

# BRIEFING BOOK: EDUCATOR RETENTION IN WASHINGTON, DC

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PREPARED BY





## **Policy Briefing: Teacher Turnover and Retention in Washington, D.C.**

**Updated November 2023**

### **Context**

Washington, D.C. has among the highest teacher turnover rates of any urban district in the United States. Teacher turnover is extremely costly, is damaging to school culture, undermines critical student-teacher relationships, and harms student achievement. EmpowerEd is a DC teacher advocacy organization that works to elevate the voices of diverse DC teacher leaders and help schools retain staff. For the past six years, EmpowerEd has studied teacher retention, both here and nationally, in our work to improve adult culture and retention in DC schools. This briefing book establishes a baseline for what we know about teacher retention in D.C. at present, what we need to know, what has already been done and our recommendations for a path forward. We hope this report informs both those in the policy arena as well as school leaders and teams seeking to improve teacher retention at their own schools. For those interested in further research and implementation exemplars, please contact us to continue the dialogue on this critical issue.

### **This Report**

- I. The state of teacher retention in Washington, D.C. Public Schools
- II. Why are teachers leaving?
- III. How does DC track teacher turnover?
- IV. The cost of turnover
- V. What we don't know and need to know
- VI. Educator wellness & retention in action
- VII. Pending legislation
- VIII. Recommendations: Data, well-being, professional authority, support & incentives
- IX. Questions for government agencies
- X. Additional data appendix

### **I. What is the state of teacher retention in Washington, D.C. public schools?**

Based on the 2023 OSSE Educator Workforce Brief,<sup>1</sup> 30 % of educators left their schools between school year 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. This number is up from DC's classroom turnover of 74 % in the previous year (a pandemic dip seen across the country during a time difficult to change jobs). Our 30 % classroom turnover compares to a typical urban district

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[https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page\\_content/attachments/EduRetention\\_1pager\\_022423.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/EduRetention_1pager_022423.pdf)

turnover rate of 16-19%. As a system, DCPS loses about 70% of its teachers in five years, compared to a 45% average at 16 urban districts reported in a recent study. City-wide, 24 % of teaching positions were filled by teachers new to their positions- a staggering number. Research indicates that teacher experience is directly related to student outcomes, and that teachers take approximately five years to develop enough expertise to become fully effective in the classroom. Yet one quarter of all DC students were being taught by someone new to teaching, posing a significant hurdle to their academic prospects. There is no debate in the research<sup>2</sup> - teacher turnover harms student achievement,<sup>3</sup> school climate,<sup>4</sup> and student relationships that are key to their long-term success.<sup>5</sup> For more, please see our full FAQs on teacher retention in the District, linked below.<sup>6</sup>

*In the corporate sector  
10 % turnover is considered  
healthy,  
15 % is high.  
DC has 25 % annual  
teacher turnover.*

### *Those numbers seem to indicate a crisis...but what about the “good turnover”?*

Is there such a thing as good turnover? Of course. Every profession and workplace needs new blood and new ideas, and will also have some practitioners serving in positions that are not right for them. In education, we should be especially concerned about teachers who have a determinant effect on the future of our children staying in jobs for which they are not right. That said, many in the corporate world follow the 10% rule (also called the “vitality curve,” famously established by General Electric CEO Jack Welch). The theory is that 20% of your workforce is the most productive, 75% is adequate (and can improve), and 10% should be fired annually.<sup>7</sup> Those who study corporate turnover, such as Gallup, have generally agreed on numbers similar to 10% as a level of healthy turnover.<sup>8</sup> Of course, you only want 10% turnover if all 10% are low performers. Others have suggested turnover as high as 15% annually can be normal, especially in high burnout profession like teaching, nursing, tech and others. However, Washington D.C. currently has a teacher turnover rate of 25- 30 % annually. Our charter schools experienced a staggering 38 % turnover rate from SY 21-22 to 22-23, including losing 31 % of educators rated as effective. **That level of churn far surpasses any normal standard- both across all professions and when compared to similar urban education districts in the United States.**

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.winginstitute.org/teacher-retention-turnover-all-research>

<sup>3</sup> [https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/4.full\\_.pdf](https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/4.full_.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ascd.org/publications/researchbrief/v2n19/toc.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/beyond-numbers-how-teacher-turnover-and-shortages-undermine-teacher-student-relationships>

<sup>6</sup> [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JDme5\\_rpKTMKEWGaHajbl8LzwrQNlj0SdcCi7KWYvRc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JDme5_rpKTMKEWGaHajbl8LzwrQNlj0SdcCi7KWYvRc/edit?usp=sharing)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.inc.com/paul-b-brown/should-you-fire-10-of-your-employees-every-year.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/316/truth-about-turnover.aspx>

## II. Why are teachers leaving?

Some have argued that D.C.'s turnover is higher than other places because D.C. is a more transient city. These arguments do not hold up. First, even according to the ranking systems that rate D.C. higher than others, D.C.'s transience (meaning those who leave the metro area – and thus the regional job market) is lower than New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.<sup>9</sup> When compared to all cities, including medium-sized cities, D.C. does not make the top ten in terms of transience.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, transience in D.C. is particularly hard to measure. Because most studies of transience here use tax filings from D.C. but not the region as a whole, they fail to capture regional migration.<sup>11</sup> In another jurisdiction, a move from Chicago to the suburb of Evanston, for example, would not be counted as transience, whereas a move from D.C. to Bethesda or Arlington would. Thus, D.C.'s transience is likely over-estimated in many surveys.

