
Learning Teams: Creating What's Next

**Prepared by the National Commission
on Teaching and America's Future**

Thomas G. Carroll, Ph.D., President
Elizabeth Foster, Director of Strategic Initiatives

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America's Schools Are About to Be Hit By the Largest Teacher Retirement Wave in History Are We Ready?

Over 50 percent of the nation's teachers and principals are Baby Boomers. During the next four years we could lose a third of our most accomplished educators to retirement. The wave of departures will peak during the 2010-11 school year, when over one hundred thousand veteran teachers could leave. In less than a decade more than half of today's teachers – 1.7 million – could be gone.

We can't recruit our way out of this problem. Wholesale replacement of accomplished veterans with inexperienced beginners is a bad bet. Beginning teacher attrition rates have been rising steadily for more than a decade.¹ (see Appendix A) By some estimates, over a third of the nation's new teachers leave the profession within three years. In some school districts half of the new hires are replaced every five years. The schools in these districts struggle to close the student achievement gap, because precious resources and time are consumed by constant efforts to rebuild their staff.

High turnover is a central factor driving the inequitable distribution of quality teaching. The consequences of this turnover are particularly dire for high-poverty schools that struggle to close the student achievement gap because they never close the **teaching quality gap**—they are constantly rebuilding their staff. A massive amount of their scarce capital—both human and financial—is consumed by the constant process of hiring and replacing beginning teachers, who leave before they have mastered the ability to collaborate with their colleagues to create a successful learning culture for their students. When they go, they leave a host of problems behind for the eager young teachers who take their place.

The traditional teaching career is collapsing at both ends. Beginners are being driven away by antiquated preparation practices, outdated school staffing policies, and inadequate career rewards. At the end of their careers, accomplished veterans who still have much to contribute are being separated from their schools by obsolete retirement systems. In five years, two-thirds of the teachers we entrust our children to in America's classrooms could be gone.

Unless we act **now**, we will lose an unacceptably large number of our best educators, just as the largest generation of children in our history must gear up to assume its place in a complex

¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004-05 Teacher Follow-Up Survey*, pp. 7-9.

world—and new data indicate that student enrollment is on the rise again.² We have less than a decade to develop a new education workforce strategy to prepare today's students for college, the workforce, and civic engagement and to mobilize our nation's resources to support our education system. The idea of a single highly qualified teacher in every classroom is an idea whose time has passed.

No Time to Waste: States at the Demographic Tipping Point

NCTAF Analysis of Teacher Demographic Data

Understanding the problem begins with a close examination of trends and patterns in the demographics of our education workforce, along with the policies and practices that are driving those trends.

NCTAF's preliminary research shows that over half of the nation's teachers are Baby Boomers (see Appendix B). Based on the U.S. Department of Education's latest Schools and Staffing Survey data, we project that as of this school year (2008-2009) **more than half of the teachers are over age fifty** in 18 states and the District of Columbia (see Appendix C). The average teacher retirement age is 59. Seventeen more states are right behind the first 19 states with over 45 percent of their teachers over age 50. For state-by-state detail on the age distribution of public school teachers, see *The Aging Teaching Workforce: A Snapshot* (NCTAF, April 2008).³

Mapping the demographic realities reveals that if states with a mature workforce use antiquated school recruitment and replacement practices to fill vacancies, they will simply drain younger teachers away from their neighboring states (see Appendix C). It is unlikely that any state or school district can sustain a quality teaching workforce during the next decade if they allow these waves of teacher retirements and attrition to roll over their schools. The retirement tsunami won't stop at state borders.

² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Projections of the Total Resident Population by 5-Year Age Groups, and Sex with Special Age Categories: Middle Series, 1999-2100.

³ NCTAF acknowledges the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for this new analysis of the SASS data.

Crisis or Opportunity?

The demographic crisis can be an opportunity to mobilize the nation to build a 21st century education system. This is an ambitious goal, but we have met challenges of this magnitude before—the achievements of the WPA during the 1930s, the World War II mobilization, construction of the interstate highway system during the 1950s, and the space program's race to the moon during the 1960s. We can do it again.

The federal stimulus funding provides a once-in-a-century opportunity to re-imagine American education. The nation's leaders could lay the groundwork for transformational change in education if they make strategic use of massive stimulus investments and the Obama Administration's "Race to the Top" education innovation initiative. This could be the decade in which we move beyond the notion that the stand-alone teacher can do everything and instead reinvent American education to give us a global competitive edge for years to come.

What's In: Forces of Change

The national age distribution profile (Appendix B) reveals that Boomers are being replaced by a second wave of inexperienced beginners, while national data show that non-retirement teacher attrition is climbing steadily. States and school districts that rely on simple recruitment and replacement policies to "fill their retirement slots" with new teachers—without addressing the way in which these teachers function—will simply add to the continuing churn as the turnover of young teachers continues.

