

Why Teachers Leave:

Results of an Ontario Survey 2006-08

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Introduction

Teacher retention is always a topic of interest to both the profession itself and to governments. The costs of teacher turnover are more than monetary, of course, since continuity and teacher satisfaction are important factors not only with respect to instruction at a school, but also to the emotional climate that helps build student success. The topic of teacher retention became critical in Ontario during the years of teacher shortages in the province, precipitated by the opening of the “85 factor pension window” in 1998 prompting more than 10,000 retirements in a single year (see Table 1). Over the past several years, however, the employment market for teachers has moved from general teacher shortages affecting all regions of the province to a mixed market with some areas of oversupply and some areas of undersupply.

This study was designed to survey teachers who left their permanent positions in Ontario school boards in a “snapshot” period of two school years, whether for purposes of retirement or resignation, and to find out their reasons for leaving.

PART A. SETTING THE ONTARIO CONTEXT: SOME TRENDS IN TEACHER SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Table 1 - Ontario Teacher Retirements 1997-2007

Year	Total	Avg. Age
1997	4,956	57.3
1998	10,504	55.9
1999	5,448	55.8
2000	6,356	55.8
2001	7,138	55.2
2002	6,513	55.5
2003	5,089	56.1
2004	4,774	56.5
2005	4,646	56.8
2006	4,492	57.3
2007	4,696	57.7

Source: Ontario Teachers Pension Plan (OTPP) May 28, 2008

Table 2 – Actuarial Projections for Expected Teacher Retirements

Year	Projection
2004	6,038
2005	5,754
2006	5,505
2007	5,562
2008	5,328
2009	5,061
2010	4,914
2011	4,851
2012	4,879
2013	4,720
2014	4,631

Source: OTPP. The 2004-06 estimates are from a report by Glen Tunney for the Plan dated April 2004; the remainder are 2007 projections based on the valuation data of Dec. 31, 2005 with retirement rate assumptions from the Jan. 1, 2007 preliminary funding valuation (not filed).

The trends in age of retirees are also interesting. The sudden drop in 1998 when the 85 factor for an unreduced pension was enacted is understandable. By 2006, following changes to the Ontario Human Rights Code that eliminated mandatory retirement at age 65, and possibly also partly due to increased teacher satisfaction with their jobs (see survey results below), the average age of retirees is once again over age 57.

Vacancies from retirements therefore, are in very short supply. In addition, between 2002-03 and 2007-08, total average daily enrolment in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools has declined by 3.4 per cent (Ontario government data).

The entire picture of teacher supply and demand, of course, requires attrition data from resignations. Again, the Ontario Teacher Pension Plan (OTPP) provides some useful data of changes in active members to the OTPP. It should be noted that there are many possible reasons for a member to leave her/his pension inactive, including extended leaves of absence, so these numbers do not equate to teachers actually leaving their boards or the profession. However, even when the inactive OTPP membership is added to the retirement data in Table 1, the totals in each of most recent years of data here remain far below the numbers of newly certified teachers.

Table 3 – Changes in Active Members of the OTPP*

Year	OTPP Leavers/Inactive			Active as of Jan 1**	Percentage Leavers/Inactive***
	Retirements	Terminated/Withdrawn/Died/Other	Inactive		
1999	5,448	803	4,049	150,672	6.8
2000	6,356	1,154	3,861	152,659	7.4
2001	7,138	1,576	3,858	153,402	8.2
2002	6,513	941	3,942	153,679	7.4
2003	5,089	629	3,995	154,525	6.3

2004	4,774	493	3,555	155,633	5.7
2005	4,646	388	3,278	158,585	5.2
2006	4,492	454	3,311	163,154	5.1

Source: OTPP

* 1999-2005 is based on Actuarial Valuation Reports and data used in the valuation process; 2006 is based on Preliminary Actuarial Valuation Results

** Note that this table does not include additions to the active membership each year.

*** Percentage of Jan1st active membership who are either retired, terminated, withdrawn, deceased or inactive as of Dec. 31st.

The OTPP data, if used as a rough indicator of teachers leaving the profession for all reasons in Ontario, show a recent attrition rate consistently under 10 percent and declining to about 5 percent in the past few years. However, it must be remembered that the “inactive” category includes teachers on extended leaves of absence, and that the contributors to the pension plan include a number of categories of “teacher” (eg. occasional teachers and teachers working for other employers outside of the publicly funded school system) who are not included in the target group for this study.

Recent attrition rates (see Table 4) determined for new teachers in the Ontario College of Teachers’ ongoing Transition to Teaching study, funded by the Ministry of Education, indicate a small but increasing attrition rate among recently certified members of the College. The College reported that only 41 per cent of 2006 graduates found regular teaching positions by spring 2007. (McIntyre, 2007)

Table 4 – Percentage of New Teachers with Lapsed College Membership 2002-07

Graduation Year	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year	Fifth Year
2001	2.7	4.5	6.5	8.4	9.4
2002	2.7	4.8	7.1	9.1	10.2
2003	2.6	5.5	7.6	9.1	
2004	4.2	6.6	8.6		
2005	4.5	7.5			
2006	4.9				

Source: Ontario College of Teachers

Those who do get jobs, however, increasingly intend to keep them. The report on the Ontario College of Teachers 2007 State of the Teaching Profession survey, for example, noted that

The percentage of teachers who definitely or probably see themselves as still in the profession five years from now continues to climb – from 65 per cent in 2003 to 79 per cent today. Among younger teachers – 18 to 34 years old – 97 per cent plan to still be teaching in five years. Ninety-three per cent of teachers who are 35 to 49 years old say they'll be staying put. (Browne, 2007)

Even if attrition rates for newly certified teachers who can’t find full-time jobs are climbing, the pension plan data shows that overall attrition rates in Ontario remain low.

