



**Second-Year Teachers' Experience**  
**in Philadelphia's Talent Development Middle Schools**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Second-Year Teachers' Experience In Philadelphia's Talent Development Middle Schools**

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This study reports on the issue of teacher satisfaction and retention among second-year teachers in Philadelphia middle schools participating in the Talent Development comprehensive school reform model. This initiative, first implemented at Central East Middle School in 1995, now includes eleven of Philadelphia's 42 middle schools. The reform design has been developed and administered by the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) at Johns Hopkins University and is considered one of a handful of promising models for the middle grades. Since the model provides extensive professional development opportunities for teachers in their content area, its success depends, in part, on the retention of these teachers.

In the spring of the 1999-2000 school year, I interviewed all of the 60 academic teachers who were new to the District in the seven middle schools that had adopted the Talent Development model as of that point. This study follows up on that original inquiry. The 37 teachers who remained from that first cohort for a second year in their schools (an additional one was on sick leave) were interviewed in May and June of the 2000-2001 school year.

#### **Key findings:**

- 22 of the original 60 teachers (37 percent) were no longer teaching in the school where they had spent their first year. Four of those were "force transferred" to other schools, one was terminated, two stayed in the District as substitutes, and the others left the system. By the Fall of 2001, (after the study was completed), another ten had left these schools—five were transferred in the District, one was terminated, and the others resigned to go teach in the suburbs or in a charter school. Two schools have retained all of their first-year teachers. Overall, after two years, fewer than half of the 60 teachers (47 percent) remained in their original school.
- Principals usually assigned teachers to no more than two content areas and one or two grade levels in order to reduce their preparations and increase their content specialization. About a third of the teachers taught the same subjects and grade levels as they had in Year 1, and another 40 percent had some change in their teaching schedules, but not a dramatic alteration.
- 73 percent of the second-year teachers participated in some form of Talent Development training compared to 80 percent in Year 1. Almost half of the teachers had had such

training in all of the subjects they were currently teaching. Mathematics teachers were the most likely to have participated in the training. Nearly all of the teachers in math, science, and reading/language arts had had training in their content area from Talent Development at some point over the two-year period of their employment at the school.

- Teachers continued to give high ratings to the training and the curriculum materials although evaluations of the reading/English language arts training were somewhat tepid. Teachers who had participated in the professional development, particularly the in-classroom help from curriculum coaches, were more likely than others to say they felt qualified to teach their subjects.
- Teachers felt well supported by their Small Learning Community coordinators and their peers. Evaluations of principals' support were lower, and many complained they did not have adequate supplies and materials. Many, but less than a majority, talked about the need for greater help with student discipline. In one school, teachers were highly critical of most aspects of the school's functioning. Overall, about half of the teachers estimated that they got greater assistance (in professional development, materials, etc.) than teachers in other schools in the District.
- The majority of teachers thought they would be back in the District the following year (73 percent) and back in their schools (68 percent). Only 19 percent, however, thought they would stay in that school from five-ten years. Only eight percent said they would stay in the District if offered an accepted job in another district.
- Teachers' reasons for wanting to leave the School District of Philadelphia included the residency requirement (59 percent), since abolished; comparatively low salaries (44 percent); problems with student discipline (38 percent); lack of supplies, materials, and equipment (29 percent); and lack of tuition reimbursement for further coursework (18 percent).

In sum, the teachers who were completing their second year expressed growing confidence about their abilities and qualifications, and many of them praised the collegial professional environments in which they worked. They noted the value of the assistance given by the small learning community coordinators and structure. They appreciated the in-depth professional development and curriculum materials provided by Talent Development. Still, many teachers pointed to disincentives in the system with regard to compensation and working conditions that would keep them from staying in the District over the long haul. The fact that their chief complaint, the residency requirement, has been abolished by the state legislature may result in higher proportions of them choosing to remain in the District for their teaching careers. They will be re-interviewed at the end of their third year.

## **Second-Year Teachers' Experience**

### **in Philadelphia's Talent Development Middle Schools**

This report summarizes second-year teachers self-reports about their experience working in the middle schools in the School District of Philadelphia that have adopted the Talent Development comprehensive school reform model developed at the CRESPAR Center at Johns Hopkins University. The study replicates one that was done a year earlier during the teachers' first year as employees in the District's public schools (Useem 2000). The Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF), Hopkins' regional partner in implementing Talent Development, chose to continue this research because staffing stability and teacher quality appear to be critical to understanding the degree of success of the initiative. Assessing the experience of newly hired teachers in these middle schools is an important component of the evaluation of the Talent Development model.