How have we not learned this hard lesson yet? We have been digging a deep hole for ourselves by relying on practices that allow teacher turnover to continue unabated year after year. Such policies also drain public funding, undermine teaching quality, and hinder our ability to build a cohesive education system. Schools and districts continue to engage in costly annual recruitment and hiring cycles, pouring more and more young teachers into our nation's classrooms, only to lose them at a faster and faster rate.

In 1994, the U. S. Department of Education warned that the nation would need to "hire two million teachers within ten years" to offset growing student enrollment and smaller class sizes, along with increasing attrition and retirement. Over the next decade we beat that goal by hiring approximately 2.25 million teachers. But during that same decade the nation lost 2.7 million teachers, with more than 2.1 million of them leaving before retirement.⁴ We need to

⁴ Carroll, Thomas, *Policy Brief: The High Cost of Teacher Turnover*, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future; 2007 Washington D.C., www.nctaf.org.

adopt a new workforce strategy.

Additionally, no recruitment strategy, no matter how robust or well-funded, can capture and distribute the wisdom and collective knowledge of successful dedicated veteran teachers. Few school systems have any way to identify who should stay, and virtually none has a way to institutionalize what the most accomplished teachers have learned through their decades of service about how to improve student achievement.

On a small scale, retirements can make room for a new generation of teachers who have the potential to bring fresh ideas and practices to our schools. However, the impact of such a large scale exodus of accomplished veterans will be that a legacy of teaching expertise developed over decades of hands-on instruction in our nation's classrooms will be lost to our schools, students, and new teachers. In the wake of their departure, education leaders could be forced to staff schools with a growing cohort of inexperienced beginners who are dropping out of teaching at an accelerating rate.

What's Out: Traditional Retirement

In a recent survey, NCTAF found that almost 60 percent of Baby Boom teachers said they intend to work after retirement.⁵ This echoes the intentions of more than half of the 78 million Boomers in the wider workforce who say that after retirement they "want jobs now or in the future to help improve the quality of life in their communities."⁶

Yet teachers, like all professionals, want new challenges and opportunities. Seventy percent of the teachers nearing retirement would be interested in staying if they were able to work in new education roles in "phased or flexible retirement" according to NCTAF's survey. Echoing findings from the broader workforce, 67 percent of the teachers surveyed view "retirement as a time to begin a new chapter in life that is more flexible" as opposed to "rest from work" or "time to begin new challenges." Moreover, 62 percent of teachers would consider working in a different capacity in the field of education post-retirement, because they want to stay active and productive, and continue to help students.

Many teachers leave the profession out of frustration with antiquated teaching conditions and to search for new jobs or encore careers with more engaging professional and personal growth opportunities. We know, however, that they will remain in teaching if given opportunities for

⁵ NCTAF wishes to acknowledge the generous support of MetLife Foundation for the development, administration, and publication of this survey.

⁶ The 2005 MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures "New Face of Work" survey.

flexibility, for new roles, to pass on what they have learned, and to become members of strong learning teams.⁷ Almost 75 percent of the teachers NCTAF surveyed react favorably to the idea of cross-generational learning teams composed of novice educators, apprentices, interns, online educators, digital media designers, and adjunct content specialists to create 21st century learning organizations.

The findings of the NCTAF survey are also supported by teacher responses in the Schools and Staffing Survey. An analysis of the past four cycles reveals an increase over the past 15 years in the percentage of teachers who say they plan to stay in teaching for as long as they are able (up from 33 percent in 1993-94 to 46 percent in 2003-04). Additionally, 60 percent of teachers who have left (including retirees) say they would consider returning. More than a third of those teachers (36 percent) report that part time opportunities to work in education would be a critical factor in their return.⁸

What's Next: Learning Teams

We can offset the loss of years of hard-won expertise as Baby Boom teachers begin to retire in large numbers by beginning **now** to develop collaborative learning teams composed of veterans and beginners trained to share their expertise and experience with each other across the generations. These teams will leverage the best of each generation's skills and knowledge to achieve the paramount goal of schools: improving student learning. In addition to enabling veteran teachers to share their expertise now, these teams will provide the opportunity for veteran teachers phasing out of full-time teaching to give back to their schools and students in a different kind of "retirement," while helping beginners to accelerate their progress toward effective teaching.

Through learning teams, we can pass on the knowledge and expertise of successful effective veteran teachers, keep them engaged in education, and enlist their support for new teachers and in transforming their schools into genuine learning organizations. These learning teams can be comprised of many different roles, including teachers, coaches and learning team leaders, online educators and mentors, media designers and digital content experts, apprentices and interns, digital-age students and parents, adjunct industry partners and community members. Moreover, states and school districts should factor in the possibility that a significant number of retired educators and Boomers from the wider workforce might make significant contributions in part-time positions.

⁷ Fulton, K, Yoon, I, & Lee, C, *Induction Into Learning Communities*, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, NCTAF, 2005, Washington D.C., www.nctaf.org.

