

Carsey Institute at UNH: More Inexperienced Teachers Found in Rural, Poor, and High-Minority Schools

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Schools in rural and poor areas as well as those with a high number of minority students employ a higher percentage of beginning teachers than schools without those characteristics, according to new research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

The research was conducted by Douglas Gagnon, doctoral candidate in education at UNH and research assistant at the Carsey Institute, and Marybeth Mattingly, director of research on vulnerable families at the Carsey Institute and research assistant professor of sociology at UNH. It is presented in the brief “Beginning Teachers Are More Common in Rural, High-Poverty, and Racially Diverse Schools.”

“Teaching is a difficult craft, one that requires time to master. The first years of one’s teaching career provide vast opportunities for professional growth, yet new teachers have fewer experiences to draw on in planning lessons, managing classrooms, and creating assessment strategies. Therefore, beginning teachers are typically less effective than their more experienced colleagues, as measured by student achievement gains,” according to Gagnon and Mattingly.

“In addition, beginning teachers are more likely to leave the profession than those who have weathered at least a few years in the classroom. Thus, employing a large percentage of beginning teachers is costly both to a district and students. For these

reasons, the percentage of beginning teachers is an important dimension of school quality,” the researchers said.

The key research findings are as follows:

- Poor communities have moderately higher percentages of beginning teachers than communities with lower poverty rates. Districts in the highest quartile of poverty have an average of 11.0 percent beginning teachers compared with an average of 8.4 percent for districts in the lowest quartile of poverty.
- A higher concentration of minority student in a school district is associated with a higher percentage of beginning teachers. Districts at or above the median percentage of combined black, Hispanic, and American Indian populations have an average of 10.3 percent beginning teachers compared with 8.4 percent for districts below the median.
- Large cities, remote towns, and rural districts have higher percentages of beginning teachers (11.0 percent, 9.8 percent, and 9.7 percent, respectively) than mid-sized-small cities, suburbs, and fringe-distant town districts (8.9 percent, 8.9 percent, and 8.7 percent, respectively).
- Poor, diverse districts in large cities are most likely to have a high concentration of beginning teachers compared with all other districts.

“Our analysis builds upon prior research that has shown a disparity in educational opportunity and achievement. Those schools most likely to have a high percentage of beginning teachers—large cities, remote towns, rural areas; those of high poverty and diversity—serve those students who are often outperformed by their peers,” the researchers said.

The complete [Carsey Institute report about this research is available here](#).

This analysis is based on data from the 2009–2010 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), the 2009 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), and the 2010 U.S. Census.

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