



Pupil Services Turnover and Attrition Brief SY2016 to SY2017

Introduction and Goals

One of the primary challenges in education for Wisconsin and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is the growing teacher shortage. State Superintendent Tony Evers has labeled it one of the “most critical public policy issues” confronting the state and is dedicating significant resources towards addressing it (<https://dpi.wi.gov/news/dpi-connected/teacher-shortage-announcement>). Work on this issue is also being guided by the Professional Standards Council—a statutorily constructed group that assists the state superintendent with improvements in the areas of teacher preparation, licensure, and regulation (<http://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2016/evers-announces-efforts-address-school-staffing-shortages>).

The issue of educator shortages is directly linked to the ability of schools and districts to recruit, retain, support and develop staff members. When schools suffer high turnover and attrition rates, students’ education and learning environments are disrupted. This situation works against efforts to improve student educational outcomes and hinders efforts to reduce the achievement gap throughout the state. High levels of turnover and attrition would also work against efforts at improving equity throughout Wisconsin schools (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/esea/pdf/WisconsinEdEquityPlan.pdf>).

This brief will only cover educational staff that are licensed through DPI and it will focus specifically on pupil services personnel, which includes school social workers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists. It presents data on both turnover and attrition in pupil services personnel throughout the state that occurred between the 2015-16(SY2016) and 2016-17(SY2017) school years.

For the purposes of this study, “turnover” is defined as the situation when an individual left a position at a school, but kept working within the Wisconsin Public School system the subsequent year either by finding a position at another school, or by retaining at least one other position within the school system. “Attrition” is defined as the situation when an individual left all of their positions within the Wisconsin public school system and did not return the next year.

Pupil Service Turnover and Attrition

Analysis shows that during the 2015-16 school year, 3544 licensed pupil services personnel were employed in Wisconsin Public Schools filling 4581 positions. The analysis distinguished between the number of positions and the number of distinct people in the pupil services category, because one person might hold multiple positions in a district (or even in multiple districts), and therefore the number of people in the school system was less than the number of positions held by them. Additionally, data on the assignment workload percentages—full-time equivalency (FTE)—that these positions entailed is presented.

Of these 3544 licensed pupil services personnel, 2869 individuals remained in 3524 positions into the next year. 555 individuals left positions while remaining within the system (turnover) and 290 left the system entirely (attrition). These statistics are displayed in table 1 along with FTE totals.

Table 1—Pupil Services Personnel SY2016-17—Remaining, Turnover, & Attrition Numbers

	Positions	% of total	Individuals	% of Total	FTE	% of Total
Total PS	4581	100.00%	3544	100.00%	3332.24	100.00%
Remaining	3524	76.93%	2869	80.95%	2654.06	79.65%
Turnover	699	15.26%	555	15.66%	422.94	12.69%
Attrition	358	7.81%	290	8.18%	255.24	7.66%

It is important to note that the percentages for individuals adds up to more than 100%. This occurs because individuals with multiple positions may have kept some of them (and were thus counted in the Remaining group), while also leaving others (thus being counted in the Turnover group).

Within the pupil services category, there are three main positions—namely school social worker, guidance counselor and school psychologist. Altogether, these positions constituted all 3332.24 FTEs within the pupil services category. Table 2 displays the turnover and attrition numbers for each of these three positions in terms of FTE.

Table 2—Pupil Service Positions SY2016-17—Turnover and Attrition Numbers

Positions	Total FTE	Turnover FTE	% Turnover	Attrition FTE	% attrition
Social Workers	555.4	91.37	16.45%	45.97	8.28%
Counselors	1891.07	163.14	8.63%	137.98	7.30%
Psychologists	885.77	168.43	19.02%	71.29	8.05%

One important aspect of the educator staffing challenge is knowing whether those leaving the profession are newly engaged educators, moderately experienced educators, or are long-term education professionals nearing retirement. By analyzing staffing data, this brief examines how long pupil service personnel had been working in Wisconsin public schools. The time period categories used in this analysis are noted in Table 3. These categories were chosen to highlight the critical nature of early years of employment within the Wisconsin Public School system as well as the different stages within an educator’s professional development. One caveat to this data is that it measures the total years of experience as an educator overall rather than measuring only the total experience in a particular position or subject area. Thus, an educator who worked as a sub for one year, then as math teacher for 7 years, and finally as a guidance counselor for 7 years would have a sum of 15 years of total experience for this measure.