⁸ Richard M. Ingersoll. University of Pennsylvania, original analyses for NCTAF of Schools and Staffing Survey.

Teaming Works

A recent Education Sector report (2008) on the Benwood school improvement initiative in Chattanooga, Tennessee found that the effect on student achievement of merit pay for new teachers was less than the effect of steady improvements in existing teachers' effectiveness as a result of increased mentoring, support, and stronger collaborative leadership. School performance improved and student achievement increased because a significant number of the teachers who were already there were empowered by a team of colleagues to elevate their game.⁹ "Teacher effectiveness is not a fixed trait" according to the Benwood study, but rather can be improved through consistent and targeted efforts.¹⁰ Effective teaching *can be taught*. We agree with what Bill Gates said in a recent *Washington Post* editorial: "The biggest part is taking the people who want to be good – and helping them."¹¹

A related National Center for Educational Achievement study (2006) of 250 schools in 20 states examined the "best practices" of 140 elementary and secondary schools that consistently outperformed demographically similar schools for at least three consecutive years across several grades on state exams. The study revealed that these proven track records of success were found in schools that had clear goals and instructional strategies that were developed through school-wide collaborative teamwork.¹²

The impending retirement of Baby Boom teachers creates a unique opportunity to build a 21st century workforce of teams that can support both veterans and beginners as they strive toward their next level of performance. By deploying carefully selected veteran educators in extended careers as learning team leaders and teaching coaches, schools can build the strong professional learning communities that have been proven to reduce costly attrition rates among new teacher hires.¹³

Teaming Is Cost Effective

In an analysis of the cost of teaming in 2007, Arthur Wise suggested that the compensation costs for teaching 150 students in six traditional classrooms—with six stand-alone teachers—would be the same as the cost of serving those same students with a cross-generational team

⁹ Silva, Elena. The Benwood Plan: A Lesson in Comprehensive Teacher Reform. Education Sector Reports, April 2008.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gates, Bill, quoted by Fred Hiatt, "How Bill Gates Would Repair Our Schools." *The Washington Post*, March 30, 2009.

¹² National Center for Educational Achievement (n.d.). *Best Practice Framework*. Retrieved March 20, 2009, from http://www.just4kids.org/en/research_policy/best_practices/framework.cfm.

¹³ Fulton, K, Yoon, I, and Lee, C, *Induction Into Learning Communities*, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, NCTAF, 2005, Washington D.C., www.nctaf.org.

of 17 individuals, who could bring a wider range of pedagogy and content knowledge to those students. Wise assumes that the combined average compensation package of six teachers (totaling \$360,000), could be used to support a team led by an accomplished educator with the assistance of a senior teacher and two novice educators at the beginning of their careers. These core team members would design and manage student learning projects with the help of thirteen adjuncts and interns drawn from industry, higher education, and the community. The team would support the professional development of its members in partnership with university faculty, district specialists, or other external resources, who would work with them part-time to improve their teaching effectiveness.¹⁴

In a similar analysis, Ken Howey and Nancy Zimpher concluded that "Well-conceived staffing patterns allowing teams of individuals with differentiated roles to work with the same group of students over multiple years need cost no more than the undifferentiated single-salary staffing model so pervasive today."¹⁵

As a general matter, the simple assumption that it is cost-effective to replace veterans with beginners does not factor in the costs of recruiting, training, and mentoring each new hire, which can range from \$4,300 in a small rural district to \$17,000 in a large urban district.¹⁶ NCTAF has done an extensive analysis of the cost of teacher turnover that school leaders can use to assess the costs and benefits of replacing veterans with large cohorts of beginners.¹⁷ Additional cost-benefit analysis needs to be done about Baby Boomers who want to have encore careers in education, and who may be less costly to employ because they will work part-time and already will have health benefits. School administrators developing new cost models should factor in the possibility that a large number of retired educators and Boomers from the wider workforce can make significant contributions in part-time positions. In the public and private sector workforce is a reservoir of retirees who have existing pension benefits that could make it possible for them to make a significant contribution to our schools at little additional cost.

Teaming Leverages Resources

Learning teams provide the structure to effectively utilize the talents of retiring Baby Boomers (educators and non-educators alike) seeking second career opportunities in the education

¹⁴ Wise, A., "Teaching Teams in Professional Development Schools: A Century Paradigm [or Organizing America's Schools and Preparing Teachers in Them]," in Wehling, B. (ed). *Building a 21st Century U.S. Education System*. © 2007.

¹⁵ Howey, K. and Zimpher, N., "Creating P-16 Urban Systemic Partnerships to Address Core Structural Problems in the Educational Pipeline," in Wehling, B. (ed). *Building a 21st Century U.S. Education System*. © 2007.

¹⁶ Carroll, Thomas, *Policy Brief: The High Cost of Teacher Turnover*, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future; 2007 Washington D.C., www.nctaf.org.

