Examining the Impact of Reduction in Force (RIF) Notices in Washington School Districts: 2009-2010

A Report Prepared for
The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 2009, nearly half of Washington state school districts issued layoff notices to teachers and other school staff. The Reduction in Force (RIF) notifications impacted approximately 3 percent of the state's teacher workforce. As was the case in many states, federal stimulus dollars were deliberately targeted at reducing the need for teacher layoffs. This report examines the impact of RIF notices on the assignment, retention and mobility of the educator workforce in the Washington state.

Drawing on a variety of state datasets, including a statewide list of school staff who received a RIF notification, analyses were constructed to address the issues of reduction in force at state, district, school and individual levels. Due to some data limitations in the use of preliminary datasets, the study may under-report some layoff and rehire rates. The following specific questions were addressed, and key findings are summarized below.

- What were the characteristics of school staff who received a RIF notification in spring 2009 in Washington state?
- How did districts that issued RIF notifications vary from those districts that did not engage in a formal lay-off process?
- How did the characteristics of schools with RIF staff differ from schools that did not have RIF staff in their buildings?
- What was the impact of the RIF process on the retention and mobility of teachers within and across schools and districts?
- To what extent were individuals who received a RIF notification rehired in the subsequent school year?

Individuals Who Received RIF Notifications

More than two thousand educators received a RIF notice in the spring of 2009. The vast majority of those receiving a RIF notice were full-time classroom teachers. Among other school staff who received RIF notices, half were school counselors (n=81). Overall, RIF teachers were younger, less experienced and less likely to have an advanced degree than the state's teacher workforce. However, 335 of the RIF teachers had five or more years of teaching experience. A small proportion of teachers (less than 7%) held one or more teaching endorsements in the shortage areas of math, science, special education and ELL/ESL or bilingual education.

Districts That Issued RIF Notifications

Nearly half of the state's 295 school districts (n = 137) engaged in a formal layoff procedure. Notable differences were found between RIF and non-RIF districts with regard to geographic location, enrollment size and district type. Of the 137 RIF districts, more than half were located in Western Washington outside of the Central Puget Sound region. Six of the ten largest districts in the state issued RIF notices, while two-thirds of

the state's smallest districts (enrollment under 1,000) did not. District fiscal conditions can be an important influence on whether or not layoff notices become necessary. We found that 39 percent of RIF districts experienced a decline in student enrollment in excess of 20 students compared to 20 percent for non-RIF districts. Expenditure levels for RIF and non-RIF districts also varied. More than twice the proportion of non-RIF districts (37%) had total per pupil expenditures greater than $12,000 as compared to RIF districts (16%). Another measure of a district's fiscal condition is its ending fund balance. On this metric, we found that more than twice the proportion of non-RIF districts (52%) had ending fund balances in excess of $1,000 per pupil compared to RIF districts (23%).

The number of RIF teachers per district varied considerably, ranging from 35 districts that issued one or two notices (26%) to 29 districts (22%) that issued notices to more than 16 teachers. Our analysis of how RIF teachers were distributed across districts suggests that high poverty and racially and ethnically diverse districts were not disproportionately impacted.

Characteristics of Schools with RIF Staff

A total of 686 schools had one or more staff who received a RIF notice. This represents more than half (55%) of the 1,259 schools in RIF districts, and approximately one third of all schools in the state. The majority of schools with RIF staff (61%) had either one or two individuals with a layoff notice. Half of the schools with RIF staff were elementary schools. The majority of elementary RIF schools (53%) enrolled 400-600 students, while the bulk of high schools with RIF staff (59%) enrolled more than 800 students. Our analysis of how RIF staff were distributed across schools indicated little variation by student poverty level or race/ethnicity. Not surprisingly, larger schools (800 or more students) had the largest number of RIF staff within their buildings.

Impact of RIF on Retention and Mobility

The vast majority of teachers (87%) who received a RIF notice were rehired in the K-12 education system in Washington state in the subsequent year (2009-10). When examining RIF staff who were working as classroom teachers, 60 percent were retained in the same school, about one fifth (22%) moved to another school or assignment in the same district, and more than one tenth (13%) exited the Washington system. While a substantial proportion of RIF staff were rehired in some capacity, there are large differences in the retention and mobility rates of RIF teachers compared to statewide averages for classroom teachers. The rate at which RIF staff were retained at the same school is substantially lower than for all teachers statewide (61% vs 87%). The proportion of RIF staff moving within their district is three times the rate for all teachers statewide (22% vs 7%), and the rate of exiters from the Washington system was nearly double the rate for all teachers statewide (13% vs 6%).

Differences in Rehiring Rates

Nearly one quarter of RIF districts (23%) rehired all staff who received a RIF notice. Districts with a rehire rate of zero were relatively small in size. Of those districts with a rehire rate of zero, all were districts that had enrollment sizes below 5,000 students, with 44 percent enrolling fewer than 1,000 students.

Discussion

The rehiring rate of 87 percent is quite high, and raises a question regarding the extent to which funds from the U.S. Department of Education Recovery Act contributed to districts' ability to fund positions which were at risk due to limited budgets. The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund is particularly important in Washington state because 70 percent of education dollars come from state sources and education accounts for more than half of all state spending. During the time period under study, Washington was awarded $731.7 million in State Fiscal Stabilization Funds, $135.1 million in Title I, Part A funds, and $239.4 million in IDEA Grants. This infusion of federal dollars was aimed, at least in part, on reducing the number of teachers (and other public sector workers such as police and first responders) who would lose their jobs. However, due to data limitations, we are not able to determine the precise extent to which staff positions funded by federal stimulus dollars were filled by individuals who had received a RIF notification.

Because of the high rehire rates in 2009-10, schools and districts were buffered from the more adverse impacts and disruption associated with massive layoffs. Since then, overall economic conditions have not improved, and states are again wrestling with severe budget shortfalls. Given the fiscal uncertainties surrounding state and local economies, as well as the unknown role that the federal government may play in the future, it is likely that RIF notifications will be issued yet again, along with other budgetary responses such as increased class size and reductions in support staff. Thus, it will be important to continue to track the impact of these notifications on employment, retention, and mobility patterns over time and the potential impact on the quality of education for students.