Table 3--Work History Categories used in Analysis

1 year or less of experience
2 years or less of experience
3 years or less of experience
3-5 years of experience
5-10 years of experience
10-15 years of experience
15+ years of experience

Table 4 presents a summary of the turnover and attrition groups within pupil services, and there are a couple of important inferences to make. With regards to turnover, one can note that there is significant

Table 4—Pupil Service Turnover and Attrition compared to Years of Experience.

Years Exp.	Turnover		Attrition	
	# of individuals	% of total Turnover	# of individuals	% of total Attrition
0-1 years	46	8.29%	17	5.86%
0-2 years	94	16.94%	33	11.38%
0-3 years	140	25.23%	47	16.21%
3.1-5 years	57	10.27%	24	8.28%
5-10 years	115	20.72%	45	15.52%
10-15 years	91	16.40%	29	10.00%
15+ years	152	27.39%	145	50.00%

turnover of newly licensed pupil service personnel, as one quarter all turnover is for individuals with 3 years or less of experience. These 140 individuals also represent 23.2% of all pupil service personnel with that level of experience. After three years, turnover tends to level out in terms of years of experience. This fact would seem to emphasize that there is a need for greater support or mentorship during this period.

Regarding attrition, the information in Table 4 provides two important inferences. The first takeaway is that one in six of those who left these positions entirely were still in that initial three year period. These 47 individuals represent about 7.8% of all pupil service personnel with that level of experience. The second takeaway is that 50% of those leaving the profession are extremely experienced educators, many of whom might be considering retirement. To confirm this last point, further analysis of the data showed that according to FTE percentages, 43.2% of those leaving were 55 years old or older. However, according to the same analysis, 26.8% of those leaving were 34 years old or younger, which could be a concern for the retention of pupil service professionals.

Maps of Educator Turnover Rates

The statewide analyses of educator turnover and attrition above do not, however, display the distribution or concentration of educator losses clearly. The following three maps show the turnover, attrition and combined (turnover+attrition) rates for pupil services personnel in the unified public school districts in Wisconsin after the 2015-16 school year. All three maps use the same color schemes and legend categories to represent differing levels of turnover or attrition. Table 5 shows the number of school districts (out of 378 unified school districts) in each category.

Table 5—Number of Districts in Mapping Categories of Turnover and Attrition Rates

	Turnover	Attrition	Turnover+Attrition
0%	204	236	152
0-5%	11	13	8
5-10%	36	34	22
10-15%	26	25	27
15-20%	29	22	35
20-33.3%	37	31	61
33.3%+	35	17	73
no data	0	0	0

Tables 6 and 7 show the breakdown the data from Table 5 further using National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Codes. These codes are “a measure of geographic status on an urban continuum that ranges from ‘large city’ to ‘rural.’”

(<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/commonfiles/localedescription.asp>) The four main categories in these codes are “city,” “suburb,” “town,” and “rural.” Table 6 shows the breakdown of districts related to turnover percentages, while table 7 shows the same breakdown for attrition percentages.

