NDTSS Three-Year Retention Study 2018-19

Introduction

Beginning teachers enter the classroom with fresh perspectives, contagious energy, and expertise in current research and practices gained from preservice education courses and practicum experiences. Working with beginning teachers provides an opportunity for experienced teachers to share knowledge, explore innovative ideas, learn mentoring skills, and acquire leadership roles. Mentoring offers a chance for both new and experienced teachers to grow in their teaching practice and become more effective educators.

However, the novelty and excitement that accompanies beginning teachers often are stymied by common classroom challenges, including classroom management, parent involvement, access to adequate resources, rigorous curriculum, and extracurricular activities. Studies suggest beginning teachers who do not receive adequate support through a well-developed induction process are more likely to leave the teaching profession. The financial expense of school districts to replace new teachers is estimated between $17,000 and $22, 000 (Holdheide & Lachlan-Hach, 2019). Not only costly to school districts, more importantly, teacher attrition has an impact on student academic growth and emotional well-being (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Because student achievement is the goal of education, it is important to examine factors that are related to teacher retention.

Schools can support beginning teachers through induction programs that include opportunities for professional learning and mentoring. The state of North Dakota recognizes the critical role that support and mentoring plays in retaining beginning teachers. Thus, a state Mentoring Program through the North Dakota Teacher Support System (NDTSS) is offered to all certified beginning teachers, in compliance with Century Code Chapter 15.1-18.2. The goal of the NDTSS is to support veteran teachers and educational leaders in building capacity in the new generation of teachers by providing a multi-tiered program focusing on mentorship. The Mentoring Program offers layers of support including one-on-one conferencing, observation of other teachers, video teaching reflection, and online professional learning. As a component of a comprehensive induction program, the Mentoring Program aims to increase teacher retention in North Dakota. Until now, little data have been collected to compare the rate of retention to teachers who participated in the Mentoring Program and teachers who did not participate in the Mentoring Program.

The purpose of this research was to determine the rate teachers were retained in North Dakota schools and compare the overall retention rate to the rate of teachers who participated in the Mentoring Program and teachers who did not participate in the Mentoring Program.

Research Questions

The following questions provided the framework for this study.

1. What is the current retention rate of teachers in North Dakota after one, two, and three years of in-field teaching?

2. What is the current retention rate of teachers who participated in the NDTSS Mentoring Program in North Dakota schools after one, two, and three years of in-field teaching?

3. What is the current retention rate of teachers who did not participate in the NDTSS Mentoring Program in North Dakota schools after one, two and three years of in-field teaching?

Assumptions

The researcher considered the following assumptions when conducting the research study.

1. Educators who are currently employed in the North Dakota school system submitted a MISO3 form.

2. North Dakota educators who completed the MISO3 form self-reported zero years of experience during their first year of teaching.

3. North Dakota educators who are not in their first year of teaching self-reported a number of years of experience greater than zero.

4. Administrators and other licensed educators are included in the MISO3 data.

Limitations

With all research, limitations are present that impact the validity and reliability of the data. The researcher considered the following limitations when collecting and analyzing retention data of teachers in North Dakota.

1. Data from the North Dakota educator form, MISO3, were utilized to inform this study. Human error may be present in the collected data because data was self-reported.

2. Educators who are not currently teaching in the kindergarten through twelfth grade levels do not report using the MISO3. Therefore, educators who are currently teaching in higher education, are teaching but have relocated outside of the state of North Dakota or hold positions in an outside educational entity are not included in this study.

3. The researcher does not have access to contact information of the educators included in the MISO3 form to collect information regarding their current state of employment.

4. For the school-year 2017-18, the researcher contacted mentor teachers of those in the NDTSS Mentoring Program asking for information regarding their mentee's current state of employment. The researcher was not able to collect this information from past mentor teachers prior to the 2017-18 school-year.

Literature Review

A growing issue facing many schools across the nation is teacher shortage. While recruitment has been a focus, studies suggest teacher retention plays a critical role in teacher shortage (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). When schools focus on retaining their current teachers, they are building the capacity and investing in the expertise within their own four walls.

By providing resources, building relationships among staff members, and creating a positive work environment, schools are better equipping beginning teachers to navigate challenges and ask for help when it is needed (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017). As a result, investment in school faculty leads to establishing and maintaining a quality workforce, collaborative climate, and successful student outcomes.

Conversely, low teacher retention rates have a negative impact on student achievement, school improvement, teacher effectiveness, and school finances. High turnover rates are especially concerning in school districts that serve a large population of students who experience poverty, identify within the minority, and live in rural school districts (Holdheide & Lachlan-Hach, 2019; Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Many factors impact teacher retention including compensation, teacher preparation and support, and school leadership (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). If schools and districts wish to increase retention rates, targeting these areas would be beneficial. In effort to combat teacher attrition, the state of North Dakota established a system offering training and continual support for mentor teachers, instructional coaches, and beginning teachers. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the component of beginning teacher mentoring in retaining teachers.