Philadelphia's middle schools are typically plagued by the weak preparation levels and high turnover of their teachers (Useem, Barends, and Lindermayer, 1999; Watson, 2001; Christman, 2001; Ruby, 2001; Useem and Neild, 2001). Pennsylvania continues to allow its teachers certified at the elementary level for grades K-6 to teach in the middle grades (6-8) even though they are ill-prepared to teach the academic content in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Nearly all of the District's middle-level teachers are elementary certified (and many have only emergency credentials) and end up in one of the District's 42 middle schools only because elementary openings have already been filled, a phenomenon explaining much of the turnover in these schools.

The Talent Development initiative provides intensive training in the academic content areas through summer institutes, after-school and Saturday workshops, and help from full-time curriculum coaches who work with teachers, particularly novice teachers, in their classrooms. Besides the professional development component, the Talent Development model includes a standards-based common core curriculum for all students; small teacher teams; an emphasis on teaching strategies that motivate students; and in-school extra-help programs for students who are struggling academically. This national initiative began in Philadelphia at Central East Middle School in 1995. Six other middle schools joined in the ensuing years, and four additional schools began implementing the model in the fall of 2001. CRESPAR envisioned from the start that the effort would evolve and become institutionalized in the District over a five to ten year period.

## Data and Methods

In the first wave of the study, all 60 academic teachers who were new to the School District of Philadelphia in the seven Talent Development middle schools were interviewed during February and March (2000) of their first year on the job. Only 38 of these 60 (63 percent) remained for a second year, and one of those was out on sick leave. Of the 22 who left, four had been transferred to other schools, 4 had taken jobs in suburban schools, 11 had resigned for other reasons (moving, going to graduate school, leaving teaching, or unknown reasons), two were per diem substitute teachers, and one was terminated. All 37 teachers still in these schools agreed to be re-interviewed in May or June 2001. These structured 20-minute interviews took place at the school site. The numbers interviewed varied by school.

<u>School</u>	<u>Number Interviewed</u>
1	5
2	7
3	10
4	7
5	2
6	5
7	1
Total Interviewed=37	

During the interviews, teachers gave information on their course and grade assignments, certification status, place of residence, and extent of participation in Talent Development training. They were also asked to assess the Talent Development training, the degree of support they had received from a variety of sources at the school, the kinds of supports they felt they still needed, and their plans for the future.

All of these schools can be characterized as high-poverty sites. Five of the seven have 86 percent or more of their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In the other two, 71 percent and 81 percent of the students are eligible. One of the schools is small (238 students) and all the rest were large, ranging from 850 to 1500 students.

## FINDINGS

### Patterns of Teacher Mobility

Teachers were more likely to leave some schools than others. Two schools retained all of their first year teachers. Four lost somewhere between 33 to 46 percent of their novice teachers and another lost two out of three people. Only two out of the 12 teachers who were hired after school started in the fall (and thus were subject to reassignment the following year) returned to their original school.

The Year 2 cohort of 37 teachers varied slightly in certain characteristics from the Year 1 cohort (60 teachers). Two of the four secondary certified teachers left, depleting the teaching force even further of those with intensive education in a subject area. The percentage of emergency-certified Apprentice teachers (27 percent) remained the same. The percentages of white teachers increased a little (from 60 percent to 65 percent) as did

the proportion of female teachers (from 75 percent to 78 percent). In other words, those who departed were more likely to be males, minorities, and secondary certified teachers.

### **Course and Grade Assignments**

Model developers at Johns Hopkins have worked hard to get principals at Talent Development schools to constrain the number of grade levels and different subjects teachers have to prepare for. They have encouraged administrators to see the wisdom of developing content knowledge among their staffs. It appears they have met some success in this effort. On average, these second year teachers were assigned to about two subject areas (mean=2.19 courses) and between one and two grade levels (mean=1.48 different grades). Seventy percent of these teachers taught at only one grade level and 81 percent taught only one or two courses. The year before, these same 37 teachers were placed in the same number of grade levels (1.48) but slightly more courses (mean=2.35). Very few teachers were assigned to three or four different subject areas.