Table 5 - Sources of Supply of New Ontario Teachers 1998-2007

New Ontario Teaching Certificates, by Year of Certification and Source									
Year	Ontario Graduates			Other Sources					Total all Sources
	Current Ont. Grads	Recent Ont. Grads	Total Ont. Grads	Previously Certif. Ontario	Other Provinces	Border U.S. Colleges	Other Country	Total Other	
1998	5,153	1,176	6,329	3,517	966	655	976	6,114	12,443
1999	5,457	474	5,931	2,399	1,142	431	805	4,777	10,708
2000	6,247	419	6,666	934	992	589	610	3,125	9,791
2001	6,580	323	6,903	1,279	1,090	1,042	909	4,320	11,223
2002	6,914	130	7,044	741	793	1,376	820	3,730	10,774
2003	7,006	467	7,323	528	457	1,261	621	2,867	10,240
2004	7,316	503	7,819	386	525	1,320	941	3,172	10,991
2005	7,626	597	8,223	332	371	1,203	1,370	3,276	11,499
2006	8,048	521	8,569	242	450	1,744	1,671	4,107	12,676
2007	8,293	478	8,771	215	489	1,594	1,601	3,899	12,670

Source: Ontario College of Teachers

The data presented in this section documents an increasing gap between the shrinking demand for new teachers, and an ever-increasing supply.

PART B: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: RECENT U.S. TRENDS

Not surprisingly, most of the studies in the literature focus on teacher attrition in the US. Therefore, this review of the literature will focus on studies of teacher attrition published in the last five years in the US as a comparison to what is taking place in Ontario's public education.

The most recent American studies continue to state that there is a teacher shortage in America and cite high attrition rates. Although difficult to pinpoint because of variability in terminology and survey samples, a conservative estimate of the annual teacher attrition rate (those that leave their job to either retire, pursue another career, or leave for another teaching position) in the US is roughly one quarter of the entire teaching population (Boe et al., 2008, pg. 23). Of those leaving their teaching position, Boe et al. (2008) discovered that 51% left the profession entirely, either to retire or pursue another career. Boe et al. (2008) argue that teacher turnover is not unique nor alarming to the teaching profession and that other professions suffer higher turnover among new entrants. They also view teacher shortages in the US as a product of the low supply of new teachers, not the exodus from the profession that is so often cited in the literature (see Guarino et al., 2006; Kersaint et al. 2007).

In 2007 the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) completed an 18-month study of teacher turnover and its costs, with an intensive look at five school districts in various states. The NCTAF study cited a teacher dropout rate of 16.8 percent nationally, and over 20 percent in urban schools. (Barnes et al, 2007). While

this attrition rate and that found by Boe et al (2008) sound alarming, a closer look at the data indicates that it includes teachers who simply change school districts as well as those who actually retire or leave teaching, on the grounds that it costs a school board as much to replace a teacher who moves elsewhere as it does to replace someone who leaves the profession. Students suffer from a disruptive learning environment when school staff experience high turnover, especially when exiting teachers are replaced by new entrants to the profession (Kersaint, et al. 2007).

Some studies specifically examined teachers early in their career. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found in their study of 50 new teachers, 20% left the teaching profession completely by the third year, while only 56% of the teachers remained in their original school three years later. Guarino, et al. (2006) in their extensive review of studies dealing with teacher attrition in the US noted that the highest turnover and attrition rates were for teachers in their first years of teaching and for those with a considerable number of years in the classroom (nearing retirement

Liu and Ramsey (2008) found that roughly half of all teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their career. Workplace intensification and insufficient time for preparation were cited by teachers as a primary reason for their job dissatisfaction. Teachers felt that early in their career they were not given the necessary supports to properly perform the job. Kersaint et al. (2007) found similar reasons for dissatisfaction, citing emphasis on testing and accountability, as well as excessive administrative duties, and a lack of administrative support as primary causes of job dissatisfaction.

On top of the dissatisfaction factors, teachers felt that they were not properly compensated for their efforts (Liu and Ramsey, 2008). However, Ladd (2007), comparing teacher salaries and student achievement for OECD countries, identified that teacher support, more than just financial compensation, was required to retain teachers.

In order to stem the tide of teachers leaving the profession, support programs were commonly cited in the literature as an effective retention strategy. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that greater support mechanisms were needed to support teachers early in their careers to ease the transition into the profession. Fry (2007) looked at the positive influence of induction programs on new teachers, where new teachers expressed the need for mentors, resource support, and admin and mentoring evaluations. Guarino et al. (2006) found in their review of the teacher attrition literature that schools that provided mentoring and inductions programs had lower rates of turnover for new teachers. As well, schools that gave teachers greater autonomy and support from administration had better success in keeping their teachers.

One Florida study illustrates the value of induction programs such as Ontario's New Teacher Induction Program. This was a longitudinal study of retention and attrition in two Florida counties – Broward (a large multicultural urban area), and St. Lucie, (rural and suburban). From 2002-2005, Broward County had an annual average attrition rate of 7.2 percent, while St. Lucie had an average attrition rate of 16.4. A major explanation for the different retention rate offered by the authors was that Broward has a new teacher induction program, called the New Educator Support System. (Shockley et al, 2006).

