

Why is it a struggle to adequately staff schools?

The perfect storm in the teacher labor market

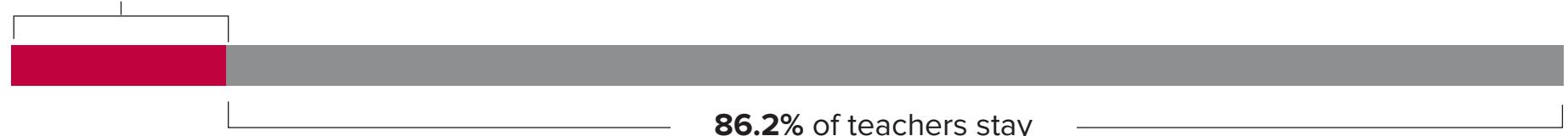
The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought. In the past decade, the interest in teaching as a career has dwindled, jeopardizing the quality of the education that children in America's public K–12 schools are receiving.

Vanishing teachers ◆

According to most recent data, 13.8% of teachers are either leaving their school or leaving teaching altogether after the school year, creating vacancies behind them.

13.8% of teachers aren't in their position a year after:

6.5% left the school but remained in the profession (turnover) and **7.3%** left teaching altogether (attrition)



Shrinking supply ◆

High turnover and attrition is not the only problem. The number of people on track to pursue a career in teaching significantly declined from 2008 to 2016.

✓ **15.4%**

drop in number of people awarded education degrees

✓ **37.8%**

drop in number of people enrolled in teacher preparation programs

✓ **27.4%**

drop in number of people completing teacher preparation programs

Hiring challenges◆

Considering the disappearance of teachers, it is no surprise that principals had a hard time filling teacher vacancies in the 2015–2016 school year.



36.2% of schools were able to fill a vacancy but found it very difficult (doubling from **19.7%** in the 2011–2012 school year)

9.4% of schools were trying to fill a vacancy and couldn't (tripling from **3.1%** in the 2011–2012 school year)

Credential disparities ◆

Vacancies are affecting the education students are getting because the teaching workforce is less stable and is becoming less experienced. The challenges are more acute for high-poverty schools. For example, they have a larger share of new teachers and of novice teachers.

	Overall	Low-poverty school	High-poverty school
Share of all teachers who are newly hired	11.2%	10.1%	12.1%
Share of all teachers who are newly hired and in their first year of teaching	4.7%	3.7%	5.3%

Source: Emma García and Elaine Weiss, *U.S. Schools Struggle to Hire and Retain Teachers: The second report in the "The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market" series*, Economic Policy Institute, April 2019
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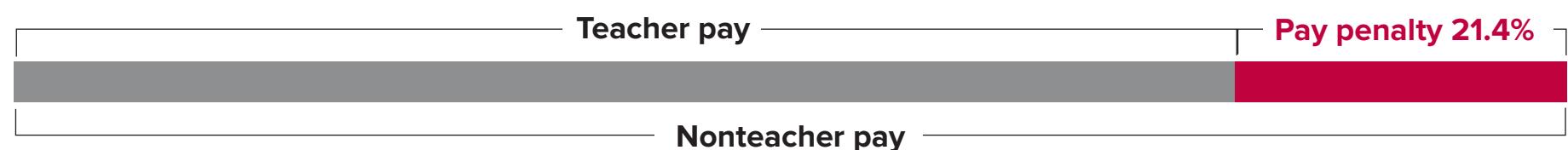
How do we know that low pay is a factor in the teacher shortage?

The perfect storm in the teacher labor market

The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought. One concrete reason why teachers are leaving the profession and why fewer people are interested in becoming teachers is low pay. Financial stress is even greater for teachers in high-poverty schools.