¹⁷ Ibid.

system. Encore careerists will work with Millennial Age teachers and Digital Age students to together deliver the knowledge, skills, and tools to help all students develop the competencies they need to succeed in a complex world. This **does not** mean that "anyone can teach." But it does mean that if 21st century learning teams are led by accomplished, certified educators, a host of experienced individuals from the wider workforce could be deployed within those teams to make effective contributions. Just as NASA's teams built the space program during the 1960s, education learning teams could build a 21st century education system.

Twenty-first century schools will only become great places to learn when we make it possible for individuals to join forces with their colleagues and community members to improve student achievement beyond what any of them can accomplish alone. Cross-generational learning teams will give everyone an opportunity to contribute. Today's young teachers can contribute their communication, collaboration, and digital media skills, while their more seasoned colleagues can add a deep understanding of how children learn. Digital Age students can help learning teams take advantage of the fact that we are now in a technology-enabled open learning economy to draw on the assets of Boomers in the wider workforce who are ready to bring a deep reservoir of real world knowledge, skill and expertise to our schools and students. Working together, cross-generational learning teams can develop and deploy a repertoire of strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Teaming Brings Service to Schools

Cross-generational learning teams can respond to the recent movement toward a new era of service. Such teams could leverage the human resources made possible by the proposed Serve America Act, which includes incentives and programs for Americans of every generation, adding more than 175,000 participants to AmeriCorps and other national service programs. Middle and high school students will be able to enroll in a "Summer of Service" volunteer program and earn \$500 toward college costs. College programs can engage students in national service while they take classes, and "Silver Scholarships" and "Encore Fellowships" will give retiring Baby Boomers a hand in breaking into new careers in public service as they earn grants transferable to children or grandchildren.¹⁸ Well-structured learning team opportunities can provide an access point for these service learning teams in schools.

In addition to developing more rewarding career paths for educators, cross-generational learning teams will create engaging opportunities for millions of Baby Boom retirees who are eager to pursue encore careers in meaningful positions in education. Civic Ventures, in a recent MetLife sponsored survey (2005), estimates that of the 78 million Baby Boomers in the workforce today, half will work after retirement—and half of them are interested in giving back

¹⁸ Povich, E. "Senate Passes Bill to Expand National Volunteer Service," AARP Bulletin Today, March 26, 2009.

to their communities by working with youth development or in education.¹⁹

If these numbers hold true, we could draw on a deep reservoir of almost 20 million Boomers who have a wide range of knowledge, expertise, and experience to bring to our schools and students. But under our current model of stand-alone teaching in self contained classrooms, most of them will be turned away at the door because there is no process for utilizing their expertise. We have an urgent need to develop a new workforce model, built around cross-generational learning teams, that can fully deploy this windfall of talent in a 21st century education system. Effective learning teams provide opportunities for individuals to serve in well-structured, short-term, part-time, and adjunct positions while they pursue other personal and professional opportunities.

Policy Challenges and Opportunities

The challenges that our nation must address as we consider strategies for reinventing our educational workforce are previewed here, and will be addressed in great detail by NCTAF and our 27 state coalitions over the coming months and years. (See Page 15 for information on upcoming NCTAF leadership retreats.)

Fluctuations in the Economy

The recent economic downturn could be a factor in some Baby Boomers' decisions to extend their careers. Yet in NCTAF's survey, just 36 percent of teachers approaching retirement and 45 percent of principals considering retirement in the next five years have put their plans on hold because of the economy. (This figure is 47 percent for teachers making less than \$80,000 per year). But this will only buy us a few years, and then those veterans will join the wave of retirees rolling toward the exits. Delaying the inevitable by gambling on unpredictable market fluctuations that might affect personal retirement decisions is not a sound workforce development strategy. Relying on a bad economy is a terrible bet. In fact, such an approach may only build toward an even a higher peak of departures if larger numbers of retirements become concentrated in a shorter time span.

Writer Ellen Goodman suggests that "the current economic downturn creates the opportunity for social change...[T]here is a chance for the boomer generation to make a virtue—or a revolution—out of the necessity of working longer."²⁰ In a similar vein, Marc Freedman, author of *Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life*, is leading a national campaign to leverage Boomer resources for social good by transforming retirement into a period of

¹⁹ The 2005 MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures "New Face of Work" survey.

²⁰ Goodman, E. "The Benefits of Working Longer," *The Boston Globe*, March 20, 2009.

personal and community reinvention.

If schools build on the fact that many educators and non-educators who might continue to work for financial reasons would welcome the opportunity to stay if they could take on new roles and career challenges, states and districts could seize this unique opportunity to lay the groundwork for building a 21st century education system.

Outdated Pay and Retirement Policies

As we restructure staffing, our pay systems also need to be brought into the 21st century to ensure that length of service and years of education are not the only basis for pay increases, that salaries and incentives are competitive in the current job market, and that teachers and principals are rewarded for teamwork that improves school performance and student achievement.