A little more than a third (35 percent) of the teachers taught the same grade and subject areas as they had the year before. Another quarter (24 percent) had a substantial change in their schedule, in some cases an improvement over the roster they had carried the previous year. Many (40 percent) experienced some change in either grade or subject areas covered but not a dramatic change.

### **Internal Subject Mobility**

Longitudinal research from Talent Development schools in Philadelphia has demonstrated the substantial movement among middle school teachers from one subject area to another each year, particularly in science, thus undermining the investment that the school and its partners had made in building teachers' subject area expertise (Ruby, 2001). These second year teachers, however, had high levels of stability in their course assignments. In mathematics, 14 of the 16 teachers (87 percent) who taught the subject in Year 2 had taught it in Year 1 as well. In science, 14 of the 19 second-year teachers (74 percent) who taught science were teaching it for the second year. Likewise, 16 of the 21 reading and English Language Arts (RELA) teachers (76 percent) had repeated the subject over both years. It remains to be seen, of course, whether such patterns will hold up over a period of years or whether teachers will migrate out of science, the least-liked area for middle school teachers, once they gain greater building seniority.

### **Teachers' Participation in Talent Development Training by Subject and School**

Teachers in middle schools adopting the Talent Development model can avail themselves of several different forms of subject specific training: a one-week summer institute; monthly after-school and/or Saturday workshops in a subject area, available for university course credit; a course at St. Joseph's University called the Skillful Talent Development Teacher that deals with classroom management and pedagogical issues; and ongoing in-class coaching from a subject-area specialist. These full-time coaches—in science, math, and reading/English language arts—are each assigned to two schools.

Overall, 73 percent of these second-year teachers took part in some form of this training, down a bit from the 80 percent rate the previous year. This change was not surprising since coaches concentrate their efforts with first-year teachers. Teachers' participation broke down in the following categories:

Summer workshop:	40%
School-year workshops:	57%
In-class coaching:	49%

Overall, 46 percent of the teachers had received Talent Development training in all of the academic subjects they were currently teaching. Another 41 percent had participated in professional development in at least one of these academic subjects. Only 13 percent (5 teachers) had had no Talent Development training, often because the courses they were teaching (e.g. arts, computers) were not areas where assistance was available.

Participation varied by subject area. Mathematics teachers were the most active participants in the training, probably a result of a special PEF/Talent Development effort in this area dubbed "Emergent Math Leaders." Sixteen teachers were selected for augmented training and leadership efforts that included attending local workshops as well as national and regional conferences, curriculum writing, leading workshops, and participating in District math initiatives. Sixty-two percent of the math teachers participated in school-year workshops compared to 47 percent of the science teachers and 33 percent of the RELA teachers. (Table 1) They were also a little more likely to work with curriculum coaches: 56 percent of the math teachers did so compared to 47 percent of the science teachers and 43 percent of the RELA teachers. The same pattern held for the summer training.

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of Second-Year Middle School Teachers Participating**  
**In Talent Development Training Opportunities by Subject Area\***

	Reading/English Language Arts N=21	Mathematics N=16	Science N=19
Coaching	43%	56%	47%
Workshops	33	62	47
Summer Workshops	38	44	21

\*percentages are based on the number of teachers teaching that subject during 2000-2001.

More impressive are the two-year totals for participation in Talent Development training. Nearly all of the teachers in math (94 percent), science (89 percent), and RELA (90 percent) had participated in some form of Talent Development training over the course of their two years in the school. These schools, then, were “growing their own” content-area specialists from an initial cadre of elementary-trained generalists.

### Teachers’ Evaluations of the Training by Subject Area

Second-year teachers continued to give high marks to the quality of the Talent Development training, particularly in mathematics and science. (Table 2) All of the teachers who had the support of the math coaches rated that coaching as excellent. Nearly all of the science teachers (87 percent) rated the coaching as either good or excellent, with most giving the latter designation. In RELA, a little more than half did so. All of the science teachers who attended workshops in those subjects and 78 percent of the math teachers evaluated the sessions as good or excellent. About 62 percent gave that same rating to RELA workshops.

**Table 2**

**Percentage of Teachers Participating in Subject-Area Training Who Rated the Training as “Excellent” or “Good” \***

	Reading/English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science
Coaching	55% (9)	100% (9)	87% (8)
Workshops	61 (13)	78 (9)	100 (10)

\*Numbers in parentheses are the total number of teachers who participated in each form of training and who gave it a rating. “Workshops” includes both summer and school-year sessions.

