

# Understanding Retention and Attrition of Special Education Teachers in Nevada Through a Longitudinal Study: A Model for Other States

Jane Splean

Nevada Department of Education

[jsplean@doe.nv.gov](mailto:jsplean@doe.nv.gov)

Edward Caffarella

State University of New York, College at Cortland

[Edward.Caffarella@cortland.edu](mailto:Edward.Caffarella@cortland.edu)

U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

2010 Project Directors' Conference

July 21, 2010

Washington, DC.

Each fall 100s of new special  
education teachers enter  
Nevada schools  
but by June,  
19% have given up being a teacher.

- This session will explore the large exodus of special education teachers through a longitudinal study.
- The first part will be a discussion of findings, some solutions, and implications for policy changes.
- The second part will explain how Nevada repurposed existing data creating a database for studying teacher attrition that can be replicated in other states.

# Large Numbers of Special Ed Teachers Give up the Classroom

- Only 60% of Nevada special education teachers remain teaching after the first three years
- Explore reasons behind the high attrition
- Many of these findings have implications for policy changes
  - At the state level
  - At the federal level

# Similar Attrition of Special Ed Teachers in Other States

	after 1 year	after 2 years	after 3 years
Alabama		33%	
Arkansas		64%	67%
Georgia		89%	
Iowa	92%	86%	88%
Nevada	81%	75%	60%
USA (All Teachers)	86%	76%	67%

# Large Problem of Teachers Leaving the Classroom after They:

- earned degrees in chosen field
- Invested several years in college
- Spent tens of thousands of dollars
- Only to find that they did not want to teach in special education

# Longitudinal Study of Special Education Teachers

- Taught from 1997 through 2010
- Identify trends over time
- Answered many questions
- But created a whole new set of questions as we came to understand attrition of special education teachers

# Movement back & forth between special & regular education

- 40,330 different individuals taught in Nevada schools.
- 12% of assignments were exclusively in special education
- 1% assignments included both regular and special education
- Teachers with just special education had a three year attrition rate of 39%
- Teachers who moved between regular and special education had a three year attrition rate of only 8%
- Why such a big difference in attrition rate?
- Clearly, something is very different in the experiences of these two groups

# Percentage of NV Teachers by Assignment 1997-2009

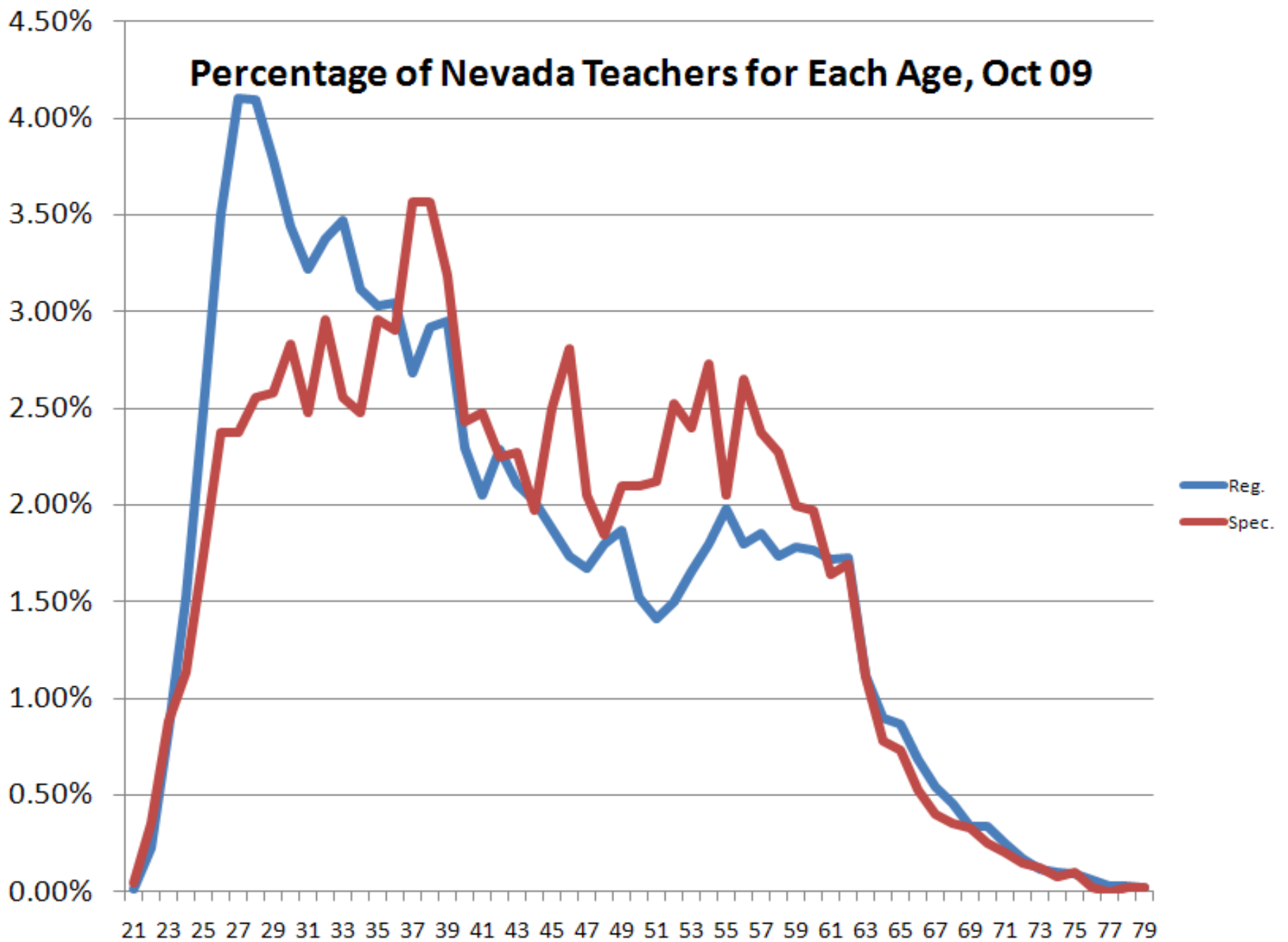
	Number	% of Total	% of Sp Ed
All service regular	35321	83.41%	
All service special	5390	12.73%	76.72%
Reg Ed changed to Sp Ed	572	1.35%	8.14%
Reg Ed to Sp Ed & back to Reg	173	0.41%	2.46%
Sp Ed changed to Reg Ed	658	1.55%	9.37%
Sp Ed to Reg & back to Sp Ed	152	0.36%	2.16%
Other changing assignment	81	0.19%	1.15%
TOTAL	42347		
TOTAL any special education	7026		
TOTAL mixed	1636		