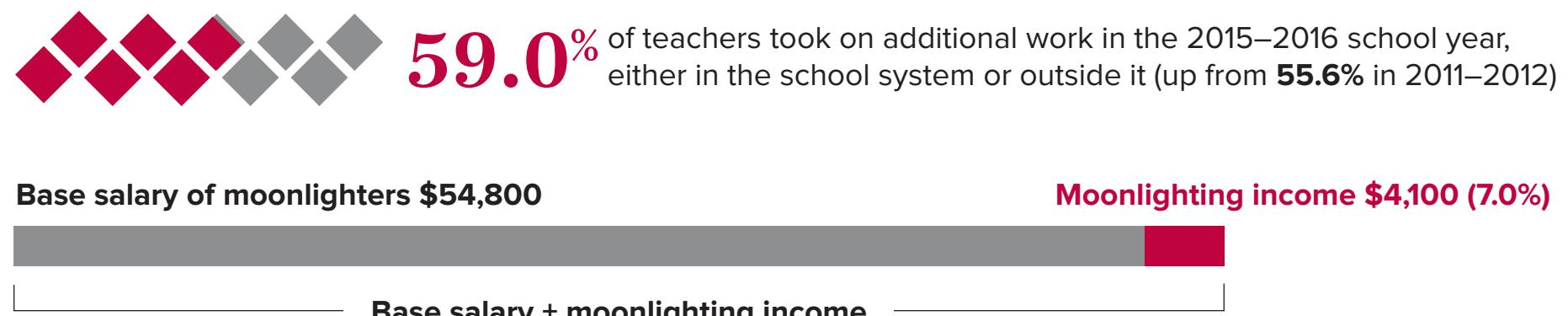
High pay penalty ◆

Teachers are paid a lot less than other comparable college graduates: teachers' weekly wages in 2018 were 21.4% lower (the pay penalty was 6.3% in 1996). People who enter teaching today are putting themselves at a financial disadvantage.



More moonlighting ◆

Another indicator that teacher pay is low is that a growing number of teachers are taking second jobs, on top of their full-time jobs at school. For these teachers, moonlighting during the school year makes up a substantial share of their total income.



Hardships in high-poverty schools ◆

Relative to teachers in low-poverty schools, teachers in high-poverty schools are paid less (\$53,300 vs. \$58,900), and earn less from moonlighting (\$4,000 vs. \$4,300), and the moonlighting that they do is less likely to involve paid activities for the school system that would help them grow professionally as teachers. (Data are for 2015–2016.)

Lower salaries among teachers who quit ◆

Teachers who ended up quitting had a lower average base salary than those who stayed, and they were more likely to have supplemented it with work outside the school system before they quit.

Salary (in 2011–2012)



Share who earned pay from moonlighting outside of the school system



Source: Emma García and Elaine Weiss, *Low Relative Pay and High Incidence of Moonlighting Play a Role in the Teacher Shortage, Particularly in High-Poverty Schools*, EPI, May 2019. The teacher pay penalty comes from Sylvia Allegretto and Lawrence Mishel, *The Teacher Weekly Wage Penalty Hit 21.4 Percent in 2018, a Record High*, EPI and CWED, April 2019.

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How do we know that tough work environments are a factor in the teacher shortage?

Teachers face real challenges to succeeding at their jobs, which helps explain why some teachers are leaving the profession and fewer people are interested in becoming teachers.

Teachers report barriers to teaching ◆

Large shares of teachers report that barriers to teaching caused by poverty and other societal forces are a “serious problem” in their school:

Students come to school unprepared to learn	27.3%	Parents struggle to be involved	21.5%	Students are apathetic	18.4%
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Teachers report insufficient support and a lack of say over their work day ◆

Even larger shares of teachers say they don’t get a great deal of support from administrators and fellow teachers and don’t have much influence on what and how they teach in class:



Teachers report physical threats ◆

More than one in five teachers report that they have been threatened and one in eight say they have been physically attacked by a student at their school. Teachers in high-poverty schools are more exposed to these threats.