When it came to rating the Talent Development curriculum itself, teachers gave positive evaluations to the materials in all three subject areas. The great majority of teachers in those subjects--88 percent in math; 82 percent in science; 78 percent in RELA--evaluated the curricula as “good” or “excellent.” Several of the math teachers worried that the reading level of the math texts was too difficult for the students. Others talked about the value of the manipulatives and other materials, and several science teachers expressed enthusiasm about the science kits. As in the previous year, while reading/English language arts teachers talked positively about the novels, some complained that the curriculum was too thin in the areas of grammar and writing mechanics.

## **Feelings of Competence: Relationship to Talent Development Training**

Teachers were asked in an open-ended question how qualified they felt to teach the subjects to which they had been assigned. Compared to the previous year, they expressed considerably more confidence in their subject-area expertise. Seventy percent of these teachers said they were comfortable with the subjects they were teaching. To a large extent, of course, this confidence comes simply from having had two years of experience on the job and, for most of them, teaching the same subjects and grade levels over two years. This stability in teaching assignment was no accident. Talent Development staff had worked hard to get principals to stabilize teachers' course and grade level assignments, and those with greater constancy in assignments were significantly more likely than others to report feelings of expertise in their subject areas (correlation of .391,  $p=.02$ ).

The Talent Development training appears to have bolstered teachers' feelings of efficacy in teaching their subject matter as well. The correlation between the variable "feeling qualified" and degree of participation in Talent Development training across their subject areas was .481 ( $p=.01$ ). When broken down by different types of training experiences, the contact with the curriculum coaches showed the strongest relationship to teacher efficacy. Even when the stability of teachers' rosters (grades and course levels) was controlled for, the relationship between training and self-reports of proficiency remained robust (.488,  $p<.01$ ). That is, teachers' sense that they were "on top of" their subject matter was not only related to the fact that their course and grade level assignments remained about the same, but was also related to their involvement in Talent Development professional development.

Unlike the previous year, the intensity of a teachers' participation in Talent Development training was unrelated to whether or not a teacher planned or wanted to stay in the school or District in the long or short run.

## **Supports for New Teachers**

The teachers were asked what supports they had received--with discipline, instruction, supplies and materials, and the "comprehensive student support" (CSP) process--during their second year of teaching in the school.

Teachers were highly complimentary of the role played by their Small Learning Communities (SLCs), sub-groupings of teachers responsible for approximately 200-400 students. Nearly three fourths said that the SLC coordinator and colleagues in the SLC had provided a high level of support, particularly with respect to student discipline and school climate. This finding dovetails with the finding of Annenberg Challenge evaluators in Philadelphia that middle school teachers had high levels of satisfaction with SLCs (Christman, 2001). Two fifths of the teachers said that SLC coordinators and colleagues were very helpful in working through the complexities of the paper work required to assess students' difficulties in the CSP process. Instructional support was less common but many teachers mentioned that their SLC peers shared materials, lessons, and

tests with them. The support provided by SLCs may account for the fact that 81 percent of these teachers reported that their peers were very helpful to them. The following quotes are from teachers at five different schools.

Teachers in this school are some of the best. I get a lot of support. I student taught in the Northeast [section of the city] and there teachers wouldn't speak to each other. They ate their lunches in their rooms. We bowl and go to happy hours and enjoy being together.

I get all kinds of support. I always go to my SLC partners. ... I am staying here because the support is pretty good.

My SLC Coordinator provides anything I require in discipline, etc. I get help from veteran teachers, and the principal has an open door policy and is very available.

I get a lot of support—any time you need supplies or ideas. The staff here is great—one of the best things about the place. ... Sometimes we socialize on Fridays.

The whole staff helped me with teaching. The principal was also there to help me when things were not going well.

The SLC Coordinator is terrific. She helps with everything. She always has an open door.

Other teachers help me on a regular basis and that's why I love teaching here.

The SLC Coordinator helps me with discipline, teaching skills, and personal support. She thanks me. It's a nice relationship.

It is fantastic here. Teachers in general support each other a lot.

I get anything I need from the SLC Coordinator, mainly support for discipline. ... [My fellow teachers] share everything necessary—materials, tests, ideas. It is a collegial atmosphere, and a few teachers socialize outside of school.