According to a 2023 report, only 8 % of teachers<sup>12</sup> in New York City, a city with a higher level of transience, left teaching entirely, compared to 17 % in DC. And for New York, that was actually their highest level of departures in recent history. Los Angeles also has higher transience than D.C. While California does not regularly update educator turnover figures, a 2019 report notes that L.A. Unified School District reported retaining 94 % of teachers in the past three years<sup>13</sup> – a dramatically higher retention rate than D.C. despite higher transience. In short, high teacher turnover is not inevitable due to a relatively high level of transience.

The top factors [in teacher departures among high performers] were work/life balance, school leadership, career change and the desire for leadership opportunities.

-Bellwether Education

*For years, DC policy makers insisted we just didn't have enough information on why teachers leave to act on DC's turnover crisis. But while there is always more to know, we actually have fairly substantial data on why teachers are leaving in D.C.*

In 2018 Bellwether Education, using data provided by DCPS exit surveys, analyzed the reasons for teacher departures, especially among high performing teachers (as measured by the DCPS IMPACT teacher evaluation system).<sup>14</sup> They excluded teachers who said relocation or retirement were their reasons for leaving, or who indicated DCPS could not have done anything to retain them. We should note, anecdotally, that many teachers report their schools losing experienced teachers due to early retirement, especially when school leadership changes, and that relocation is sometimes also an indicator of job dissatisfaction. Nonetheless, with those factors excluded, the study looked at the top reasons that “high performing” teachers left DCPS. The top factors were work/life balance, school leadership, career change, and the desire for leadership

<sup>9</sup> <https://moneywise.com/a/people-cant-flee-these-us-cities-fast-enough>

<sup>10</sup> <https://smartasset.com/mortgage/the-most-transient-cities-in-america>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gwhatchet.com/2016/01/13/we-need-to-stop-calling-d-c-a-transient-city/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2023/9/6/23862194/nyc-teacher-workforce-shortages#:~:text=More%20than%208%25%20of%20the,at%20least%20the%20past%20decade.>

<sup>13</sup> <https://my.lausd.net/webcenter/wccproxy/d?dID=78868>

<sup>14</sup> [https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/DCPS%20Retention%20Deck\\_5.7.18\\_FINAL.pdf](https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/DCPS%20Retention%20Deck_5.7.18_FINAL.pdf)



opportunities. While many of these are concerns in other “high burnout” professions, they are not inevitable. **Substantial research and examples from other professions demonstrate the power to change these factors through a concerted approach that elevates the profession and addresses the culture at the root of high turnover.**

When asked what strategies might have retained them, **the top cited strategies among top performers were more scheduling flexibility** and more behavioral support. This theme, around the desire for more scheduling flexibility, has been consistent. A 2021 survey of DC Educators conducted jointly by the Washington Teachers Union and EmpowerEd found “flexible scheduling” to again be the number one factor that would retain them.<sup>15</sup> Yet again a 2023 EmpowerEd survey of 1,100 educators (the largest sample to date) found scheduling flexibility to be in the top three strategies educators said would retain them<sup>16</sup>- closely following higher pay and benefits. With much of the rest of the professional workforce becoming more flexible, educators are increasingly enticed by jobs that both pay more and provide greater work/life balance. We simply will not be able to keep enough educators to adequately staff schools with expert teachers without systemically addressing flexible scheduling.

Another clear theme in the data has been around teacher voice, professional trust and leadership opportunities- all key aspects of professional respect. In the 2018 DCPS exit survey, **high performing teachers of color named more leadership opportunities as the top strategy that would have retained them.** In the 2021 WTU/ EmpowerEd Survey- among the most highly rated retention efforts educators named were “more professional autonomy to do your job”, “major reforms to the teacher evaluation system” and “release time from teaching to take on other interests.”

**When it comes to teacher evaluation,** DCPS educators are far more likely to raise a flawed and punitive evaluation system as a reason for their departure than charter school educators, with a 2020 DC State Board of Educator survey of recently departed educators finding IMPACT to be the number one issue that drove educators out of DCPS.<sup>17</sup> Despite a 2021 American University study<sup>18</sup> finding substantial racial bias in the DCPS IMPACT evaluation system, educators report little change has been made to address this.