Retirement policies built around the notion that accomplished veterans should leave the classroom, simply because they are in their fifties, are also obsolete. States and school districts need to reexamine the fiscal consequences of pension provisions that push teachers in their fifties out of the workforce. In some states, retirement "bumps" that encourage teachers to retire early, ultimately strain the finances of individuals' whose life expectancies will continue to increase. At the same time, early-out provisions can create additional stress on public pension systems that have experienced a significant decline in the recent economic downturn—some state pension systems could be strained to the breaking point if we continue to accelerate large number of Boomers into retirement. Efforts to draw on the expertise of Baby Boom educators during retirement must go beyond current stopgap measures to employ retired educators in shortage areas. These approaches are too often limited by confusing regulations and pension penalties that limit the retiree's contributions and hours. In short, the effects of teacher pension systems on teaching quality and school performance are in need of a thorough reexamination across every state and school district.²¹

Selection of Participants

Not all retiring teachers are interested in working in retirement, nor should all of them stay. But it is a faulty and costly assumption to allow accomplished veterans, who have been the beneficiaries of a substantial, long-term professional development investment, to walk away from their careers just because they are in their fifties. We must develop selection criteria and processes that enable veteran teachers to contribute to schools according to their expertise and level of commitment. NCTAF will work with the National Board for Professional Teaching

²¹ NCTAF is currently conducting research in this area, and exploring the significant pension research and policy analysis being conducted by experts such as Michael Podgursky at University of Missouri-Columbia and Robert Costrell at the University of Arkansas. Retiree health benefit systems will require additional examination.

Standards—the organization that has certified 74,000 accomplished teachers across the country—to examine effective criteria for selecting teacher and team leaders. At the same time, NCTAF will work with Civic Ventures, Experience Corps, and others to develop best practices for incorporating the valuable skills of non-educator Boomers into the learning teams of schools.

Rising Student Enrollment

Student enrollment is once again on the rise. According to the National Center for Health Statistics "more babies were born in 2007 than in any other year in American history," breaking the previous record set by the first Baby Boom in 1957.²² The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has projected that enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools will increase by more than three million by the year 2015. NCES is also projecting that an additional 418,000 teachers will be needed by 2017 to meet this rising enrollment, based on the single teacher per classroom model. We will never be in a position to prepare enough teachers to meet the needs of the next generation if we continue with this outmoded approach to school staffing.

Today's students are the most diverse generation in the history of our country, and meeting their individual needs requires more support and services than ever before. As youth, they come from complex communities in challenging times, and as adults they will be expected to contribute effectively to the success of these same communities. They will pursue multiple careers in a globally integrated economy that rewards continuous learning, sustained teamwork, and constant innovation. Stand-alone teachers working in self contained classrooms cannot meet the needs of 21st century learners.

Low Performing Schools

We need **all hands on deck** to end long-standing inequities in teaching quality and school performance for low-income students and children of color. The prevailing approach to this problem involves recruitment and hiring incentives to attract highly qualified individuals to hard-to-staff schools. Unfortunately, even the most effective individuals too often leave before they have been able to make lasting changes in school performance or student achievement. The conventional wisdom that offering these teachers higher salaries will encourage them to stay is wrong. Pay is not the deciding factor on why so many new teachers are leaving. NCTAF believes we need to go a step further.

Students lose the most when good teachers leave their schools—but it is time to recognize that

²² Hamilton, Brady E., et al. *Births: Preliminary Data for 2007* National Vital Statistics Reports, Volume 57, Number 12, March 18, 2009,

high turnover schools are also extremely costly to operate. Trapped in a chronic cycle of teacher hiring and replacement, these schools sap their districts of precious dollars that could be better spent to improve teaching quality and student achievement. It is time to change the conditions that make these schools so hard to staff in the first place. In every story about high performing schools that are bucking the odds to improve student achievement, a strong collaborative teaching culture is at the heart of the effort. No single teacher can—or should be expected to —meet these myriad challenges alone.

Teacher Preparation and Careers

It is time to build the capacity of teachers to function like professionals whose preparation, practice, and career advancement are seamlessly aligned around a cohesive knowledge base that is focused on improved student learning. We must become explicit and intentional about our efforts to build a seamless continuum of professional growth that begins with teaching apprenticeships and extends to multiple roles for accomplished teachers. "Teaching Residencies" that embed teacher preparation and continuous professional development in learning organizations and evolve to meet the needs of today's students show considerable promise for training individuals to work in learning teams. With the emergence of a new learning economy, we have entered an era in which education workforce knowledge and skill requirements are constantly growing because the job is no longer static.

