

**K-12 General-Education Teachers' Voluntary Resignations
from the Hawai'i Department of Education:
*Demographics, Reasons for Leaving, Dissatisfactions,
and Suggestions for Improvement***

Paul R. Brandon, Ph.D.

October 2000



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

Informing the Education Community

The author, who is Research Professor of Educational Evaluation at Curriculum Research & Development Group (CRDG), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, conducted this study for the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC). HEPC funded CRDG to provide staffing, supplies, and postage. Much of the author's time was provided by CRDG as an in-kind contribution. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Terry Ann F. Higa, who under severe time constraints, carefully and conscientiously supervised data collection and assisted in report table preparation and report editing.



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

The Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) is an independent policy research organization that provides timely, concise, relevant and objective policy briefs, reports, articles, studies, forums, and workshops that reflect the needs and requests of Hawai'i policymakers. HEPC strives to become a trusted partner with policymakers in efforts to understand, nurture, improve, and adopt the best and most appropriate policies for our life-long learners in Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Educational Policy Center...

- Works with policymakers to identify what information they need.
- Reviews, collects and distributes information on existing research on issues relevant to Hawai'i.
- Provides concise, objective, independent analysis of research.
- Provides timely, targeted, interpreted data, briefings and testimony for policymakers.
- Maintains a website with links to cutting-edge research and policy.
- Commissions a range of policy briefs, articles, studies and reports that generate new knowledge and insights that inform policy decisions.
- Conducts, facilitates, and participates in educational forums and workshops.
- Initiates research on emerging and enduring issues that affect the quality of schools and the quality of learning.

Contact Us

THE HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER
1776 University Avenue, UES 103 • Honolulu, HI 96822-2463
Phone: (808) 956-9563 • Fax: (808) 956-5665
Email: hepc@hawaii.edu • Website: www.hawaii.edu/hepc

K–12 General-Education Teachers’ Voluntary Resignations from the Hawai‘i Department of Education: Demographics, Reasons for Leaving, Dissatisfactions, and Suggestions for Improvement

Executive Summary

This is the executive summary of the report of a teacher-attrition survey of Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE) elementary and secondary general-education teachers. Its purpose is to inform Hawai‘i policymakers who are addressing issues of DOE teacher supply and demand. The five questions addressed here are:

- 1) What are the demographic characteristics of elementary and secondary teachers who recently resigned their DOE jobs?
- 2) What reasons do recently resigned teachers give for having left their DOE positions?
- 3) Of the teachers who reported having recently left the DOE because they were dissatisfied with teaching as a career, what were their primary dissatisfactions with their jobs and the DOE?
- 4) What are recently resigned teachers’ opinions about the steps the DOE might take to encourage teachers to remain in their jobs?
- 5) What findings of the report might have implications for educational policy making in Hawai‘i?

The survey discussed here was of K–12 general-education teachers who resigned during School Years (SY) 1997–98, 1998–99, and 1999–2000. It was conducted in September 2000. Demographic data provided by the DOE were also analyzed. Of the 681 former teachers who resigned during the three-year period, 44% responded. Furthermore, with the exceptions of a somewhat less-than-desirable response rate for younger teachers, and possibly of a lower-than-desirable response rate for former teachers who moved to the mainland, analyses showed that the survey results are reasonably representative of the total group of resigned teachers.

The highlights of the report’s findings, with some possible implications, include:

- On average, 225 teachers (about 2.4% of all DOE teachers) voluntarily leave their positions each year. This percentage is considerably smaller than the 4.2% of teachers who typically leave their positions for reasons of retirement, termination, or death each year, and it is markedly lower than the 5.6% reported nationwide in the mid-1990s. Unless recent resignation rates in Hawai‘i are anomalous (e.g., because the slow Hawai‘i economy did not provide alternative employment opportunities for teachers who wished to leave teaching), it is reasonable to conclude that teacher attrition is not as critical an issue in Hawai‘i as on the mainland. One possible implication of this finding is that, before taking steps to encourage this group to stay in the DOE, policymakers might wish to speculate whether the benefits will be worth the costs.
- Of all the respondents to the survey, six in ten gave a reason for leaving that had to do with teaching issues, nearly six in 10 indicated a personal or family reason, about one in four indicated they left to take other jobs, a little less than two in 10 indicated a reason that had to do with moving, and about one in 10 gave a reason that had to do with pursuing more education. These results contradict common perceptions about large proportions of teachers leaving the DOE because they move to the mainland. However,

the proportion of survey respondents who indicated they left the DOE to move to the mainland might be small, because this group was more difficult than Hawai‘i residents to reach by mail.