Introduction and Focus of the Study

In times of shrinking state and local education budgets, districts face considerable uncertainty when attempting to determine staffing levels for the upcoming school year. One common consequence of tough financial circumstances is the decision by a district to formally notify employees of possible layoffs, typically using a process called Reduction in Force (RIF). RIF notifications generally occur during the spring prior to the upcoming school year. The RIF process is usually governed by state statute and/or local collective bargaining agreements. While a number of individuals who receive RIF notices are often rehired in the subsequent year, the layoff process can prompt shifts in teacher distribution and assignment, particularly with respect to the employment status of teachers with the fewest years of experience. In addition, the re-assignment of staff due to RIF procedures may also result in the filling of positions by individuals who have several years of experience working as an educator, but are now assigned to a school, subject area, grade level, and/or type of position which is completely new to them. While RIF notifications in K-12 education have occurred multiple times over the past three decades, there is very little empirical evidence that examines the characteristics of those who receive RIF notifications and the impact of the RIF process on teacher distribution, assignment, retention or mobility.

In the spring of 2009, many districts in Washington state and across the country made the decision to issue formal layoff notices. The problem was so pronounced that some of the federal stimulus dollars from the U.S. Department of Education Recovery Act allocated in the summer of 2009 (e.g., State Fiscal Stabilization Funds) were specifically targeted at reducing the need for layoffs in the education sector. The intent of this report is to examine the impact of the 2009 layoff notices on the assignment, retention, and mobility of the educator workforce in Washington state. To accomplish this aim, we examine data for certificated staff members who received a RIF notice in the spring of 2009 and determine whether or not that individual was employed in the Washington education system in the fall of 2009. We describe the characteristics of teachers who received a RIF notice and compare them to the characteristics of the statewide teacher workforce. For those individuals who were rehired in 2009-10, we analyze the extent to which they changed assignments, schools, districts, duties, or FTE status. We also conduct a comparative analysis of the characteristics of districts that sent RIF notifications with districts that did not engage in layoff procedures. Finally, we describe differences in retention and mobility rates in schools and districts that were impacted by RIF notices compared to those that did not engage in a RIF notification process.

Summary of Relevant Literature about Reduction in Force

The literature on Reduction in Force (RIF) in education primarily focuses on conditions necessitating RIF and procedures for conducting teacher layoffs. Declining enrollments and cuts in state and federal spending due to recession are frequently cited as circumstances contributing to reductions in staffing (Fass, 1982; Jacobs, 1982; Phelan, 1983a; Phelan, 1983b; Ward, 1984; Weber, 1996; Weldy, 1978; Wood, 1986). Much of

the debate centers on the traditional role of seniority as the primary determinant in decisions regarding who receives layoff notices. While some specific elements of the RIF process are dictated by state statute, state board of education rules and regulations, collective bargaining agreements and/or local school board policies, the widely accepted practice of basing layoffs on seniority alone is not necessarily legally required (Wood, 1986). Additionally, the courts are ambiguous on the recall rights of teachers who receive a layoff notice (Ward, 1984). Thus, alternatives to seniority-based layoff procedures are potentially available for local school boards and employee associations to consider (Wood, 1986).

While the use of objective criteria such as years of experience and credentials are expedient, Schultz (1976), among others, argues that basing layoffs on seniority offers the least financial relief and contributes to a faculty age imbalance and the associated loss of new ideas (Ellsworth, 1977; Lombardi, 1974; Schultz, 1976; Roza 2009; NCTQ, 2010). Additionally, basing RIF on seniority often entails the loss of beginning teachers, which, in the past, reduced the gains in labor force participation for women and teachers of color (Kalvelage, 1978; Phelan, 1983). Phelan (1983) concludes that seniority is a predictable, understandable criterion and if a district is unwilling to invest in a comprehensive evaluation program, reductions should be based on years of service, credentials, and similar factors.

The current debate continues to focus on the policies and procedures used to decide which teachers receive RIF notices. Recent calls to curtail or amend seniority's role in determining layoffs argue that seniority-based practices exacerbate the number of jobs lost and raise concerns about ignoring the role of teacher performance in determining layoffs (Roza, 2009; NCTQ, 2010; Chait & Miller, 2009). However, seniority-based procedures still dominate layoff practices. In 2009, nearly 60,000 teachers were laid off by districts using seniority as the primary determinant (NCTQ, 2010).

Since most districts continue to use seniority as a major part of their criteria for layoffs, beginning teachers are heavily affected by the RIF process. Even threatened layoffs are cited as a reason for beginning teacher attrition (Natale, 1993). There is some limited research that focuses on the experiences of teachers who receive a RIF notice (Brooks, 1984; Phelan, 1982; Ross & Roth, 1984) and some empirical data that examines the rehire rates of teachers who received lay off notices, using survey data from a single district (Fass, 1982). Overall, there is little comprehensive research on the characteristics of those who receive a layoff notice and the effects of layoff notices on employment rates and mobility patterns in the subsequent year. Additionally, there is little empirical evidence that compares differences in the fiscal and demographic characteristics of districts that issue layoff notices and those that do not engage in formal layoff procedures. Finally, there is no empirical work that examines the impact of layoff notices across a state system. Thus, the knowledge base regarding the impact of layoff notifications on the retention, mobility, and attrition of educators over time is a policy issue in need of additional research and analysis.

Research Questions

In order to assess the impact of the 2009 RIF notification process on Washington's educators, schools and districts, we focused on the following research questions:

1. What were the characteristics of school staff who received a RIF notification in spring 2009 in Washington state?
2. How did districts that issued RIF notifications vary from those districts that did not engage in a formal lay-off process?
3. How did the characteristics of schools with RIF staff differ from schools that did not have RIF staff in their buildings?
4. To what extent were individuals who received a RIF notification rehired in the subsequent school year?
5. What was the impact of the RIF process on the retention and mobility of teachers within and across schools and districts?

Data Sources and Methods

In this study, we merges data from a variety of state sources, including administrative data for all education personnel, the state's teacher certification database, and school and district data regarding fiscal indicators and student and teacher demographics.

We began the study using data provided by individual school districts in response to a special request for information from the State of Washington's Professional Educator Standards Board. This data collection effort provided the educator name and certification numbers of individuals reported as having received a RIF notification in the spring of 2009. Because certification numbers were provided, we were able to link individuals who received RIF notices to the state's personnel database and to demographic, fiscal, and achievement data for the districts and schools in which those receiving RIF notices were located. While the majority of the data sources used are from the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years, we also have access to longitudinal data regarding teacher retention and mobility that we have produced in prior studies dating back to 2000. We use a portion of this historical data for comparative purposes.

