

Certification and Private School Teachers Moving to Public Schools

Private school teachers who switch schools are more likely than their counterparts in public schools to report that increased salary or benefits played an important role in their decision to change schools (Luekens, Lyter, and Fox 2004), and teacher salaries are typically higher in the public sector (Gruber et al. 2002). Therefore, private school teachers seeking to change schools might be expected to move to public schools more often than to other private schools. However, the most recent national data show no measurable difference in the rates of private school teachers' movement between private schools and across sector to public schools (Luekens, Lyter, and Fox 2004). Private school teachers may prefer to stay within the private sector because of other job conditions on which teachers typically rate private schools higher than public schools. For example, private school teachers more often report satisfaction with parental support than do public school teachers (Holton 2003). On the other hand, private school teachers may find it difficult to switch to the public sector because public schools are more likely than private schools to require teacher certification (Gruber et al. 2002). Little is known about the relationship between teacher certification and the movement of teachers from private to public schools. Are private school teachers with certifications, especially recently obtained certifications, more likely than private school teachers without certifications to switch schools and move to the public school sector?

This Issue Brief uses data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) to report the movement of private school teachers, with and without state certification, from 1987–88 to 2000–01. On SASS, teachers described their certification credentials in their main assignment. The TFS, which occurs in the school year following the SASS school year, is a follow-up sample survey of SASS teachers including teachers who changed schools, left teaching entirely, or stayed in the same school from one school year to the next. On the TFS, teachers who had remained in the profession reported their certification credentials in their main assignment, as well as any changes in their school assignments. Combined, data from the SASS and TFS allow a comparison of teachers who were not state-certified in their main assignment in either school year with teachers who were state-certified in their main assignment in both years or who either obtained a new

state certification in their main assignment between years or switched main assignments into one in which they held a state certification.¹ Because the SASS and TFS have been repeated four times since 1987–88, this Issue Brief can compare the certification and school movement patterns of these teachers in four time periods: from 1987–88 to 1988–89, from 1990–91 to 1991–92, from 1993–94 to 1994–95, and from 1999–2000 to 2000–01.²

For each time period, this Issue Brief looks at the percentage of private school teachers who continued teaching in their school (stayers) or moved to a different school (movers), and, among movers, the percentage who moved to a public school and the percentage who moved to another private school. Findings are reported separately for teachers who had no regular state certification in their main assignment in either year of the time period and those who had a regular state certification in both years or in the second year only.

Movement and Certification of Private School Teachers

In the four time periods, the percentage of private school teachers who changed schools ranged from 7 to 11 percent (see table 1). In none of the four 2-year time periods was there a measurable difference in the percentage who moved schools between teachers with a regular state certification in both years and those without. Teachers state-certified in their main assignment in the second year only, in each time period, were more likely than non-certified teachers to change schools. Differences in rates of movement ranged from 7 percentage points in 1994–95 (12 percent of those state-certified in year two only changed schools, compared with 5 percent with no regular certification) to 15 percentage points in 1988–89 (24 percent of those state-certified in year two only changed schools, compared with 9 percent of teachers without a regular state certification).

Of the teachers who changed schools, there were no significant differences between private school movers who moved to another private school and those who moved to a public school: 50 percent of private school teachers who changed schools between 1987–88 and 1988–89 stayed within the private school sector, as did 53 percent of movers between 1990–91 and 1991–92, 48 percent of movers between 1993–94 and 1994–95, and 46 percent of movers between 1999–2000 and 2000–01.

