**Fiscal Facts: Revolving Classroom Doors: Recent Trends in Wisconsin’s Teacher Turnover**

Teacher turnover surged in Wisconsin in 2023 as record numbers of teachers moved between districts, and the most teachers since 2012 left public school classrooms altogether.

Coming into the 2023 school year, turnover rose to 15.8% - the highest percentage during a 14-year period examined in a sweeping analysis of state data by the Wisconsin Policy Forum. For comparison, from 2009 to 2023, an average of 11.5% of the state’s teachers turned over each year.

The 2023 rate included both the highest levels on record of teachers moving between districts and the second-highest levels of teachers leaving Wisconsin public school classrooms for some other pursuit.

Our analysis grouped turnover into two categories: “moves,” or teachers who move from one Wisconsin district in one year to teach in another Wisconsin district the next year; and “leaves," or teachers who are present in state public school data one year, but do not show up in the data at all the next year.

The average statewide teacher move rate in the period studied was 2.9%, while the average statewide leave rate was 8.0%. Wisconsin’s leave rate ranged from a low of 6.4% in 2011 to a high of 10.4% in 2012 (likely linked to a surge in teacher retirements after 2011 Act 10.) The leave rate in 2023 was nearly as high at 10.1%. Although it never surpassed the rate of teachers leaving, Wisconsin’s average rate of teachers moving increased during the period studied, from 1.1% in 2010 to 4.7% in 2023.

The report highlights how teacher retention strategies may need to vary depending on location. Urban districts’ primary concern may be teachers leaving the public school classroom or the state entirely. Rural districts are not spared from this concern, but must also contend with simultaneously having a greater risk of losing their teachers to other Wisconsin districts. Indeed, the analysis bolsters a long-held belief that some districts in rural -- and to a lesser extent in urban – areas function as “donor” districts by losing more teachers to other districts than they gain. “Recipient” districts are predominantly in suburban areas.

Meanwhile, turnover among teachers of color was substantially higher than among their white counterparts. This may reflect, in part, the fact that the state’s Black teachers (who experienced the highest levels of turnover on average) are concentrated in districts with high turnover rates for teachers of all races. Turnover among teachers of color is of particular concern due to documented benefits from their presence for all students, and especially students of color.

The increase in teacher turnover does not appear to be unique to Wisconsin – or even the education profession. While teacher turnover is not always harmful, high levels of it can affect district operations, and research suggests that it can also affect outcomes for students and schools.

Policy responses worth considering may include increasingly popular “grow your own” teacher recruitment programs; affordable housing policies; grant programs that send flexible funds to districts at greatest risk for educator workforce issues; attaching financial incentives to hard-to-staff classrooms, schools, and districts; and improved working conditions.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at* [*wispolicyforum.org*](https://wispolicyforum.org/research/state-tax-burden-up-but-overall-burden-still-falling/)*.*