The charter sector faces its own unique challenges. From school year 21-22 to 22-23 DCPS had a 22 % turnover rate, while DC public charter schools average a whopping 38 % turnover rate. Many DC charter schools, especially the smaller LEAs, pay substantially lower salaries than DCPS schools. While educators at these schools often have greater professional autonomy, they also mostly do not have union representation or an official avenue to redress grievances, reasons frequently cited by departing charter school educators in EmpowerEd’s educator surveys over the past six years.

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<sup>15</sup> [https://www.weareempowered.org/uploads/2/6/1/4/2614188/dc\\_educator\\_survey\\_results\\_show\\_plummeting.pdf](https://www.weareempowered.org/uploads/2/6/1/4/2614188/dc_educator_survey_results_show_plummeting.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.weareempowered.org/flexiblescheduling.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/publication/attachments/2020-02-29-FINAL-2020%20Teacher%20Attrition%20Report%20%2B%20Cover%20Memo%20%2B%20Reply%20Letters.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://wtop.com/education/2021/08/review-of-the-evaluation-system-for-dc-teachers-shows-racial-bias-gap-in-scores/>

We also have high rates of principal turnover; 26% of schools opened school year 2022-2023 with a new principal. We cannot entirely separate the discussions of teacher and principal turnover, as they are fundamentally linked. The Learning Policy Institute is undertaking a research project with the National Association of Secondary School Principals that highlights the need to focus on a pipeline of quality school leaders that can support quality teachers.<sup>19</sup>

“ ‘How much say does the faculty collectively have?’ And, ‘How much leeway do you have in your classroom over a series of issues?’ It turns out both levels are really important for decisions whether to stay or to part. And what's interesting about this finding [is that] this would not cost money to fix. This is an issue of management.”- Richard Ingersoll, University of Pennsylvania

***There are other factors that are unique to DC:*** a highly politicized system of mayoral control that drives demand for quick success (which can often put counterproductive pressure on principals and teachers alike), two nearly even public school sectors that drive both teacher and student instability (like mid-year transitions) and shorter principal contracts than in many other districts. **But we also should not focus on the local factors and research alone, as it is possible, even likely, DC is simply doing a poorer job of promoting retention strategies than other urban districts.**

Dr. Richard Ingersoll of the University of Pennsylvania is one of the top researchers in the country regarding teacher working conditions and the issue of teacher turnover and has produced more

substantive research on the topic than any other leading researcher.<sup>20</sup> He believes that lack of voice in teachers’ schools and lack of autonomy over their work are the principal drivers of turnover throughout the country, even where salaries are low. He says “I’ve worked with these data a lot going back last couple of decades. Where nationally, large samples of teachers are asked, ‘How much say does the faculty collectively have?’ And, ‘How much leeway do you have in your classroom over a series of issues?’ It turns out both levels are really important for decisions whether to stay or to part. And what's interesting about this finding [is that] this would not cost money to fix. This is an issue of management.”<sup>21</sup>

While school demographics and poverty levels are often correlated with high levels of turnover, most researchers believe the relationship is *not* causal. In other words, there are many reasons why people leave high-poverty schools, but the reasons many expect – difficulty teaching students who may be grade levels behind or student behavior concerns – are generally not the top concerns. Instead, it’s how schools approach those problems. Ingersoll notes on behavior concerns that what teachers want is an approach where administrators “Get the teachers on

<sup>19</sup> [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/NASSP\\_LPI\\_Principal\\_Turnover\\_Research\\_Review\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/NASSP_LPI_Principal_Turnover_Research_Review_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <https://scholar.gse.upenn.edu/rmi>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/03/30/395322012/the-hidden-costs-of-teacher-turnover>

board. You get everyone together and say, ‘Look, we have this issue. Do we want to have a rule or not? What would it be? How do we want to address it?’ And a decision is collectively made as opposed to being imposed on the faculty.” A 2009 study also found that student characteristics, though predictive of turnover, are not the cause. Rather, a variety of working conditions are the likeliest contributors.<sup>22</sup>

**Because this is so important- we’ll highlight it one more time:**  
educators do not leave high poverty schools because it is harder to teach children in poverty or because these students have more challenging behavior. They leave these schools at higher rates because districts give teachers less professional discretion at high poverty schools so they do not feel they have the ability to address the challenges presented to them.

“A 2009 study also found that student characteristics, though predictive of turnover, are not the cause. Rather, a variety of working conditions are the likeliest contributors.”

Because so many of the teachers who leave are teachers in their first five years, Ingersoll has regularly advocated for stronger mentoring programs that are most effective when you free up the time of new teachers to spend time with veteran teachers, get to know them and learn from them. Over-structuring mentorship programs, however, can also be problematic, making it feel like another mandated initiative and lowering a teacher’s sense of trust and autonomy – which can contribute to higher turnover. Mentor programs must be structured to support effective relationships. Being an excellent teacher doesn’t always translate into being an excellent mentor; many current systems that identify mentors confuse this. Effective programs must include opportunities for mentors to collaborate with each other and share expertise.

