

EH 102

Research Paper

The Mass Migration Out of the Education Field

Education is a necessary field. The people who work within education are the people that society has entrusted with cultivating lifelong learners who grow into productive members of society. Educators also get the opportunity to work closely with people, building relationships and fostering passions. Being a stepping stone in a child's life is something that many educators, and at one time myself, find priceless. However, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, about 8 percent of educators leave the field each year. With this number being exacerbated by the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is alarming how many teachers decide to find another career. Teachers are becoming burnt out, exhausting their resources, and becoming hopeless in a way that we have never seen before, and continuing to ignore these circumstances as a society, may be more severe than people anticipate.

In the last two years, circumstances have changed drastically for almost everyone nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To say the field of education was shaken by this change would be an understatement. Every single person working within a school or district office, every student from toddlers at early childhood education programs to students at institutions of higher education, and every parent of a student had to completely rethink the way things have always been done. Due to this complete overhaul, "84 percent of teachers also said teaching is more stressful than it was before coronavirus closures" (Loewus). With schools closed and students, teachers, and staff at home, the undertaking of online learning began.

However, the education field was suffering due to shortages long before the pandemic began. Before COVID-19 was a thought in anyone's head the education system had long standing

retention and turn over problems due to a number a factors such as there not being enough newly certified teachers entering the field to make up for teachers leaving, inadequate pay compared to other professional fields, little or no support from administration or district officials, and the absence of meaningful professional development opportunities (“A Policy Agenda to Address the Teacher Shortage in U.S. Public Schools...”). All of these factors, among others, are problems that have continuously built up over time.

Wages are one of the largest of these pre-pandemic issues. Throughout my entire lifetime, I can remember dozens of times where teachers in other cities or states were protesting due to wages. This has been a problem in the education system so much so that when I was in high school several of my own teachers traveled to the capital of our state, South Carolina, along with hundreds of other educators to protest legislation that could have negatively impacted already low wages for teachers. As for support, having support from those who work above you in any profession is important. It is important for teachers to feel supported by their administration, school staff, and district for them to succeed in the classroom the same way it is important for students to have support from their teachers and parents to be able to be successful in the classroom. At its core, the education profession is all about relationships. The relationship you build and maintain with those whom you teach, and in the case of younger learners, their parents, is essential to their success both in school and in life. While these relationships are the reason many people join this field of work in the first place, these relationships often require a lot of physical and emotional energy that is not returned. The statistics, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, state “Less than half of teachers strongly agree that the administration’s behavior is supportive and encouraging (49.6%) or that there is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members (38.4%)” (“Examining the Factors That Play a Role in the Teacher Shortage Crisis: Key Findings from EPI’s ‘Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor

Market' Series"). If for no other reason, because they are human beings, teachers deserve to feel adequately supported by their school's staff.

Professional development is something that people in every field seek out. No one wants to be stuck in the same place with no growth forever, especially career-wise. Jobs that present themselves with opportunities for meaningful professional growth are attractive to people because who would not want to have a job that pays them to expand their skill set and become better? Unfortunately, these opportunities are scarce or completely unavailable to some teachers. Education is an ever-evolving profession. It is a fact that everyday we learn how to teach a certain topic better, a new behavior management technique, or something else that can help teachers teach even more effectively. However, without schools and districts providing opportunities to teachers to participate in additional training, they are not equipped with the best tools to do their jobs.

While the pandemic and its lasting effects created a slew of new issues that have made everyday life more difficult for teachers, it is evident that the education field was suffering losses due to long running problems before the word quarantine was ever in anyone's vocabulary. If we fail to address these core issues that plague education, teacher turnover may be a never ending problem. The issues of wages, lack of professional opportunities, and absence of vital support are issues that cause even the most dedicated of educators to decide to leave the profession. The education field impacts more than just the teachers who decide to leave the field or stay in it despite the hardship and is absolutely essential to continue to foster a productive society.

Works Cited

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