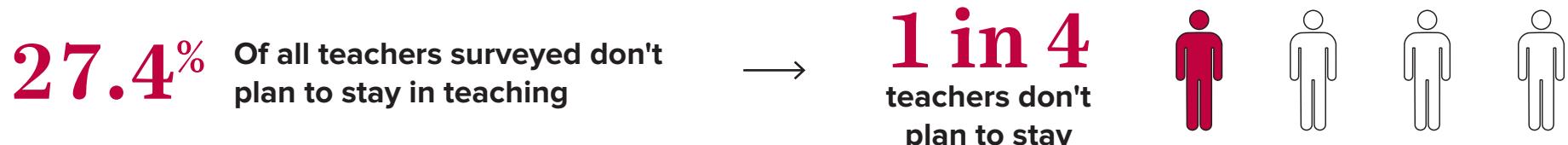
	Overall	Low-poverty school	High-poverty school
Share of teachers who have been threatened	21.8%	15.8%	25.8%
Share of teachers who have been physically attacked	12.4%	9.5%	14.8%

Working environments were worse among teachers who quit

Teachers who quit were more likely than teachers who stay to report teaching unprepared students (39.0 percent vs. 29.4 percent), to say stresses of teaching aren't worth it (12.5 percent vs. 3.6 percent), and to report little influence over what they teach in class (74.6 percent vs. 71.4 percent).

A quarter of current teachers plan to or may quit

According to most recent data, 27.4% of all teachers don't see themselves staying in teaching for the rest of their careers.



Source: Emma García and Elaine Weiss, *Challenging Working Environments (“School Climates”), Especially in High-Poverty Schools, Play a Role in the Teacher Shortage*, Economic Policy Institute, May 2019. Findings are based on 2015–2016 survey data, except for the shares of quitting versus staying teachers experiencing a given challenge, which are based on 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 survey data.

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There is room to improve the professional supports that play a role in the teacher shortage

The demands of teaching are constantly changing. Ensuring that teachers have broad access to strong professional supports can help teachers update their knowledge and teaching skills and advance in their careers, making teaching a more appealing profession.

Some highly valued professional development activities are not broadly available ♦

There is limited access to some of the types of professional development that research has found most valuable, with low shares of teachers:

26.6%

Accessing university courses

23.1%

Presenting at workshops

21.6%

Making observational visits to other schools

Time to access supports is limited ♦

Teachers largely don't get the time and resources they need to study, reflect, and prepare their practice.

49.1%

do not get time away from teaching to participate in professional development

72.7%

do not receive a stipend for professional development accessed outside of regular work hours

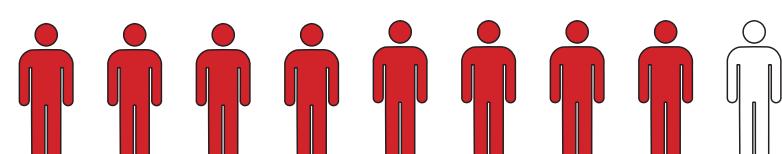
71.8%

are not reimbursed for conferences or workshop fees

90.6%

do not receive any reimbursement of college tuition

Teachers don't have a say in their professional development opportunities ♦



8 in 9

teachers have less than a great deal of influence determining the content of their professional development

Teachers' satisfaction with professional development is low ♦

1 in 4

find subject-specific professional development very useful

1 in 4

find professional development related to using computers for teaching very useful

1 in 5

find professional development related to student discipline and classroom management very useful

Supports play a role in the teacher shortage ♦

There is a relationship between the professional supports offered and teacher retention.

Found their subject-specific professional development activities very useful



Worked in highly cooperative environments



Source: Emma García and Elaine Weiss, *The Role of Early Career Supports, Continuous Professional Development, and Learning Communities in the Teacher Shortage*, Economic Policy Institute, July 2019. Findings are based on 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 survey data, all for K–12 public school teachers.

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There is room to improve the early career supports that play a role in the teacher shortage

New teachers must adapt the theoretical knowledge they acquired in their teacher education programs to the realities of the classroom. Ensuring that new teachers have broad access to strong early career supports can help build teacher effectiveness and confidence, make teaching a more appealing profession, and help retain teachers.

Early supports are broadly available but unevenly distributed ♦

While large shares of first-year teachers in U.S. public schools receive early-career supports, lower shares of new teachers in high-poverty schools access those supports.

