

# Middle Schools in South Carolina:

## Teacher Retention and Working Conditions

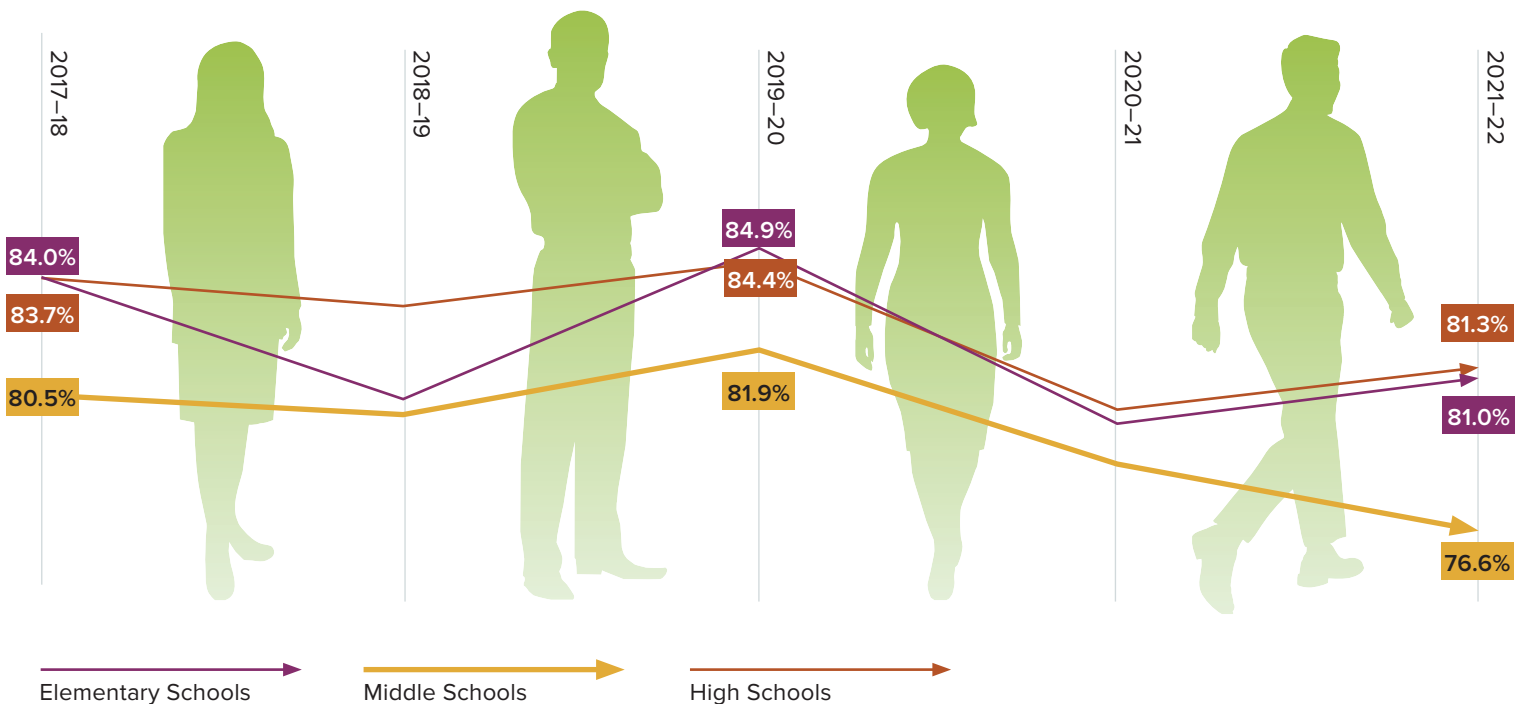
Across SC TEACHER research on teacher retention, working conditions, and workforce profiles, data have continuously pointed to a unique story for middle school educators.

This infographic synthesizes those findings to unveil the narrative of middle school teacher experiences, including significant challenges and opportunities.

### Middle School Teacher Retention Rates

Compared to elementary and high schools, middle schools consistently show lower one-year and three-year retention rates. This trend has persisted over recent years.