It is important to note that there are some caveats and potential limitations to the dataset used in this analysis. First, it is possible that rehire rates might be under-reported as the state's personnel data collection system is based on an October 1 headcount, and it is possible that individuals may have been hired by districts after October 1, 2009. It is also possible that some districts did not report individuals who may have received a layoff notice, but were not classified as classroom teachers (i.e., these individuals worked in some other professional capacity, such as a school counselor or school principal). The request to the district from the state agency was worded as follows: "We are requesting the names and certificate numbers for all people who worked as teachers in this district in 2008-2009 and received a Reduction in Force (RIF) notice this past spring." We can confirm that some districts included certificated staff who were not classroom teachers in

their report to the state, but cannot be certain that this was done uniformly across all districts. Because of this potential inconsistency, some of our analyses are restricted to only those individuals who were working as classroom teachers. We also cannot confirm the extent to which the state's nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs) participated in the reporting process. While these regional entities do not operate individual schools, they sometimes hire educators to provide contracted services to individual districts, particularly for special education services. Thus, for all the reasons just described, the dataset from which this analysis is drawn may contain some under-reporting of either the number of individuals receiving notices or the number of individuals who were eventually rehired in the 2009-10 school year.

Study Findings

We organized the summary of our results in four sections. The first section examines the characteristics of *individuals* who received a RIF notification, and we compare those characteristics to the profile of all teachers in the state's workforce. Next, we present data and analyses about the characteristics of *districts* that issued one or more RIF notices, and compare these districts to those that did not report engagement in a layoff process in the spring of 2009. In a third section, we focus on *schools* within districts that did issue RIF notifications. We characterize the distribution of individuals receiving a RIF notice across schools and compare them with schools that did not have any individuals with a layoff notice. Finally, we present data and analyses about the impact of RIF notification on the *assignment, retention, and mobility of individuals* who had received a layoff notice. Our analyses of the impact of RIF notification are reported at the individual, school, district, and state levels.

Characteristics of Individuals Receiving RIF Notices

Data provided by the 295 districts in Washington state reveals that 2,095[1] individuals received a RIF notification in the spring of 2009. Of these individuals, four-fifths (80%) worked full-time (defined as .95 FTE or greater) and the vast majority (92%) worked as a classroom teacher for at least a portion of their duties. Classroom teachers who received a RIF notice represented 3 percent of the total number of classroom teachers in the state. The remaining certificated individuals worked in an assignment other than a classroom teacher in that year. Examples of such individuals include counselors (50% of this group), library media specialists, nurses, psychologists, and other school support personnel. Of the 1,857 classroom teachers involved, a small portion (2%) worked in at least one other type of assignment in addition to that of a classroom teacher. Table 1 provides information about the assignment and FTE status of those receiving a RIF notice.

[1] In the analyses that we conducted, we were only able to obtain complete data for 2,019 of these individuals.

Table 1: Assignments and FTE Status of Certificated RIF Staff		
	2008-09	
	Number	Percent
Number RIF Staff reported by districts	2,095	100%
Number located in personnel records	2,019	96%
Classroom Teachers	1,857	92%
FTE = .95 or greater	1,513	82%
FTE = .50 to .94	269	15%
<0.5 FTE	75	4%
Non-Classroom Teachers	162	8%
FTE = .95 or greater	111	69%
FTE = .50 to .94	45	28%
<0.5 FTE	6	4%
Assignments of Non-Teachers	162	100%
Counselor	81	50%
Library Media Specialist	16	10%
School Support Personnel	12	7%
School Administrator	4	2%
Nurse	13	8%
Psychologist	13	8%
Speech and language therapist	8	5%
Occupational therapist	6	4%
Social worker	2	1%
Other Support staff	7	4%

Of those RIF staff who were working as classroom teachers in 2008-09, we find expected differences in their characteristics with respect to experience levels, degree attainment, and age as compared to the overall teacher workforce statewide. Not surprisingly, RIF teachers were significantly less experienced than the overall workforce in the state. Most of the RIF teachers (71%) started the 2008-09 school year with three years of experience or less, compared to 57 % of all teachers statewide. Only about one fifth (18%) had 5 or more years of experience, compared to 77 percent of all teachers. One half of RIF teachers were age 30 or younger. This is a sizable difference from the distribution of the overall teacher workforce as only 15 percent of all teachers statewide are in this same age category. Less than half (45%) of RIF teachers had a Masters degree or higher, compared to almost two-thirds (64%) of all teachers statewide.

There do not appear to be any notable differences in the racial/ethnic characteristics of RIF teachers compared to all teachers statewide. Some slight gender differences were noted, with 74 percent of RIF teachers being female (compared to 72% of all teachers). Table 2 provides additional information about the characteristics of RIF staff working as classroom teachers compared to state workforce averages.

Table 2: Characteristics of RIF Teachers Compared to All Teachers Statewide

	RIF Teachers (n=1,857)		All Teachers Statewide (n=57,182)		Percentage
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Difference
Age (in 2008)					
<31	932	50%	8,546	15%	35%
31-40	455	25%	14,492	25%	-1%
41-50	293	16%	14,329	25%	-9%
51-60	139	8%	16,110	28%	-21%
61+	38	2%	3,705	6%	-4%
Level of education					
Bachelors or equivalent	1,028	55%	20,783	36%	19%
Masters or higher	824	44%	36,396	64%	-19%
Not Listed	1	0%	3	0%	0%
Experience					
Beginning teacher (0 yrs)	279	15%	1,287	2%	13%
.1 to 1 year	404	22%	2365	4%	18%
1.1 to 2 years	410	22%	2586	5%	18%
2.1 to 3 years	229	12%	2739	5%	8%
3.1 to 4.9 years	200	11%	4,384	8%	3%
5 to 9.9 years	181	10%	12,126	21%	-11%
10 years or more	154	8%	31,695	55%	-47%
Race/Ethnicity					
Asian/Pacific Islander	52	3%	1,504	3%	0%
African American	33	2%	821	1%	0%
Hispanic	37	2%	1,577	3%	-1%
Native American	20	1%	458	1%	0%
White	1,715	93%	52,822	92%	0%
Gender					
Female	1,380	74%	40,981	72%	3%
Male	477	26%	16,201	28%	-3%

While these findings are generally not surprising, it is notable that nearly one-fifth of RIF teachers had more than five years of experience, and of these, nearly half (n=154) had more than 10 years of experience. This indicates that while RIF notices primarily impacted novice teachers, there were 335 teachers with five or more years of teaching experience who received a layoff notice. In interpreting this finding, it is important to note that in many districts in Washington state, years of teaching experience both within the district and within the state are factors that are used to determine seniority rankings. For example, a teacher with 7 years of teaching experience out of state and only one year of teaching experience in Washington would receive a layoff notice before a teacher with fewer years of total experience, but more years of teaching in the district or state.

