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Education News from EPRU/EPIC: TEACHER ATTRITION RATE HIGHER AT CHARTER SCHOOLS THAN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) at ASU
Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC) at CU-Boulder

******NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE******

TEACHER ATTRITION RATE HIGHER AT CHARTER SCHOOLS THAN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Charter school teachers more than twice as likely as those in regular schools to leave after one year, research finds.

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TEMPE, Ariz and BOULDER, Colo. May 23, 2007 -- As many as 40 percent of newer charter school teachers end up leaving for other jobs, a new study concludes.

The report, "Teacher Attrition in Charter Schools," by Gary Miron and Brooks Applegate, of the Western Michigan University Evaluation Center, was released by the Education Policy Research Unit at Arizona State University and by the Education and the Public Interest Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

In the past, research has focused on why teachers seek charter school jobs, but the equally important question of teacher attrition in charter schools has been largely unexamined.

"High attrition consumes resources of schools that must regularly provide pre- and in-service training to new teachers; it impedes schools' efforts to build professional learning communities and positive and stable school cultures; and it is likely to undermine the legitimacy of the schools in the eyes of parents," the authors note.

The new research from Miron and Applegate is based on their analyses of data collected in surveys of charter school employees from around the country conducted from 1997 to 2006.

Attrition rates fluctuate from year to year and state to state, but typically as many as one in five or one in four charter school teachers leave each year—approximately double the typical public school attrition rate, which is around 11 percent.

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In addition to being younger and less experienced, the researchers found that teachers who quit charter schools were more likely to be uncertified. Teachers with higher levels of formal education were more likely to stay.

Attrition among inexperienced and younger teachers may be particularly critical for charter schools, because the percentage of charter-school teachers under 30 (37 percent) is more than three times that of traditional public schools (11 percent).

Teachers who reported less satisfaction with their charter school's mission, its ability to achieve that mission, or its administration and governance also were more likely to leave. "It appeared that teachers who were not satisfied were leaving or were being asked to leave," Miron and Applegate report.

Attrition rates were highest among upper grade teachers, especially in grades 6, 7, 10, and 11, the researchers found.

Charter school teachers who have remained have told surveyors they were "generally optimistic about their schools" but many still reported feeling insecure in their jobs, the researchers found. Meanwhile, attrition rates "suggest substantive frustration with working conditions and dissatisfaction with salaries, benefits, administration, and governance."

Based on their findings Miron and Applegate recommend that supporters of charter schools "would be well-advised to focus on reducing high turnover, especially for new teachers in charter schools." They also recommend that charter schools:

- Identify discrepancies and devise strategies to narrow the gaps between teachers' expectations for charter schools and the realities of those schools;
- Strengthen teachers' sense of security in charter schools; and
- Improve teachers' satisfaction with working conditions, salaries, benefits and governance.

"The large numbers of teachers who are 'voting with their feet' suggest substantive frustration with working conditions and dissatisfaction with salaries, benefits, administration, and governance," the researchers conclude. "The high attrition rates for teachers in charter schools constitute one of the greatest obstacles that will need to be overcome if the charter school reform is to deliver as promised."

Find Gary Miron's and Brooks Applegate's report, "Teacher Attrition in Charter Schools" on the web at:

<http://epsl.asu.edu/epru/documents/EPSSL-0705-234-EPRU.pdf>

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