- A substantial proportion of former teachers reported significant dissatisfaction with teaching. About four in ten of the survey respondents indicated that they left their positions because they were dissatisfied with teaching as a career—a much larger proportion than the 8% reported in national studies. The Hawai‘i findings might be due in part to a sample self-selection bias (i.e., highly dissatisfied teachers might have been more likely to return questionnaires than less-dissatisfied teachers), but they might also be due to problems intrinsic in DOE teaching that are more troublesome than in most mainland educational jurisdictions.
- A substantial proportion of resigned teachers might be receptive to encouragement to stay in their DOE positions. Of the teachers who voluntarily resigned during the three years addressed in the survey, about four in ten are working in education now, and about half stated they plan to work in education next school year. If the DOE, College of Education, and other institutions or agencies are to take steps to reduce teacher attrition, this group might be receptive to any remedies that might be devised.
- Of the total group of survey respondents, about two-thirds said that higher salaries and/or better fringe benefits would encourage teachers to stay, about four in 10 mentioned decreasing class sizes, and about three in 10 mentioned issues of inadequate classroom resources and materials or issues of student discipline and school safety.
- Younger teachers make up a substantial proportion of resigning teachers. The proportion of teachers 39 years of age or younger who resigned (66%) is almost double the proportion that this age group comprised of all current DOE teachers. The finding that the youngest teachers have the highest resignation rate reflects trends noted in national studies. The survey results do not help us learn precisely how to target this group, because they show no significant differences among age groups’ reasons for leaving, but the results do show that, across all age groups, women are more likely than men to leave for personal or family reasons, and men are more likely than women to leave because of dissatisfaction with salaries or benefits.
- The Leeward and Windward Districts are losing proportionately more teachers than the other five districts.
- Secondary-level teachers are leaving at a higher rate than elementary-level teachers; during the past three years, about 3.0% the former group left their positions, whereas about 1.8% of the latter group left their positions.

K–12 General-Education Teachers’ Voluntary Resignations from the Hawai‘i Department of Education: Demographics, Reasons for Leaving, Dissatisfactions, and Suggestions for Improvement

Purpose and Policy-Research Questions

This is a report of a teacher-attrition survey of elementary and secondary general-education teachers who voluntarily resigned from the Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE) in recent years. The purpose of the report is inform local policymakers about the demographics of these teachers, their reasons for leaving their DOE positions, the primary dissatisfactions they expressed about their DOE jobs, and issues that might be addressed when developing policy to improve teacher retention.

The focus of the report is on a survey of DOE teachers who resigned during School Years (SY) 1997–98, 1998–99, and 1999–2000.¹ The report addresses five policy-research questions:

- Question 1.* What are the demographic characteristics of elementary and secondary teachers who recently resigned their DOE jobs?
- Question 2.* What reasons do recently resigned teachers give for having left their DOE positions?
- Question 3.* Of the teachers who reported having recently left the DOE because they were dissatisfied with teaching as a career, what were their primary dissatisfactions with their jobs and the DOE?
- Question 4.* What are recently resigned teachers’ opinions about the steps the DOE might take to encourage teachers to remain in their jobs?
- Question 5.* What findings of the report might have implications for educational policy making in Hawai‘i?

Background²

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2000) has projected that public-school K–12 student enrollment will increase 9.9% in Hawai‘i between 2000 and 2010 . The availability of teachers to address this deficit typically is affected by several supply-and-demand factors. These include (a) the number of teacher-preparation graduates and the capacity of teacher colleges to produce new graduates, (b) the availability and success of

¹Except for a few teachers, whom the DOE mistakenly included in the set of names it provided for this study, teachers who retired or left involuntarily during this period were not surveyed.

