



Teacher Turnover and Attrition Brief

SY2017 to SY2018

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 improvement 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 Teachers, which includes teachers in all subjects (math, technology education, German, chemistry) as well as Speech/Language Pathologists, Librarians, Library Media Specialists, and Instructional Technology Integrators. It presents data on both turnover and attrition for teachers throughout the state that occurred between the 2016-17(SY2017) and 2017-18(SY2018) 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.

Teacher Turnover and Attrition

Analysis shows that during the 2016-17 school year, 63657 licensed teachers were employed in Wisconsin Public Schools filling 80572 positions. The analysis distinguished between the number of positions and the number of distinct people in the Teacher 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 63657 licensed teaching personnel, 56782 individuals remained in 71685 positions into the next year. 2442 individuals left 3256 positions while remaining within the system (turnover) and 4553 left the system entirely (attrition). These statistics are displayed in table 1 along with FTE totals.

Table 1—Teaching Personnel SY2017-18—Remaining, Turnover, & Attrition Numbers

	Positions	% of total	Individuals	% of Total	FTE	% of Total
Total Teachers	80572	100.00%	63657	100.00%	61959.67	100.00%
Remaining	71685	88.97%	56782	89.20%	55489.24	89.56%
Turnover	3256	4.04%	2442	3.84%	2279.06	3.68%
Attrition	5631	6.99%	4553	7.15%	4191.37	6.76%

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 Teacher category, there are a large number of different subject areas and positions—108 in total—but the eight largest categories—make up approximately 65.36% of all FTEs. These subjects and positions are: 1. Elementary Ed. (32.79%), 2. Cross-Categorical Special Ed (8.17%), 3. English (6.17%), 4. Math (6.05%), 5. Phys. Education (3.99%), 6. Speech Pathology (2.77%). 7 Art (2.76%) and 8. Social Studies (2.65%). Altogether, these positions constituted 40,497.23 FTEs within the Teacher category. Table 2 displays the turnover and attrition numbers for each of these eight subject areas in terms of FTE.

Table 2—Teaching Positions SY2017-18—Turnover and Attrition Numbers

Subject/Position	Total FTE	Turnover FTE	% Turnover	Attrition FTE	% attrition
Elementary Ed	20317.14	604.81	2.98%	1229.11	6.05%
Cross Cat SE	5059.16	309.16	6.11%	477.23	9.43%
English	3821.44	141.94	3.71%	256.25	6.71%
Math	3750.42	142.14	3.79%	212.94	5.68%
Phys. Ed	2477.02	77.59	3.13%	132.6	5.35%
Speech Path.	1718.35	56.16	3.27%	115.03	6.69%
Art	1708.94	83.64	4.89%	119.2	6.98%
Social Studies	1644.76	55.07	3.35%	84.49	5.14%

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 teachers 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 a program coordinator for 7 years, and finally as a teacher for 7 years would have a sum of 15 years of total experience for this measure.

Table 4 presents a summary of the turnover and attrition groups within teachers, and there are a couple of important inferences to make. With regards to turnover, one can note that there is significant proportion of the total turnover related to teachers with little experience. Specifically, nearly 30% of the total turnover is tied to teachers with 3 or fewer years of experience. These 732 individuals represent 8% of all teachers with 3 years or less of work experience. This finding is an improvement over previous years where the number of individuals in this group was more than 15% of the educators who had this much experience.

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—Teacher 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	253	10.36%	373	8.19%
0-2 years	485	19.86%	658	14.45%
0-3 years	732	29.98%	948	20.82%
3.1-5 years	374	15.32%	396	8.70%
5-10 years	593	24.28%	719	15.79%
10-15 years	367	15.03%	570	12.52%
15+ years	376	15.40%	1920	42.17%

Regarding attrition, the information in Table 4 shows that the majority of those leaving teaching positions possess significant teaching experience. Nearly 55% of those leaving the Wisconsin public school system have 10 or more years of experience, with 42% of the attrition coming from those with more than 15 years of experience. This last category certainly contains a large number of retirees, but it does invite further inquiry to confirm this conjecture. A second important inference from the table is that a bit more than 20% of the total attrition comes from those with 3 years or less of experience. These 948 individuals also represent 10.6% of teachers with that level (0-3 years) of work experience. This points to a significant issue of teacher retention for newly hired teachers.

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 administrative personnel in the unified public school districts in Wisconsin after the 2016-17 school year. All three maps use the

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

	Turnover	Attrition	Turnover+Attrition
0%	31	18	6
0-5%	219	118	41
5-10%	106	198	148
10-15%	16	35	128
15-20%	3	4	36
20-33.3%	2	4	17
33.3%+	1	1	2
no data	0	0	0

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.