The most comprehensive data on the general teaching population are available from the U.S. National Centre for Educational Statistics (NCES), which is the statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Education. Their January 2007 report *Teacher Attrition and Mobility* is based on a 2004-05 follow-up sample of elementary and secondary school teachers who participated in a school staffing survey in the previous year. Some of the key findings with respect to public school teachers are:

1. Of the 3,214,900 who taught during the 2003–04 school year, 84 percent stayed at the same school (“stayers”), 8 percent moved to a different school (“movers”), and 8 percent left the profession (“leavers”) during the following year.
2. Among public school teachers younger than age 30, about 15 percent moved to another school, while 9 percent left teaching.
3. 38 percent of “movers” rated the opportunity for a better teaching assignment as very important or extremely important in their decision to change schools.
4. 25 percent of “leavers” left to pursue a position other than that of a K–12 teacher and 31 percent left for retirement. (Marvel et al, 2006)

For the general teaching population, family or personal reasons are often cited as the primary reason for leaving the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2002; Kersaint et al. 2007). This is a difficult group to retain because their decision to leave teaching has come about because of factors outside of their teaching careers. However, a large group leave teaching simply because they are dissatisfied. Ingersoll (2002) found that roughly 26% of ‘leavers’ left the profession because they were dissatisfied with aspects of their job ranging from poor administrative support to issues of student discipline

One recent study whose purpose and methodology most clearly parallels our Ontario study was done by Ken Futernick of California State University. The major portion of respondents, a randomly selected group of 6000 K-12 full-time public school teachers, of which half were current teachers and half had left in the past five years, were invited by letter to complete an on-line survey. 875 did so. This study focused on reasons why some teachers leave, and reasons why others stay. “Leavers” were further subdivided, with extra questions asked of those who indicated that they were dissatisfied with either school conditions or compensation, and were not leaving for personal circumstances such as retirement or family concerns.

One of the reasons California represents an interesting comparison to Ontario is that currently more than twice as many teachers are being credentialed each year as retire. A teacher shortage still exists in California, however, in that there were still 20,000 non-credentialed teachers in 2004-05 (Futernick, 2007 p.10), and a recent study indicated that 22 percent of new California teachers leave the profession within four years (Centre for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2007). California also has relatively high average salaries (\$56,444 in 2003-04), and poor salary and benefits, while cited by 40 percent of dissatisfied leavers, was not among the top five reasons given for leaving. In contrast, other U.S. studies (see for example, Tye and O’Brien, 2002, Liu and Ramsey, 2008) have found that salary plays a much larger role in teacher dissatisfaction.

In Futernick’s California study, the top five reasons cited by dissatisfied leavers were:

1. bureaucratic impediments (57 percent) (such as too much paperwork, too many meetings, excessive standardized testing)
2. poor support from the school district (52 percent) (eg inadequate professional development, poor hiring or payroll procedures)
3. low staff morale (46 percent)
4. lack of resources such as textbooks, computers, supplies (42 percent)
5. an unsupportive or ineffective principal (42 percent)

These findings are not dissimilar to our Ontario findings.

PART C. THE ONTARIO TEACHER EXIT SURVEY 2006-08

Survey Methodology

With funding and support from the Ministry of Education, and cooperation from the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) designed and administered a pilot survey for teachers who leave their school board and the profession. The pilot phase involved 14 school boards representative of all three publicly funded school systems. After the pilot phase was completed in January 2007, the project was expanded to all remaining district school boards and conseils scolaires for the remainder of the school year 2006-07, and repeated in the school year 2007-08.

Each teacher (excluding occasional teachers) who handed in a letter of resignation (including retirements) to a school board was provided with a sealed envelope. In it was a letter from OTF, explaining the purpose of the survey and providing a web address with a unique and confidential alphanumeric password to use to access the online survey. 10,000 such log-in identities were generated each year, and more than 7000 letters were mailed out to school boards for use in the 2006-07 year, with over 6000 sent out for 2007-08. The number of letters actually distributed to resigning teachers was not tracked in 2006-07, but was tracked by most boards in 2007-08. A sample of 18 Ontario school boards, chosen to represent 25% of the total number of boards, and roughly representative in terms of north/south, urban/rural, French/English, and public/catholic distribution, showed 1871 total resignations in 2007-08, of which 399 completed our survey, for a response rate of 21.3%.

The online survey was designed to be answered quickly; average time per respondent was less than 6 minutes. All correspondence, and the survey itself, were available in both official languages.

Survey Results

Demographics

For the 2007-08 school year, 876 respondents resigned from a school board in Ontario and completed the online survey, down from 984 respondents in 2006-07. In this section

and in following sections, data from 2007-08, or year two, will be reported first with data from 2006-07, or year one, in brackets.

The key demographics of those resigning from school boards are in line with the general population of teachers, and very similar in both years of the survey. Roughly 72 (71) percent of the respondents are female with over two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents having taught in the elementary panel. Almost all of the respondents (92 percent in both years) were employed as full-time teachers and 90 (88) percent received their training in Ontario.

The average age of a resigning teacher was 54 (53) years old (57 for retirees in both years, which is in line with the Ontario average, 53 (52) for resigning from teaching but not from the workforce, and 42 (43) for those who are resigning from their board but not from the teaching profession). 74 (72) percent of respondents were certified to teach in Ontario prior to 1980. In year two, there were more responses from the French language school boards – 54 in total, or 6.2% of respondents, up from 33 (3.4%) in 2006-07.