²This section is not based a comprehensive literature review. The author searched the Internet for reports about teacher attrition. Sufficient information was obtained to help (a) prepare the background section of this report, (b) structure and interpret the findings of data analyses, and (c) make conclusions about the findings of the study in light of what is known about teacher attrition nationwide. This information (not specifically cited in the text of this report) was found in Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, and Weber (1996); Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann (n. d.); Fetler (1997); National Center for Education Statistics. (2000); and Wayne (2000).

programs designed to entice people from industry and business into teaching, (c) class-size policies, (d) standards that teachers must achieve, (e) the number of less-than-fully qualified people available and willing to enter teaching on an emergency basis, (f) the rate at which teachers retire or are terminated, and (g) the rate at which teachers voluntarily resign—that is, the teacher-attrition rate.

Teacher attrition is affected by factors such as salaries, working conditions, family events or conditions, departures to pursue educational or employment opportunities, school staffing actions (e.g., undesirable reassignments), and dissatisfaction with teaching as a career. Surveys conducted by NCES in 1990–91 and 1991–92 showed 5.6% attrition among general-education teachers at public schools and 12.7% at private schools.³ Attrition rates in California by the beginning of teachers' 7th year of service have been estimated at about half.

Much of the focus on the demographic characteristics of departing teachers has been on their age groups. Attrition is highest among the youngest teachers (except for attrition due to retirement in the oldest age group); across all age groups, the longer teachers have taught, the less likely they are to leave teaching before retirement. NCES data show that, of departing teachers with less than four years experience, 44% who left cited personal and family reasons, 17% left involuntarily (due to staffing actions), and 12% left to go to school; only 8% cited dissatisfaction with teaching as a career. Teachers with young children are more likely to resign than are teachers with older children. Departing teachers' age group is considered in the analyses conducted for this study, as well as other demographic characteristics that are of interest, including job positions (elementary vs. secondary teachers), school district, education levels, gender, and marital status.

Survey Methods

To answer the five questions addressed in this study, two data-collection and -analysis efforts were conducted. First, with the help of the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HPEC) director, Dr. Scott Thomas, the author obtained and analyzed computer files from the DOE's Office of Personnel Services and its Information System Services Branch.⁴ One file included demographic information about all DOE personnel who voluntarily resigned during SYs 1997–98, 1998–99, and 1999–2000. This information was used to identify

³The surveys were the Schools and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Follow-up Survey.

⁴I am most grateful to the DOE for its prompt assistance in providing these files.

respondents for the survey described in the next paragraph and to analyze the data by demographic group. Another file included demographic information on all DOE teachers during the three years. This information was used to compare the demographic characteristics of the recently resigned DOE teachers with the full set of DOE teachers. All data were kept in secure computer files and analyzed confidentially.

Second, in collaboration with the HEPC director, the author developed a questionnaire, the *Hawai'i Teacher Follow-Up Survey* (HTFS), distributed it to recently resigned DOE teachers, and analyzed the collected data.⁵ The purpose of the HTFS was to collect data addressing the first four research questions. The questionnaire borrowed items from the 1994–95 NCES *Teacher Follow-Up Survey*, with modifications of some items to make them appropriate for Hawai'i. Questionnaires were distributed in September 2000 by U. S. mail to all general-education elementary and secondary teachers who resigned during SYs 1997–98, 1998–99, and 1999–2000. A cover letter from Dr. Thomas and a stamped return envelope were included. Respondents who did not return questionnaires were mailed another copy, also with a cover letter and return envelope. Data from questionnaires that had been returned by October 2, 2000 were entered into SAS computer files. To facilitate the analyses, the HTFS data were electronically merged with the DOE dataset. The merged files did not include respondents' names or addresses.

Of all the 681 mailed questionnaires, 152 (22%) were returned as undeliverable because of out-dated addresses or expired forwarding periods. Of those who received the questionnaires, the response rate was 57% ($N = 300$). To confidently generalize our findings to all recently resigned teachers, a greater rate is desirable; nevertheless, the response rate is satisfactory, because it is quite high for mail surveys.⁶

Of the 152 undeliverable questionnaires returned to CRDG, 71 (47%) were to mainland addresses. This high percentage suggests that the survey responses are more representative of long-term Hawai'i residents than of teachers who moved here temporarily from the mainland.

To identify other differences between the survey respondents and the entire surveyed

⁵A copy of the HTFS is provided in Appendix A.

