



# HELP WANTED

AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHER  
PIPELINE IN METRO MILWAUKEE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

In this, the third and final installment in a series on educators in the Milwaukee area, the Public Policy Forum seeks to understand whether the state and region face a shortage of teachers. Building upon our earlier analyses of teacher and school leader demographics and employment trends, we strive to better understand how the teacher workforce has changed in recent years and how it is likely to change in the near future.

We address this issue with a comprehensive look at the public school teacher workforce, as well as teacher preparation programs throughout the state. Using the most recent federal, state, and institutional data, we present findings for the state and the four-county Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes school districts in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties.

The findings and conclusions of our analysis are intended to provide insight for policymakers and the public and spark dialogue about the future of the teaching workforce within the state and region.

## THE TRANSITIONING TEACHER WORKFORCE

We begin our analysis of the educator pipeline by seeking to understand the current state of the teaching profession and how it has changed over time. **Table 1** shows the number of teachers who left the workforce from one school year to the next over the most recent five-year period for which data are available.

**Table 1: How many teachers left the workforce between each year?**

Region	Between 2009-10 and 2010-11	Between 2010-11 and 2011-12	Between 2011-12 and 2012-13	Between 2012-13 and 2013-14
Metro Milwaukee	1,223	1,870	1,375	1,498
State of Wisconsin	4,173	6,507	4,688	4,932

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction

In the Milwaukee area, there were 1,498 teachers who left the workforce prior to the 2013-14 school year, representing 10.4% of all educators. The data show a clear spike in teachers leaving after the 2010-11 school year. This corresponds to the time when Wisconsin Act 10 was proposed and adopted. We cannot say definitively whether Act 10 caused the spike in teachers leaving the workforce, but there is an unmistakable break in the trend line immediately following the legislation.

**Table 2** provides further insight by showing the age groups of Metro Milwaukee teachers who left the workforce. Teachers age 55 and above – who are eligible for retirement – represent 46.7% of teachers who leave. However, this means **53.3% of the teachers who leave are doing so prior to retirement**. Young teachers in their 20s and 30s comprise 34% of those who leave the profession. This suggests that public school districts in the state have difficulty retaining young teachers.

**Table 2: What percentage of Metro Milwaukee teachers who left fell into each age group?**

Age Group	Between 2009-10 and 2010-11	Between 2010-11 and 2011-12	Between 2011-12 and 2012-13	Between 2012-13 and 2013-14
Under 25	4.0%	1.6%	1.8%	2.1%
20s	20.1%	11.9%	11.9%	12.1%
30s	24.1%	18.4%	24.7%	21.9%
40s	13.8%	10.2%	17.4%	13.1%
50 to 54	6.3%	4.7%	6.1%	6.2%
55 and Above	35.7%	54.8%	39.9%	46.7%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction



**Table 3** provides a breakdown of years of experience among Metro Milwaukee teachers who left the workforce. About 36% of those leaving in each year had more than 20 years of experience, which corresponds to older teachers leaving the workforce. However, **more than one in five of the teachers who left in the most recent year were new teachers with less than five years of experience.** Although the share of new teachers among those leaving is down from 33.7% following the 2009-10 school year, the departure of so many new teachers presents a challenge for school and district leaders.

**Table 3: What percentage of Metro Milwaukee teachers who left fell into each experience group?**

Years of Experience	Between 2009-10 and 2010-11	Between 2010-11 and 2011-12	Between 2011-12 and 2012-13	Between 2012-13 and 2013-14
Less than 5	33.7%	22.0%	20.5%	21.9%
5 to 10	17.5%	12.6%	19.8%	14.4%
10 to 15	11.2%	9.9%	15.2%	15.6%
15 to 20	7.9%	8.5%	11.6%	11.9%
20 +	29.7%	46.9%	32.9%	36.1%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction

## WHY ARE TEACHERS LEAVING THE PROFESSION?

We conducted a survey of human resource officers at school districts throughout Metro Milwaukee to ask for the three most common reasons teachers give for leaving the workforce.<sup>1</sup> While this is not a substitute for interviewing every teacher who leaves the profession, the high-level answers we gathered provide valuable insight.

Survey respondents listed money as the most frequent reason. From low starting salaries, to capped raises, to a lack of opportunity for income growth, teachers indicate they seek higher earnings beyond the classroom. The second-most frequent reason is family. Respondents uniformly cited instances of teachers not returning to the workforce after having children. Consequently, districts may wish to consider policy changes that better accommodate the needs of working parents. Many survey respondents also cited changing demands and job expectations as reason for teacher departures, while others indicated some teachers were unprepared for the challenges of the job.

