

# Exploring the Uniformity of South Carolina Teacher Vacancies: Policy and Practice Implications for Addressing the Teacher Shortage in South Carolina

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Analyses were conducted on teacher vacancies at the start of the 2020-21 school year in SC school districts using data from the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) and district demographic information from public data files prepared by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). Results of these analyses provide a descriptive profile of the teacher vacancies from these data sets. An analysis was also conducted to examine the relationship between teacher vacancy rates and student achievement using data from SC's School Report Cards. The following patterns were evidenced in the data:

## + RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Consider the use of funds available for recruitment and retention to be directed toward the highest poverty districts, as well as special education, mathematics, and science certification areas.**
- **Differentiate the salary schedule and supply state funds in accordance with vacancy rate data.**

## + OVERALL

- Statewide, 1.2% of teaching positions were vacant at the start of the 2020-21 school year.
- There was considerable variability in teacher vacancy rates by school district, ranging from a low of 0% (for 17 districts) to a high of 19.2% with a median of 0.9%.
- Relative to all vacancies in the state, special education, early childhood education/elementary, and mathematics had the largest proportions of vacancies (17.6%, 13.6%, and 11.1%, respectively). Considering all FTE positions in the state, teachers of these subject areas represent about half of all positions.
- Individual subject area vacancy rates ranged from 0% to 3.7% with a median of 1.5%. Subjects with the highest vacancy rates include speech language, arts, and world languages (3.7%, 2.9%, and 2.6%, respectively).

## **+** KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

- Rural districts tend to have more teacher vacancies than urban districts with greater variability in vacancy rates.
- Districts in the highest poverty quartile tend to have more teacher vacancies than lower poverty districts with the greatest variability in vacancy rates.
- Small-, medium-, and large-sized school districts have similar medians for the percentage of teacher vacancies while the variability is greater for medium districts and greatest for small districts compared to large districts.
- Considering region of the state, Upstate districts tend to have the fewest teacher vacancies with the lowest variation in vacancy rates. The Lowcountry and Pee Dee regions tend to have the greatest teacher vacancies with greater variation in vacancy rates compared to other regions.

## **+** RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- Teacher vacancy rates have a moderate negative association with student achievement outcomes for both elementary/middle and high school measures.
- School districts with greater teacher vacancy rates tend to have lower student achievement in both English/language arts and mathematics.

## **+** ABOUT SC TEACHER

SC TEACHER provides comprehensive research, visualized data profiles, and compelling stories to communicate impact of educator pipeline policies and promote transformative practices that inform policymakers, educators, and communities who care about education scaling economic opportunity.

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