### III. How does DC track teacher turnover?

Incompletely. DC Public Schools does not have the practice of reporting annual teacher retention in a comprehensive or timely way. On the other hand, DCPS has reported a limited data point on their single year to single year retention of effective and highly effective teachers in recent years, suggesting the numbers are tracked. Luckily, after years of advocates elevating these issues, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education began issuing an Educator Workforce Report<sup>23</sup> in 2019. They published another on SY 21-22 and have released a smaller briefing annually on topline retention numbers. Prior to this, DCPS teacher retention rates have been produced by data analyst Mary Levy for many years, who has worked through an arduous process comparing year to year rosters. Those numbers do not account for transfers between schools but only the year to year tally at each individual school. Meanwhile, charter schools do individually report their teacher retention numbers annually as part of their annual reports. The numbers are not, however, audited or independently verified and they have self-reported using different standards from school to school for retention and salary data despite the Public Charter School Board’s established definition. In recent years, in fact, many individual charter school retention numbers (including those on OSSE’s data files, have reported numbers that appear to be inaccurate, and in a surprisingly high number of cases, seem to have confused retention and attrition (ex. Showing an 88 % attrition rate- which we can only hope and assume was actually an 88 % retention rate).

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15327930pje8003\\_4](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15327930pje8003_4)

<sup>23</sup> <https://osse.dc.gov/page/dc-educator-workforce-data>

**Another important part of tracking teacher turnover is the administration, collection and publication of educator exit surveys.** Though DCPS has administered an exit survey to departing educators for years, they have only once published limited results through Bellwether Education Partners as part of a 2018 report. Luckily, the DC Council passed legislation in 2023 requiring DCPS to begin annually publishing exit survey results in 2024. However, they did not specify specific data points to be collected, increasing the likelihood that the district may simply choose not to ask whether controversial topics such as teacher evaluation, standardized testing, professional voice and other factors drove departure decisions, knowing the results will be public. Furthermore, the DC Council has not yet required public charter schools to administer and publish exit survey results despite having substantially higher turnover than DC Public Schools.

#### IV. The cost of turnover

Ingersoll, who has consulted schools on teacher retention for decades, has noted that schools, unlike most businesses, seem to view turnover as cost-free when it's in fact very costly. "There's a tremendous amount of research in business schools on the whole issue of employee turnover. And the corporate sector certainly understands turnover is not cost-free. And there's this one industry that's never been paid attention to, and that's education."

**\$40 Million**  
The estimated cost DC has sunk in turnover related expenses in the past five years- money that could have directly supported school and student growth

The Learning Policy Institute has calculated the cost to a district or LEA of losing one teacher is approximately \$20,000.<sup>24</sup> There are roughly 4,000 teachers in DCPS and nearly as many in the charter sector. With 70% attrition in the last five years, the city (across both districts) has lost nearly \$112,000,000. If we brought DC's turnover down to the national average for urban districts, we'd have spent \$72,000,000 instead. That means DC has wasted nearly \$40,000,000 that could have been used on better development and support for our teachers, investment in community schools, mental health supports for students, wrap around services, support for ELL and SPED students, and so much more. *At a time when budget cuts have been steep, 40 million over five years is nothing to sneeze at. **This is a problem worth solving.***

Since teacher retention begins with strong school leadership, we must also reinforce the need for consistency in the principal position. An estimate from the Carnegie Foundation puts the cost of a new principal hire as \$75,000 and highlights the negative impact of principal churn, especially on students in low achieving, high need schools.<sup>25</sup> For more on the background of principal

<sup>24</sup> <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/the-cost-of-teacher-turnover>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/the-high-cost-of-principal-turnover/>



retention and key recommendations, explore this research (linked below) from the Learning Policy Institute.<sup>26</sup>

## V. What we don't know and what we need to know.

There are many areas of study that would help us better understand why teachers leave and what we can do to keep them. It would be useful to know:

- Of those leaving, what percent are lead classroom teachers, aides, special education teachers, etc.
- How support staff turnover compares to classroom teacher turnover.
- What teacher retention is by subject area.
- How many teachers are leaving mid-year.
- How many teachers are transferring between schools each year and during their careers.
- Which programs are better preparing teachers that stay and perform well over time by tracking teachers based on their teacher training (pipeline).
- How common it is for DC teachers to travel between sectors over their career, which way they normally move, and how often teachers move back to the profession.
- If the reasons for leaving DCPS and charter schools are different. And if so, how? What trends emerge? (we need comparable exit surveys across sector to compile this)
- When teachers re-locate, how often that is preventable. (Is relocation itself really the reason for their departure or did another factor drive the decision to relocate?)
- The effect of principal retention on teacher retention and correlations between an individual principal's years at the school and the school's teacher retention rate.
- Correlations between declining budgets, declining enrollments, and teacher loss.