At the same time, we need to re-imagine the teaching career to sustain the growth of teams of educators over time. The tradition of hiring young teachers in their twenties and expecting them to do essentially the same job for the next 30 years is a thing of the past. Sustaining teachers' growth throughout their careers calls for the creation of new roles and opportunities to support intern and apprentice teachers who develop their skills alongside more accomplished educators. These veterans in turn have ample opportunities to take on new learning challenges with the support of Millennial Age teachers who bring new skills, knowledge, and passion to their learning teams.

Schools as Community Centers

In the new model, schools not only become hubs for the work of teams but also for entire neighborhoods. A strong and growing body of evidence clearly shows that students learn better when the major forces in their lives—family, school, and community—work together. Arne Duncan, the new U.S. Secretary of Education, is a strong advocate for using school facilities as community hubs in order to improve teaching and learning. He said recently *"I am just convinced that when families learn together and where schools truly become the heart and center of a neighborhood – a community anchor – there are tremendous dividends for*

children."²³ Cross-generational learning teams provide a clear model for how teachers in our schools can work with other neighborhood agencies to address real-life social, economic, environmental, and health care challenges that their students face.

NCTAF, in partnership with KnowledgeWorks Foundation, is working with coalitions from South Carolina and West Virginia (a state aggressively addressing the fact that 68 percent of its teachers are over the age of 50) to transform schools into places where teacher candidates and experienced teachers engage in partnerships with community service organizations, community colleges, and colleges of education to improve student achievement. The goal is to integrate learning with community resources and civic participation to build both stronger learning environments and stronger communities. Cross-generational learning teams that pool the knowledge, skill, and experience of multiple generations will be at the heart of efforts to create these true community learning centers.

²³ Coalition for Community Schools, www.communityschools.org, 2009

NCTAF Challenges the Nation's Leaders: Mobilize Learning Teams to Reinvent American Education

There are two ways to deal with change: wait and the change will come to you, or create the change you want. **It is time to create the change we want to see.**

Secretary Duncan has called on the nation's education leaders to "think very creatively and to think very differently."²⁴ It is time for new strategies to create truly 21st century schools. Cross-generational learning teams will "create what's next."

If our states and school districts use their stimulus investments, along with the expanding resources available in a new learning economy, and the wealth of knowledge and experience that learning teams can bring to the task, they can build a 21st century education system. The stimulus funding provides the opportunity to empower school leaders and teachers as agents of change, rather than as targets of change.

To lay the groundwork for this mobilization, NCTAF will convene a series of invitational leadership retreats over the next six to twelve months. On April 28, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, NCTAF will convene a small group of state leaders and policy experts in Washington, D.C. to mobilize action and launch a series of regional retreats across the country.

The retreat participants will concentrate first on understanding the problem. This will include an analysis of current demographic data and research, which will be used to establish the groundwork for a range of stimulus innovations that can be quickly deployed to launch 21st century learning teams.

During NCTAF's retreats, education leaders and national experts will develop strategies to use stimulus funding and innovation grants to improve school performance and teaching effectiveness. In the course of their planning, they will address the policy challenges and opportunities outlined above. This will lead to a careful examination of the human resources and systems we have in place in education, and ultimately to the creation of a truly 21st century education workforce.

For additional information on NCTAF Learning Team Retreats and initiatives, please visit: www.nctaf.org and www.learningteams.org.

²⁴ Glod, Maria. "Education Secretary Plans to Use Stimulus to Fuel Reform." *The Washington Post*. March 25, 2009.

Contribute to the Discussion

Learning teams are open learning organizations—shared knowledge and collaboration makes them stronger and more effective. NCTAF is actively seeking your input and ideas about how to build a 21st century education system. Join us at www.learningteams.org to share your opinions and experience.

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This is the second in a series of short policy briefs from NCTAF about the need to use the next several years to create a 21st century education workforce. As more than a million Baby Boom teachers approach retirement, it is time to assess and prevent the loss of valued veteran teachers, and to pilot and strengthen programs and policies that retain those teachers interested in contributing to a new standard of teaching.

As NCTAF proceeds with its series of leadership retreats subsequent policy briefs topics will include:

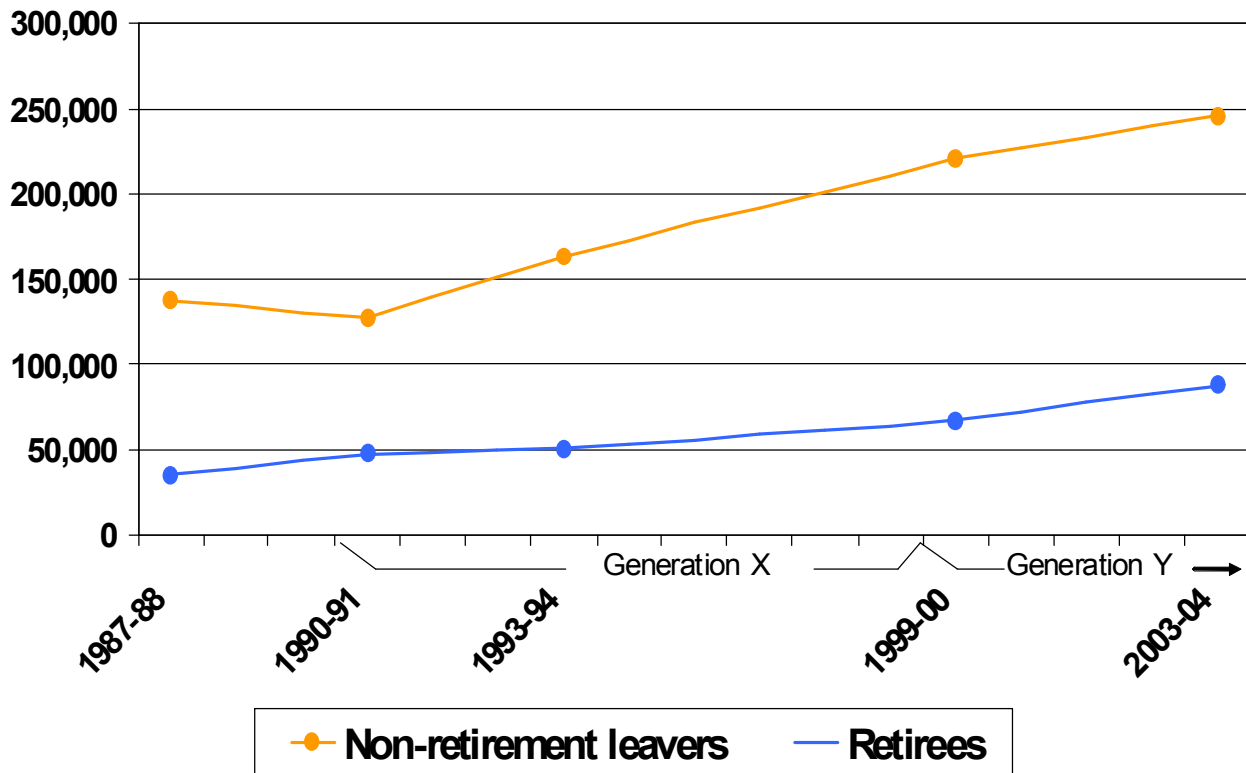
- *Analysis of Teacher Demographics and Past Hiring and Replacement Policies*
- *The Status and Impact of Current Teacher Retirement Policies*
- *The Role of a New Age of Service in the Development of Learning Teams*
- *The Role of Learning Teams in the Creation of 21st Century Learning Organizations*

Additional issues for policy briefs will emerge during the course of our work, and we invite you to suggest topics and ideas that we should pursue. Please visit www.learningteams.org to share your suggestions.

This policy brief is based upon work supported by MetLife Foundation.

Opinions in this paper reflect those of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and do not necessarily reflect those of the funder.