	Overall	Low-poverty school	High-poverty school
Share of new teachers assigned a mentor	79.9%	83.7%	78.3%
Share of new teachers in an induction program	72.7%	75.8%	70.9%

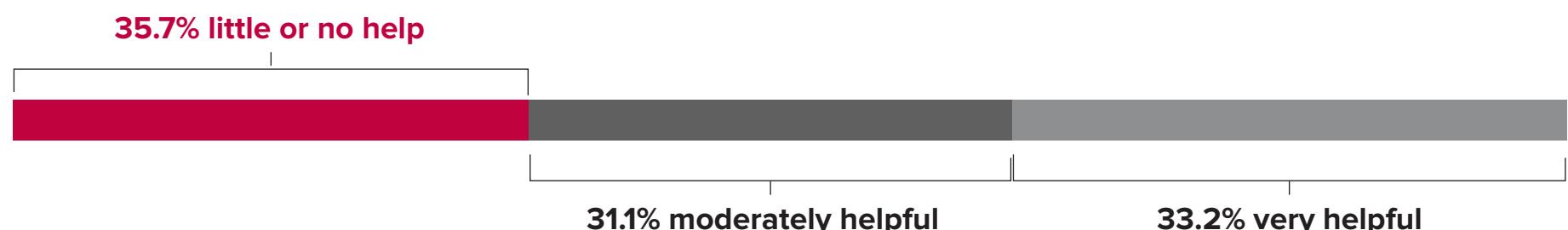
Time to access supports is limited ♦

Most new teachers don't get the time they need to prepare their practice—and that holds true for teachers in both high- and low-poverty schools.



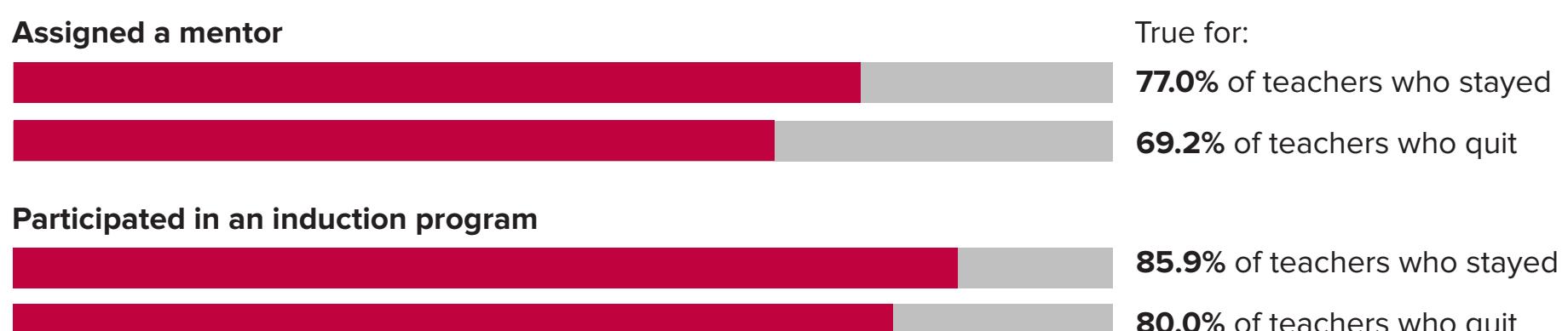
Some supports aren't very helpful ♦

Only a third of new teachers think working with mentors improved their teaching a lot.



Supports play a role in the teacher shortage ♦

There is a relationship between early supports and teacher retention. Larger shares of teachers who stayed in their schools had received early supports than did teachers who quit teaching.



Source: Emma García and Elaine Weiss, *The Role of Early Career Supports, Continuous Professional Development, and Learning Communities in the Teacher Shortage*, Economic Policy Institute, July 2019. Findings are based on 2015–2016 data, except for shares of staying vs. quitting teachers receiving early supports, which are based on 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 survey data, all for K–12 public school teachers.

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