## VI. Educator wellness & retention in action

**EmpowerEd's school partnerships**, which utilize a three-tiered approach to educator wellness and retention, demonstrate the need to address retention on a school-by-school basis. The building of individual wellness habits, positive adult culture and organizational policies and practices that will retain staff is best done by working with a school's educators to establish goals that meet their school's needs and then working with school leadership and staff to build consensus, distribute leadership and implement a holistic educator wellness and retention plan. Learn more about our school partnerships at [www.weareempowered.org/wellness](http://www.weareempowered.org/wellness)



## VII. Pending legislation

There are two pieces of legislation currently before the DC Council aimed at supporting teacher retention. These bills would be helpful and consequential, though more is needed. See our analysis of the two bills below and, in the next section, our comprehensive recommendations.

<sup>26</sup> [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/NASSP\\_LPI\\_Principal\\_Turnover\\_Research\\_Review\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/NASSP_LPI_Principal_Turnover_Research_Review_REPORT.pdf)

## B25-0200 - Educator Retention for Student Success Act of 2023

### **What the bill would do, and our recommendations for amendments**

Paid mental health leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“DCPS shall provide each full-time educator not less than <b>16 hours of mental health leave</b> per school year. Mental health shall <b>not be counted as sick leave.</b>”</li> </ul>
Wellness Coordinator in high-need schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and coordinate efforts to improve both student and staff wellness</li> <li>Gather data for needs-assessment and necessary improvements, resources, gaps for both students and teachers</li> <li>Incorporate feedback for all new wellness initiatives</li> <li>Provide data on satisfaction, activity summary, etc... to DME and SBOE</li> <li><b>Mandates position for 25 schools:</b> those with highest percentage of at-risk student population and above-average teacher turnover rate</li> </ul>
Fair Paraprofessional Compensation Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Task force includes</b> OSSE, DCPS chancellor, one charter LEA leader, PCSB leader, union presidents, one expert organization, and 2 union-appointed paraprofessionals</li> <li>Task force will assess research and propose fair <b>compensation according to pay scale framework</b></li> </ul>
Flexible Scheduling Pilot Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NOTE: The Council already passed a flexible scheduling pilot in last year’s budget, but it will be limited to approximately 10-12 schools. We know the demand is much larger and would like to see funding deepened.</li> <li>Last year’s budget established a working group to study flexible scheduling at OSSE-this legislation called for it at DME</li> <li><u><b>Note:</b> it is vital that the flexible scheduling model which a school chooses has buy-in from the teachers, or if it’s individual flexibility, that it will not impact ability for teachers to switch back to full-time or to keep accruing benefits.</u></li> </ul>
DCPS Exit Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This was already passed in last year’s budget, however: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) It does not apply to charter schools despite charter schools having substantially higher turnover than DCPS. This must be fixed.</li> <li>2) Last year’s budget legislation did not require DCPS to include specific questions or items. This will likely lead to DCPS not including issues of controversy on the exit survey (like the role of the evaluation system), knowing the results will be public. The council doesn’t need to require a universal survey, but it should at least require a minimum set of critical, identical questions be asked on all LEA exit surveys to be made public.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Our suggested amendments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include permanent funding for OSSE Educator Wellness Technical Assistance Grants- \$500,000 a year over the four year financial plan</li> <li>Require both DCPS <i>and</i> public charter schools to conduct and share results of educator exit surveys, require a few basic reason for departure questions of all exit surveys</li> </ul>

## B25-0499 - Student Loan Repayment Assistance for Educators Act of 2023

Preamble/Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The bill is explicitly meant to enhance DC’s educator force: “In advancing the District’s goal of attracting qualified and passionate educators to teach in its schools”</li> <li>• Highlights the <b>high cost of living</b>, which makes the paycheck for most educators not a livable wage: “the cost of living in the District diminishes the attractiveness of a comparatively strong salary”)</li> <li>• Says that younger educators are more likely to have student loans, presumably the reason for targeted bill action. Also acknowledges that Black educators are more likely to have significant loan debt.</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Educator” includes principals, APs, teachers, <b>assistant teachers and paraprofessionals</b> in <i>any</i> public DC LEA</li> <li>• Educators must be US citizens or permanent residents, <b>residents of District</b>, and be enrolled in federal income-driven repayment plan with lowest monthly payment amount</li> <li>• Compliance must be maintained throughout program, as audited regularly by OSSE; <b>theoretically an increase in salary over the 5 years would eliminate eligibility</b></li> <li>• <b>Must be enrolled in postsecondary institution after 1/1/2024</b> and apply for loan relief program within 2 years of leaving institution</li> <li>• <b>Income cap: \$75k for individual or \$95k for joint income filer (married)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>This will also not be a backdated program; unless educators are currently enrolled in postsecondary institution/enrolled after New Years, they are ineligible</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recipients must apply through OSSE</li> <li>• Recipients get monthly payments for up to 5 years (60 months), during which time their <b>loan debt is paid off in full</b></li> </ul>
Bottom Line: Who Will This Affect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bill will only provide relief for future teachers, not current, unless they are enrolled in a preparation program currently.</li> <li>• Bill will affect mostly charter school teachers, paraprofessionals and new to DCPS teachers or those with less training. Most educators with a working spouse would be over the income cap.</li> <li>• <b>Because the income cap isn’t tied to inflation</b>, fewer and fewer teachers will be eligible with each coming year</li> </ul>
Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other states’ programs tend to offer an increasing student loan “rebate” or “credit” as you increase years of service. Some are targeted toward high-need teaching areas</li> </ul>