According to Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017), beginning teachers who receive induction support (including mentoring and professional learning) early in the profession are less likely to move to another school or leave teaching altogether. Holdheide & Lachlan-Hach (2019) suggested that mentoring support for beginning teachers increases teacher effectiveness, student engagement, and use of formative assessment. Combined, these implications have a positive effect on student outcomes.

The current research emphasizes the impact of teaching retention and strong induction programs as indicators of effective teaching leading to student achievement (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Since data regarding statewide teacher retention has historically not been collected, the NDTSS identified this as a gap in the research. Therefore, the intent of the NDTSS study was to collect and analyze data to determine the current rate of retention of teachers in North Dakota.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the current rate of retention for teachers who were employed as first-year teachers during the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years. Data for this study were collected from samples of teachers who received mentoring in the North Dakota Teachers Support System (NDTSS) Mentoring Program and teachers who did not receive mentoring in the NDTSS Mentoring Program.

The researcher collected data from the state educator form, MISO3. North Dakota educators who are currently employed and licensed in kindergarten through twelfth grade in the North Dakota school system are required annually to complete the MISO3 form. Data from the form

includes information about the educator as well as the number of years of experience. This data is self-reported by the educators.

The researcher requested the MISO3 for the previous years from the Department of Public Instruction. Upon receipt, the researcher analyzed data based on the variable, years of experience. Educators who reported zero years of experience during the indicated years were extricated from the population. Data were stratified based on participation in the NDTSS Mentoring Program.

The NDTSS records all participants who have participated in the Mentoring Program. These records were utilized to determine which individuals from the MISO3 who indicated zero years of experience were also participants in the Mentoring Program during their first year of teaching. Only educators who were mentored in the NDTSS and reported zero years of experience in the respective year they were enrolled in the program were analyzed for Phase I of the research study. Individuals who reported a number other than zero were not included in the sample data (see Appendix A for sample size). Data analysis utilized the most current MISO3 form (2018-19) for employment in the North Dakota school system. Educators who do not have a MISO3 form indicating they are currently employed by the North Dakota school system were considered not to have been retained as teachers. MISO3 forms that indicated current employment in the North Dakota school system were considered retained.

Additionally, educators who did not participate in the NDTSS Mentoring Program were analyzed using the most current MISO3 form. Only educators who self-reported having zero years of experience in the respective year were included in the sample data (see Appendix A for sample size). These educators were analyzed with respect to current employment in the North Dakota school system. Educators who do not have a MISO3 form reporting current employment in the North Dakota school system were considered not to be retained. Individuals with MISO3 forms that indicated current employment in the North Dakota school system were considered retained.

The researcher analyzed this data to determine retention percentage rates for educators who participated and educators who did not participate in the NDTSS Mentoring Program. Data are illustrated in Appendix A.

Findings

The NDTSS conducts an annual retention study to quantify the percentage of participants who completed the Mentoring Program and have been retained as educators in North Dakota schools. No known comparison data has been collected and analyzed for teachers who do not participate in the Mentoring Program until now. The NDTSS expanded the retention study to include all North Dakota teachers, thus allowing a comparison of Mentoring Program participants and teachers who did not receive mentoring through the NDTSS. The following table summarizes the findings of the study.

Table 1
Three-Year Rate of Retention

Initial year of teaching	Mentored in NDTSS	Not Mentored in NDTSS	Rate of Retention for ND
2017-18	94.3% (n=211)	85.6% (n=257)	89.5% (n=468)
2016-17	90.7% (n=258)	74.7% (n=304)	81.9% (n=562)
2015-16	82.5% (n=273)	73.2% (n=340)	77.0% (n=613)
Cumulative Total	88.3% (n=742)	77.2% (n=901)	82.2% (n=1643)

The researcher collected new teacher data from the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school-years using the MISO3 form and the state Mentoring Program database. Analysis suggested teachers who participated in the NDTSS Mentoring Program were retained at an 11% greater rate than teachers who did not participate in the Mentoring Program. Further, the rate of retention for NDTSS participants was 6% more than the overall retention rate for all North Dakota teachers.

Conclusion

Future research should continue updating the state teacher retention rate and explore other variables within the data. Examining retention data in various regions across the state or demographics may provide valuable information regarding recruitment and professional learning needs of teachers. Comparison data may be useful in teacher preparation programs in higher education as well.

To address limitations in the study, the MISO3 form should be evaluated to ensure alignment of questions with survey objectives. Questions can be revised to address specific areas of interest, including number of years of experience and enrollment in loan forgiveness programs. The NDTSS can also utilize the form to contact beginning teachers to examine other variables influencing teacher satisfaction, retention, and recruitment.