When examining the teaching credentials of those who received a RIF notice, we find that nearly one half (49%) are endorsed to teach at the elementary level. When analyzing this data by teaching shortage areas, we find that 7 percent of those who received a RIF notice hold a special education endorsement, 6 percent are endorsed in mathematics, 5 percent hold a science endorsement, and 3 percent are credentialed to teach English language learners.[2] While these proportions are small, this does prompt questions about a potentially counterproductive influence of layoff notices on existing shortage areas. Due to data limitations, we were not able to determine whether or not districts that issued RIF notices to individuals with endorsements in shortage areas actually were experiencing a shortage of teachers in the specific areas. We were also not able to determine if those with shortage area endorsements had any actual teaching experience in those areas.

Characteristics of Districts that Issued RIF Notices

Districts were nearly evenly split in terms of the number that issued one or more RIF notices (n = 137) compared to districts that did not engage in formal layoff procedures (n = 158). Our analysis found some differences between these districts with respect to specific demographic and fiscal characteristics. We also examined differences between districts that issued RIF notices by the number of teachers who received layoff notices. We describe these differences below.

Districts that issued RIF layoff notices (RIF districts) and those that did not (non-RIF districts) varied in terms of regional location, enrollment size, and type. Of the 137 RIF districts, more than half (52%) were located in Western Washington outside the Puget Sound region, while 60 percent of the non-RIF districts were located in Eastern Washington. A substantially larger proportion of RIF districts were located in the Puget Sound ESD 121 and the Northwest ESD 189 than non-RIF districts, while a greater proportion of non-RIF districts were located in ESD 101 and ESD 123, both of which are located in Eastern Washington (see Table 3).

When examining districts by enrollment size, we find that six of the ten largest districts in the state issued RIF notices, including the two largest districts, Seattle and Spokane. Two-thirds of the state's smallest districts (enrollment under 1,000 students) did not issue RIF notices. With respect to district type, one quarter of RIF districts (26%) were suburban compared to just one-tenth (11%) of non-RIF districts. The suburban RIF districts were primarily large suburban districts (17%). The largest difference in district type was found with rural remote districts. More than one third of the non-RIF districts (34%) were rural remote districts, compared to about half that percentage (18%) for RIF districts.

When comparing the characteristics of the student population in RIF and non-RIF districts, we find similar profiles. Nearly the same percentage of RIF districts (59%) had a student poverty rate above the state average, compared to non-RIF districts (58%). Only

[2] These proportions represent duplicated counts, as it is common for teachers to hold more than one type of teaching credential or subject matter endorsement.

slight differences exist between RIF and non-RIF districts with respect to the proportion of students of color served by the districts. However, a sizable difference exists in the proportion of students served in the state's transitional bilingual education program. More than twice the proportion of non-RIF districts (46%) served no students in a transitional bilingual program compared to RIF districts (21%). Detailed comparisons of the demographic characteristics of RIF and non-RIF districts are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of RIF and Non-RIF Districts in 2008-09

Characteristics	ALL RIF Districts (n= 137)		Non-RIF Districts (0% RIF) (n=158)		Percentage Difference
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
District Regional Location					
Eastern WA	41	30%	95	60%	-30%
Central Puget Sound (ESD 121)	24	18%	11	7%	11%
Western WA (outside ESD 121)	72	53%	52	33%	20%
Districts by ESD					
ESD 101: Spokane	18	13%	41	26%	-13%
ESD 105: Yakima	11	8%	14	9%	-1%
ESD 112: Vancouver	13	9%	17	11%	-1%
ESD 113: Olympia	25	18%	19	12%	6%
Olympic ESD 114: Bremerton	8	6%	7	4%	1%
Puget Sound ESD 121: Renton	24	18%	11	7%	11%
ESD 123: Pasco	4	3%	19	12%	-9%
North Central ESD 171: Wenatchee	8	6%	21	13%	-7%
Northwest ESD 189: Anacortes	26	19%	9	6%	13%
District Type*					
City (Large, Midsize, Small)	6	4%	14	9%	-4%
Suburb (Large)	23	17%	9	6%	11%
Suburb (Midsize, Small)	13	9%	8	5%	4%
Town (Fringe, Distant, Remote)	26	19%	28	18%	1%
Rural (Fringe, Distant)	45	33%	45	28%	4%
Rural (Remote)	24	18%	54	34%	-17%
District Enrollment					
20,000+	6	4%	4	3%	2%
10,000-19,999	9	7%	12	8%	-1%
5,000-9,999	19	14%	11	7%	7%
1,000-4,999	53	39%	35	22%	17%
999 and under	50	36%	96	61%	-24%
Poverty Compared to State Average					
FRPL students <40.4%	56	41%	66	42%	-1%
FRPL students >=40.4%	81	59%	92	58%	1%
ELL/Transitional Bilingual					
None (0% students)	29	21%	73	46%	-25%
>0% to 5% students	69	50%	38	24%	26%
6-10% students	20	15%	14	9%	6%
11%+ students	19	14%	33	21%	-7%

**District Type based on National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale codes.*

District fiscal conditions can be an important influence on whether or not layoff notices become necessary. When examining RIF and non-RIF districts, we find that 39 percent of RIF districts experienced a decline in student enrollment in excess of 20 students, compared to about half that proportion for non-RIF districts (20%). This is as expected, since student enrollment is a key factor in determining both funding levels and staffing levels.

We also find differences in expenditure levels between RIF and non-RIF districts. More than twice the proportion of non-RIF districts (37%) had total per pupil expenditures greater than $12,000 as compared to RIF districts (16%). Some of this higher expenditure level[3] is likely due to the fact that the smallest districts in the state are more likely to be non-RIF districts, and the state's smallest districts are funded through a separate formula, at levels well above the state average. When examining expenditure trends using a four-year average, we find a similar distinction. Nearly twice the proportion of non-RIF districts (45%) averaged more than $12,000 per pupil compared to RIF districts (26%).

