TWO YEARS LATER: COVID-19 and the Composition of the Massachusetts Teacher Workforce

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Motivation

- COVID-19 has created unprecedented disruption for school systems, educators, and students.
- News stories frequently report concerns about a mass exodus of teachers.

A shortage of teachers and Covid-19 create a perfect storm for the education system

CNBC, October 9, 2020

More than 2,000 Massachusetts educators have received layoff or nonrenewal notices

The vast majority are teachers, says the Massachusetts Teachers Association

Boston Globe, June 23, 2020

Back to school? 1 in 5 teachers are unlikely to return to reopened classrooms this fall, poll says

USA Today, May 26, 2020
Our Focus

- We examine the extent to which the composition of the teacher workforce changed in Massachusetts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Using state records, we compare data from the 2020–21 and 2021–22 school years to pre-pandemic data, evaluating patterns in:
  - **Teacher turnover (Spring to Fall):** Captures summer turnover; does not measure within-year turnover.
  - **Teacher hiring (Fall):** Identifies patterns in fall hires; does not examine mid-year hiring.
What Existing Literature Says

6 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover in fall 2020 was no higher than pre-pandemic levels (Aldeman et al., 2021; Bastian & Fuller, 2021).

- Surveys from 2020-21 show teachers’ stress-levels and considerations of leaving their job increased during the pandemic (Diliberti et al., 2021; Zamarro et al., 2022).

18 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Emerging evidence is beginning to paint a picture of turnover increases into the 2021-22 schools year (e.g., Goldhaber and Theobald, 2022).
Key Findings

- Teacher turnover remained stable 6 months into the pandemic (Fall 2020).
- No mass exodus, but turnover increased by 15-20% after 18 months of the pandemic (Fall 2021).
- The turnover increases in Fall 2021 were largest among white teachers and early-career teachers.
- During the pandemic, newly-hired teachers have been more racially/ethnically diverse than in prior years, particularly among teachers holding emergency licenses.
- Increased turnover among white teachers + Increased hiring of teachers of color → Small steps toward diversifying the workforce.
Overall Turnover Patterns
Teacher Turnover: By Year

6 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover from Spring to Fall 2020 was similar to previous years.

18 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- 2021 turnover notably higher than in previous years.
- 17% (2.5pp) increase since 2019 in total turnover.
- 15% (1.2pp) increase since 2019 in those who leave the state workforce.
## Newly Hired Teacher Turnover: By Year

### 6 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC
- Turnover from Spring to Fall 2020 was lower than previous years.

### 18 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC
- 2021 turnover notably higher than in previous years.
- 31% (10.7pp) increase since 2019 in total turnover.
- 42% (8.3pp) increase since 2019 in those who leave the state workforce.

### Graph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Transfer Within Districts</th>
<th>Transfer Between Districts</th>
<th>Leave Teaching in MA Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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18 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC
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- 42% (8.3pp) increase since 2019 in those who leave the state workforce.
A greater share of districts in western Massachusetts had high turnover.
2021 Teacher Turnover: By School District

- High turnover persisted in many districts in western MA, but high levels also appeared around Boston and the Cape.
Characteristics Associated with Turnover
Teacher Turnover: By Experience

6 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover dropped among the least experienced.
- Turnover increased among the most experienced.

18 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover increased among all levels of experience.
- Turnover in 2021 was 15–20% higher than in 2019 for all levels of experience.
Teacher Turnover: By Race/Ethnicity

6 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover was roughly stable for white teachers, but decreased for all other ethnoracial groups.

18 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover was higher than pre-pandemic levels for all racial groups, particularly for white teachers.
Teacher Turnover: By School Composition

6 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover decreased in schools with higher percentages of Black or Hispanic/Latinx students.

18 MONTHS INTO THE PANDEMIC

- Turnover increased relative to 2020, but remained below pre-pandemic levels in schools with higher percentages of Black and Hispanic/Latinx students.

School’s Percent of Black and Hispanic/Latinx Students
Newly-Hired Teachers
Each year, between 9–11% of the teacher workforce is a new hire.

White teachers comprise the largest share of new hires.

But this share has been decreasing, and continued to do so during the pandemic.
Newly-Hired Teachers: By School Composition

- Schools with a high concentration of Black or Hispanic/Latinx students employ the largest share of the newly-hired Black or Hispanic/Latinx teachers.

- And this difference continued to grow during the pandemic.
Newly-Hired Teachers: By Race/Ethnicity & License Type

- New hires who hold emergency teaching licenses are more likely to identify as Black or Hispanic/Latinx.
  - Emergency licensure offered in response to the pandemic, waiving many typical requirements.
  - Roughly 18% percent of newly-hired teachers since Fall 2020 hold emergency licenses.
The percentage of newly hired teachers leaving the state workforce is lowest among new hires holding initial licenses.

But total turnover among new hires with emergency licenses is similar to new hires holding initial and provisional licenses.

Too soon to tell if patterns will hold over longer time horizons.
■ Turnover remained stable for the first 6 months, but increased in Fall 2021 after 18 months of the pandemic.
  ■ Demonstrates the well-documented challenges of the pandemic on our educators.
  ■ Does this represent the feared mass exodus of teachers? Probably not.

■ During the pandemic, white teachers left at rates higher than in prior years and new hires continue to be more racially and ethnically diverse.
  ■ Represents small steps toward diversifying the workforce.

■ During Fall of 2021, early career teachers left in high numbers.
  ■ May pose a pipeline challenge if this pattern continues in future years.
  ■ Additional resources and supports for new hires may help.