⁶For example, the DOE Evaluation Section has routinely found that the best response rate it can expect in mail surveys (e.g., alumni surveys) is about 30%.

group, statistical tests were conducted.⁷ (Distributions of demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.) The results of these tests showed that the respondents differed from non-respondents in three ways. First, teachers who resigned last year tended to return completed questionnaires more than those who resigned during the two previous years. This probably occurred because mail delivery to the teachers who resigned in 1997–98 and 1998-99 was less successful than it was to those who resigned last school year. There is no reason to believe, however, that the responses of those who resigned in 1999–2000 are likely to be notably different from those who resigned during the previous two school years; therefore, the preponderance of newly resigned teachers should not affect the generalizability of the findings. The second way that the respondents differed from the non-respondents had to do with age: Respondents older than 40 had a higher rate of questionnaire return, and younger respondents had a lower rate of return. This probably is in part an artifact of not being able to deliver the questionnaires, in that younger former DOE teachers are more likely to have moved than older former teachers. It might also reflect the daily time demands on younger teachers. The third way that the respondents differed was that former elementary teachers had a higher rate of return (and secondary teachers a lower rate) than the non-respondents. However, the differences in percentages between the group of respondents and the group of all resigned teachers was not large: Of the respondent group, 48% were elementary teachers vs. 44% of the total group of resigned teachers, and 52% were secondary teachers vs. 56% of the total group of resigned teachers.

On the remaining demographic variables, no statistically significant differences were found. As seen in Table 1, the respondent group and the total group were markedly similar in their distribution among DOE districts, education levels, gender groups, and licensure/certificate status groups. In conclusion, the results of the comparisons on demographic variables show that the survey findings reasonably generalize to the total group of resigned teachers, with a somewhat less-than-desirable response rate for younger teachers and possibly a lower-than-desirable response rate for mainland teachers.

⁷A comparison of the statistical significance of the differences between the respondents and the non-respondents was made with the chi-square statistic ($\alpha = .05$). The statistics are not reported here and are available from the author upon request.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the DOE Teachers Who Resigned During the Most Recent Three-Year Period and of the Group of Survey Respondents

Characteristic (with percentages for the total group of elementary and secondary teachers who taught in the DOE during the three years [mean number = 9,534]) ^a	Resigned DOE teachers (<i>N</i> = 681)		Survey respondents (<i>N</i> = 300)	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
<i>School year of resignation:</i>				
• 1999–2000	232	34%	138	46%
• 1998–99	217	32%	89	30%
• 1997–98	232	34%	73	24%
<i>Grade level taught in DOE:</i>				
• Elementary (56%)	297	44%	144	48%
• Secondary (44%)	384	56%	156	52%
<i>License or certificate:</i>				
• License	643	94%	288	96%
• Certificate	38	6%	12	4%
<i>District taught in:</i> ^b				
• Honolulu (19%)	107	16%	47	16%
• Central (18%)	103	15%	48	16%
• Leeward (19%)	155	23%	66	22%
• Windward (10%)	96	14%	39	13%
• Maui (12%)	87	13%	34	11%
• Kauai (6%)	39	6%	15	5%
• Hawai‘i (15%)	94	14%	51	17%
<i>Highest degree:</i>				
• Bachelor’s, professional diploma, or 5-year degree	545	80%	232	77%
• Master’s or doctorate	121	18%	60	20%
• Missing data	15	2%	8	3%
<i>Gender:</i>				
• Female (77%)	516	76%	231	77%
• Male (23%)	165	24%	69	23%
<i>Marital status:</i>				
• Married (66%)	386	43%	179	60%
• Single (34%)	295	57%	121	40%
<i>Age group (as of 9/1/00):</i>				
• Less than 30 (10%)	157	23%	62	21%
• 30–39 (28%)	295	43%	112	37%
• 40–49 (25%)	129	19%	68	23%
• 50 or more (37%)	87	13%	54	18%
• Missing data	13	2%	4	1%

^aPercentages are averages of the percentages for the three years.

^bPercentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

Findings

What Are the Demographic Characteristics of Elementary and Secondary Teachers Who Recently Resigned Their DOE Positions?