## VIII. Recommendations on data, well-being, professional growth, support & incentives

<b>Data Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A universal teacher exit survey used by all DC Public and Public Charter Schools and administered by OSSE or the State Board of Education with publicly shared data- or at least the requirement both sectors ask a common set of questions (and they can add others at their discretion)</li> <li>• Extensive, collaborative research that dives into the reasons why teachers <i>do</i> stay to report on what is working in certain DC school contexts</li> </ul>
<b>Retention Recommendations</b>	<p><u>Educator Well-Being</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable funding for OSSE’s Educator Wellness Technical Assistance Grants in the financial plan that allow schools to partner with CBOs to identify specific challenges at their school, build a wellness team, wellness plan and work to improve morale and retention.</li> <li>• Guarantee mental health days for educators</li> <li>• Wider, systemic implementation of flexible scheduling models both at the school and individual level. (Ex of school model: school uses a one day a week enrichment day schedule to provide extra time for student enrichment and educator wellness &amp; planning. Example of an individual model: All DC educators with children under two years old can work a reduced schedule at their discretion for two years, retaining full benefits and the right to return to full-time). See <a href="#">EmpowerEd’s 2023 Flexible Scheduling Report and Playbook</a>.</li> </ul> <p><u>Teacher Professional Authority and Growth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a more comprehensive induction and mentoring program following best practices in other districts</li> <li>• Replace the DCPS IMPACT evaluation system with a growth-oriented system like Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) and eliminate the use of statistically rebuked Value Added Measures</li> <li>• Training for administrators and teachers on “high expertise teaching”</li> <li>• Implementing principal professional development to supporting positive working conditions for staff, building the adult professional culture in schools</li> <li>• Implementing ore authentic teacher leadership opportunities, that do not involve leaving the classroom</li> </ul> <p><u>Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greatly reduce standardized testing and implement an educator and community review board to review bias, sensitivity and relevancy of DC’s annual CAPE assessment. Trust teachers with formative assessments and let teachers teach!</li> <li>• Greatly expand Community Schools/ Connected Schools model as well as co-teaching models to provide holistic student supports.</li> <li>• Carefully designed mentorship programs that pair veteran teachers and new teachers in authentic learning spaces. This requires a holistic approach that 1) provides new teachers with a reasonable, lower-prep course-load; 2) provides new teachers additional time for the mentoring relationship and/or collaboration with colleagues who teach the same subject; 3) provides veteran teachers a reduced course-load to make real time to participate; 4) is well marketed as a leadership</li> </ul>



	<p>opportunity, with thorough screening; and lastly, 5) properly supports and <i>compensates</i> the veteran teachers. This should not be tagged on to pre-existing responsibilities, but be its own role. If it is just tagged on, it will not happen with fidelity.</p> <p><u>Incentives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement a DC student loan relief program for DC educators, especially those serving for 5 years or more</li> <li>● Providing direct housing assistance to DC educators</li> </ul>
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For specific examples of teacher-led professional development models, holistic teacher growth and evaluation systems, successful principal professional development and more, check out the resources available from the Learning Policy Institute (<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/>) and Research for Better Teaching: <https://www.rbteach.com/shop/products/1>

## IX. Questions for government agencies: upcoming retention hearings

**For both DCPS and PCSB about each sector:**

- What was your retention rate for classroom teachers *staying at the same school* from school year 2022-2023 to the current school year 2023-2024? What percentage remained in the district?
- What did your exit survey results show as the top reasons for teacher departures?
- What was the in-school retention rate for Principals? Assistant Principals Paraprofessionals/ Teacher Aides? Social Workers? School Psychologists?
- Did you start the year this year with educator vacancies? How many? In what subject areas? What is the ward breakdown?
- How many educators have resigned since the start of the school year? What about school psychologists? Social Workers? School Counselors?
- How many classes are currently being taught by long term substitutes? Short term substitutes? Unlicensed educators?
- How many vacancies do we currently have for classroom teachers? Teacher aides/ paraprofessionals? Social workers? School psychologists? School counselors?

**For DCPS:**

- **Of all DCPS educators rated “highly effective” five years ago, how many are currently still working in DCPS?**
- **Of the DCPS educators rated “effective” five years ago, how many are currently still working in DCPS?**
- **Of the DCPS educators rated “developing” three years ago, how many have moved to either “effective” or “highly effective” and are still in DCPS?**
- The council passed a requirement that DCPS begin publishing the results of annual exit surveys next year. Will DCPS commit to asking about the following things on the exit survey so that we can have an idea of their effect on retention: the evaluation system (IMPACT), teacher professional trust, scheduling flexibility, the amount of standardized testing?
- The council passed a flexible scheduling pilot last year which DCPS is required to report on by February. Part of that requirement is for DCPS to report on all the schools that wanted to pursue

flexible schedules but were not chosen for funding. Will DCPS be putting out an open call for all principals to determine interest so we can ensure the opportunity is open to all and the council can get transparent data about demand?