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

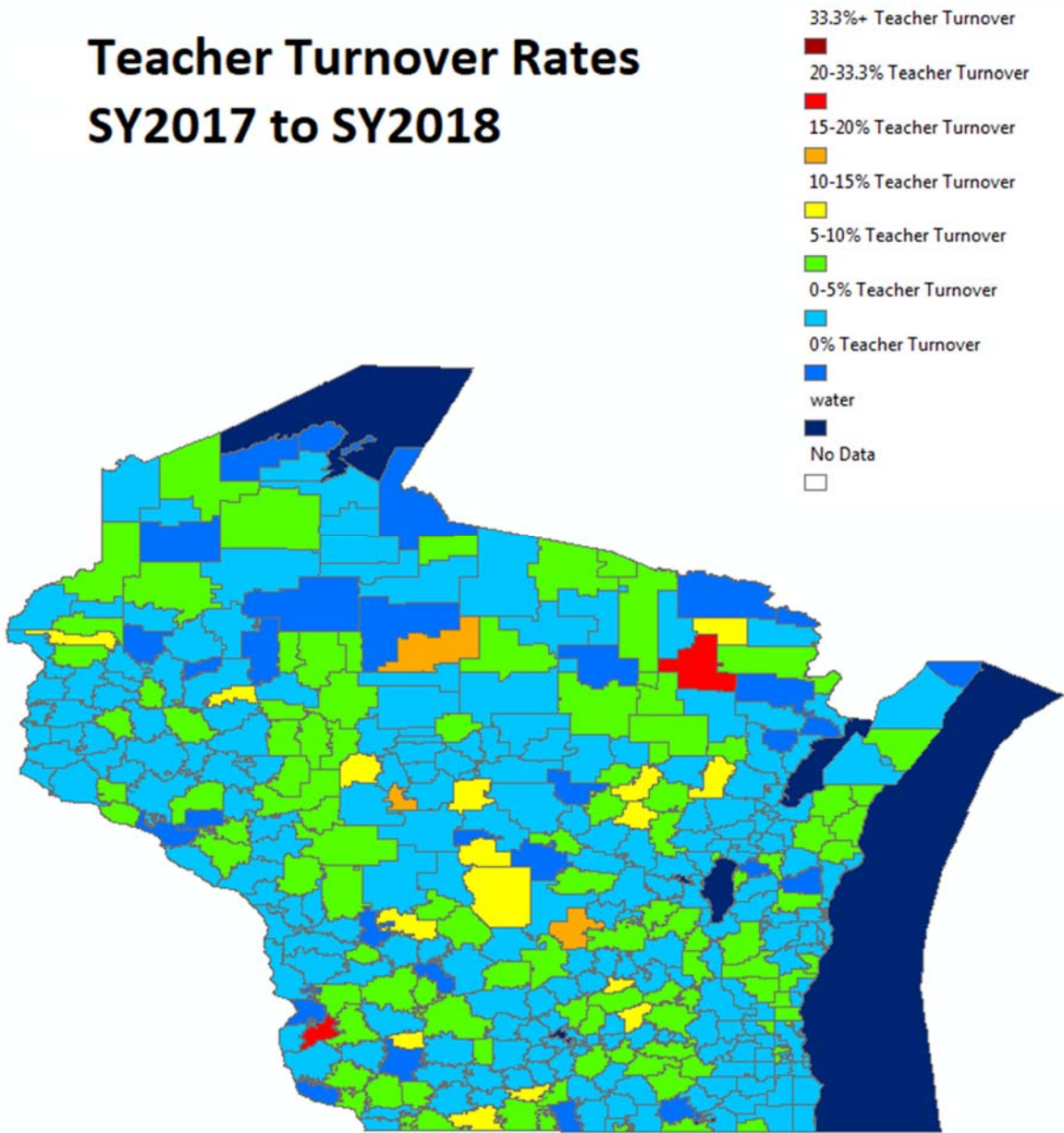
% Turnover	Rural	Town	Suburb	City	Total # of Districts
0%	26	5	0	0	31
0-5%	100	55	49	15	219
5-10%	63	30	11	2	106
10-15%	15	1	0	0	16
15-20%	3	0	0	0	3
20-33.3%	2	0	0	0	2
33.3%+	0	1	0	0	1
No Data	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of Districts	209	92	60	17	378