The intent of this research study was to determine the retention rate for North Dakota teachers and use the data as a comparison between teachers who participated in the NDTSS Mentoring Program and those who did not. The data suggest participation in the NDTSS Mentoring Program increases the likelihood of teachers to stay within the profession during their first three years of teaching; teachers who do not participate in the program are more likely to leave the teaching position during the first three years in the classroom. To determine long-term effects of the Mentoring Program, additional years of data will be added to the findings as they are collected.

TEACHER SUPPORT SYSTEM

References

Carver-Thomas, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). The trouble with teacher turnover: How teacher attrition affects students and schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 27*(36). http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3699

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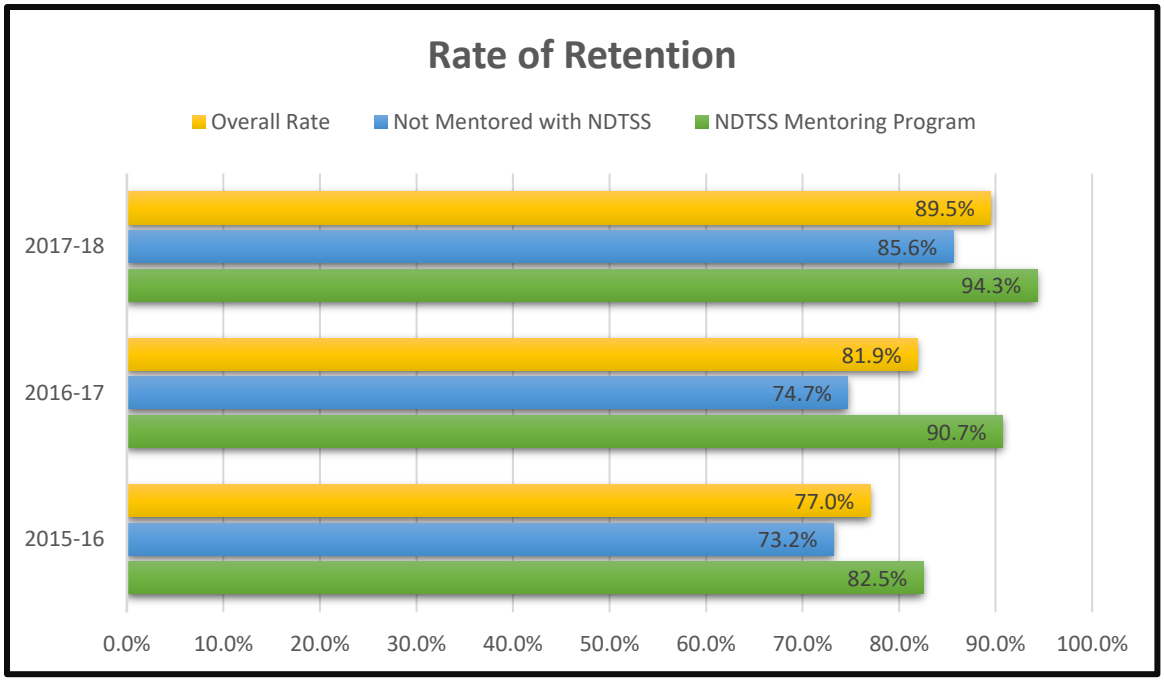
Appendix A

NDTSS Three-Year Retention Study

2018-19

Rate of Retention			
Year	Mentored in NDTSS	Not Mentored in NDTSS	Overall Rate of Retention for ND
2017-18	94.3% (n=211)	85.6% (n=257)	89.5% (n=468)
2016-17	90.7% (n=258)	74.7% (n=304)	81.9% (n=562)
2015-16	82.5% (n=273)	73.2% (n=340)	77.0% (n=613)
Cumulative Total	88.3% (n=742)	77.2% (n=901)	82.2% (n=1643)



* Data collected from MISO3 Form
* Teachers indicating zero years of experience in 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18.
* In the three-year study, 87 teachers mentored in NDTSS and 205 teachers who were **not** mentored in NDTSS are no longer teaching.

Appendix B

Cost of Teacher Attrition

Teachers not mentored in NDTSS Mentoring Program

ND Cost of Teacher Attrition		
Year	# of not mentored teachers x Difference in Retention Rate	Number of teachers
2017 - 18	257 x 8.7% =	22 teachers
2016 - 17	304 x 16% =	49 teachers
2015 - 16	340 x 5.3% =	18 teachers
	TOTAL	89 teachers
Estimated cost per teacher X number of teachers		Cost: $1,780,000

In the past three school years, if we could have mentored the 901 teachers who were not mentored and retained them at the rate experienced by mentored teachers, 89 teachers would not have left teaching. At a cost of $20,000 for recruitment, hiring and training a new teacher, retaining these 89 teachers would have saved North Dakota schools approximately $1.78 million dollars.