A demographic analysis is useful because policymakers should (a) have a demographic picture of recently resigned teachers and (b) understand the extent to which resigned teachers mirror the distributions of the total group of DOE elementary and secondary teachers. The percentages given in Table 1 show that:

- The numbers of teachers voluntarily resigning from the DOE during the past three years have remained steady; the percentages resigning are nearly equal for each of the three years. The average (mean) number of teachers who voluntarily resigned is 227—2.4% of the average total number of teachers. On average, another 398 teachers (4.2%) were removed from the DOE rolls because of retirement, termination, and death. Thus, on average, the teacher turnover rate for DOE elementary and secondary teachers during the past three years has been 6.6%, with nearly two-thirds of this 6.6% due to voluntary resignation.
- The percentage of teachers who resigned from secondary-school positions (56%) is greater than the percentage of teachers who resigned from elementary-school positions (44%). Indeed, as seen in Table 1, this percentage distribution is the exact reverse of the distribution of all elementary and secondary teachers who were employed in the DOE during the past three years. On average, the attrition of teachers at the secondary level (about 3%) is markedly higher than that at the elementary level (about 1.8%).
- Of the seven DOE administrative districts, the percentages of resigning teachers on Maui, Kaua‘i, and Hawai‘i are quite similar to the percentages of all DOE teachers employed in these districts. On O‘ahu, the percentages of recently resigned teachers are lower in the Honolulu and Central Districts and notably higher in the Windward and Leeward Districts. The Windward and Leeward Districts are losing proportionately more teachers than the other five districts.
- In Hawai‘i, there has been a strong tendency, as has been found nationally, for attrition to be the highest among the youngest teachers. Of all DOE teachers during the past three years, 38% have been 39 years of age or younger, but of all the teachers who resigned during the same period, 66% were 39 or younger. Assuming that younger teachers are less likely than older teachers to be married, the marital-status percentages also show this tendency: About two-thirds of all teachers employed by the DOE are married, but only

Table 2. Present Occupational Status of Survey Respondents

Present occupational status	<i>N</i>	% ^a
<i>Respondents continuing to work in education (subtotal = 41%):</i>		
Working as a teacher in an elementary or secondary school outside of the Hawai‘i DOE	99	33%
Working in an elementary or secondary school with an assignment other than teaching	10	3%
Substitute teaching	9	3%
Returned to the DOE	7	2%
<i>Respondents no longer working in education (subtotal = 46%):</i>		
Working in an occupation outside of elementary or secondary education	85	28%
Caring for family members	34	11%
Student at a college or university	18	6%
Disabled	3	1%
Other	23	11%
Missing data	4	1%
<i>Total</i>	300	100%

^aPercentages do not total 100 because of rounding.

43% of recently-resigned teachers are married.

Survey respondents were also asked about their occupational status this year and about their plans for next year. In Table 2, their current occupational status is shown, and in Table 3, plans for SY 2001–02 are shown. The results in these tables show that:

- Of the survey respondents, 33% have teaching positions outside the DOE, 3% are working as educators in non-teaching positions, 2% have returned to the DOE, and 3% are substitute teachers. Thus, about 40% continue in education, and almost 60% are employed outside education or participating in other activities. Of all the respondents, only about 10% indicated that they are caring for family members.
- About half of the survey respondents indicated that they plan to hold positions in education next school year, with about 45% indicating they plan to teach. The respondents do not plan to devote more of their time to caring for family members; only 12% indicated this activity in their response to the questionnaire.

Table 3. Survey Respondents' Expected Activities In School Year 2001–02

Expected activity	<i>N</i>	% ^a
<i>Respondents planning to work in education (subtotal = 51%):</i>		
Teaching any of Grades K–12	109	36%
Teaching at the pre-kindergarten or post-secondary level	20	7%
Substitute teaching	5	2%
Working in a non-teaching occupation in the field of education	18	6%
<i>Respondents not planning to work in education (subtotal = 43%):</i>		
Working in an occupation outside the field of education	68	23%
Caring for family members	37	12%
Student at a college or university	11	4%
Unemployed and seeking work	3	1%
In military	1	.3%
Other	16	7%
Missing data	6	1%
<i>Total</i>	300	100%

^aPercentages do not total 100 because of rounding.

What Reasons Do Recently Resigned Teachers Give for Having Left Their DOE Positions?

