

ESSENTIALS

\$1 million

A recent follow-up to a study of new teacher mentoring in Chicago Public Schools found a sizable return on investment. The independent evaluation of New Teacher Project's mentoring effort documented an 11% increase in teacher retention, resulting in a financial return on investment of 22%, which the researchers project would translate into almost \$1 million over a five-year investment in mentoring.

They also estimated, based on students' improved test scores, a long-term benefit of an average \$38,000 increase in students' future lifetime earnings. The report points out that these findings have important equity implications, because African American and Latino students are more likely to be taught by new teachers.

bit.ly/2Jz5fEH

6 out of 45

Elementary school principals are responsible for the instructional leadership of their schools, and more and more of those schools include prekindergarten classrooms. Yet many principals have no background in early childhood education, and, in 2017, only six out of 45 states surveyed by New America required principals-in-training to take coursework in the subject.

The state of Illinois has worked to address this gap as part of its efforts to revamp principal preparation, starting with legislation in 2010 that required early childhood coursework and related questions on the licensing exam. This report from New America details successes and challenges in this work, along with lessons for other states.

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15 hours

In a study published in the October issue of the *American Educational Research Journal*, researchers dove into the black box of teacher professional learning to examine which elements make a difference. They analyzed all materials and tasks from 21 mathematics professional development programs and categorized them according to content focus and learning strategy (e.g. presentations, implementation planning).

The only significant content predictor of improvements in teachers' math knowledge was curricular content knowledge — that is, professional development focused on understanding the specific math curricula teachers' schools use, learning standards, or how math concepts are sequenced. Examining student work was the only significant professional development strategy. Planning classroom implementation was not associated with increased knowledge, despite being the most common strategy.

The researchers write, "These findings indicate that 15 hours of examining student work would be associated with a 0.39 SD increase in teachers' [math knowledge] gain scores, whereas 15 hours of PD in curricular content knowledge would be associated with a standard deviation increase of approximately 0.15."

bit.ly/2MlzUB4

85%

Low salaries have long been a concern for teachers and prospective teachers, but with the growing cost of housing in many parts of the country, those concerns are becoming particularly acute. This study examined the impact of these trends on teachers in San Francisco,

one of the hottest housing markets in the U.S.

Researchers found that teachers there "are considerably more likely to experience economic anxiety" than average Americans, with "a full 85% experiencing economic anxiety frequently or sometimes." For example, "Fewer than 5% of employed Americans find it very difficult to cover their housing costs, whereas 13% to 27% of SFUSD teachers (owners and renters, respectively)" do.

Furthermore, the findings suggest this could have a negative impact on students, as teachers with high economic anxiety had a lower regard for the teaching profession, missed more days of school, and were more likely to plan to resign in the coming year.

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Null effect

Cooperating teachers, who supervise teacher candidates' field placements, play a big role in preservice teacher education. But leaders of preservice programs sometimes struggle to recruit cooperating teachers, especially highly effective ones, in part because those teachers worry their own teaching evaluations will suffer.

This study examined whether there is empirical evidence for that fear and came to a reassuring conclusion. Looking at the evaluations of 4,500 cooperating teachers during the years they did and did not supervise candidates, researchers found no decrease in evaluation scores. In fact, during the years these teachers served as supervisors, "teachers had significantly better observation ratings and somewhat better achievement gains, though not always at significant levels."

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