The SLC Coordinator has too much to do. But the other two teachers in my team are very supportive in teaching and discipline. So we handled things ourselves.

The SLC Coordinator is wonderful and provides anything we need help with. All of the teachers are so helpful to each other. They

lend an ear—you can vent or get ideas or send a discipline problem to their class.

All the teachers here are supportive. We share everything. We make up tests together, share tests and materials, and make suggestions about what works. It reduces your preparation.

In one school, SLCs did not live up to their potential. They rarely met for common planning time because teachers often covered the classes of their absent colleagues during the periods set aside for meetings. Only 29 percent of the respondents said that their peers were highly supportive of one another in that school although there were pockets of collegial environments in the building. As we see in the quotes that follow, teachers in this building, which we will call School A, were critical of many aspects of the school's functioning. It stood apart from the other schools as a particularly difficult place to work.

[The help from the SLC Coordinator] is great but there is no time to meet because of covering other classes. We had only five meetings as a SLC this year instead of once a week. In discipline, there is no follow through, no consequences. There is only one VCR in the building. We don't have overhead projectors in the classroom. The librarian was out for a long period and the computers were in the library so we couldn't get access to them. The Time Out room is never open.

The SLC Coordinator is very supportive and we speak informally every day. The SLC is supposed to meet one time a week but I can't remember the last time we met.

One-on-one meetings with the SLC Coordinator are rare. There has been only one group meeting this year. ... We need a coordinated plan for problem children.

Overall, teachers in the seven schools were less likely to report support from building-wide administrators. Only 27 percent said the principal or assistant principal provided a high level of support. This figure, however, masks significant variations by school. Of the five schools with five or more respondents, the percentages of those giving their principals high marks ranged from zero to eighty percent.

Only 38 percent of the teachers said they received an adequate level of supplies and materials. Again, however, this percentage varied from school to school. In one building, all of the teachers complained about the insufficiency of materials and supplies while in another, 70 percent were satisfied with the level of support. Across all schools, teachers reported that they spent approximately \$300 out of their own pockets for classroom materials. A few teachers talked as well about the shabby conditions of the building:

I have two sinks [in science class]. I am missing everything. Anything I do for a lab I buy myself so I don't do some labs. I spend \$50 a month [of my own] on average.

In reality, for what I'm teaching, it's almost impossible to have 33 kids with eight computers. It is very difficult. There is not enough equipment.

I spent \$700 [out of my own pocket] this year for paper, pencils, pencil sharpeners, curriculum materials, chart paper ... Life would be a lot easier [with adequate teaching materials].

It would be nice to have an overhead projector and an available VCR.

The conditions we expect children to go to school in are deplorable.

There are no social studies books or curriculum. We make it up ourselves. We have to use the copier but don't have enough paper for what we need.

We have no science lab. There is no water in the class. I teach science vocabulary instead of doing experiments.

When asked how much support they got in their schools compared to what they heard from teachers in other Philadelphia schools, half of the teachers in these Talent Development schools responded that they got high levels of support. Only 16 percent said they probably got less support. Teachers at only one of the schools (School A) reported getting comparatively low levels of assistance.

The teachers were asked what, if anything, should have been done to make their lives easier this year. Surprisingly, 25 percent of them, concentrated primarily in two schools, said "nothing;" i.e. they thought their basic needs had been met:

I get a lot of support—anything I need, I can get it here.

Any kind of discipline problem is handled quickly in this school.

We have lots of support—we have more supplies [than other schools] And plenty of professional development opportunities.

I like it here. I am very happy.

We get a lot of support, especially professional development opportunities. Give me one or two more years and I'm on my way to stardom! I like this school a lot. The opportunities here are great.

More than a third (36 percent) of the overall cohort, however, said they needed more support in dealing with student discipline:

So many students are disruptive—sometimes five or more. I have five or six special education kids in one class and have no help for that. They need services. It makes my job difficult.

I want to be in a school where children are more respectful. I want to help in a community like this but it is stressful. I will burn out if I stay. It would be nice to have parental support.

Kids run around the building and knock on my door and use profanity. How does that help anyone? We need to cut that out.

There is zero support for dealing with kids with filthy language. The school makes rules and then doesn't back it up.