Another important metric related to the likelihood that a district might engage in a layoff process is the district's ending fund balance. At times, districts will weather fiscal exigencies by tapping into reserve funds. Thus, districts may be in a better position to forego layoff notices if fund balances are available and can be utilized. More than twice the proportion of non-RIF districts (52%) had ending fund balances in excess of $1,000 per pupil compared to RIF districts (23%). Table 4 provides details about fiscal conditions of RIF and non-RIF districts.

[3] The average per pupil expenditure for all Washington districts was $9267 in 2007.

Table 4: Fiscal Conditions of RIF and Non-RIF Districts in 2008-09

District Characteristics	ALL RIF Districts (n= 137)		Non-RIF Districts (n=158)		Percentage Difference
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Change in Enrollment					
31+ student increase	29	21%	38	24%	-3%
1 to 30 student increase	16	12%	33	21%	-9%
No enrollment change	1	1%	7	4%	-4%
1 to 10 student decline	21	15%	34	22%	-6%
11 to 20 student decline	16	12%	14	9%	3%
21+ student decline	54	39%	32	20%	19%
Total Expenditure Per Pupil					
6,000 - 9,000	44	32%	40	25%	7%
9,001 - 12,000	71	52%	59	37%	14%
Above 12,000	22	16%	59	37%	-21%
Four-Year Average Exp. Per FTE					
7,500 - 9,999	51	37%	43	27%	10%
10,000 - 11,999	51	37%	44	28%	9%
12,000+	35	26%	71	45%	-19%
Ending Total Fund Balance Per Pupil					
0-499 (includes negatives)	45	33%	31	20%	13%
500-999	60	44%	45	28%	15%
1000+	32	23%	82	52%	-29%

The number of RIF teachers in each district varied considerably, ranging from 35 RIF districts (26%) that issued notices to just one or two teachers, to 29 districts (22%) that had more than 16 RIF teachers. Four districts (Bethel, Seattle, Issaquah, and Spokane) issued notices to more than 100 teachers in their district. Given these differences in the number of RIF teachers per district, we examined how the number of RIF teachers in a district varied by district location, enrollment, and student demographics.

We first examine the characteristics of districts that issued the largest number of layoff notices (defined as 16 or more RIF teachers). We find that find that the majority of these districts (55%) were located in Western Washington outside ESD 121, with only 7 percent located in Eastern Washington. While five of the six largest RIF districts (enrollments at 20,000 above) had more than 16 RIF teachers, a sizable portion of districts in each of the other enrollment categories (ranging from 1,000 to 19,999) had more than 16 RIF teachers. As would be expected, the only exception was for districts with less than 1,000 students. Only 1 of 49 RIF districts with less than 1,000 students had 16 or more RIF teachers (see Table 5).

Districts with higher poverty rates and higher proportions of students of color were proportionately less impacted by large numbers of RIF teachers. Only 10 percent of districts in the highest poverty category (greater than 60%) had 16 or more RIF teachers, compared to approximately one third (34%) of districts in the lowest poverty category. Following a similar pattern, 24 percent of districts with the highest proportion of students

of color had 16 or more RIF teachers, compared to 34 percent for districts with less than 20 percent students of color. This suggests that high-poverty and racially and ethnically diverse districts did not have a disproportionate number of RIF teachers. Table 5 provides details about the characteristics of districts with the largest numbers of RIF teachers. Additional details can be found in Appendix A.

Table 5: Characteristics of RIF Districts by Number of RIF Teachers

	Total Districts		16+ RIF Tchrs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts				
Number of RIF Districts	133*		29	22%
Districts located in				
Eastern WA	39	29%	2	7%
Central Puget Sound (ESD 121)	24	18%	11	38%
Western WA (outside ESD 121)	70	53%	16	55%
District Enrollment				
20,000+	6	5%	5	17%
10,000-19,999	9	7%	8	28%
5,000-9,999	19	14%	7	24%
1,000-4,999	50	38%	8	28%
999 and under	49	37%	1	3%
District Poverty				
FRPL students <29.9%	23	17%	10	34%
FRPL students 30 to 39.9%	30	23%	7	24%
FRPL students 40 to 49.9%	30	23%	6	21%
FRPL students 50 to 59.9%	28	21%	3	10%
FRPL students 60 to 100%	22	17%	3	10%
District Percent Students of Color				
<20%	70	53%	10	34%
≥20 and <40%	43	32%	12	41%
≥40%	20	15%	7	24%

*Of the 137 RIF districts, four districts only had RIF staff that were non-teachers.
**The range in this category is from 16 to 202 RIF teachers.

Characteristics of Schools with RIF Staff

In the spring of 2009, a total of 686 schools had one or more staff who received a RIF notice. This represents more than half (55%) of the 1,259 schools in RIF districts. The RIF schools also comprise one third of all schools in the state (n = 2,084).[4] Elementary schools represented half of all RIF schools, while middle and high schools represented 17 and 21 percent, respectively. Twelve percent of RIF schools were buildings with

[4] For purposes of our analysis, we define a school as a building in which teachers (duty roots 31, 32, and 33) are assigned (not including a district office) in the state's S-275 personnel databases.

combined grades (e.g., K-8 or K-12).[5] The majority of elementary RIF schools (53%) enrolled 400-600 students, while the bulk of high schools with RIF staff (59%) enrolled more than 800 students. The majority of schools with RIF staff (61%) had either one or two individuals with a layoff notice. Table 6 provides details about the distribution of RIF schools by type and number of RIF staff per school.

Table 6: Characteristics of Schools with RIF Staff in 2008-09 (n = 686)		
	Number	Percent
School Type		
Elementary (50% of schools)		
Less than 200 students	13	4%
200-399 students	110	32%
400-599 students	184	53%
600-799 students	30	9%
More than 800 students	8	2%
Total	345	100%
Middle (17% of schools)		
Less than 200 students	4	4%
200-399 students	12	11%
400-599 students	40	35%
600-799 students	35	31%
More than 800 students	23	20%
Total	114	100%
High School (21% of schools)		
Less than 200 students	16	11%
200-399 students	26	18%
400-599 students	5	3%
600-799 students	12	8%
More than 800 students	87	59%
Missing/NA	1	1%
Total	147	100%
Combined (12% of schools)	80	100%
# RIF Staff in a Single Building		
1 RIF	263	38%
2 RIF staff	157	23%
3 or 4 RIF staff	162	24%
5 or more RIF staff	104	15%
Missing data	3	0%

[5] Schools were categorized according to grade level served. Elementary schools included schools with any of grades K-6 and none of grades 7-12. Middle schools included school serving primarily any of grades 6-9. High schools included any of grades 9-12 and none of grades K-8. Combined schools included those schools with one or more of the grades K-6 and one or more of grades 9-12.