Resignation Data

Using the terminology established in Part B, 86 (77.5) percent of the respondents qualify as “leavers” including 67 (60.8) percent retiring and 19 (16.7) percent resigning from teaching but remaining in the workforce. The number of retirees completing the survey increased in year two of the survey, mirroring the slight increase shown in the most recent OTPP data (see Table 1). Of the retirees, 23 (22) percent retired with less than an 85 factor – slightly lower than the normal Ontario average. Comments from the ‘early’ retirees indicated that many of them entered the profession late in life, and that they are of normal retirement age, or that they were only a few weeks or months short of an unreduced pension.

One of the most significant differences in the data from year one to year two is a sharp drop in the share of exiting teachers who qualify as “movers”, ie those who resigned from their job with a school board but still remain in teaching. In 2007-08, only 123, or 14% of respondents, fit this category, down from 222, or 22.6%, in 2006-07.

Table 6 – Status of Respondent

<i>Status of Respondent</i>	<i>2007-08</i>		<i>2006 - 07</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Retired or Plan to Retire	589	67.2	598	60.8	1187	63.8
Resigned from board but not from teaching	123	14.0	222	22.6	345	18.5
Resigned from board and teaching but not from work force	164	18.7	164	16.7	328	17.6
Total	876	100.0	984	100.0	1860	100.0

Of the recent grads (ie those certified in the past 10 years) who responded to the survey , the proportion of “leavers” drops dramatically to only 25 (20) percent, as compared to the 75 (80) percent who qualify as “movers”. Again, this relative percentage of leavers has increased slightly since 2006-07, although it should be noted that the numbers of recent graduates who resigned from a school board and completed our survey is relatively small at 84 for 2007-08.

Table 7 – Retirement Status

<i>Retirement Status</i>	<i>2007-08</i>		<i>2006 - 07</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Retired with 85 Factor	451	76.6	468	78.1	919	77.4
Retired with Less than 85 Factor	138	23.4	131	21.9	269	22.6
Total	589	100.0	599	100.0	1188	100.0

For the purposes of this survey, it is important to focus on two categories of “leavers” – those who retire from teaching but not the workforce (N= 164 in both years), and those who self-identify as leaving the profession entirely prior to collecting a full pension (N= 138, and 131 in year one as indicated in Table 7). We will thus look first at answers given by each of these two groups of respondents.

Leaving the Profession but Not the Workforce

Almost half of the respondents who leave the teaching profession ‘early,’ but wish to remain actively employed, cited personal reasons (e.g. family or health) for their decision to resign from teaching. As you can see from Table 8, reasons were remarkably similar for this group of respondents in both years of our survey.

Over one third of respondents (36 percent) leaving the profession but still actively involved in the workforce cited ‘job dissatisfaction as their primary reason for resigning. However, although this seems like a high percentage of dissatisfied teachers, of the total number of resignations, those who leave the profession ‘early’ because they are dissatisfied with teaching only make up 6 percent of the total population of resigning teachers.

17 (16.5) percent of the respondents cited a ‘new job opportunity’ as the reason for their resignation.

Table 8 – Primary Reason for Leaving Teaching Profession

<i>Primary Reason For Leaving Teaching Profession</i>	<i>2007-08</i>		<i>2006 - 07</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Personal Reasons	77	47.0	78	47.6	155	47.3
Job Dissatisfaction	59	36.0	59	36.0	118	36.0
New Job Opportunity	28	17.1	27	16.5	55	16.8
Total	164	100.0	164	100.0	328	100.0

There are also no statistically significant differences between elementary or secondary teachers, or between male or female respondents, with respect to the primary reasons cited for leaving the profession.

Retiring ‘Early’

The following tables include only the respondents who reported retiring prior to collecting their unreduced pension. Keep in mind, however, that only 23 (22) percent of retirees retired with less than an 85 factor. Respondents who reported retiring ‘early’ cited a switch to a ‘life of leisure’ as a major influence in their decision. Almost 45 (41) percent retired ‘early’ in order to pursue leisure activities. The share of respondents citing job dissatisfaction as a major influence in their decision to retire early remained steady at 28.3 (28.2) percent, and only a very small number retired early to pursue another career. Both years of survey data indicate that teachers who retire early mostly do it for leisure or family decisions – or in other words by choice. Only a relatively small portion chooses to retire early because of job dissatisfaction.

Table 9 – Factors Influencing the Decision to Retire ‘Early’

	2007-08			2006-07		
	<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Minor Influence</i>	<i>Major Influence</i>	<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Minor Influence</i>	<i>Major Influence</i>
Pursue Leisure Activities	38 (27.5%)	38 (27.5%)	62 (44.9%)	35 (26.7%)	42 (32.1%)	54 (41.2%)
Family	55 (39.9%)	34 (24.6%)	49 (35.5%)	55 (42.0%)	34 (26.0%)	42 (32.1%)
Job Dissatisfaction	53 (38.4%)	46 (33.3%)	39 (28.3%)	55 (42.0%)	39 (29.8%)	37 (28.2%)
Health	63 (45.7%)	43 (31.2%)	32 (23.2%)	65 (49.6%)	30 (22.9%)	36 (27.5%)
Pursue New Career	122 (88.4%)	15 (10.9%)	1 (0.7%)	107 (81.7%)	17 (13.0%)	7 (5.3%)

In the year one data, a statistically significant finding was discovered when gender was crosstabulated against the factors for retiring early. Specifically, when the variables were made dichotomous by combining the ‘minor influence’ and ‘major influence’ categories into a single ‘influence’ category, significant gender differences were found in the ‘family influence’ variable. Although the significance was weak, it pointed to women experiencing a greater influence from family to retire early. However, the year two data yielded no significant difference between gender groups. This lack of significance may be due in part to the small number of male teachers resigning early (18), since a higher percentage of female teachers continued to cite family as a minor or major influence in their decision to retire early.