From a list of reasons why teachers might have resigned their teaching positions, teachers were asked to select up to three. The results of their selections are summarized in Table 4. These results show that four most-frequently given reasons for having resigned their positions with the DOE were that (a) they were dissatisfied with teaching as a career (39%), (b) they want better salary or benefits (34%), (c) they made a family or personal move (26%), and (d) they wanted to pursue another career (20%).⁸ No more than 15% of the respondents selected any of the remaining reasons for leaving their DOE teaching jobs.

⁸95% confidence intervals for the percentages shown in Table 4 range from $\pm .94$ to ± 5.51 , with a mean of 3.04. These confidence intervals (indeed, all the confidence intervals discussed in this report) show that not too much should be made of small differences between percentages.

To identify differences (if any) in the selections of these four items among demographic subgroups, comparisons on each item were made (a) among the four age groups shown in Table 1, (b) between respondents with graduate degrees and respondents with less than graduate degrees, (c) between elementary and secondary teachers, (d) between males and females, and (e) between married and unmarried respondents.⁹ The results showed that females were more likely than males to report having left the DOE for family or personal reasons (females = 29%, males = 17%) and that males were more likely than females to report having left because of dissatisfaction with salary or benefits (males = 48%, females = 30%). These were the only statistically significant differences found in comparisons among demographic subgroups.

The former teachers' reasons for leaving their DOE teaching positions roughly fall into five categories, as shown in Table 4. Because teachers could select more than one reason within each category, analyses were conducted to determine the numbers and percentages of respondents who selected at least one response within a category. These analyses show that 60% indicated reasons having to do with teaching, 55% indicated personal reasons, 28% indicated they left to take other jobs, 17% indicated reasons having to do with moving, and 9% indicated reasons having to do with pursuing more education. It should be noted, however, that the proportion of survey respondents who indicated they left to move back to the mainland is probably less than the proportion of the full group of recently resigned teachers who left for this reason, because this group was more difficult than Hawai'i residents to reach by mail.

Of the Teachers Who Reported Having Recently Left the DOE Because They Were Dissatisfied With Teaching as a Career, What Were Their Primary Dissatisfactions With Their Jobs and the DOE?

The 116 respondents who indicated that they were dissatisfied with teaching as a career were asked in Item 4 of the survey to select (from a list) the reasons for their dissatisfaction. (See Table 5.)¹⁰ The reasons most often selected were poor salary (32%), lack of resources and material/equipment for the classroom (29%), student discipline problems (29%), lack of recognition and support from administration (29%), class sizes that were too large (27%),

⁹The statistic used was chi-square with a significance level of .05.

¹⁰Although the range of the 95% confidence intervals for the percentages shown in Table 5 (± 1.87 to ± 5.27) is less than the range shown in Table 4, the mean confidence interval (4.15) is higher, indicating generally greater variability in the percentages shown in Table 5 than in the percentages shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Survey Respondents' Reasons for Leaving their Teaching Jobs with the Hawai'i Department of Education^a

Reasons for leaving	N	%	S.e.%
Reasons having to do with teaching:			
Dissatisfied with teaching as a career	116	39%	2.8%
For better salary or benefits	102	34%	2.7%
School staffing action (e.g., school reorganization, reassignment)	18	6%	1.4%
To take a sabbatical or other break from teaching	6	2%	.8%
Took other jobs:			
To pursue another career	60	20%	2.3%
Took a job in Hawai'i's private sector	25	8%	1.6%
Reasons having to do with pursuing more education:			
To take courses to improve career opportunities in the field of education	18	6%	1.4%
To take courses to improve career opportunities outside the field of education	11	4%	1.1%
Reasons having to do with moving:			
Moved back to mainland because Hawai'i is too expensive	35	12%	1.9%
Moved back to mainland because Hawai'i is too geographically isolated	12	4%	1.1%
Moved back to mainland (never intended to remain in Hawai'i for long)	11	4%	1.1%
Moved back to mainland because Hawai'i is too culturally different	2	1%	.5%
Moved to an island in Hawai'i where a teaching job was unavailable	3	1%	.6%
Personal reasons:			
Family or personal move	79	26%	2.5%
Pregnancy/child rearing	37	12%	1.9%
Health	15	5%	1.3%
To retire	9	3%	1.0%
Other family or personal reason	44	15%	2.0%

^aRespondents were asked to select the three most important reasons from the list of 18 shown here.

too much bureaucracy (26%), poor student motivation to learn (24%), and inadequate time to prepare lesson/teaching plans (23%).