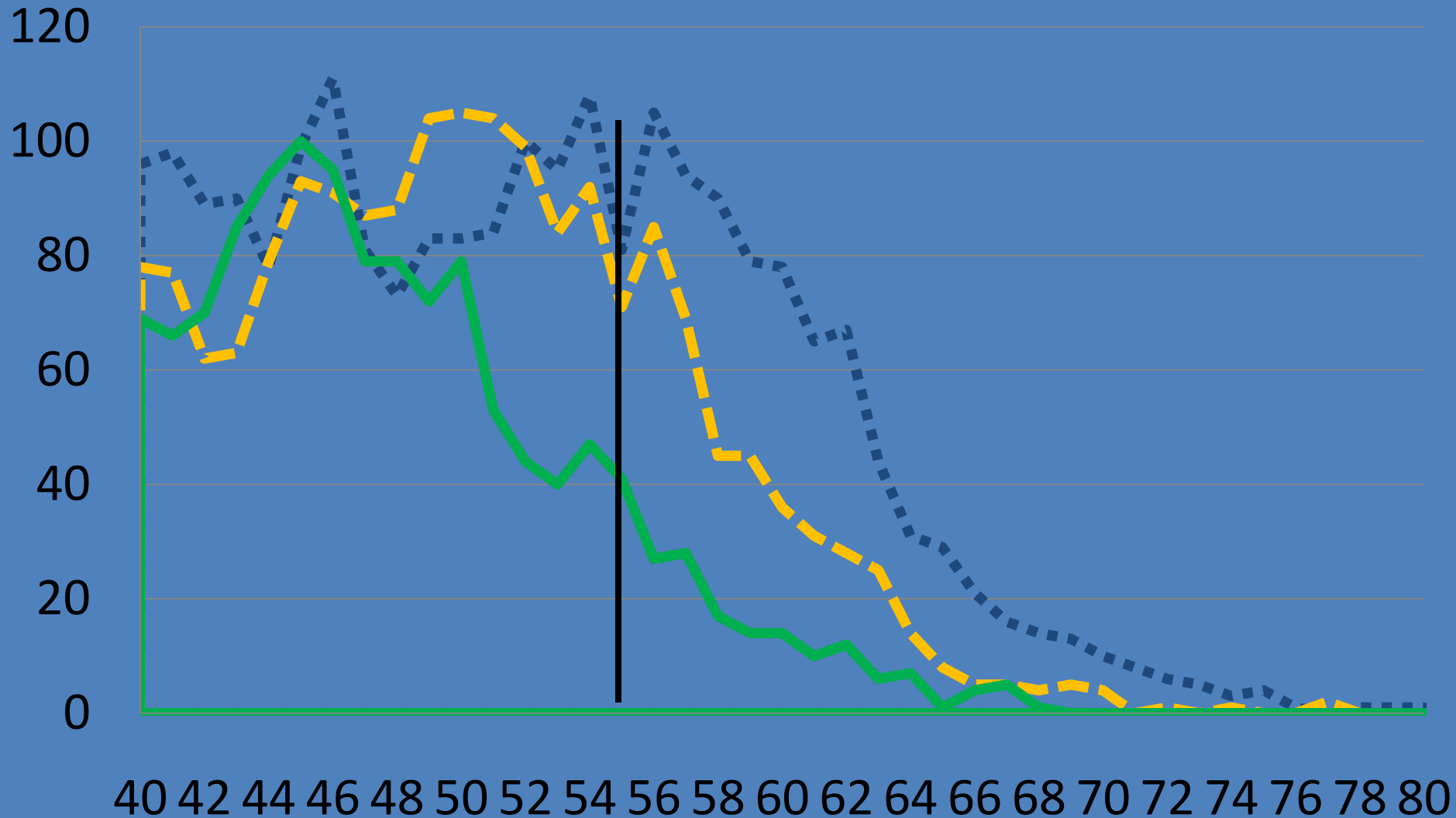
# Movement of Teachers Among Districts and Schools, 1997-2010