Reasons for Job Dissatisfaction

To investigate whether there are systemic reasons for teachers leaving, we have combined “dissatisfied leavers” from both our categories. The results below include both respondents who retired ‘early’ from the profession and those who resigned from teaching but are still actively involved in the labour market. Again, it should be remembered that these comprise only 11 (10) percent of the total number of respondents.

The average scores in Table 10 were created from answers to the question “To what degree did these factors contribute to your job dissatisfaction?. The answers were given on a scale of 0 (none) to 5 (significant), which makes the averages lower than they might otherwise appear.

Table 10 – Job Dissatisfaction – Average Scores for Each Category $n = 98$ (97 in 2006-07)

<i>Workplace Issue (2006-07 Rank in Brackets)</i>	<i>2007-08 Average Score /5</i>	<i>2006-07 Average Score /5</i>
Teaching Work Load (1)	3.46	3.18
Relationship With Administration (2)	2.81	2.90
Class Size (3)	2.18	2.25
Assigned Duties (eg supervision) (4)	2.14	2.23
Relationship With Peers (8)	.97	.81
Relationship With Students (6)	.93	1.14
Assignment Not In Line With Qualifications (5)	.91	1.23
Salary/Benefits (7)	.87	.88
Relationship With Parents (9)	.83	.80
Job Location (10)	.60	.42
Job Security (11)	.52	.37

One significant difference is apparent between the responses of the two groups summarized in Table 11, ie those who cited job dissatisfaction as their primary reason for leaving. While only 33% (25% in 2006-07) of early retirees in this group assigned “relationship with administration” a score of 5 (significant factor), 58% (65% in 2006-07) of those resigning from the teaching profession but not the work force assigned a score of 5 to the “relationship with administration” variable. Although the gap was not as large in year 2 of the survey, a problem with school administration is still the dominant factor influencing dissatisfied teachers who leave the profession early in their career, before they qualify for a reduced pension.

Leaving the Board but not the Profession

“Movers” comprised only 14% of our 2007-08 survey respondents, down considerably from the previous year’s 22.6%. As indicated in Table 11, most of them were motivated by personal reasons such as spousal moves or family considerations, and only 14% (15) left their boards because of job dissatisfaction. A closer look at the top five sources of job dissatisfaction from the group of dissatisfied “movers” in Table 12 shows a slightly different order than for the early retirees and leavers (see Table 10). However, the sample size is too small to read much into these results.

Table 11 – “Movers” – Primary reason for resigning from board

	2007-08		2006 – 07		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Personal Reasons	78	63.4	144	64.9	222	64.3
New Job Opportunity	28	22.8	44	19.8	72	20.9
Job Dissatisfaction	17	13.8	34	15.3	51	14.8
Total	123	100.0	222	100.0	345	100.0

Table 12 – “Movers” – Major Sources of Job dissatisfaction

<i>Job Dissatisfaction (2006-07 Rank in Brackets)</i>	2007-08		2006-07	
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Relationship with Administration (1)	17	3.35	34	3.94
Teaching Work Load (2)	17	2.12	34	3.09
Assigned Duties (4)	17	2.06	34	1.91
Class Size (3)	17	1.82	34	2.09
Job Assignment not in line with Qualifications (5)	17	1.29	34	1.35

Since only those who indicated that they were moving to seek a new job opportunity were asked to indicate where that job would be in 2006-07, many ‘movers’ were not asked to indicate their destination school board. This technical irregularity was rectified for the 2007-08 survey year resulting in all ‘movers’ being asked to indicate their new school board and whether they were going to continue to teach in the Ontario public system. Therefore, only 2007-08 results will be reported. For the 123 respondents indicating they would be switching teaching jobs, 86 (70%) indicated they would remain in the Ontario public system. Three large urban school boards were the top three destinations for ‘movers’ employing roughly 30% of the 75 respondents who indicated their new school board would be a public board in Ontario. Of those who opted not to return to a public school board in Ontario, 23 ‘movers’ went to a public school board outside Ontario and 14 to a teaching job in a private school.

Written Comments

Many of the survey respondents chose to take advantage of the opportunity to add written comments to their surveys (see questions 2(b) and 14 in Appendix A), often providing lengthy explanations for their job dissatisfaction. In year one, there were 337 written comments, of which 94 were neutral in nature (usually a simple statement about reaching retirement age), and 73 expanded on their personal reasons for leaving or moving (family, health, or their new job). The remaining 170 comments expressed dissatisfaction with one or more aspects of their work situation or the education system. In 2007-08, there were 287 written comments, of which 173 expressed dissatisfaction.

Table 13 shows the most common topics that dissatisfied respondents featured in their comments, ranked in order of number of 2007-08 comments, and with words used more commonly in 2007-08 indicated in bold face. Many of these themes are related; for example, workload and stress, although they are separated here because the respondents who spoke about stress noted a variety of sources for that feeling. Note that some respondents commented on more than one issue so that the total is more than 173 (170).