What Are Recently Resigned Teachers' Opinions About the Steps the DOE Might Take to Encourage Teachers to Remain in Their Jobs?

In Table 6, recently resigned DOE teachers' opinions about the steps the DOE might take

Table 5. Survey Respondents' Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Teaching in the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE)^a

Reason for dissatisfaction	<i>N</i>	%	S.e. _%
Poor salary	34	32%	2.7%
Lack of resources and material/equipment for the classroom	31	29%	2.6%
Student discipline problems	31	29%	2.6%
Lack of recognition and support from administration	31	29%	2.6%
Class sizes too large	29	27%	2.6%
Too much bureaucracy	28	26%	2.5%
Poor student motivation to learn	26	24%	2.5%
Inadequate time to prepare lesson/teaching plans	25	23%	2.4%
Inadequate support for new teachers (e.g., mentor teacher programs)	18	17%	2.1%
Intrusions on teaching time (i.e., not enough time working directly teaching students)	16	15%	2.1%
Inadequate facilities	11	10%	1.8%
Poor opportunity for professional advancement	8	7%	1.5%
Lack of influence over school policies and practices	8	7%	1.5%
Lack of parental involvement	5	5%	1.2%
Lack of control over own classroom	3	3%	1.0%

to encourage teachers to remain in their jobs (HTFS Item 5) are summarized.¹¹ The percentages shown in Table 6 are larger than those shown in Tables 4 or 5 and indicate strong agreement among respondents. The pattern of results is similar to the pattern shown in Table 5. Of the responding teachers, 64% indicated that the DOE should consider providing higher salaries and/or better fringe benefits, 43% said it should consider decreasing class sizes, 30% said it should consider providing better resources and materials for classroom use, and 30% said it should consider dealing more effectively with student discipline and making schools safer. Of the remaining selections for Item 5, none showed percentages greater than 25%.

¹¹Confidence intervals for the percentages shown in Table 6 range from ± 2.14 to ± 5.61 , with a mean confidence interval of 4.02. The stability of the responses to Item 5 on the survey is about the same as that for Item 4.

Table 6. Survey Respondents' Opinions About the Steps the DOE Might Take to Encourage Teachers to Remain in Hawai'i DOE Teaching Jobs

Steps to encourage teachers	<i>N</i>	%	S.e.%
Providing higher salaries and/or better fringe benefits	193	64%	2.8%
Decreasing class size	130	43%	2.9%
Providing better resources and materials for classroom use	91	30%	2.7%
Dealing more effectively with student discipline and making schools safer	89	30%	2.6%
Reducing teacher workload	73	24%	2.5%
Reducing the paperwork burden on teachers	49	16%	2.1%
Giving teachers more authority in the school and in their own classrooms	45	15%	2.1%
Providing tuition reimbursement for coursework required for certification or career advancement	39	13%	1.9%
Providing more support for new teachers (e.g., mentor teacher programs)	40	13%	2.0%
Providing merit pay or other pay incentives to teachers	33	11%	1.8%
Improving opportunities for professional advancement	30	10%	1.7%
Increasing standards for students' academic performance	23	8%	1.5%
Increasing parent involvement in the schools	11	4%	1.1%
Giving special recognition and/or special assignments to excellent or outstanding teachers	11	4%	1.1%

What Findings of the Report Might Have Implications for Educational Policy Making in Hawai'i?

Some of the findings presented in this report might have implications for policy making. These findings are summarized here, and some suggestions about their implications are made.

- The numbers of teachers voluntarily resigning annually from the DOE (*N* = approximately 225) are not large—they constitute about 2.4% of all DOE teachers. This percentage is considerably less than the 4.2% leaving the DOE for reasons of retirement,

termination, or death. Indeed, the percentage of teachers voluntarily resigning is markedly lower than the 5.6% identified in a national survey conducted in the mid-1990s. In contrast to mainland educational jurisdictions, Hawai‘i teachers seeking new teaching positions outside the DOE must make major moves or find positions in private schools, which probably are infrequently available. Unless resignation rates in Hawai‘i are anomalous (e.g., because the slow Hawai‘i economy in the 1990s did not provide alternative employment opportunities for teachers who wished to leave teaching), it is reasonable to conclude that teacher attrition is clearly not as critical an issue in Hawai‘i as on the mainland. One possible implication of this finding is that, before taking steps to encourage this group to stay in the DOE, policymakers might wish to speculate whether the benefits will be worth the costs.