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

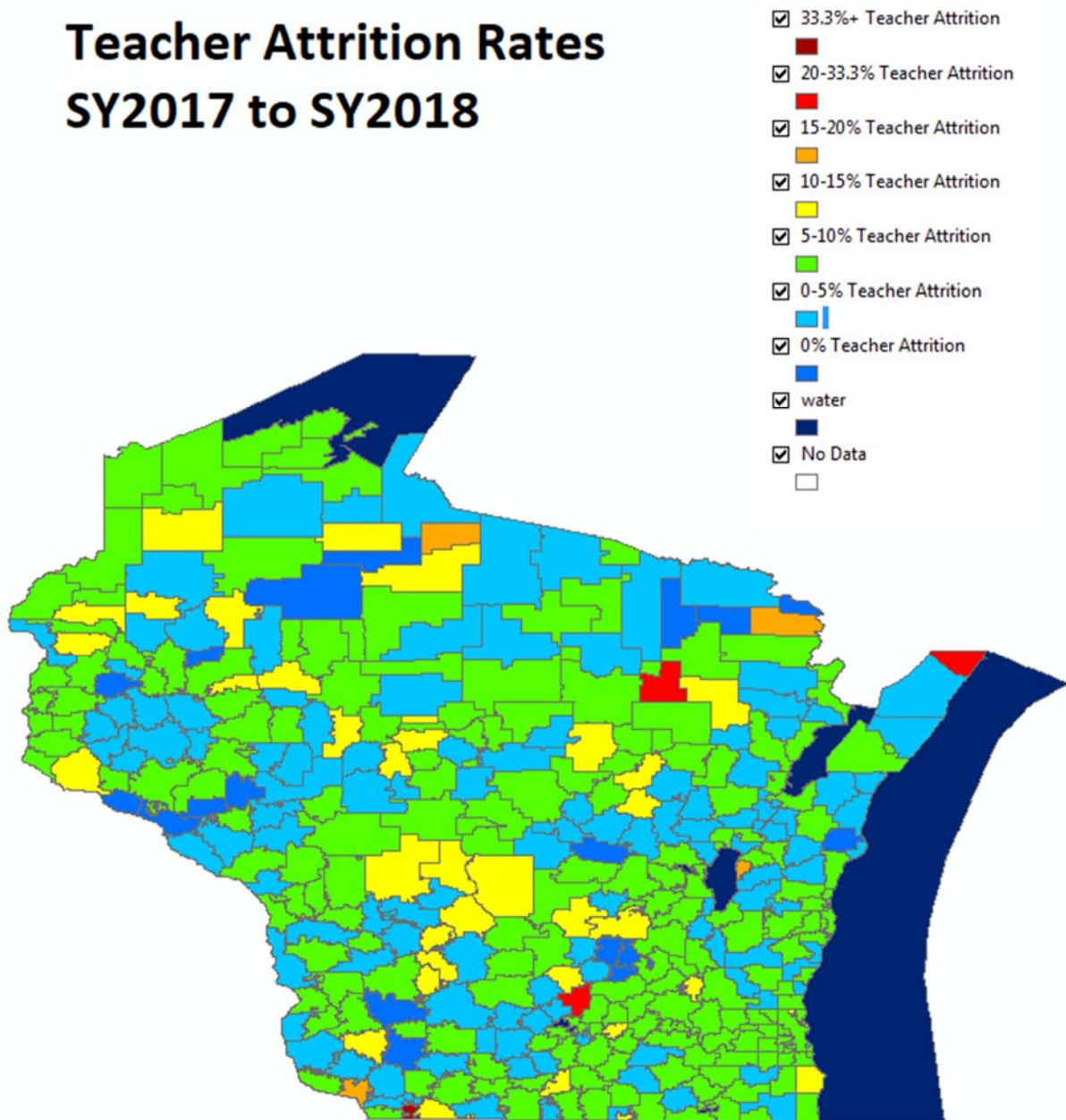
% Attrition	Rural	Town	Suburb	City	Total # of Districts
0%	16	2	0	0	18
0-5%	80	19	18	1	118
5-10%	77	68	39	14	198
10-15%	29	2	2	2	35
15-20%	4	0	0	0	4
20-33.3%	2	1	1	0	4
33.3%+	1	0	0	0	1
No Data	0	0	0	0	0
Total # of Districts	209	92	60	17	378

Maps will be shown on separate pages for easier visibility

Teacher Turnover Rates SY2017 to SY2018



Teacher Attrition Rates SY2017 to SY2018



Teacher Turnover + Attrition Rates SY2017 to SY2018

