

Teacher Turnover in Charter Schools

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Abstract

This study examines how teacher turnover differs between charter and traditional public schools and seeks to identify factors that explain these differences. Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS), we found that 25% of charter school teachers turned over during the 2003-2004 school year, compared to 14% of traditional public school teachers. Fourteen percent of charter school teachers left the profession outright and 11% moved to a different school, while 7% of traditional public school teachers left the profession and 7% moved schools. Using multi-nomial logistic regression, we found the odds of a charter school teacher leaving the profession versus staying in the same school are 132% greater than those of a traditional public school teacher. The odds of a charter school teacher moving schools are 76% greater. Our analysis confirms that much of the explanation of this "turnover gap" lies in differences in the types of teachers that charter schools and traditional public schools hire. The data lend minimal support to the claim that turnover is higher in charter schools because they are leveraging their flexibility in personnel policies to get rid of underperforming teachers. Rather, we found most of the turnover in charter schools is voluntary and dysfunctional as compared to that of traditional public schools.

Keywords: Charter schools, teacher turnover, school organization