

Financial Incentives to Promote Teacher Recruitment and Retention: An Analysis of the Florida Critical Teacher Shortage Program

Feng, L., & Sass, T. (2015). Financial incentives to promote teacher recruitment and retention: An analysis of the Florida Critical Teacher Shortage Program. SREE Spring 2015 Conference. Society for Research on Education Effectiveness.

Purpose: The goal of this study was to understand the effectiveness of incentives, namely loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement and retention bonuses, designed to attract and retain teachers in high-need subjects, such as math, science, and special education.

Subjects: The analysis included the entirety of the Florida public school teacher workforce from 1995-1996 through 2012-2013, as well as the students they served.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the characteristics of the teachers who participated in the incentive programs, such as their qualifications, the kind of schools they work in, and their effectiveness (value-added)?
- 2) What are the parameters of the program's effectiveness, such as the differential effects on subject area, level of incentive, length of retention, and the quality of teachers.

Research Methods: The researchers conducted difference-in-difference estimators for each incentive, as well as triple-difference estimates. The goal of this type of analysis was to examine the benefits that loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, and bonuses had on teacher attrition.

Findings: The study found that loan forgiveness increased the likelihood of teachers remaining in shortage areas, although the magnitude differed by subject area. The tuition reimbursement incentive also increased the likelihood that teachers would be attracted to high-need subjects. The one-time bonus reduced teacher attrition by approximately 25%. Overall, the program had a modest effect on the likelihood that a teacher would become certified and remain teaching in an area of need.

Implications: Given fixed pay scales, it is difficult to staff schools in certain subject areas, such as math, science, and special education, given the alternative, high paying career options for prospective teachers in these areas. When Florida incentivized these positions to sidestep pay scale restrictions, more effective teachers in these challenging subjects were attracted and retained in the teaching field. This study provided strong support for a policy of providing incentives to teachers in areas of high need to assure that the talent pool at the district and state level is as robust as possible.