Table 13– Major Focus of Written Comments Which Expressed Dissatisfaction

Source of Dissatisfaction (2006-07 ranking in brackets)	Number of Comments 2007-08	Percent (of 173) 2007-08	Number of Comments 2006-07	Percent (of 170) 2006-07
Board policies (hiring, leaves, timetable, benefits, school or board organization, resources etc (4)	42	24.2	23	13.5
School Administration (largely Principals/VP's) (1)	38	22.0	43	25.3
Workload (2)	29	16.8	24	14.1
Harassment/bullying, disrespect (8)	25	14.4	12	7.1
Report cards/ reporting/ assessment policy /paperwork(5)	21	12.1	17	10.0
Govt. educational initiatives/curriculum(11)	21	12.1	8	4.7
Stress (3)	14	8.1	23	13.5
EQAO testing (7)	11	6.4	13	7.6
Special Education and IEP's* (6)	8	4.6	16	9.4
Compensation inadequate (na)	5	2.4	---	---
Issues with one or more Superintendents (8)	4	2.3	10	5.9
Union or federation support (9)	3	2.3	9	5.3

* Individual Education Plan

As might be expected for comments solicited by an open-ended request for “other” reasons, Table 14 shows that there were many contributing factors to the decisions made by dissatisfied leavers in addition to the categories indicated in Table 10.

An analysis of the major changes in comments from 2006-07 to 2007-08 indicates that while concerns with administrators remain significant, other issues emerged in the second year of the study. There were a new group of comments involving assessment policy, primarily secondary school teachers who wanted to hold students more accountable for late or missed work. Also, as well as articulating feelings of being bullied or harassed, usually by administration, in year two several comments highlighted a perceived lack of respect from (younger) colleagues and several felt disrespected by students. A few newer or part-time teachers leaving in 2007-08 also indicated that the compensation was simply not enough. While far fewer comments mentioned job stress than in the first year of the study, an increasing number targeted a specific grievance with their employing school board, including an impossible timetable to teach, failure to get approved for a leave of absence, and board cutbacks in specific areas.

A few sample comments (sometimes excerpted from long paragraphs) are included below, organized in thematic groupings. Many issues are interrelated and it is the cumulative effect that has led to the teacher leaving the profession. The year of origin of each comment is shown. Two comments, translated from French, are marked with an asterisk.

i) **Workload and stress issues** – Both early retirees and those leaving teaching spoke eloquently about being burned out because of excessive bureaucratic demands placed on teachers.

The workload on teachers continues to increase every year. There is always extra administrative work that takes away from teaching time. There is also extra testing and reporting... on and on it goes every year. (2007-08)

Job stress. I found that teaching requires far too much mental and physical energy due to overwhelming workload and far too many children in schools with learning and behavioural challenges. (2006-07)

The work load has become intolerable over the years. Report card times are horrific! ... Everyone is exhausted. (2006-07)

The politics, paperwork, meaningless "training", waste of time and resources, and over/under-involved parents are wearing teachers out. (2006-07)

I could have continued to teach but the job is becoming more and more demanding and stressful. I feel that teachers are constantly being told they're not doing enough, not doing it correctly and they must go along with the next new initiative which always means many more hours of meetings, workshops, "coaching" sessions and record keeping. (2007-08)

ii) **Issues with Administration** – Many leavers commented on unsatisfactory relationships they had with their principal or superintendent. Occasionally, teachers' federations were also mentioned. A few sample comments illustrate these relationships.

The administration treated me without respect, undermined my confidence and questioned my professional conduct. The other teachers undermined my authority in the classroom. I could not work in those conditions. (2007-08)

Harassment by principal through a bogus evaluation and inadequate support from Union and superintendent. (2006-07)

It was demoralizing to be micro-managed by administrators who were either bullies or inept and lazy. Administrators are rarely monitored or held accountable if their management techniques are inappropriate... (2006-07)

It would be most helpful if promotions were considered more carefully, and that those in leadership positions were seasoned enough to lead the younger folks to do a proper job. Leaders must set a good example and not be just friends to students. (2007-08)

iv) Local School Board Policies – School/board organization and various board human resources policies were mentioned in a number of comments.

*I requested a leave without pay but they refused me as I have taught for only two years at (Board X). I was at (Board Y) since 1996. I needed a leave as I was exhausted...so, knowing that I could not put up with another year, I quit (2007-08).**

I truly loved teaching the students. Getting no support from the board for programs that will help bring students back into the much needed field of construction and trades was very discouraging. (2007-08)

*I don't understand how a principal was hired for a school, a person not qualified with only four years in a classroom. One would say that the superintendent placed his/her friend in this job. (2006-07)**

v) Government Educational Policies – Curriculum changes and assessment and evaluation policies were mentioned, especially in 2007-08.

The Ministry of Education requirements around IEPs/reports have become excessive. I do not dispute the need for IEPs, but 3-5 expectations per subject area to be done 3 times per year is absolutely excessive. (2007-08)

We are expected to teach a curriculum that students are unprepared for and unable to understand; we are expected to pass a certain percentage of students even though they are unable to comprehend the curriculum; and the assessment demands are ridiculous and pointless. (2007-08)

I resigned/retired chiefly because of changes in provincial and Board Assessment and Evaluation policy which discouraged students from being accountable for doing their own work and submitting it in a timely manner (2007-08)

Poor funding for normal, academic and able students make the teaching in science very antiquated. I had better resources 10 years ago for university bound students. Now, all is for at-risk students with poor accountable and discipline consequences. (2007-08)

Summary

In Ontario, teachers tend to stay in teaching once they obtain a full time job. When comparing the more recent American literature on teacher attrition rates to our Ontario trends noted in Part A of this report, we therefore find that

- The overall annual rate of teachers leaving the profession (including retirees) in the U.S. is approximately 8 percent compared to an estimated rate based on OTPP data of approximately 5 percent in Ontario. The Ontario rate, unlike American trends, has generally declined in the past five years.
- In Ontario, almost 65 percent of “leavers” are retirees, compared to 30 percent in the U.S. This means that in the U.S. the higher attrition rate is not due to retirements, but to teachers leaving the profession.
- Over 20 percent of beginning teachers leave within 5 years in the U.S. compared to approximately 10 percent in Ontario. The literature indicates that both numbers are considerably lower than attrition rates in the mid-1990’s. The Ontario rate has risen in the past few years as the employment market has moved from general teacher shortages affecting all regions of the province.