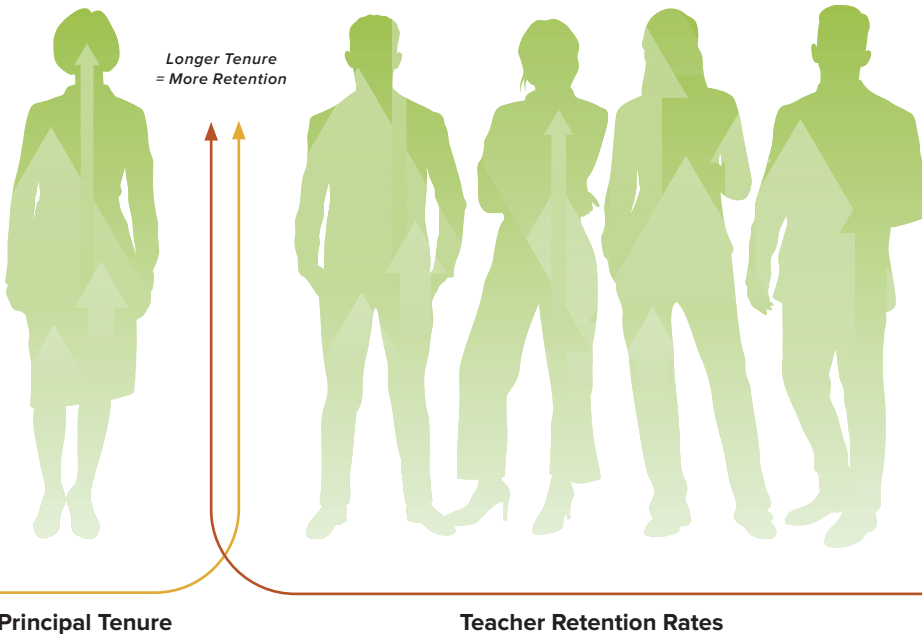
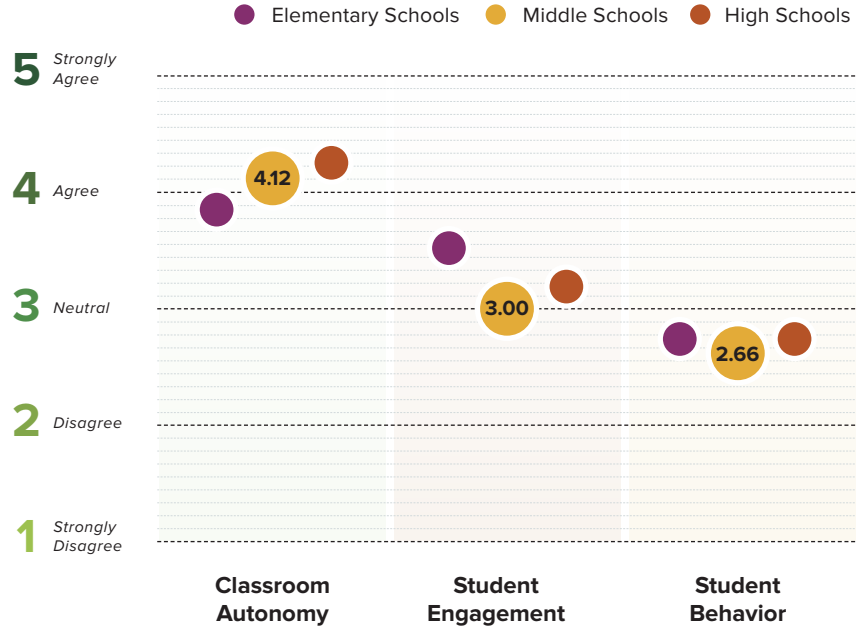
*One-Year Teacher Retention Rates by School Organizational Level*



## Working Conditions of Middle School Teachers

Compared to elementary school counterparts, middle school teachers have reported greater autonomy and more time to fulfill their responsibilities. However, such resources seem to be offset by heightened demands, primarily related to student behavior and engagement.

This freedom in decision-making and instructional planning coupled with rigorous challenges maintaining classroom discipline and fostering student interest highlights a complex dynamic for teachers in middle school settings.