Table 1. State certification status of private school teachers, by type of movement between schools: 1987–88 to 1999–2000

	All teachers	Moved		
		Total	To public school	To private school
1987–88 to 1988–89				
All private teachers	100.0	10.9	49.6	50.4
No certification in main assignment in 1987–88 or 1988–89	30.0	8.6	27.3	72.7
Certification in main assignment 1987–88 and 1988–89	50.0	10.5	54.2	45.8
Certified in main assignment in 1988–89 only	9.0	23.5	63.9	36.1
1990–91 to 1991–92				
All private teachers	100.0	7.5	46.6	53.4
No certification in main assignment in 1990–91 or 1991–92	30.3	5.9	21.0	79.0
Certification in main assignment 1990–91 and 1991–92	57.0	6.5	57.4	42.6
Certified in main assignment in 1991–92 only	7.7	14.8	65.4	34.6
1993–1994 to 1994–95				
All private teachers	100.0	6.5	52.4	47.6
No certification in main assignment in 1993–94 or 1994–95	32.8	4.9	37.1	62.9
Certification in main assignment 1993–94 and 1994–95	51.0	5.6	60.3	39.7
Certified in main assignment in 1994–95 only	10.8	11.6	57.2	42.8
1999–2000 to 2000–01				
All private teachers	100.0	9.9	53.8	46.2
No certification in main assignment in 1999–2000 or 2000–01	37.7	8.3	35.6	64.4
Certification in main assignment 1999–2000 and 2000–01	50.8	9.7	65.5	34.5
Certified in main assignment in 2000–01 only	7.4	15.4	58.6	41.4

NOTE: Details do not sum to totals, because the category certification in year 1 but not year 2 of the time period has been omitted. Not all apparent differences in this table are statistically significant. Standard errors are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006081>.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999–2000 "Private School Teacher Survey" and Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000–01 "Current Teacher Survey."

Private school movers who had regular state certifications in both years of a given time period were more likely than those without to move to public schools in all four time periods, and those who held state certification in their main assignment in only the second year were more likely than those without certification to move to public schools in all time periods except 1993–94 to 1994–95. In 1988–89, 27 percent of movers with no regular state certification in the main assignment moved to a public school; this statistic was 21 percent in 1991–92, 37 percent in 1994–95, and 36 percent in 2000–01. In contrast, of movers who held regular state certifications in both years of a time period, 54 percent in 1988–89 moved to public schools, as well as 57 percent in 1991–92, 60 percent in 1994–95, and 66 percent in 2000–01. Also, 64 percent of movers who were state-certified in their main assignment in year two only in 1988–89 moved to public schools; this statistic was 65 percent in 1991–92, 57 percent in 1994–95, and 59 percent in 2000–01. In each time period except 1994–95, this percentage was higher than the corresponding percentage for teachers with no regular state certification in the main assignment.

Conclusion

In this exploratory study of the association between state certification and private school teachers' movement to other private schools and public schools between 1987–88 and 2000–01, private school teachers who either obtained a state certification in their main assignment between one year and the next or who switched main assignments into one in which they were state-certified were more likely to change schools than those without a regular state certification in the subject area of their main assignment. In three of the four time periods, higher percentages of movers who held state certification only in year two of the time period switched to public schools than did those without regular state certifications in their main assignment in either year of the time period. In all four time periods, higher percentages of movers with regular state certifications in both years of the time period moved to public schools than did their peers without the certification.

However, regardless of certification status, 11 percent or fewer of private school teachers changed schools during any 2-year period. Also, this analysis reports a statistical association between certification status and teachers' movement across schools. The reasons for the association were not examined, but can be researched in the SASS data, using reports of teachers' job satisfaction, career aspirations, and reasons reported for changing schools.

Endnotes

¹ The analysis combines teachers who obtained a new state certification in their main assignment between the 2 years of the time period with those who switched main assignments into one in which they held a state certification, because data were not available to split the two groups into separate categories in the two earliest time periods.

² The analysis included samples of 1,162 respondents representing 392,420 private school teachers in 1999–2000 who continued teaching in 2000–01, 1,751 respondents representing 376,869 private school teachers in 1993–94 who continued teaching in 1994–95, 1,972 respondents representing 353,850 private school teachers in 1990–91 who continued teaching in 1991–92, and 1,951 respondents representing 311,924 private school teachers in 1987–88 who continued teaching in 1988–89. More information about SASS and TFS is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/>.

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NCEES 2006-081

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