- 40,330 different teachers in NV
- 51.7% still teaching
- Of those continuing to teach
- 99.4% remained in same district year to year (YtY)
- 87.2% remained in same school (YtY)
- 79.5% remained in same assignment (YtY)
- May vary for other states because of unique Nevada geography

### Percentage of Nevada Teachers for Each Age, Oct 09



# Age of State of Nevada Special Education Teachers Currently Close to Retirement on Oct. 1, 1997 (green solid), 2003 (yellow dash), & 2009 (blue dot)



# Breaks in Teaching 1997-2010

(e.g., child rearing leaves)

- 1.13% for 1 year
- 0.42% for 2 years
- 0.72% for over 2 years

# Retention Rates by Teaching Areas

<i>After X Years</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>10</i>
Emotionally Disturbed	81%	44%	22%
Learning Disabilities	89%	47%	39%
Autism	84%	50%	47%
Mental Retardation	82%	51%	41%
Speech & Language	83%	53%	31%
Generalist	85%	53%	38%
Multiple/Diversely	84%	55%	10%
Early Childhood	81%	55%	41%
Gifted and Talented	88%	59%	36%
Visually Impaired	86%	66%	33%
Hearing Impaired	81%	69%	65%
Adapted Physical Ed	91%	84%	83%

# Teacher Stayers, Movers, and Leavers, by Selected Teacher Characteristics: 2004–05

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Stayers</b>	<b>Movers</b>	<b>Leavers</b>
All	3,214,900	83.5%	8.1%	8.4%
Special Ed	412,700	78.9%	11.1%	10.0%
Math	238,000	84.6%	8.6%	6.8%
Sciences	214,000	88.5%	5.6%	5.9%

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *Teacher Attrition and Mobility*

# Teacher Follow-Up Surveys (TFS)

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducts a periodic national-level Teacher Follow-Up Surveys (TFS).
- TFS is a high-quality survey that defines attrition and migration behaviorally by tracking changes in an individual teacher's employment status from one year to the next.
- The data for next survey was collected in 2008-2009 and the summary should be released in 2011.

# Reasons for Moving

Better teaching assignment (subject or grade)	38.1%
Dissatisfaction with administrator's support	37.2%
Dissatisfaction with workplace conditions	32.7%
New school is closer to home	26.2%
Higher job security	19.1%
Laid off or involuntarily transferred	18.7%
Changes in job description or responsibilities	18.3%
Better salary or benefits	16.5%
Dissatisfaction with professional development	12.8%
Did not have enough classroom autonomy	10.4%
Dissatisfaction for other reasons	31.2%



# Reasons for Leaving

Retirement	31.4%
To pursue position other than a K-12 teacher	25.3%
Pregnancy or child rearing	18.7%
Dissatisfied with school or teaching assignment	16.0%
Dissatisfied with teaching as a career	14.6%
School staffing action (e.g., RIF, school closing)	14.6%
Better salary or benefits	14.2%
Health	11.8%
Changed residence	11.2%
To take courses in education	8.9%
To take courses in career outside of education	5.3%
Other family or personal reasons	20.4%

The second part of the presentation will deal with the process used to collect and analyze the data.

- Although each state will be different, the basic process used in Nevada can be generalized to other states.

