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## Understanding and Preventing Teacher Migration

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### What is Teacher Migration?



Ingersoll (2011) defines teacher turnover as “the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs” (p. 500). Reasons for teacher departures from their positions include promotions, retirements, interim contract endings (visiting instructional faculty and lateral entry teachers), the acceptance of non-teaching positions within the district, and the creation of a position because of a teacher’s death. Ingersoll and Smith (2003, p.2) asserted that “Total teacher turnover is fairly evenly split between two components: attrition (those who leave teaching altogether); and migration (those who move to teaching jobs in other schools).”

Teacher migration is a phenomenon within teacher turnover. Ingersoll and Smith (2003, p.2) state that teacher migration occurs when a teacher moves from one teaching job to another job. This includes teacher transfers between schools and districts in and out of state (Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001). According to Ingersoll (2001), teacher migration “has been largely de-emphasized as a component of teacher turnover because it does not decrease the overall supply of teachers (p.2).” In his early research, Ingersoll (2001) asserted roughly half of the teacher turnover is due to teachers leaving the profession. The other half is due to teachers migrating to another school but not leaving the profession altogether (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll 1995, pp. 4–9).

A limited number of studies have examined teacher migration (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Rollefson & Broughman, 1995; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic & Maislin, 1998). This is largely due to the difficulty in distinguishing between teacher attrition and teacher migration (Ingersoll, 2001, p.504).

### **What are the reasons for Teacher Migration?**



There are a multitude of reasons why a teacher may migrate to another school or another district. Primarily, the reasons revolve around opportunity. An opportunity to move to a school closer to home, an opportunity for a fresh start with administration, an opportunity to experience growth in a new setting with a new professional challenge. Generally speaking, the teacher desires change yet remains committed to the profession.

### **How does Teacher Migration impact the profession?**

While there is limited research on this phenomenon, Ronfeldt, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2011, p.3) assert teacher migration may result in the infusion of new ideas into the profession and may help raise student achievement. In closing, Ingersoll (2011, p.514) states, “Unlike attrition, teacher migration is a form of turnover that does not decrease the overall supply of teachers because departures are simultaneously new hires.”

However, there is no denying the fiscal impact of teacher turnover. Teacher turnover is costly. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future conducted a pilot study in five school districts and found that a singular teacher resignation costs the district thousands of dollars (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007). For larger districts, it costs \$17, 812 to replace a teacher and \$4,366 in small rural districts (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007).

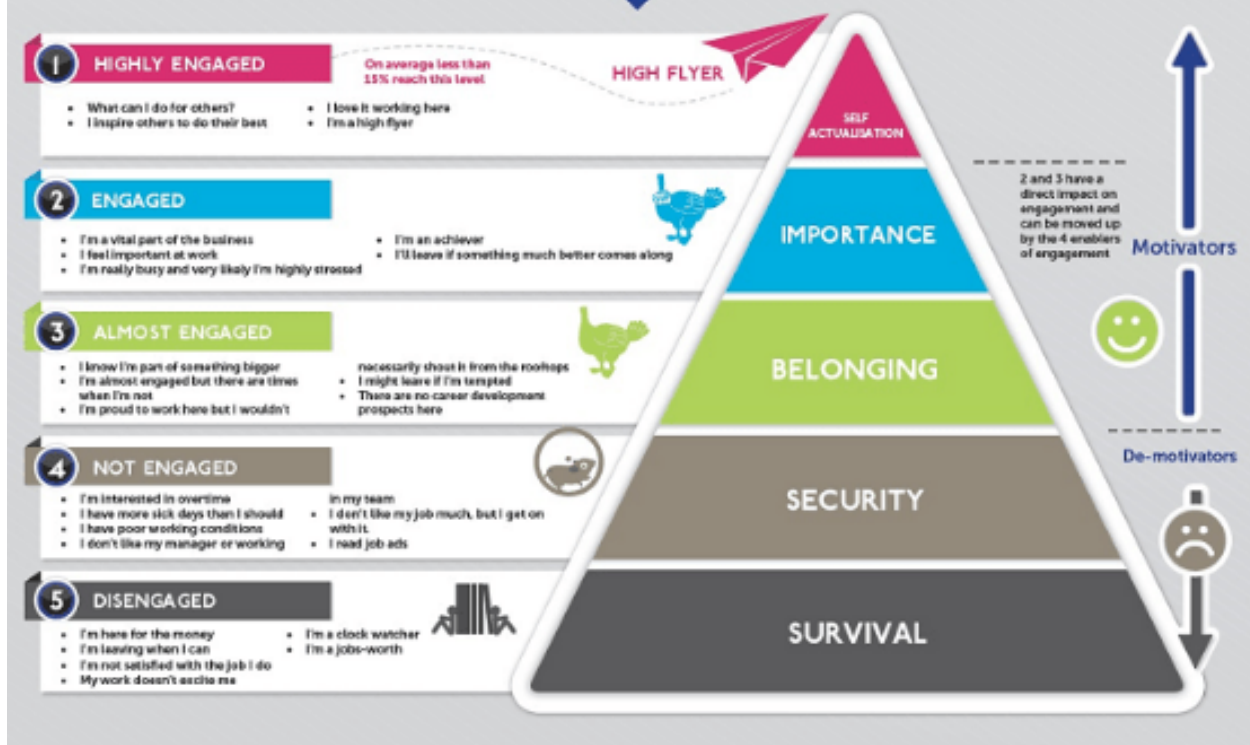


In 2008, NC's teacher turnover rate of 13.85% cost the state between \$29 million and \$63 million. Corbell (2009) estimated that replacing teachers in North Carolina costs more than \$84.5 million annually. In North Carolina, the average cost per resigned teacher was \$9,875 (National Commission on Teaching America's Future, 2007).

### **What can a principal do to prevent Teacher Migration?**

Jacob, Vidyarthi, Carroll (2012, p.6) identify the goal of smart teacher retention as, "The solution is to improve retention, not to increase it blindly. Schools must retain more "Irreplaceables" while simultaneously raising expectations for teachers and retaining fewer of those who consistently perform poorly". To this end, Jacob, Vidyarthi, Carroll (2012) researched urban districts to identify smart retention strategies. The study found that teachers who experienced two or more different turnaround strategies, such as advancement opportunities, regular performance feedback, and public recognition, planned to stay at their schools nearly twice as long as other teachers. Furthermore, "Irreplaceable" teachers were likely to stay at schools with a strong instructional culture in which principals set strong performance expectations for them (Jacob, Vidyarthi, Carroll, 2012).

## MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS APPLIED TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



Additional researchers have focused on reasons teachers stay in the classroom. Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2009) looked at teacher retention factors in various states. Boyd et al. (2009) found that in North Carolina teacher perceptions of school leadership are predictive of intention to remain in the school. Johnson (2006) states teachers stay and are successful if they have a number of supports.

These supports include:

- matching teaching assignments to the teacher's field of expertise;
- a flexible curriculum that allows for meaningful accountability;
- job-embedded professional development;
- career opportunities for growth and influence beyond their classroom;
- supportive colleagues at all levels of experience;
- support providers in working with students;
- safe facilities;
- parental involvement.

Taking time to invest in multiple teacher satisfaction strategies and keep employees positively engaged yields the greatest return on investment for student achievement and preventing teacher migration.

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