In addition to considering the types of schools in which RIF notifications occur, we also examine the relative distribution by student characteristics. Of particular interest is whether or not RIF notifications disproportionately impacted schools with certain kinds of students. Table 7 provides details regarding the number of RIF notifications issued within a single school and the student characteristics in those schools.

When examining schools by poverty ranges, we find little variation. Among schools with five or more RIF staff, 45 percent had proportionally fewer students in poverty (less than 30% FRPL).[6] There were no discernable patterns with regard to the number of RIF staff and the proportion of students of color at the school. The simple correlation between the number of RIF staff in a building and the proportion of students of color was zero, indicating no relationship between these variables.[7]

School size, however, does reveal some predictable differences with regard to the number of RIF staff per building. As would be expected, larger schools (800 or more students) had the largest number of RIF staff within the school. Among schools that issued RIF notices to five or more staff, 46 percent had more than 800 students in the school. The simple correlation between the number of RIF staff in the school and number of students is 0.358, a statistic that reveals a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that the larger the school, the larger the number of RIF staff.

Across multiple analyses of the schools by student poverty and race/ethnicity, we did not find the schools to be disadvantaged in the number of RIF notifications by these characteristics. School size, however, does play a role in the number of staff who may have received a RIF notification.

[6] We also conducted simple correlations with regard to school poverty rates and the number of staff who received RIF notices at the school. The correlation was close to zero (-0.144), indicating a weak negative relationship. In other words, the higher the poverty, the lower the number of staff who received a RIF notice, though the relationship is close to zero.

[7] We did not compare whether differences exist between RIF and non-RIF schools within the same district.

Table 7: Schools with RIF Staff by Student Characteristics

	Number of Schools with RIF Staff (n=686)							
	1 RIF Staff		2 RIF Staff		3 or 4 RIF Staff		5+ RIF Staff	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Schools								
Number of all Schools	260	38%	160	23%	162	24%	104	15%
Student Poverty								
FRPL students <30%	73	28%	49	31%	45	28%	47	45%
FRPL students 30 to 49%	91	35%	56	35%	62	38%	36	35%
FRPL students ≥50%	95	37%	55	34%	55	34%	20	19%
Not available or not reported	1	0%	0	0	0	0	1	1%
Race/Ethnicity (Students of Color)								
<20%	90	35%	50	31%	53	33%	31	30%
≥20 and <40%	92	35%	66	41%	67	41%	46	44%
≥40%	77	30%	43	27%	42	26%	26	25%
Not available or not reported	1	0%	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
Schools by Size								
Less than 200 students	36	14%	12	8%	11	7%	3	3%
200-399 students	83	32%	43	27%	36	22%	7	7%
400-599 students	89	34%	72	45%	60	37%	26	25%
600-799 students	33	13%	13	8%	20	12%	19	18%
More than 800 students	18	7%	19	12%	35	22%	48	46%
Missing/NA	1	0%	1	1%	0	0	1	1%

Impact of RIF on Retention, Mobility, and Attrition

We now turn our attention to the impact that RIF notices had on the employment status of individuals in the subsequent school year (2009-10). To conduct this analysis, we searched the state's personnel database which contained employment information as of October 1, 2009.[8] We located all individuals who were reported as working in the K-12 education system in any capacity, full or part time. The vast majority of teachers (87%) who received a RIF notice in the spring of 2009 were rehired in the K-12 education system in Washington state in the subsequent year (2009-10). Of those who were rehired, the majority (60%) were retained in the same school and the same assignment as the prior year. An additional one percent worked in the same school, but with a different assignment. For example, a counselor or a librarian may have been rehired as a classroom teacher. A fifth of those who received a RIF notice (21%) were employed in the same district but relocated to a different school. Finally, an additional five percent found employment in a different district. The employment patterns are similar for other certificated staff, but a larger proportion moved to other schools or districts or exited the workforce. Table 8 displays these retention and mobility rates for all RIF staff. Additional details about the characteristics of RIF teachers by employment status is located in Appendix B.

[8] As mentioned previously, it is possible that some individuals were hired after the October 1 reporting date, and would therefore not be included in this analysis. We also note that the personnel database used was preliminary. A finalized dataset will not be available until Fall 2010.

Table 8: Employment Status of RIF Individuals from 2008-09 to 2009-10				
	RIF Teachers (n=1,857)		RIF (non-teaching) Staff (n=162)	
Retention & Mobility Status	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Retained in Same District				
Retained same school and assignment	1113	60%	95	59%
Retained same school different assignment	14	1%	5	3%
Retained same district different school	399	21%	18	11%
Moved within WA State				
Hired by a different WA district	85	5%	17	10%
Exited the WA Workforce				
Exited the Washington workforce June 2009	246	13%	27	17%

Next we compare the retention rates of RIF teachers to all teachers statewide. It is important to note that while statewide teacher retention and mobility rates have been relatively stable over time, the retention rate has increased and the percentage of exiters has decreased in the last three years. As shown in Table 9, the rate at which teachers are retained from one year to the next has increased from 82.5 percent (2006 to 2007) to 86.8 percent (2008 to 2009). We also note that the rate of exiters dropped over this same time period, from 7.8 percent (2006 to 2007) to 5.5 percent (2008 to 2009).

Table 9: Statewide Year by Year Retention and Mobility Trend Data				
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	3-Year Annual Ave
Stayers in School	82.5%	84.7%	86.8%	84.7%
Movers in District	6.4%	6.3%	6.8%	6.5%
Movers out District	2.7%	2.2%	0.9%	1.9%
Exiters from WA system	7.8%	6.7%	5.5%	6.7%

The retention and mobility rates of RIF staff during the 2008-09 year are significantly different from the yearly rates for all teachers statewide. Figure A compares the retention and mobility rates for RIF teachers with all teachers statewide. As seen in Figure A, the percent of individuals staying in their same school was 87 percent for all teachers statewide, compared to a 60 percent rate for RIF teachers in 2009 to 2010. The proportion of RIF teachers moving within their districts (22%) was three times the rate for all teachers (7%).

