

Projecting Teacher Demand in California: A Local Perspective

Monitoring the teacher labor market is key in efforts to ensure that there is a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. But, while most previous analyses of teacher supply and demand in California have focused at the state level, a new research report¹ from REL West at WestEd delves beneath statewide figures to examine what is happening on the demand side locally, in the state's 58 counties and in clusters of contiguous counties, or regions.

New teacher supply generally consists of newly credentialed teachers, though interns, teachers who reenter the field after a break, and those who come from other states can also add to supply. On the demand side, changes in student enrollment, teacher attrition, and teacher retirement all play a role, as can policy changes, such as class-size reduction. In this dynamic market, a substantial change in any one of these variables can cause imbalance between the number of teachers needed and the number available.

Because REL West researchers were limited to using only existing data for this study and, thus, could not analyze all market variables, this report cannot predict any future imbalances. Instead, using data from the 2005/06 school year as a starting point, it projects local teacher demand based on expected changes in two variables: student enrollment and teacher retirements.

Anticipated Demand Based on Enrollment and Retirement

Projected student enrollment and teacher retirement vary by locale. Twenty-one counties are expected to experience double-digit enrollment growth, as a percentage of current enrollment, by 2015/16, while another 22 counties are expected to see declining student numbers. For teacher retirement, more than 40 percentage points separate counties with the highest projected rates from

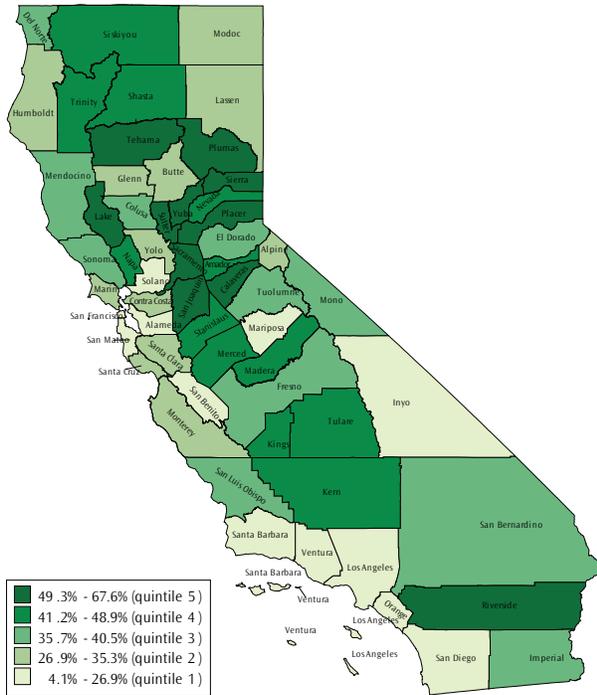
those with the lowest. The counties projected to experience the highest number of teacher retirements are in the Bay Area, Sacramento Metropolitan Region, San Joaquin Valley, Inland Empire, and South Coast regions.

To examine the net effect on future demand of anticipated student enrollment and teacher retirement, researchers combined the two projections, calculating future demand both in numeric counts and as a percentage of the number of teachers employed in a county for the 2005/06 school year. The report quantifies future demand in both ways because, with numbers alone, this report would be a story largely of California's 10 biggest counties.

Including percentages broadens the story. In addition to making it easier to consider future demand relative to current workforce size in a given area, percentages help convey the relative impact of changes in demand across counties or regions that might differ in their capacity to address future demand. For example, the need to hire 60 teachers over the next decade would pose a greater challenge for a county currently employing 100 teachers than for one employing 1,000 teachers; the first county would need to replace 60 percent of its current teachers, while the second will need to replace 6 percent.

When considering future teacher demand as a percentage of current workforce numbers, researchers found that 64 percentage points separate the county facing the

Estimated percentage change in the number of K–12 teachers in California needed from 2005/06 to 2015/16 based on projected teacher retirements and student enrollment, by county



Source: Authors' analysis based on California State Teachers' Retirement System data for 1994/95–2005/06 and California Department of Education's 2001/02–2005/06 Personnel Assignment Information Form data for retirement projections; California Department of Finance, for enrollment projections; and California Department of Education, for county-level pupil-teacher ratios.

highest demand and that facing the lowest demand: At the high end, Yuba County is expected to have to hire the equivalent of 68 percent of its current teaching staff; at the low end, Los Angeles County is expected to need to hire the equivalent of 4 percent of its current teachers.

In numeric counts, Riverside County tops the teacher demand list, with a projected need of approximately

11,000 new teachers by 2015/16. The next closest county is Sacramento, whose projected need approaches 7,000 teachers, with San Bernardino not far behind. At the bottom in real numbers is Alpine County, expected to need 5 new teachers. Because this analysis is unable to account for non-retirement attrition or any added demand from recent state policy changes related to class size reduction, all these estimates may be lower than the total number of new teachers actually needed.

Looking regionally, the study suggests that the Central Valley and Inland Empire (i.e., Riverside and San Bernardino counties) will face some of the highest demand relative to the size of their current teacher numbers.

This information suggests that local decision-makers may want to seek additional county- or district-level data to gain a more complete picture of regional teacher labor markets in the state. For example, districts and county offices of education could work with the teacher preparation programs serving their respective area to estimate how these programs are likely to contribute to the local teacher supply in the coming years. At the same time, further investigation at the state level, such as research into the degree to which new teacher *supply* in California is localized rather than uniform across the state, could help policymakers as they consider what interventions might best address the anticipated differential demand for new teachers across counties and regions. The state's new longitudinal teacher database (currently under development) could facilitate more complete analysis of the regional teacher labor market issues that this report begins to highlight.

1 White, M.E., & Fong, A.B. (2008). *Teacher trends in California: A county and regional perspective* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2008–No. 057). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory West.

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