both the size and quality of the teacher applicant pool. They also provide evidence that targeted salary increases can improve the quality of new-hires (Hough & Loeb, 2013)

Teacher Recruitment

- **What other conditions shape the success of recruitment efforts?**
 - Attribute importance scores for teachers who have worked in low-performing schools:



Teacher Retention

- **What strategies have been shown to shape teacher retention?**
 - **Financial incentive evaluations**
 - Mixed results on whether financial incentives impact retention.
 - Bonuses of \$1,800 for teachers certified in high need areas (math, science and SpEd) in NC reduced turnover by 17% (Clotfelter et al., 2008)
 - High-performing teachers in tested subject areas in TN's Priority Schools who received \$5K bonus were 20% more likely to remain in their schools when compared to their peers who were just below the cutoff to receive a bonus (Springer, Swain & Rodriguez, 2019)
 - The Talent Transfer Initiative offered high value-added teachers a \$20K bonus paid out over 2 years to transfer and remain in schools with low-average test scores. This increased both transfer and retention of targeted teachers (Glazerman et al., 2013)
 - \$20K in scholarships (\$5,000 per year over 4 years) to attract and retain academically talented, newly licensed teachers to low-performing schools in CA had a significant effect on teacher recruitment but did not impact retention among recipients (Steele, Murnane & Willett, 2009)
 - Note: Incentives work only as long as they are available (See, Morris, Gorard & El Soufi, 2020)



Teacher Retention

- **Financial incentive nuance**

- Researchers have suggested that high-impact teachers require a large pay differential to stay in schools with lower levels of academic performance (Clotfelter et al., 2011)
 - For example, a simulation study estimated that an additional \$10,000 per year in pay for teachers in hard-to-staff schools would improve retention rates to that of teachers in average schools (Feng, 2009)
- However, there are fine lines to walk in terms of the size of the financial incentive.
 - Some research has suggested that large bonuses linked to performance do not lead to higher retention rates because the bonuses serve as a signal that the teachers have the talent to work in a higher performing district or in an industry outside of teaching (Shifrer, López-Turley & Heard, 2018)

Teacher Retention

- **What other conditions shape the success of retention efforts?**
 - **Working conditions and school culture/climate**
 - Teacher perceptions of working conditions predict their plans to leave a school. ~60% of intention to leave school can be explained by working condition perceptions (Ladd, 2011)
 - Teacher collaboration and collegiality, student disciplinary policies, PD quality, expectations for working outside of the school day, and support from school administrators are correlated with teachers' employment decisions and job satisfaction (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2016; Ladd, 2011; Simon et al., 2019).
 - Insufficient planning and collaboration time is predictive of higher planned departure rates for elementary and middle school teachers (Ladd, 2011)
 - Classroom autonomy, including autonomy to choose instructional materials, methods, and assessments is linked to lower turnover (Achinstein et al., 2010; Guarino et al., 2006; Johnson, 2006).
 - Class size and school safety are related to teacher turnover (Horng, 2009; Loeb et al., 2005)

Teacher Retention

- **What other conditions shape the success of retention efforts?**
 - **School leadership**
 - For teachers, quality of school leadership is one of the most important working condition factors.
 - Prior research from MA suggests that higher teacher turnover rates in schools serving high proportions of low-income and minority students could be explained by lower levels of administrative support, poorer teacher relationships, and weaker school cultures (Johnson et al., 2012).
 - More effective principals have lower rates of teacher turnover. Among effective principals, teacher turnover is higher for less effective teachers and lower for more effective teachers. This study highlights school leaders' "strategic retention" of teachers based on teacher performance (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019)

Teacher Recruitment & Retention

- **What ideas emerge from the recruitment and retention literature that can inform the TFA fellowship design?**
 - Consider school leadership when placing fellows
 - District support is not enough; ensure there is school-level support for the fellows
 - School leadership team's priorities: Discipline, safety, PD, autonomy
 - Be mindful of principal turnover
 - Think about clustering fellows
 - Placing fellows in the same building may provide meaningful opportunities to collaborate or tackle a problem collectively, thereby improving school culture
 - Include clear expectations for fellows to positively shape broader working conditions and school culture (and be transparent about this expectation so non-fellows are aware)
 - Provide high-quality PD for teacher teams or whole school
 - Time for collaboration with school leadership and others
 - Opportunities to try innovative practices



**All reference information for literature cited
in this presentation will be included in the
written literature synthesis document.**



Education Policy Innovation Collaborative

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

236 Erickson Hall, 620 Farm Lane, East Lansing, MI 48824 | (517) 884-0377 | EPICedpolicy@msu.edu