My biggest problem working here is the lack of order and noise in the hallways—that chaos as kids change classes. The administration is afraid to have teachers clear the halls—a certain standard has been set. In another district I worked in, we never had non-teaching assistants do it. Teachers patrolled the hallways.

The kids are loud in the hallways. They bang on the doors and curse ... The kids need to know what is unacceptable. There should be higher expectations and consequences for behavior. Little things start to add up ... Most of the kids are wonderful but a few ruin it for everyone else.

The lack of discipline in this building is forcing teachers to leave. We spend more time every day on discipline. The NTAs in the halls are good but they are not there all the time. During class time, kids are in the hall. It drives teachers crazy.

Nearly 20 percent said they wished they had had a better relationship with the principal--more feedback and recognition, better communication, or a less hierarchical relationship. Seventeen percent singled out the need for more equipment and supplies. Other categories were mentioned by just a few such as more parent involvement and more time to meet.

### **Plans for the Future**

Teachers thought they would continue to teach in the District (73 percent) and their school (68 percent) the following year. Their responses were complicated by the fact that some expected to be “forced transferred” to another school due to declining enrollment or the elimination of a grade level at the school. At the time of the interview, only one teacher had accepted a job offer from another (suburban) district. In three of the schools, nearly all of the teachers seemed genuinely positive about wanting to continue working in that building, at least in the short run, and in two others, a majority wanted to stay for the

time being. In School A, however, more than half the teachers wanted to leave or expected to leave.

Several factors were at work to keep teachers in their schools and the system for a third year. This cohort of teachers is not eligible to request a voluntary transfer to another school until the end of their third year in the District. If they stay in the system through that third year (2001-2002), they will receive \$3000 as the second installment of their hiring bonus as well. At several schools, teachers were happy with the support of their peers and SLCs, and sometimes with their principals, and were becoming comfortable in that school environment.

Their longer-term plans were another matter. Very few (19 percent) said they could see themselves staying at the school for 5-10 years. As was the case the previous year, even fewer, only three of the 37 (eight percent), said they would stay in the School District of Philadelphia if offered an acceptable job in another district.

As before, the most frequently cited reason for the desire to find a job elsewhere was the District's residency requirement for teachers. At the time of the interview, teachers were required to move into the city of Philadelphia after three years of employment. More than half of the respondents (54 percent) said in response to a forced-choice question that this requirement would definitely be a problem for them at the end of the three-year period or sometime in the future--e.g. when they had school-aged children; when a spouse retired or moved; when they felt like a change of scenery, etc. Only 32 percent said unequivocally that it would never be a barrier to continued employment. In an open-ended question asking respondents to name the reasons why they might leave the District, 59 percent cited the residency requirement. As it turned out, the Pennsylvania state legislature abolished the requirement a few weeks after the interviews were completed.

The teachers cited other reasons for contemplating leaving as well, similar to those reported a year earlier. Those most commonly mentioned were:

- Comparatively low salaries: 44%
- Problems with student discipline: 38%
- Insufficient supplies, materials, and equipment: 29%
- Lack of tuition reimbursement for advanced study (required for permanent certification): 18%

A sampling of the teachers' comments on compensation issues include the following:

The salary is horrible ... I need more money [as well as] tuition reimbursement [for graduate courses]. I owe \$27,000 in debt and pay \$225 a month payment on that.

We are worth more than we're getting paid, and we pay the wage tax. I have an M.A. I went to a job fair and saw that another district was offering \$36,900 for a B.A.

I've had to work two jobs. I took a pay cut to come here. Every two weeks I take home \$671. The pay makes people leave—and with all we have to deal with ... Money is a huge issue.

I waitress on the weekends.

We need more financial incentives such as tuition reimbursement. People in my classes at Eastern College get \$900 per class from their district.

I can't afford it [the job]. I make so little money.

Money is a huge issue. I am working two jobs.

I have accepted a job in a suburban district. The salary is the same but the district will pay for all of my graduate courses at any school. I will have 28 kids in a class and will be teaching the same subject for four periods a day. My team will meet every morning plus I will have my own prep period daily.

Teachers' employment decisions at the end of their third year (2001-2002) bear watching closely. At that point, teachers are free to request a voluntary transfer--perhaps to an elementary school--and they will have collected the second installment of their hiring bonus. They will also have accumulated enough teaching experience to make them more desirable hires for other districts. At the same time, however, several factors might be operating to retain them in their schools: the repeal of the residency requirement; the possibility of a weakened job market in other careers; the satisfaction of working in a collegial school environment with ample professional development opportunities; the possible implementation of an enhanced compensation system (currently on hold); and the greater confidence that comes with work experience and additional training.