# NCLB

- Data pulled directly from the NV teacher assignment database
- Used for NCLB reporting purposes
- Highly Qualified Teachers: To be deemed highly qualified, teachers must have:
  - 1) a bachelor's degree
  - 2) full state certification
  - 3) prove that they know each subject they teach

# Highly Qualified Teachers

- Since every state must file these reports, there should be a similar database within each state.
- The original Nevada database is organized on a year-by-year basis showing:
  - Classes/courses taught by each teacher
  - demographic information such as
    - Age
    - Certifications held
  - Class information such as
    - school,
    - grade
    - district
  - Assignments collected in October

ED85EVA1

## Licensee Evaluation Form

05/10/2007

SSN: 111-11-1111

License #: 0000069352

Date Added: 12/09/2005

Name:

JOHN

Q

PUBLIC

First

Middle

Last

Modifier

Personnel

Degrees

Experience

License

Lic Provs

Endorsements

End Provisions

Name:

JOHN

Q

PUBLIC

First

Middle

Last

Modifier

Previous Name:

First

Last

Street:

111 PALO VERDE DR

City:

CARSON CITY

State:

NV

Zip Code:

89701

Phone:

(775)888-8888

Sex:

M

Date of Birth:

08/21/1910

Ethnic Code:

Licensee Status:

L

Years of Experience:

09.00

Loc:

C

Tech:

DB

County:

Commit

Print

Delete

Exit

# Licensee Assignments

SSN:

Name:

Title                      First                      Middle                      Last                      Modifier

---- Assignments ----

State	Cty	Dist	School	Asgn	School Yr	Prmy	Hours	FTE	Cntrct Amt	Salry Sch	HQT
NV	16	01	00000	00710	2006/2007	1	5.00	1.000	50000.00	50000.00	NH
INV	16	01	00000	00288	2006/2007	2	3.00	0.000	0.00	0.00	T1

# For Analysis of Retention and Attrition

- Data were repurposed
- Show each teacher's career
  - From 1997 through 2010
  - Classes taught each year
  - Started Teaching
  - When they left Teaching.
- The data also show a variety of other factors such as
  - Teacher movement between districts and schools,
  - Extended absences or leaves (e.g., child rearing),
  - Changing assignments particularly between special and regular education.

# NV Special Education Teachers

Started in fall of	Total Hired	Left after 1 year	Left after 2 years	Left after 3 years	Left after 4 years	Left after 5 years	Left after 11 years	Still Teaching Fall 2009
1998	188	21%	9%	11%	9%	4%	3%	47
1999	220	20%	8%	10%	6%	7%		74
2000	245	22%	9%	7%	11%	7%		87
2001	242	21%	12%	10%	7%	7%		77
2002	349	15%	12%	11%	5%	5%		147
2003	274	16%	17%	10%	5%	5%		120
2004	316	17%	13%	6%	4%	7%		165
2005	314	15%	8%	18%	4%			172
2006	381	17%	9%	6%				258
2007	332	14%	8%					258
2008	373	16%						312
2009	537							537



Cumulative % NV Spec. Ed. Teachers	Started		Left	Left	Left	Left	Left	Left	Still
	in	Total	after	after	after	after	after	after	Teaching
	fall	Hired	1	2	3	4	5	11	Fall
	of		year	years	years	years	years	years	2009
	1998	188	21%	30%	40%	49%	53%	75%	47
	1999	220	20%	28%	39%	45%	52%		74
	2000	245	22%	32%	38%	49%	56%		87
	2001	242	21%	33%	43%	50%	57%		77
	2002	349	15%	27%	38%	43%	48%		147
	2003	274	16%	32%	43%	48%	53%		120
	2004	316	17%	30%	37%	41%	48%		165
	2005	314	15%	23%	41%	45%			172
	2006	381	17%	27%	32%				258
	2007	332	14%	22%					258
	2008	373	16%						312
	2009	537							537



# Cumulative Percentage of Nevada Teachers Remaining Teaching by Years of Service

After X Years	1	2	3	4	5	11
Regular Only	86%	76%	67%	62%	56%	36%
Special Only	83%	72%	61%	54%	48%	25%
Mixed	100%	96%	92%	88%	82%	63%
All Teachers	86%	76%	68%	62%	56%	36%
USA Total*	86%	76%	67%	60%	54%	

\*from National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2003). *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*. Washington, DC: NCTAF.

# System Development Considerations

- Use actual data
- Full Population
- Sp Ed trends get buried in overall data
- Mixed assignments = high retention rates
- Losing large numbers of new teachers
- Losing more special education teachers than regular education teachers
- Large number of special education teachers at retirement age

# References

- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2003). *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*. Washington, DC: NCTAF
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. (2007). *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004-05 Teacher Follow-up Survey*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.