Table 6—District Breakdown by NCES Locale Code for Turnover Percentages

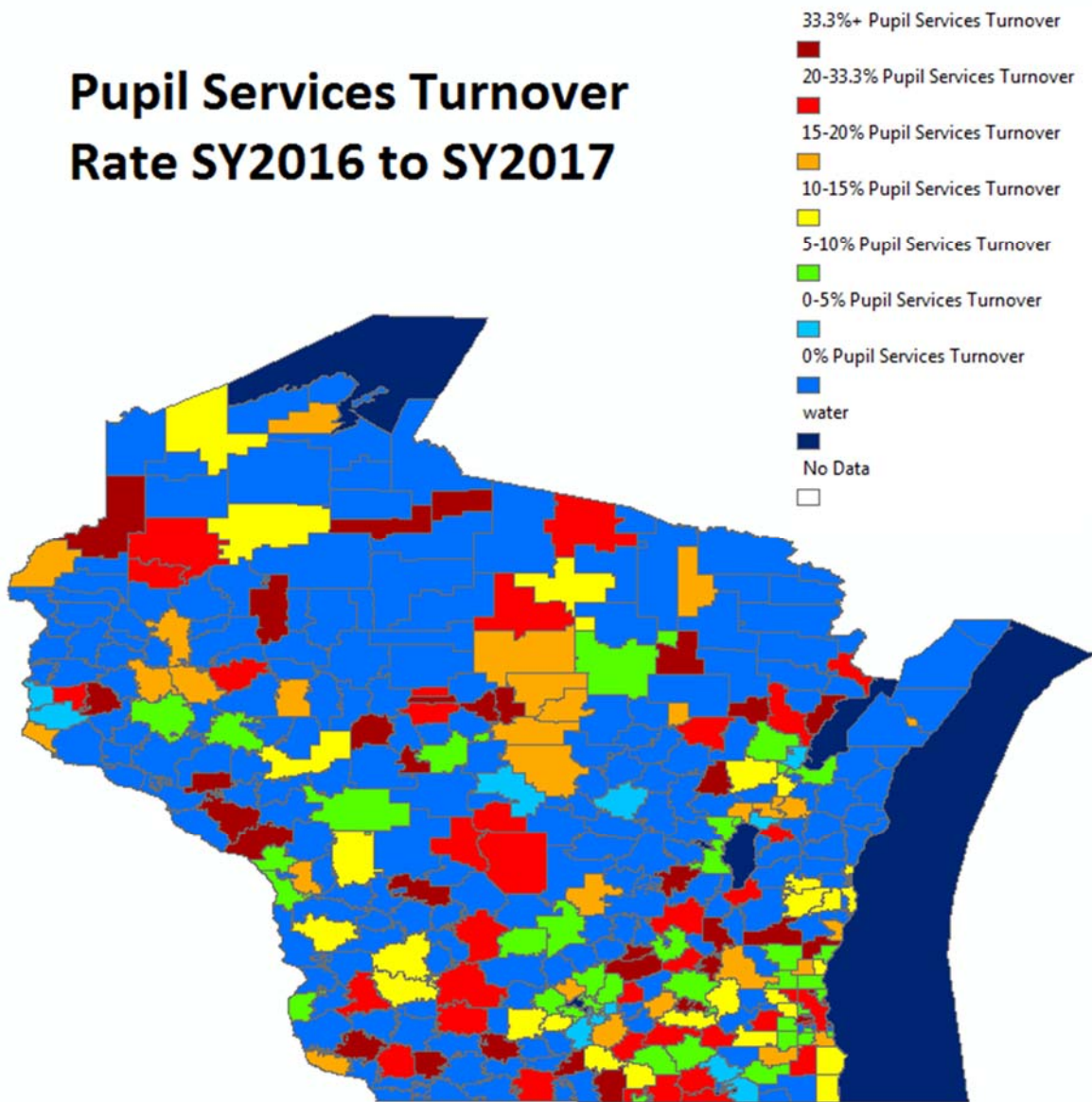
% Turnover	Rural	Town	Suburb	City	Total # of Districts
0%	115	46	35	8	204
0-5%	5	1	4	1	11
5-10%	19	10	4	3	36
10-15%	16	7	2	1	26
15-20%	16	9	3	1	29
20-33.3%	22	9	6	0	37
33.3%+	15	10	7	3	35
no data	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of Districts	208	92	61	17	378