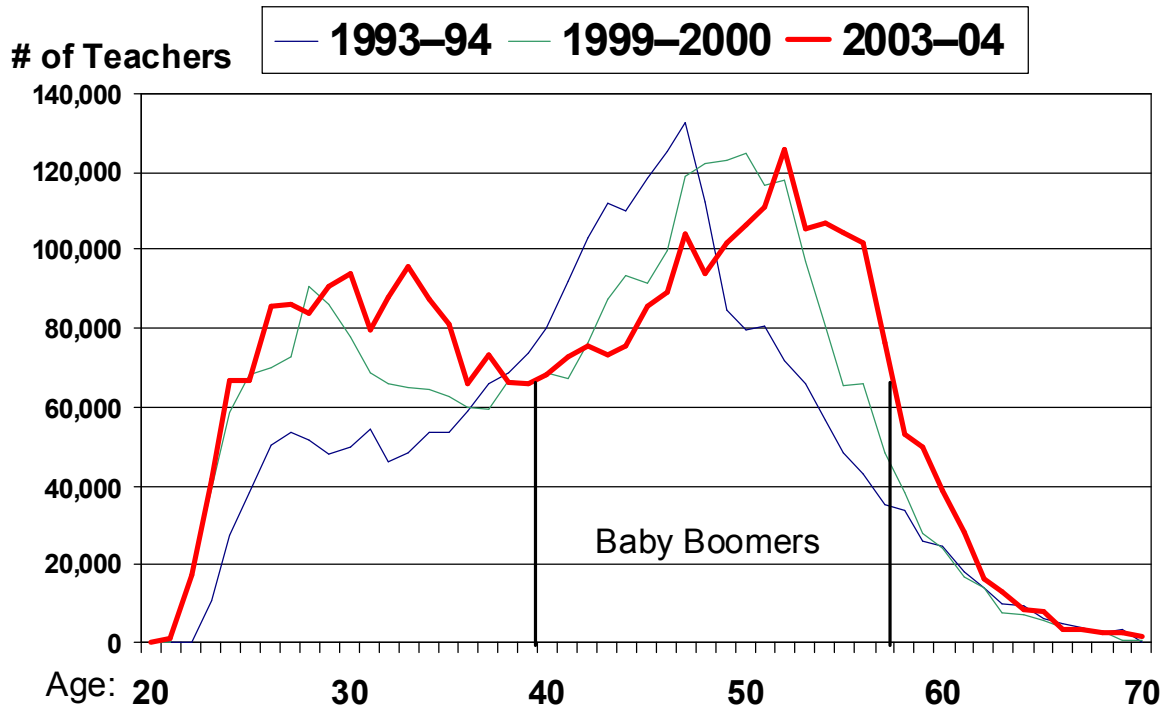
Trends in Teacher Attrition



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004-05 Teacher Follow-Up Survey*.

Appendix B

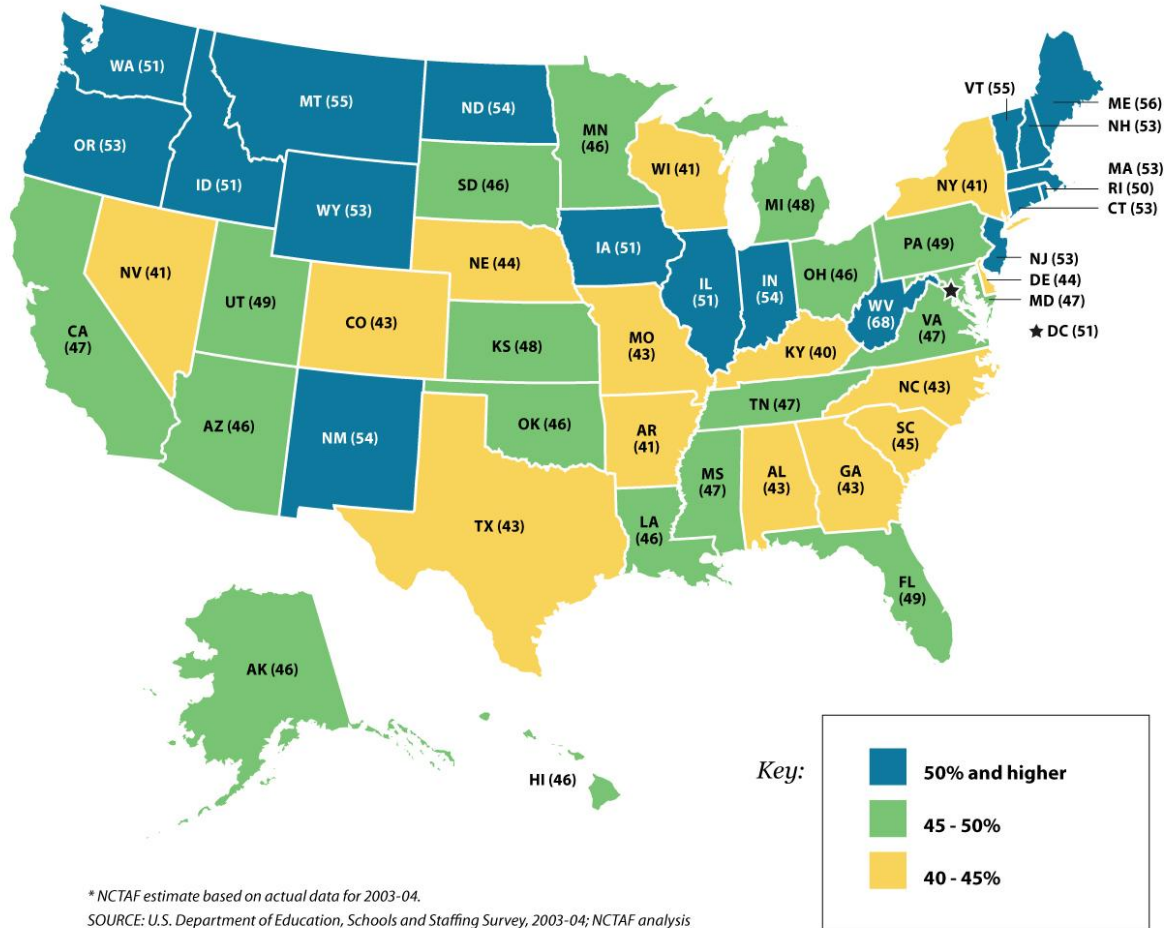
Age Distribution of U.S. Public School Teachers



Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, were between 40 and 58 when the most recent national teacher survey was done. These Boomers, who now constitute 53% of the U.S. teaching workforce are between 45 and 63 during this school year.
Source: U.S. Ed. NCES *Schools and Staffing Survey* for 2003-2004

Appendix C

Percentage of
Public School Teachers
Age 50 and Older, 2008-09*





2100 M Street, N.W. ▪ Suite 660 ▪ Washington, DC 20037
www.nctaf.org