- Teachers are reporting regularly losing their planning periods to cover for other educators, which obviously lowers the quality of teaching and leads to teacher burnout. What is DCPS doing to ensure all schools have an appropriate number of full-time permanent substitutes so that teachers do not have to lose planning to cover?
- How many candidates are currently in the applicant pool for each of these positions: lead teacher, social worker, school psychologist?
- What is DCPS doing to recruit, support and retain Latino/a educators? There are still nearly double the amount of Latino/a students as educators and this representation makes a critical difference for those students. We also have a huge need for bilingual educators as we look to expand dual language programs.

#### FOR PCSB:

- Can you share how many educators with effective scores on their schools evaluation system have been retained by the charter LEA after 3 years? 5 years? If not, why does PCSB not ask schools to track retention in this way?

#### X. ADDITIONAL DATA APPENDIX - A few highlights beyond those to which we refer and link in the briefing above.

1. Change in teachers of color- Washington D.C. compared  
Source: Albert Shanker Institute Report on the State of Teacher Diversity.

**CON-2: CHANGES IN SHARES OF THE TEACHING FORCE IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**

CITY	SECTOR (duration of data)	WHITE TEACHERS	BLACK TEACHERS	HISPANIC TEACHERS
BOSTON	DISTRICT (10 years)	+0.3	-3.1	+1.0
	CHARTER (4 years)	+1.8	-1.0	-0.8
CHICAGO	DISTRICT (9 Years)	+4.2	-10.9	+3.8
	CHARTER (3 years)	+1.7	-2.5	-0.3
CLEVELAND	DISTRICT (11 years)	-1.4	-1.3	+1.0
	CHARTER (11 years)	+18.7	-18.2	-0.7
LOS ANGELES	DISTRICT (9 years)	-6.6	-2.4	+7.1
	CHARTER (9 years)	12.8	-1.2	+13.0
NEW ORLEANS	CITYWIDE (10 years)	+19.8	-24.2	+2.0
NEW YORK CITY	DISTRICT (10 years)	+0.2	-3.1	+0.7
	CHARTER (2 years)	-4.7	-1.3	+0.2
PHILADELPHIA	DISTRICT (11 years)	+4.2	-9.5	-0.1
	CHARTER (5 years)	+6.9	-7.7	+1.2
SAN FRANCISCO	DISTRICT (9 years)	-5.0	-1.6	+3.0
WASHINGTON, D.C.*	CITYWIDE (8 years)	+23.0	-27.5	+3.1

\*As noted in the city profile, these Washington, D.C., figures are based on the U.S. Department of Education SASS study, since we were unable to obtain data from D.C. state and city agencies.

[http://www.shankerinstitute.org/sites/shanker/files/The State of Teacher Diversity\\_0.pdf](http://www.shankerinstitute.org/sites/shanker/files/The%20State%20of%20Teacher%20Diversity_0.pdf)

This chart illustrates two problems: 1) Washington, D.C. has experienced a larger drop in black teachers than any comparable city measured, and 2) Washington, D.C. still does not track and report official teacher demographic data. If we care about it, we should count it.

- Most teachers who have left DCPS over the five year window studies here were those rated effective or highly effective – 53% of those who have left, total.

Source: From the D.C. State Board of Education Report on Teacher Retention (2018)

**Table 10: Numbers and Percentages of DCPS Classroom Teachers Leaving DCPS by Final IMPACT Rating SY 2012-13 to SY 2016-17**

Final IMPACT Rating	Left 2013	Left 2014	Left 2015	Left 2016	Left 2017	5 year total	% of 5 year total	
Ineffective	38	52	46	50	79	265	9%	Total Percentage of teachers lost ineffective or minimally effective- 23 %
Minimally Effective	85	86	77	81	107	436	14%	
Developing	137	108	182	148	133	708	23%	
Effective	217	223	236	205	218	1,099	35%	Total percentage of teachers lost that were rated effective or highly effective- 53 %
Highly Effective	94	123	130	137	123	607	19%	
Total	571	592	671	621	660	3,115	100%	

19

While many have pointed to DCPS's rate of retaining its effective and highly effective teachers, which annually clocks in close to 90%, we have done a poor job keeping effective and highly effective teachers in the three-to-five-year range, with over 1,700 such teachers leaving in the past five years.