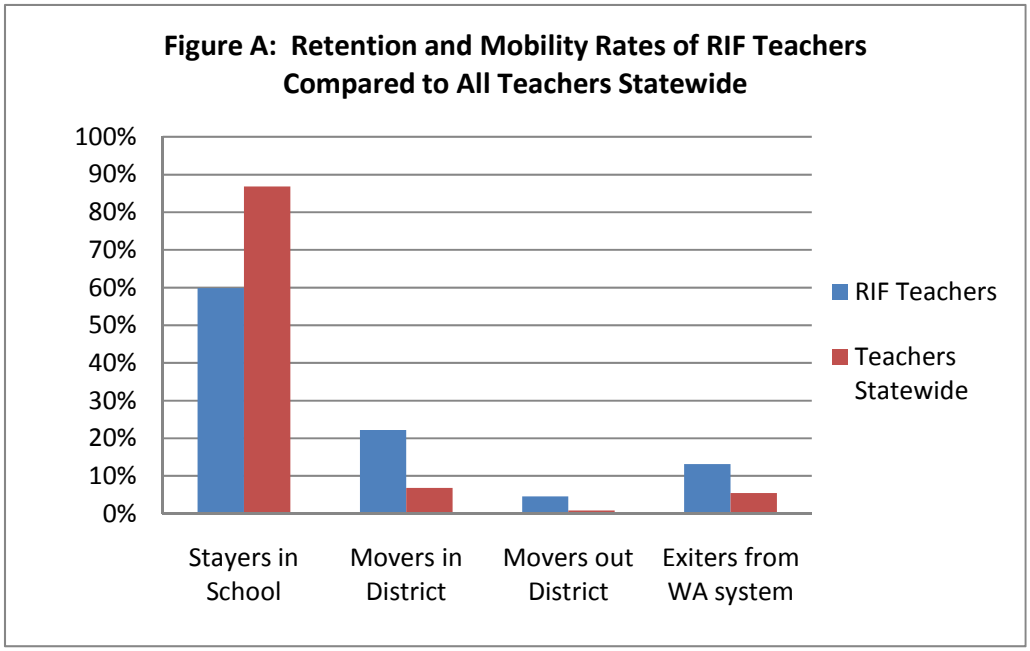

Figure A also shows that the rate of exiters for RIF teachers (13%) was twice the rate of six percent for all teachers in the state. We cannot track whether the exiters changed careers, left the labor force, or obtained employment in education in another state.[9] The rate of exiters for those working as classroom teachers (13%) in 2008-09 was lower than the rate for those who were working in roles other than classroom teaching (17%). However, RIF classroom teachers with 5 or more years of experience did have proportionately higher rates of exiting (22% were exiters compared to 13% of the population of RIF teachers). Over 15 percent of RIF exiters were teachers over the age of 50. The majority of exiters who were not classroom teachers (63%) were school counselors.[10]

Of those classroom teachers who worked full-time prior to receiving a RIF notice, 80 percent were rehired on a full-time basis (defined as .95 FTE or greater). A substantially smaller proportion (61%) of those who were working full-time in 2008-09 in roles other than classroom teachers were rehired into full-time positions. Of those RIF staff working as classroom teachers in the 2008-09 school year, 86 percent were working as classroom teachers in the subsequent school year.

Rehiring Rates by District and School Characteristics

Rehiring rates differ across districts and schools. In this analysis, it is important to keep in mind that 38 percent of schools had only one RIF staff member. Thus, in these cases,

[9] It is also possible that an individual was rehired in the state, but was not included in the state's preliminary personnel dataset.

[10] It should be noted that the total number of RIF staff who were not classroom teachers is very small (n = 27), meaning that the total number of RIF counselors who were exiters was only 17.

a rehire rate of 100 percent is represented by the status of one individual. We also calculated rehire rates at the individual level. That is, we examined the individuals who were located in each of the RIF districts and determined the percentage who obtained employment in Washington state in 2009-10, irrespective of the district in which they were hired.

Rehiring rates ranged from zero to 100 percent. Of the 137 districts that issued RIF notices, nearly one quarter (23%) had 100% rehire rates for their RIF staff (either within the district or elsewhere), and 12 percent of districts had no RIF staff employed in Washington state in 2009-10. Districts with a rehire rate of zero were relatively small. Of those districts with a rehire rate of zero, all were districts that had enrollment sizes below 5,000 students. Forty-four percent of these districts enrollment below 1,000 students. When examining school characteristics, no differences were found in the characteristics of the student population (poverty rates and percentage of students of color) and the rehire rates of RIF staff. We found that the majority of RIF schools (60%) with a zero rehire rate served 500 students or less. Appendix C provides data regarding rehire rates by district and school size.

Summary and Discussion

For the first time in decades, more than two thousand educators received layoff notices in Washington state, and nearly half of the state's 295 school districts engaged in a formal layoff procedure. Consequently, it is important to analyze the characteristics of individual staff members and their distribution across the schools and districts that were impacted by layoff notices. Furthermore, given that layoff notices have the potential to cause disruptions to typical patterns of attrition, retention, and mobility, it is equally important to understand the extent to those receiving a RIF notice were rehired, and the contexts in which the rehiring occurred.

Our analysis showed that the vast majority of those receiving RIF notices in 2008-09 were full-time classroom teachers. Of those RIF staff who had duties other than classroom teaching, half were school counselors. We found some expected differences in the characteristics of RIF teachers compared to the state's teacher workforce overall; namely, RIF teachers were younger, less experienced, and less likely to have an advanced degree. This finding supports the claim that, on average, those involved in layoff procedures have lower salaries since years of experience and education level are the two most important determinants of teacher salaries. However, we also found that more than 300 RIF teachers had five or more years of teaching experience, and half of those had more than 10 years of experience. This is likely attributable to the fact that layoff procedures prioritize years of experience within the state of Washington as a more important factor than total years of experience. We also found that a portion of individuals who received a layoff notice held endorsements to teach in shortage areas, raising the question as to whether or not layoffs serve to exacerbate shortage areas.

We found some demographic differences between RIF and non-RIF districts, particularly with respect to geographic location, enrollment size, and district type. More than half of the RIF districts were located in Western Washington outside the Puget Sound area, while two-thirds of the state's smallest districts did not issue RIF notices. Contrary to what might be expected, not all urban districts issued layoff notices. In fact, a higher proportion of RIF districts were suburban, especially large suburban districts. Nearly a third (30%) of the state's schools had at least one staff member with a RIF notice. Our analysis did not reveal any consistent pattern with respect to the characteristics of students enrolled in RIF districts or schools. However, some fiscal conditions were associated with RIF districts in that these districts had less revenue per pupil and lower ending fund balances. Additionally, a greater proportion of RIF districts were experiencing a decline in student enrollment.