## FILLING THE GAPS

After quantifying the number of teachers leaving the workforce each year and exploring reasons why, we turn our attention to the teachers being hired to fill vacancies. **Table 4** shows the age groups of Metro Milwaukee teachers who entered the workforce during the five years we analyzed.

**Table 4: What is the distribution of entering Metro Milwaukee teachers across each age group?**

Age Group	Between 2009-10 and 2010-11	Between 2010-11 and 2011-12	Between 2011-12 and 2012-13	Between 2012-13 and 2013-14
Under 25	9.8%	11.8%	13.0%	12.6%
20s	38.0%	43.7%	43.6%	44.9%
30s	29.3%	27.1%	26.2%	26.7%
40s	18.1%	18.0%	16.5%	16.2%
50s	9.9%	8.3%	10.2%	9.8%
60 +	4.7%	2.9%	3.5%	2.4%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction

<sup>1</sup> Survey was sent to members of the School Personnel Administrators of Metro Milwaukee, a professional organization of human resource officers from districts throughout the region.



Teachers in their 20s made up 44.9% of all replacement educators, though just 12.6% were under the age of 25, suggesting districts are not filling vacancies with 23-year-olds fresh out of college. These data also reveal interesting patterns for mid- and late-career changers. In any given year, about 43% of entering teachers are in their 30s and 40s. Moreover, 12.2% of entering teachers in 2013-14 were age 50 and over. These senior teachers comprise a smaller portion of entering teachers today as compared to 2009-10.

**Table 5** provides a breakdown of years of experience among Metro Milwaukee teachers who enter the workforce. The vast majority of those entering the workforce – 75.5% – are new educators with less than five years of experience. Indeed, 62.3% of entering teachers are in their first year of teaching. However, there is also evidence of people returning to the profession after some period of time away, as nearly a quarter of entering teachers have more than five years of experience.

**Table 5: The distribution of entering Metro Milwaukee teachers across each experience group**

Years of Experience	Between 2009-10 and 2010-11	Between 2010-11 and 2011-12	Between 2011-12 and 2012-13	Between 2012-13 and 2013-14
Less than 1	44.8%	50.2%	55.3%	62.3%
Less than 5	62.5%	67.1%	72.2%	75.5%
5 to 10	15.7%	14.5%	9.8%	10.8%
10 to 15	9.8%	8.1%	7.9%	6.6%
15 to 20	4.6%	4.5%	4.1%	3.2%
20 +	7.3%	5.8%	6.0%	3.9%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction

Over time, there has been a shift towards teachers with no experience entering Wisconsin classrooms. Teachers with no prior experience comprised 44.5% of entering teachers in 2010-11, but grew to 62.3% in 2013-14. Moreover, those with more than 10 years of experience declined from 21.7% of entering teachers to 13.7% over the same period. **The trend points to fewer teachers with experience returning to the profession and a greater reliance on new, less experienced teachers in the workforce.**

A pertinent question is whether teacher departures may accelerate because districts are facing a wave of retirements in the coming years. **Table 6** shows the percentage of the teacher workforce age 50 and over. **About 27% of the workforce in Metro Milwaukee has reached the minimum retirement age of 55 or will do so in the next few years.**

**Table 6: Percentage of teaching workforce aged 50 and over**

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Metro Milwaukee	31.7%	31.9%	28.7%	28.2%	26.7%
Wisconsin	32.2%	32.1%	29.3%	28.7%	27.8%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction

A central question to our analysis is whether there are enough teachers entering the profession to replace those who are leaving. Thus far, districts seem to be managing the teacher transitions, but their continued ability to do so is predicated on a steady and stable supply of new teachers. As the following section illustrates, however, the supply of new teachers is neither steady, nor stable.



## THE TEACHER PIPELINE

The teacher preparation programs throughout Wisconsin generate a pool of new teachers who enter the profession each year. **Table 7** shows enrollment at teacher preparation programs in Wisconsin, neighboring states, and the nation, from 2008-09 to 2013-14. **A casual look at the data shows the number of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs has declined sharply over the six-year period.** In Wisconsin, enrollment levels have fallen 27.9%, from 12,323 students in the 2008-09 school year. The UW campuses saw the biggest impact of the decline with enrollments falling 31.5% over the six years.