- What educators say would retain them- 2021 and 2023 EmpowerEd and WTU surveys:

**2021 EmpowerEd & WTU Joint Survey (678 responses)**

**2023 EmpowerEd survey (1,110 respondents)**

Action to Prevent Turnover	Ranking (#1= most impactful)
Flexible Scheduling Options	1
Higher Pay	2
More Classroom Support	3
Less Focus/ Time on Standardized Tests	4
More Professional Autonomy to Do Your Job	5
Major Reforms to the Teacher Evaluation System	6
"Release Time" from Teaching Load to Take on Other Interests	7
Fewer New Initiatives	8
Better Benefits	9
Better Wrap Around Supports for your Students	10
Better Relationship with your School Leader	11
More Teacher/ Staff-Led PD	12
Housing Cost Incentives	13
More Teacher Mentorship/ Support	14
Student Loan Forgiveness	15
More Support for your own Professional Learning	16
Money & Support to Pursue Career Advancement/ Training	17
A "sabbatical" to Pursue Professional Interests	18

#### DC TEACHER SURVEY: How impactful would the following solutions be in keeping you in your current role?

##### THE TOP TEN RANKINGS

TIER 1: "very high" potential impact scores

TIER 2: similarly "high" potential impact scores

- Higher Pay
- Guaranteed Mental Health Days
- Flexible Scheduling
- More Planning Time
- Healthier School Buildings

- Guaranteed Permanent Subs for All Schools
- More Mental Health/ Wrap Around Supports for Students
- Overhauling the Teacher Evaluation System
- Guaranteed (Paid) Time Off for Professional Learning
- Less Focus/ Time Spent on Standardized Testing

- A sabbatical to pursue other professional interests
- More mental health and wrap-around supports for educators
- Home-buying or rental assistance

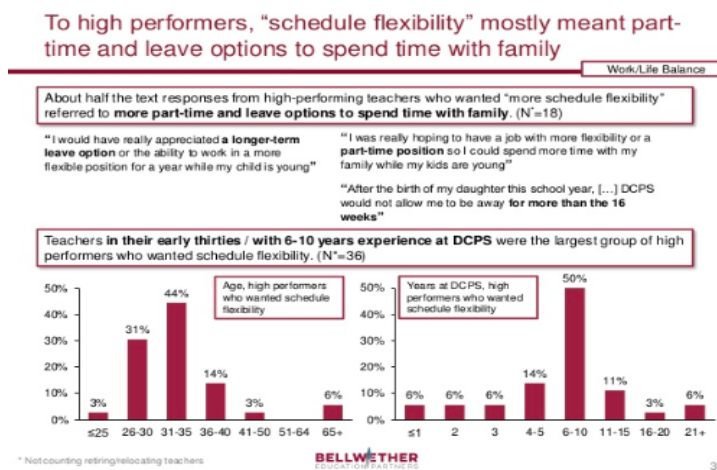
- Student loan repayment assistance
- More Teacher & Staff leadership opportunities
- Mentorship programs

Black women (particularly those over 30) rated "flexible scheduling" significantly higher than other groups

4. Top performers want part-time and family leave options

Source: Bellwether Education Report on DCPS Exit Survey Data

[https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/DCPS Retention Deck\\_5.7.18\\_FINAL.pdf](https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/DCPS Retention Deck_5.7.18_FINAL.pdf)



It is not uncommon for the teaching profession to lose great teachers when they start a family, but it is not inevitable. Schools districts around the country and schools here in DC have implemented flexible teacher scheduling, allowing teachers to teach 80% time, half-time or take sabbaticals as strategies to retain experienced teachers.

**Learn More: Subscribe to EmpowerEd's *Educator Wellness Revolution Podcast* and Check out our *Retention Agenda*.**

## OUR TEACHER RETENTION AGENDA

#TEACHERSOLUTIONS TO SOLVE DC'S TEACHER TURNOVER CRISIS

### 1. Treating Teachers as Professionals

- Approve new contract for WTU
- Approve new contract for paraprofessionals/ aides
- Institute a minimum salary scale above a DC living wage for charter school teachers, another for teacher aides/ support positions
- Greatly reduce standardized testing. Trust teachers with formative assessments, curriculum planning & let teachers teach!

### 2. Recruit, Retain, Diversify

- Greatly expand Grow Your Own program funding (esp. with low cost local education preparation providers)
- Provide local student loan repayment assistance
- Provide home ownership & rental assistance
- Focus on representation gaps: Latiné Educators, Black Males, etc...
- Pass "Data Warehouse Amendment Act": provide detailed annual data on who is leaving and why to target solutions

### 3. Support Educator Wellness & Adapt to Changing Nature of Work

- Fund flexible scheduling to allow schools to design and implement approaches that provide teachers more time for planning, collaboration, remote work while providing students exciting enrichment opportunities to deepen learning
- Locally fund educator wellness school-based partnerships (currently ESSR funded)
- Guaranteed mental health days for all educators
- Expand Community Schools model & school-based mental health for students and teachers/ staff!

### 4. Invest in Teacher Growth

- Replace the DCPS IMPACT teacher evaluation system with a growth based system like "Peer Assistance and Review". Eliminate statistically rebuked "Value Added Measures"
- Implement asset mapping, teacher & staff led PD, provide "floating PD" hours to teachers as a right
- Provide opportunities for leadership, especially for teachers of color (not just academic leadership)



**Get In Touch:**



**When Teachers Lead, Our Students Succeed**

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