Among the educators who received a RIF notice in 2008-09, the vast majority found some type of employment in the state of Washington's K-12 education system in the subsequent year. Of those who were rehired, 60 percent went back to work in their same school, 22 percent remained in their same district but in a different school or assignment, and five percent found employment in another Washington district. This total rehiring rate of 87 percent is quite high, and raises a question regarding the extent to which funds from the U.S. Department of Education Recovery Act contributed to districts' ability to fund positions which were at risk due to limited budgets. The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund is particularly important in Washington state because 70 percent of education dollars come from state sources and education accounts for more than half of all state spending. During the time period under study, Washington was awarded $731.7 million in State Fiscal Stabilization Funds, $135.1 million in Title I, Part A funds, and $239.4 million in IDEA Grants. This infusion of federal dollars was aimed, at least in part, on reducing the number of teachers (and other public sector workers such as police and first responders) who would lose their jobs. However, due to data limitations, we are not able to determine the precise extent to which staff positions funded by federal stimulus dollars were filled by individuals who had received a RIF notification.

Because of the high rehire rates in 2009-10, schools and districts were buffered from the more adverse impacts and disruption associated with massive layoffs. Since then, overall economic conditions have not improved, and states are again wrestling with severe budget shortfalls. Given the fiscal uncertainties surrounding state and local economies, as well as the unknown role that the federal government may play in the future, it is likely that RIF notifications will be issued yet again, along with other budgetary responses such as increased class size and reductions in support staff. Thus, it will be important to continue to track the impact of these notifications on employment, retention, and mobility patterns over time and the potential impact on the quality of education for students.

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Appendix A: Characteristics of Districts by Number of RIF Teachers

	Total Districts		1-2 RIF Tchrs		3-4 RIF Tchrs		5-15 RIF Tchrs		16+ RIF Tchrs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts										
Number of Districts	133*		35	26%	33	25%	36	27%	29	22%
Districts located in										
Eastern WA	39	29%	15	43%	17	52%	5	14%	2	7%
Central Puget Sound (ESD 121)	24	18%	4	11%	1	3%	8	22%	11	38%
Western WA (outside ESD 121)	70	53%	16	46%	15	45%	23	64%	16	55%
District Enrollment										
20,000+	6	5%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	5	17%
10,000-19,999	9	7%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	8	28%
5,000-9,999	19	14%	1	3%	2	6%	9	25%	7	24%
1,000-4,999	50	38%	11	31%	12	36%	19	53%	8	28%
999 and under	49	37%	23	66%	19	58%	6	17%	1	3%
District Poverty										
FRPL students <29.9%	23	17%	3	9%	4	12%	6	17%	10	34%
FRPL students 30 to 39.9%	30	23%	8	23%	4	12%	11	31%	7	24%
FRPL students 40 to 49.9%	30	23%	7	20%	12	36%	5	14%	6	21%
FRPL students 50 to 59.9%	28	21%	9	26%	7	21%	9	25%	3	10%
FRPL students 60 to 100%	22	17%	8	23%	6	18%	5	14%	3	10%
District Race/Ethnicity (Students of Color)										
<20%	70	53%	22	63%	22	67%	16	44%	10	34%
≥20 and <40%	43	32%	8	23%	7	21%	16	44%	12	41%
≥40%	20	15%	5	14%	4	12%	4	11%	7	24%

*Of the 137 RIF districts, four districts only had RIF staff that were non-teachers.

**The range in this category is from 16 to 202 RIF teachers.

Appendix B: Characteristics of RIF Teachers by Employment Status (n = 1837)

	Total	Retained same school and assignment	Retained same school with different assignment	Retained same district different school	RIF hired by different WA district	RIF exited WA workforce
Totals						
All RIF Teachers	100%	60%	1%	21%	5%	13%
Gender						
Female	74%	59%	1%	23%	4%	13%
Male	26%	62%	1%	16%	7%	14%
Age (in 2008)						
<25	11%	59%	0%	24%	6%	11%
25-30	39%	58%	1%	23%	6%	12%
31-40	25%	63%	0%	22%	2%	13%
41-50	16%	59%	2%	21%	4%	13%
51-60	7%	61%	2%	13%	3%	21%
61+	2%	58%	0%	8%	8%	26%
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	63%	2%	19%	4%	12%
African American	2%	52%	0%	21%	3%	24%
Hispanic	2%	43%	0%	35%	3%	19%
Native American	1%	55%	0%	15%	0%	30%
White	92%	60%	1%	21%	5%	13%
Level of education						
Bachelors or equivalent	55%	60%	1%	20%	5%	15%
Masters or higher	45%	60%	1%	24%	5%	11%
Experience						
Beginning (0 years)	15%	55%	1%	28%	5%	11%
.1 to 1 year	22%	59%	0%	21%	6%	14%
1.1 to 2 years	22%	59%	1%	23%	3%	14%
2.1 to 3 years	12%	65%	1%	21%	3%	10%
3.1 to 4 years	7%	64%	0%	21%	3%	12%
4.1 to 4.9 years	4%	65%	0%	23%	1%	11%
5 to 9.9 years	10%	61%	1%	15%	7%	16%
10 to 14.9 years	4%	58%	1%	16%	9%	16%
15 to 24 years	3%	60%	2%	17%	0%	21%
25 yrs or more	1%	72%	0%	4%	0%	24%

Appendix C: Rehire Rates by District and School Enrollment

	100% Rehire Rate		75% to 99.9% Rehire Rate		25% to 74.9% Rehire Rate		0% Rehire Rate	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
District Enrollment								
Districts (n=137)	32	23%	48	35%	41	30%	16	12%
10,000+	0	0	14	29%	1	2%	0	0
5,000-9,999	2	6%	11	23%	6	15%	0	0
1,000-4,999	10	31%	16	33%	18	44%	9	56%
999 and under	20	63%	7	15%	16	39%	7	44%
School Enrollment								
Schools (n=689)	243	35%	108	16%	144	21%	194	28%
1-500	155	64%	42	39%	54	38%	117	60%
501-1000	71	29%	47	44%	60	42%	63	32%
1000+	17	7%	19	18%	30	21%	14	7%