- Of all the respondents to the survey, six in 10 gave a reason for leaving that had to do with teaching issues, nearly as many indicated a personal or family reason, about one in four indicated they left to take other jobs, a little less than two in 10 indicated a reason that had to do with moving, and about one in 10 gave a reason that had to do with pursuing more education. These results contradict common perceptions about large proportions of teachers going to the mainland to teach. However, the proportion of survey respondents who indicated they left the DOE to move back to the mainland might be small, because this group was more difficult than Hawai‘i residents to reach by mail.
- Policymakers should be aware that a substantial proportion of former teachers reported significant dissatisfaction with teaching. About four out of 10 of the survey respondents indicated that they left their positions because they were dissatisfied with teaching as a career—a much larger proportion than the 8% reported in national studies. The Hawai‘i findings might be due in part to a sample self-selection bias (i.e., highly dissatisfied teachers might have been more likely to return questionnaires than less-dissatisfied teachers), but they might also be due to problems intrinsic in DOE teaching that are more troublesome than in most mainland educational jurisdictions.
- Administrators and policymakers might be encouraged by findings that suggest a substantial proportion of resigned teachers might be receptive to encouragement to stay in their DOE positions. Of the teachers who voluntarily resigned during the three years covered in the survey, about four in 10 are working in education now, and about half stated they plan to work in education next year. If the DOE, College of Education, and other institutions or agencies are to take steps to reduce teacher attrition, this group

might be receptive to any remedies that might be devised.

- If efforts are made to encourage teachers to stay in their positions, suggestions for improvement can be found in the findings reported here. Of the total group of survey respondents, about two-thirds said that higher salaries and/or better fringe benefits would encourage teachers to stay, about four in ten mentioned decreasing class sizes, and about three in ten mentioned issues of inadequate classroom resources and materials or issues of student discipline and school safety.
- Younger teachers make up a substantial proportion of resigning teachers. The proportion of teachers 39 years of age or younger who resigned (66%) is almost double the proportion that this age group comprised of all current DOE teachers. This finding reflects trends noted in national studies. The survey results do not help us learn precisely how to target this group, because they show no significant differences among age groups' reasons for leaving, but the results do show that, across all age groups, women are more likely than men to leave for personal or family reasons, and men are more likely than women to leave because of dissatisfaction with salaries or benefits. The steps taken to encourage younger teachers to remain in their positions probably also will encourage others to stay.
- The appropriate districts to target are the Leeward and Windward Districts. These districts are losing proportionately more teachers than the other five districts.
- Secondary-level teachers are leaving at a rate considerably greater than elementary-level teachers. The proportion of secondary-school teachers who left their positions (about 3.0%) was nearly two-thirds greater than the proportion of teachers resigning from elementary-school positions (about 1.8%).

References

Boe, E. E., Bobbitt, S. A., Cook, L. H., Whitener, A. L., & Weber, A. L. (1996). *Predictors of retention, transfer, and attrition of special education and general education teachers: Data from the 1989 Teacher Follow-up Survey*. (NCES Working Paper Series). [On-line]. National Center for Education Statistics. Available from: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs96/9612.pdf>

Croasmun, J., Hampton, D., & Herrmann, S. (n. d.) *Teacher attrition: Is time running out?* [On-line]. Available from: <http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/Hampton.asp>

Fetler, M. (1997) Where have all the teachers gone? *Education Policy Analysis Archives* [On-line serial], 5(2). Available from: <http://olam.ed.asu.edu/epaa/v5n2.html>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2000). *Growing pains: The challenge of overcrowded schools is here to stay*. [On-line]. Available from: www.ed.gov/pubs/bbecho00

Wayne, A. J. (2000). Teacher supply and demand: Surprises from primary research. *Education Policy Analysis Archives* [On-line serial], 8(47). Available from: <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n47.html>

Appendix A

Hawai'i Teacher Follow-up Survey

(not available on electronic copy of report)