Of the 1860 resigning teachers who completed our survey over two school years, 63.8 percent retired, 18.5 percent moved to another board, and 17.6 percent left the profession but not the workforce. The most significant difference between 2007-08 and 2006-07 respondents is that fewer moved to another school board (a drop from 23% to 14% of respondents). “Movers” left primarily for personal reasons, and most went to a job in another publicly funded school board.

Overall, just over 10% resigned (either retiring ‘early’ or leaving the profession) due to dissatisfaction with their job. In general, then, Ontario teachers seem to be relatively satisfied.

The leading factors cited by dissatisfied leavers were

1. workload issues such as excessive paperwork, increasing bureaucratic demands, long hours outside of school time needed for preparation, marking and reporting, and increasing stress;
2. issues with administration, including many who felt disrespected or not supported, or felt that administrators were not properly trained or held accountable themselves;
3. class sizes (although almost no written comments expanded on this topic; instead, many comments gave unsolicited details of dissatisfaction with specific board and ministry policies involving assessment, curriculum, and school organization);
4. issues with particular duties, especially dealing with IEP’s and the demands of special education and EQAO testing, or with certain job assignments/timetables

Other factors were not significant in influencing the teachers' decision to leave, including salary and relations with colleagues or parents.

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APPENDIX A TEACHER EXIT SURVEY

You have submitted your resignation to the school board. We appreciate your responses to the following questions. All answers will be kept strictly confidential, and no individual will be identified in any way.

1. How would you describe yourself?
 - Retiree or planning to retire
 - Resigning(ed) from your school board, but remaining within the teaching profession
 - Resigning(ed) from the teaching profession, but not retiring from the workforce

Respondents will then be presented with only those questions that are relevant to them, based on their response to this question.

2. [QUESTIONS EXCLUSIVELY FOR THOSE WHO ARE RETIREES OR PLANNING TO RETIRE]

2. (a) Did you
 - retire with an 85 factor or greater
 - retire with less than an 85 factor

If respondents select "retire with less than an 85 factor, ask

2. (b) To what degree did the following factors influence your decision to retire early?
[A 3-POINT RATING SCALE, INCLUDING "NO INFLUENCE," "MINOR INFLUENCE," AND "MAJOR INFLUENCE" WILL BE PROVIDED]
 - job dissatisfaction
 - health
 - family
 - leisure (e.g. travel)
 - new career opportunity

If respondents select "no influence" or "minor influence" for all of the factors, ask:

2. (b) 1. What was your reason for retiring early?
[AN EXPLANATION BOX WILL BE PROVIDED FOR RESPONDENTS TO WRITE IN THEIR ANSWERS]

If respondents select "major influence" for job dissatisfaction, ask:

2. (b) 2. To what degree did these factors contribute to your job dissatisfaction?
[A 5-POINT RATING SCALE, FROM "NOT AT ALL" TO "SIGNIFICANTLY," WILL BE PROVIDED]
 - salary/benefits
 - job security
 - teaching workload
 - assigned duties (e.g. supervision)
 - class size
 - teaching assignment was not in line with my qualifications
 - job location (i.e. too far away from home)
 - relationship with parents
 - relationship with students
 - relationship with administration
 - relationship with peers
 - other (please specify): _____

If job dissatisfaction is not selected as a “major influence”, and new career opportunity is selected as a “major influence,” ask:

2. (b) 3. To what degree did the following factors influence your decision to pursue a new career opportunity?
[A 5-POINT SCALE, FROM “NOT AT ALL” TO “SIGNIFICANTLY,” WILL BE PROVIDED]

- salary/benefits
- job security
- workload
- work more in line with my qualifications or interests
- job location (i.e. closer to home)
- work environment
- other (please specify): _____

2. (b) 4. Please describe your new career opportunity briefly in the space below.

3. [QUESTIONS EXCLUSIVELY FOR THOSE WHO ARE RESIGNING(ED) FROM THEIR SCHOOL BOARD, BUT REMAINING WITHIN THE TEACHING PROFESSION]

3. (a) What was your primary reason for resigning from your school board? (Please select one)

- job dissatisfaction
- personal reasons (e.g. moving)
- new job opportunity

If respondents select “job dissatisfaction,” ask:

3. (b) To what degree did the following factors contribute to your job dissatisfaction?
[A 5-POINT RATING SCALE, FROM “NOT AT ALL” TO “SIGNIFICANTLY,” WILL BE PROVIDED]

- salary/benefits
- job security
- teaching workload
- assigned duties (e.g. supervision)
- class size
- teaching assignment was not in line with my qualifications
- job location (i.e. too far away from home)
- relationship with parents
- relationship with students
- relationship with administration
- relationship with peers
- other (please specify): _____

If respondents select “new job opportunity,” ask: (intro deleted in 2007-08 so that all “movers” are asked this question)

3. (c) Is your new job opportunity in the:

- private education system
- public education system, outside Ontario
- public education system, inside Ontario.