## Principal’s Positive Impact

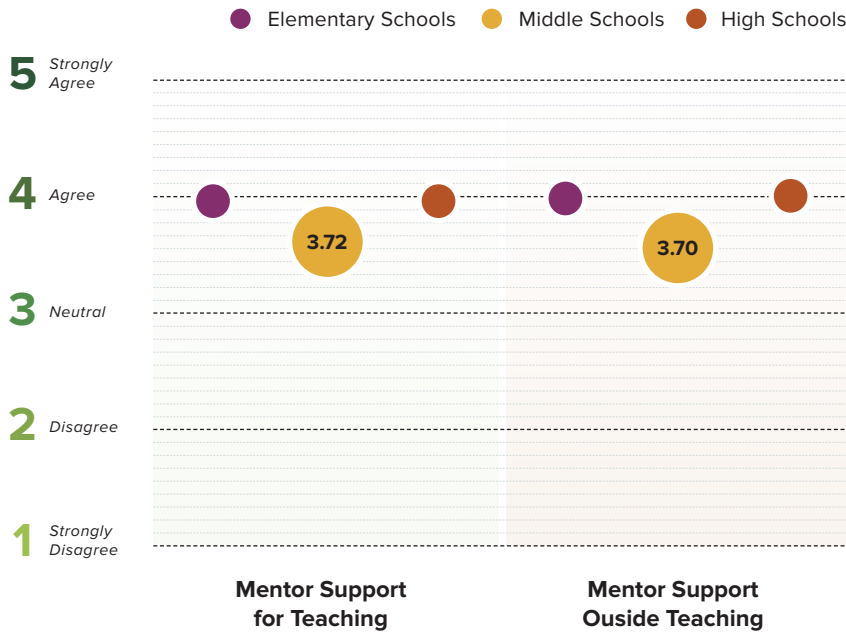
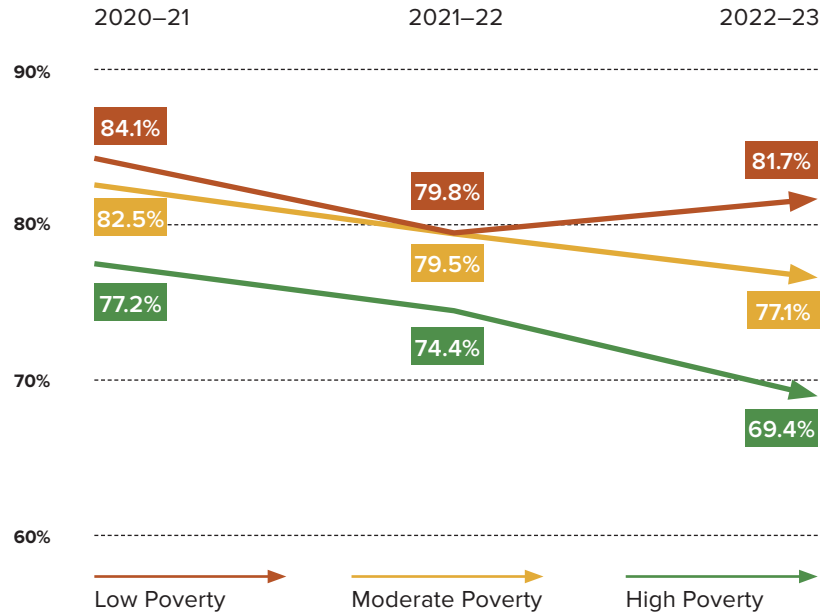
According to the data, principal tenure plays a meaningful role in retention trends. Middle schools with longer-serving principals tend to be more effective in retaining teachers, suggesting leadership stability is a key factor.

## The Role School Poverty Plays

Poverty levels also seem to significantly impact middle school retention rates. While low-poverty middle schools have shown some improvement, retention rates in moderate- and high-poverty schools continue to decline, despite a temporary rise during the pandemic.

These findings underscore the necessity of additional support and resources in potentially more challenging school environments.

One-Year Teacher Retention Rates Across School Poverty Levels



## Mentorship and New Teacher Support

Compared to elementary levels, new middle school teachers perceive a significant gap in mentorship support, both inside and outside the classroom. This gap is even more stark for those in moderate and high poverty areas. The lack of this resource directly impacts new teachers' ability to navigate their early career, affecting job satisfaction and potentially influencing their intent to remain in the profession.

# Takeaways and Steps Forward

The middle school teaching narrative is full of challenges, as well as opportunities for targeted intervention. SC TEACHER research findings show enhanced mentorship, stable and effective leadership, and additional supports targeting unique demands to be key strategies for addressing job satisfaction and retention at the middle school level.

Focusing on these areas can help create a more supportive and sustainable environment for middle school teachers, ultimately benefiting the students they serve at a critical point in life, as well as the broader educational community.

# 1

**Tailored  
Support**

# 2

**Stable  
Leadership**

# 3

**Enhanced  
Mentorship**

Read more about these findings in SC TEACHER reports.



Read the 2023 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey.



Read the South Carolina Teacher Retention Report for 2022–23.