### **Summary**

The teachers who were present for a second year in the middle schools to which they were initially assigned continued to benefit from and appreciate the Talent Development program, even in the one school whose dysfunctional climate undermined the effectiveness of the initiative. Teachers in most of the schools also gave high marks to the support they received from their peers and administrators in their Small Learning Communities. In at least four of the schools, there was evidence that collegial professional communities had developed in all or part of the building, a factor that significantly enhanced teachers' job satisfaction.

Although nearly all of the teachers said they would accept employment elsewhere if offered an acceptable teaching job, only one had accepted a position in a suburban district for the following year. Many teachers registered deep dissatisfaction with their salaries

and other forms of compensation and with the frustrations of disciplining students and working in ill-supplied classrooms. But the elimination of the residency requirement, their chief complaint, provides hope that many will choose to stay in their school or elsewhere in the Philadelphia school system.

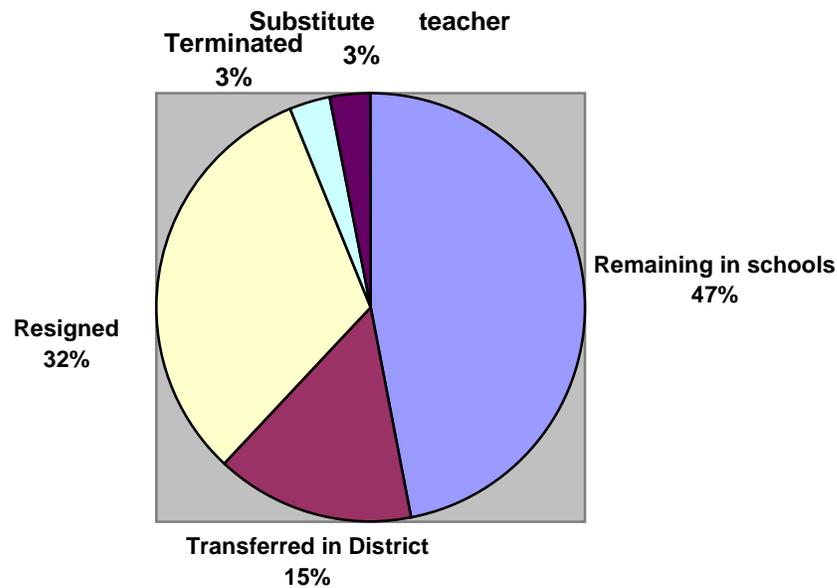
The turnover and inadequate preparation of the teaching staff in high-poverty middle schools such as these underscores the importance of having subject-specific staff development for teachers as a permanent feature of the school environment. Such support must include an array of opportunities-- in-classroom coaching and workshops in the summer, after school, and on Saturdays. Reform initiatives should follow the example of Talent Development in developing the capacity of District personnel to lead such efforts in the school building by using Teachers on Special Assignment as curriculum coaches and by organizing emergent teacher leader programs to provide subject-area leadership on site. Facing up to the reality that supports such as these must be institutionalized requires that districts and schools find ways to reconfigure their budgets to pay for such high priority expenditures on an ongoing basis.

## Postscript

Between June and September of 2001, an additional ten teachers had left these seven schools, leaving only 28 of the original 60 teachers who were hired in the fall and winter of 1999. Five of these ten were “force transferred” to other schools in the District, four because the sixth grade at one of the schools was eliminated and another as a result of declining enrollment. Two took jobs in the suburbs. Another went to a charter school, and one moved out of the area. One teacher was terminated. Two schools managed to retain all of their second-year teachers. Figure 1 profiles the two-year turnover data for the original 60 teachers.

Figure 1

### Status of 60 Teachers after Two Years at a Middle School



Overall, then, there was a 53 percent two-year teacher-turnover rate for these seven high-poverty middle schools. The turnover rate for the District, 38 percent, was lower since the transferred teachers were still in the system’s schools. While the migrating teachers take with them the knowledge and skills they have learned from Talent Development trainers, the departure of such a substantial number clearly weakens the effectiveness of the reform effort in the schools they have left behind.

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