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Recruitment and Retention of Educational Professionals: Adams-Friendship Area School District

Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
School of Education
University of Wisconsin-Madison



UniverCity Year
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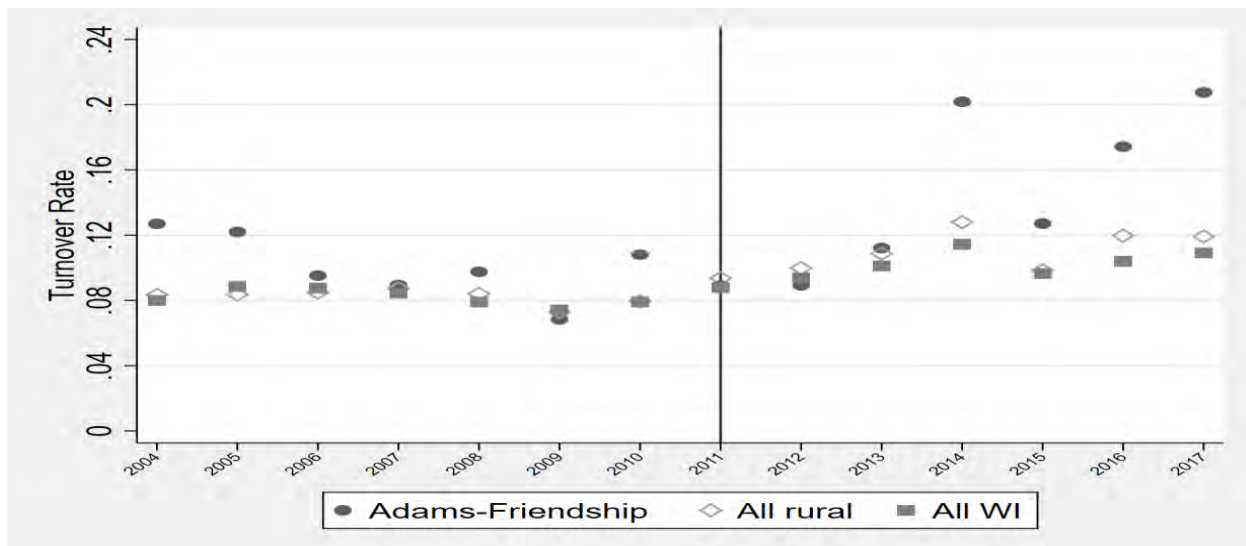
Recruitment and Retention of Educational Professionals: Adams-Friendship Area School District

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1. Problem statement

- The Adams-Friendship Area School District has struggled with teacher turnover. This human capital loss leads to negative effects on school climate and student learning. As shown in Figure 1, teacher turnover rate of the district is higher than those of other rural districts and all Wisconsin's districts, particularly after 2014. To make matters worse, roughly 50% of professional staff has left the district over last 2 years. Of 126 staff in the district, 24 and 37 of them are hired in the summer of 2018 and 2019, respectively.

Figure 1. Teachers Turnover Rates Over Time¹



2. Teacher Survey (7/2 – 7/15)

- I conducted a survey of 20 staff who have participated in the mentoring program.
- The respondents report that leadership (85%), administrative support (95%), personal work achievement (95%), working conditions (85%), and relationship with co-workers (95%) are quite influential factors on their job satisfaction, while job stressors (40%), accountability (60%), students (60%), and locale (60%) are relatively less influential factors. Additionally, 65% of respondents agree that the mentoring program is successful.

¹ The data source is administrative staffing records managed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. In this figure, teachers are full time instructional staff whose age are between 21 and 55. Turnover indicates whether a teacher leaves the current district after year t. The vertical bar in 2011 points to the beginning of Act 10.

3. In-depth interview (7/16 – 7/30)

- Following the survey, I had interviews with 7 staff among the survey respondents. Major findings are as follows.
- *Impression of rural schools* – Steppingstone for their next career, challenges to reside in, reluctance to make a critic because of small local community
- *Leadership* – Importance to reduce leadership turnover, need more administrative support
- *Salary incentive* – Positive view, but not sure whether novice teachers will be retained first 3 years. Housing is more important than salary (not enough apt. for rent in this area)
- *Mentoring program* – Several topics in the general session are not relevant to non-teaching staff. No specific guidelines or formal training for mentors. Novice teachers need more specific mentoring (e.g., real life experience; how to manage classroom and student discipline; mental health). Mentor-mentee matching matters based on subjects, areas, and buildings.
- *Retention of novice teachers* – Need to ask newly hired teachers frequently and specifically what they need. Novice teachers may feel uncomfortable to navigate curriculum or learning programs. Grow-own program may work.
- *Collegiality* – Need to place more value on teachers' opinions when planning on and deciding school operation. Need to have trust, communication, and emotional support/behaviors. Peer support matters, especially from a same team.

4. Policy suggestions

- Attention to Teacher Turnover (Ronfeldt et al., 2013)
 - Be alert to teacher turnover and its negative impact on school community and student learning.
- Marketing by Selling Rurality (Lowe, 2006; Maranto & Shuls 2012; Osterholm et al., 2006; Seelig, 2017)
 - Consider “rural” as not a challenge but an advantage
 - Marketing the positive aspects of the community - “small town environments, low housing costs, outdoor recreation, scenery” - especially through a social media presence and attractive website design may lead to boosting hiring numbers and retaining educators.
- Targeted Housing Incentives (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016; Verdin & Smith, 2013)
 - Affordable housing has a strong impact on teachers' decision to stay in the district
 - Mississippi's “Critical Teacher Shortage Act” may offer loans of up to \$6,000 to purchase a house in the same county where the school district is located. Arkansas's teachers with three years of teaching experience and administrator recommendations may apply to the “Teacher Housing Incentives” for rental assistance or up to \$10,000 in forgivable loan toward the purchase of a house.
 - This strategy may need to be collaborated with the state government
- Establishing the Pipeline: Grow Your Own (GYO) (Boyd et. al 2005; Pewaukee Insight; School District of New Berlin; Sutton et. al 2014; Valenzuela 2017; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)
 - Beginning teachers are far more likely to teach closer to where they grew up than elsewhere, and more than seven out of ten teachers from rural areas take their first job in a rural area
 - GYO teacher programs help address teacher shortages, retention issues and teacher diversity, particularly in hard-to-staff subject areas.
 - DPI already supports GYO programs, called “Educators Rising”
 - Multiple districts around the state have instituted GYO programs

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About UniverCity Year



UniverCity Year is a three-phase partnership between UW-Madison and one community in Wisconsin. The concept is simple. The community partner identifies projects that would benefit from UW-Madison expertise. Faculty from across the university incorporate these projects into their courses, and UniverCity Year staff provide administrative support to ensure the collaboration's success. The results are powerful. Partners receive big ideas and feasible recommendations that spark momentum towards a more sustainable, livable, and resilient future. Join us as we create **better places together.**