**Table 7: Enrollment in teacher preparation programs over time**

State	Total Enrollment 2008-09	Total Enrollment 2009-10	Total Enrollment 2010-11	Total Enrollment 2011-12	Total Enrollment 2012-13	Total Enrollment 2013-14	Change 2008-09 to 2013-14	%Change 2008-09 to 2013-14
Illinois	34,184	34,103	32,433	26,045	17,934	14,699	-19,485	-57.0%
Iowa	9,243	11,984	9,336	9,308	7,885	7,142	-2,101	-22.7%
Michigan	23,372	22,128	18,402	18,483	14,372	11,287	-12,085	-51.7%
Minnesota	12,172	11,565	10,403	8,856	7,300	7,549	-4,623	-38.0%
Wisconsin	12,323	12,624	11,780	10,998	9,561	8,887	-3,436	-27.9%
<b>Nation</b>	<b>719,081</b>	<b>725,518</b>	<b>684,801</b>	<b>623,190</b>	<b>499,800</b>	<b>465,189</b>	<b>-253,892</b>	<b>-35.3%</b>

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education Title II Reports

Two patterns are apparent. First, the nation and each neighboring state saw enrollment levels decline over the period. Second, three of the four neighboring states saw larger enrollment declines than Wisconsin. It is clear that **the decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs that our state has experienced in recent years is part of a larger regional and national trend impacting the teaching profession.**

**Table 8** shows the number of teacher preparation program completers in Wisconsin, the nation, and neighboring states over time. In 2013-14, there were 3,741 students who completed a Wisconsin teacher prep program. Since 2008-09, the number of students completing teacher preparation programs statewide has decreased by 6.6% (266 students). The decline is attributed to the public universities, where the number of completers fell 11.8%.

**Table 8: Teacher preparation program completers over time**

State	Total Completers 2008-09	Total Completers 2009-10	Total Completers 2010-11	Total Completers 2011-12	Total Completers 2012-13	Total Completers 2013-14	Change 2008-09 to 2013-14	%Change 2008-09 to 2013-14
Illinois	10,355	10,568	10,421	9,738	8,486	6,454	-3,901	-37.7%
Iowa	2,364	2,524	2,471	2,576	2,653	2,404	40	1.7%
Michigan	5,819	5,182	4,848	4,711	4,450	3,951	-1,868	-32.1%
Minnesota	3329	3308	3411	3587	2931	3057	-272	-8.2%
Wisconsin	4,028	4,160	4,319	4,075	3,965	3,741	-287	-7.1%
<b>Nation</b>	<b>232,707</b>	<b>241,401</b>	<b>217,492</b>	<b>204,180</b>	<b>192,459</b>	<b>180,796</b>	<b>-51,911</b>	<b>-22.3%</b>

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education Title II Reports

Despite a fall in students completing teacher preparation programs, Wisconsin fares better than most neighboring states and the nation. Illinois and Michigan have experienced significant declines in program completers since 2008-09, falling by 37.7% and 32.1%, respectively. The decline in program completers in Wisconsin is not as severe as other states or the country, but it does present challenges within our state.



## POLICY OPTIONS

We propose a set of policy options to ease the shortage and bolster the profession. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather to spur a conversation on the future of the teaching profession in our state and region. The list includes:

- Promise programs that assist with college costs and incentivize people to become educators
- Expansion of existing state and federal teacher loan forgiveness programs
- A debt assistance program that helps educators to pay off student loans while teaching
- Changes to teacher salaries, including raises and performance-based compensation
- Part-time teacher employment to accommodate family obligations while boosting retention

We acknowledge that several of these options would require additional public funding. This undoubtedly will be a challenge given state and local budget constraints, but the scope of this problem may demand that funding obstacles be overcome.

## CONCLUSION

This report set out to determine if the Greater Milwaukee region was facing a teacher shortage. Overall, we find that there is a shrinking supply of new teachers to replace a steady stream of existing teachers leaving the workforce. Moving forward, this dwindling supply will make it harder to replace each teacher vacancy. Specific research findings include the following:

- The number of teachers leaving the workforce has increased 22.5% in recent years.
- More than a quarter of the teaching workforce in Metro Milwaukee is over age 50, and as this group ages, departures are likely to become more numerous.
- According to local school district human resources professionals, aside from retirement, most teachers leave for money or family obligations.
- About 62% of replacement teachers in Milwaukee are in their first year of teaching.
- Enrollments in Wisconsin teacher preparation programs are down 27.9%, from 12,323 students in 2008-09 to 8,887 students in 2013-14.
- Teacher prep program completers are down 6.6% in recent years – from 4,007 to 3,741 – and will likely continue to decline for the next several years.

As with many research projects, this report raises more questions than it provides answers. Some questions for future research include:

- What is the pipeline for school leaders and are we facing a shortage in that area, as well?
- Does teacher turnover affect student academic achievement?
- With so many new teachers leaving the profession, is there a linkage to the quality of teacher preparation programs and whether they are providing the experiences and skills necessary to succeed in the job?

Armed with this information, we encourage policymakers, school leaders, and the public to have an honest conversation about what the teaching profession in Milwaukee should look like. Collaborative partnerships and focused attention can better support current teachers and encourage new teachers, thus ensuring a steady and stable supply of educators for the schools and children in our region.