Please identify school board: _____

[A DROP-DOWN LIST OF SCHOOL BOARDS, WHICH INCLUDES A “CHOOSE NOT TO RESPOND” OPTION, WILL BE PROVIDED]

3. (d) In your new job, are or will you be employed:

- in the elementary system
- in the secondary system
- at the school board level

If respondents select "in the elementary system," ask:

3. (d) 1. Which best describes your new position? (Please select all that apply)

- classroom teacher
- school administrator
- special education teacher (self-contained)
- special education teacher (resource)
- curriculum or program staff
- itinerant teacher
- guidance
- library
- other (please specify): _____

If respondents select "in the secondary system," ask:

3. (d) 2. Which best describes your new position? (Please select all that apply)

- classroom teacher
- school administrator
- special education teacher (self-contained)
- special education teacher (resource)
- credit recovery or similar special assignment
- curriculum or program staff
- department head or assistant department head
- library
- guidance
- other (please specify): _____

If respondents select "at the school board level" in response to question 3 (d), or only "library," "guidance", or "school administration" in response to question 3 (d) 1. or 3 (d) 2., ask:

3. (e) To what degree did the following factors influence your decision to accept a new job?
[A 5-POINT RATING SCALE, FROM "NOT AT ALL" TO "SIGNIFICANTLY," WILL BE PROVIDED]

- salary/benefits
- job security
- workload
- work more in line with my qualifications or interests
- job location (i.e. closer to home)
- work environment
- other (please specify): _____

If respondents select any of the other categories in question 3 (d) 1. or 3 (d) 2., ask:

3. (f) To what degree did the following factors influence your decision to accept a new job?
[A 5-POINT RATING SCALE, FROM "NOT AT ALL" TO "SIGNIFICANTLY," WILL BE PROVIDED]

- salary/benefits
- job security

- teaching workload
- assigned duties (e.g. supervision)
- class size
- teaching assignment more in line with my qualifications
- job location (i.e. closer to home)
- relationship with parents
- relationship with students
- relationship with administration
- relationship with peers
- other (please specify): _____

4. [QUESTIONS EXCLUSIVELY FOR THOSE WHO ARE RESIGNING(ED) FROM THE TEACHING PROFESSION, BUT NOT RETIRING FROM THE WORKFORCE]

4. (a) What was your primary reason for leaving the teaching profession? (Please select one)
- job dissatisfaction
 - personal reasons (e.g. moving, going back to school, etc.)
 - new career opportunity

If respondents select "job dissatisfaction", ask:

4. (b) To what degree did the following factors contribute to your job dissatisfaction?
[A 5-POINT RATING SCALE, FROM "NOT AT ALL" TO "SIGNIFICANTLY," WILL BE PROVIDED]

- salary/benefits
- job security
- teaching was not what I expected
- teaching workload
- assigned duties (e.g. supervision)
- class size
- teaching assignment was not in line with my qualifications
- job location (i.e. too far away from home)
- relationship with parents
- relationship with students
- relationship with administration
- relationship with peers
- other (please specify): _____

If respondents select "new career opportunity," ask:

- 4 (c) To what degree did the following factors influence your decision to pursue a new career opportunity?
[A 5-POINT RATING SCALE, FROM "NOT AT ALL" TO "SIGNIFICANTLY," WILL BE PROVIDED]

- salary/benefits
- job security
- workload
- work more in line with my qualifications or interests
- job location (i.e. closer to home)
- work environment
- other (please specify): _____

- 4 (d) Please describe your new career opportunity briefly in the space below.

[QUESTIONS FOR ALL RESPONDENTS]

5. When you resigned, were you employed as a:

- full-time teacher
- part-time teacher
- occasional teacher

6. Was your last position in the:

- elementary system
- secondary system

If respondents select "elementary system," ask

6 (a) Which best describes your last position? (Please select all that apply)

- primary teacher (JK-3)
- junior teacher (4-6)
- intermediate teacher (7-8)
- special education teacher (self-contained)
- special education teacher (resource)
- curriculum or program staff
- itinerant teacher
- library
- guidance
- other (please specify): _____

If respondents select "secondary system," ask

6 (b) 1. Which best describes your last position? (Please select all that apply)

- classroom teacher
- special education teacher (self-contained)
- special education teacher (resource)
- credit recovery or similar special assignment
- curriculum or program staff
- department head or assistant department head
- library
- guidance
- other (please specify): _____

6 (b) 2. Which subjects did you teach in your last teaching assignment? (Please select all that apply)

- English
- mathematics
- science(s)
- social sciences (history, geography, family studies etc.)
- languages other than French
- French (FSL)
- technological education
- computers
- business
- arts (art, music, drama etc.)
- physical education
- special education
- English as a Second Language
- It was not a subject-based teaching assignment
- other (please specify): _____

[QUESTIONS FOR ALL RESPONDENTS]

7. How many years of total teaching experience did you have prior to September 1, 2006?
_____ years.
8. In what divisions are you certified to teach?
- Primary
 - Junior
 - Intermediate
 - Senior
9. Where did you receive your pre-service teacher training?
- Ontario
 - other Canadian province
 - U.S.
 - other country (please specify)_____
10. In what year were you certified to teach in Ontario? _____
[A DROP-DOWN LIST OF YEARS, WHICH INCLUDES A “CHOOSE NOT TO RESPOND”
OPTION, WILL BE PROVIDED]
11. Please indicate your gender:
- female
 - male
12. In what year were you born?
[A DROP-DOWN LIST OF YEARS, WHICH INCLUDES A “CHOOSE NOT TO RESPOND”
OPTION, WILL BE PROVIDED]
13. What is the name of the school board you are leaving?
[A DROP-DOWN LIST OF SCHOOL BOARDS, INCLUDING A “CHOOSE NOT TO
RESPOND” OPTION, WILL BE PROVIDED]
14. If you would like to expand further on any of the questions you have answered in this survey,
please use this space. Thank you very much for your participation in this survey.