Table 7—District Breakdown by NCES Locale Code for Attrition Percentages

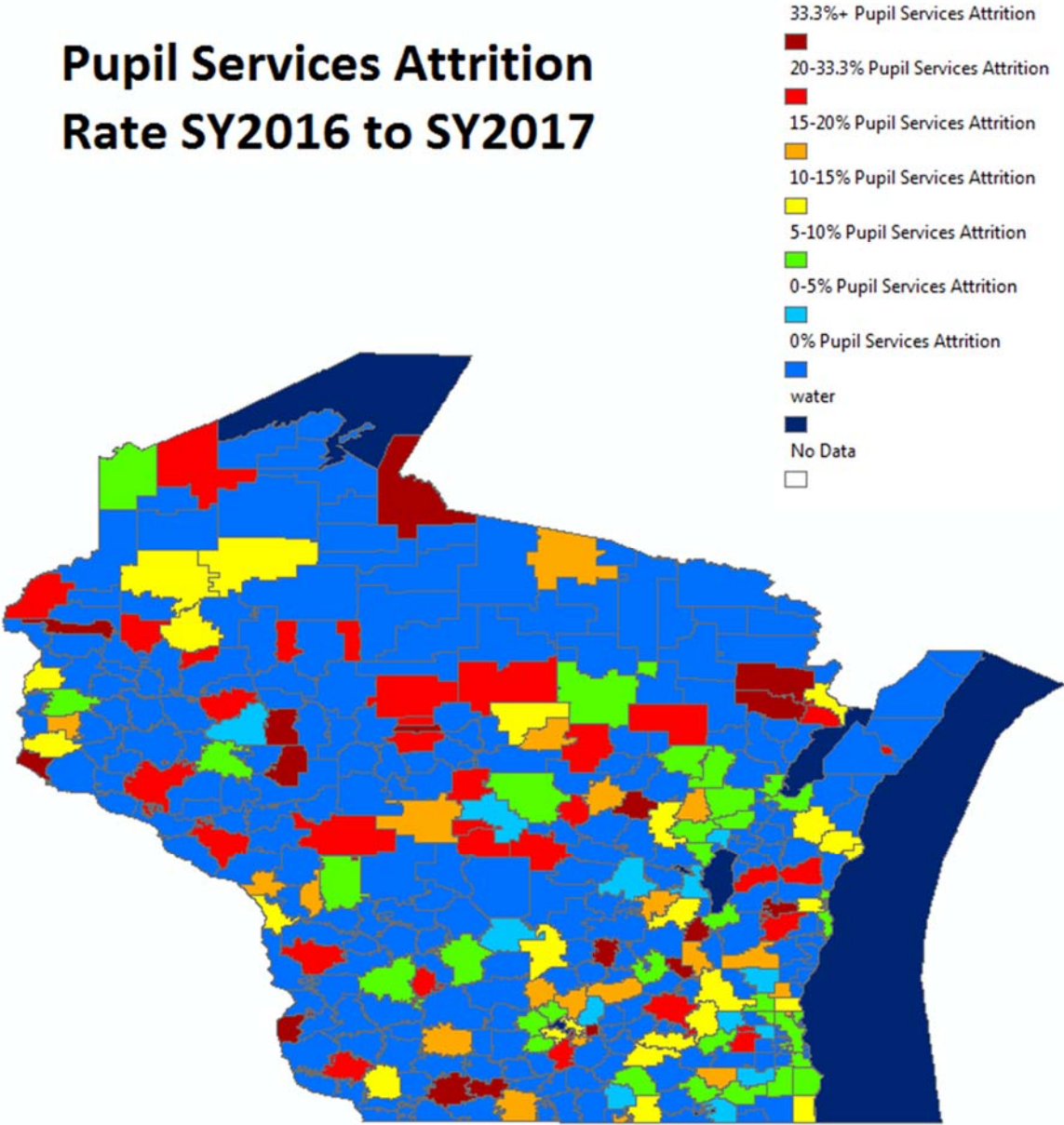
% Attrition	Rural	Town	Suburb	City	Total # of Districts
0%	164	42	28	2	236
0-5%	1	4	5	3	13
5-10%	4	11	12	7	34
10-15%	5	11	6	3	25
15-20%	5	9	7	1	22
20-33.3%	15	13	2	1	31
33.3%+	14	2	1	0	17
No data	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of Districts	208	92	61	17	378

Maps will be shown on separate pages for easier visibility

Pupil Services Turnover Rate SY2016 to SY2017



Pupil Services Attrition Rate SY2016 to SY2017



Pupil Services Turnover + Attrition Rate SY2016 to SY2017

