



## Some Progress Achieved in Addressing Factors Contributing to Teacher Attrition

### *at a glance*

Our 2007 report identified three factors that contribute to teacher turnover—school governance, student behavior, and limited career opportunities. School districts and the Department of Education have taken some steps to address these factors. The department has continued to implement the William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders. Districts have offered more professional development programs to their teachers on classroom management. However, the department should take additional steps to identify effective classroom management techniques. The state has not yet developed a proposed career ladder system for teachers, but current funding constraints may preclude additional efforts in this area at this time.

### Scope

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In accordance with state law, this progress report informs the Legislature of actions taken by the Department of Education in response to a 2007 OPPAGA report on teacher retention.<sup>1,2</sup> This report presents our assessment of the extent to which the department has addressed the issues discussed in our report.

### Background

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Historically, Florida has had a shortage of public school teachers. Many teachers leave the profession prior to retirement, causing districts to hire new and often inexperienced staff. Research has shown that this turnover hurts student performance, as new teachers still are developing their instructional skills. In 2007-08, a survey of teachers found that 7% reported plans to leave their jobs. This was a slight increase from the 6.1% of teachers in 2005-06 who reported plans to leave.

Our 2007 report evaluated factors that affect teacher attrition. We concluded that while teachers leave the profession for a variety of reasons, over 40% stated they left because of dissatisfaction or to pursue a different career. Major reported areas of dissatisfaction included school governance, student behavior and limited career opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Section [11.51\(6\)](#), *F.S.*

<sup>2</sup> *Dissatisfaction with School Governance, Student Behavior, Parent Support, and Career Opportunities Lead to Teacher Attrition*, OPPAGA Report No. [07-19](#), February 2007.

## Current Status ---

The Department of Education and school districts have taken some steps to address the identified factors that contribute to teacher attrition, but additional steps should be taken. Specifically, the department should work with districts to continue to develop and provide training programs that address school governance, classroom management, and career progression.

To address school governance issues, the department has continued to implement the William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders, which was established by the Legislature in 2006. This program offers professional development resources for school principals, including on-line training modules on topics such as effective classroom visits, using data to drive instruction, and strategies for personnel recruitment and retention. The program also provides a network of mentors such as retired school administrators who provide support to new principals. The department monitors use and completion of the online training modules. Additionally, the Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership completed an evaluation of the program in August 2008 based on surveys of participating principals and mentors. Almost all of the principals surveyed (97%) expressed satisfaction with the support they received from the mentors, who indicated that 56% of the principals they worked with showed significant growth in skills and knowledge.

While the department has not implemented our recommendation to create or recommend classroom management professional development programs, it reports that districts have increased the number of in-service training programs they offer on classroom management. The number of training hours provided in student behavior and classroom management increased 38% over a two-year period, growing from 188,791 hours in 2005-06 to 261,454 hours in 2007-08.

While the department manages four model professional development programs available to school districts, none of these model programs specifically address classroom management. Given the importance of this factor in teacher retention, we continue to recommend that the department identify effective practices in this area and develop model professional development programs and lists of available resources that districts can use to help curtail the loss of experienced teachers.

The department has not yet taken steps to work with school districts to develop career ladder systems for teachers. However, current economic conditions may preclude efforts in this area. Four school districts piloted a career ladder program for teachers in 2003. However, this program only functioned for one year and was then ended due to funding constraints. The department has not developed any other career ladder systems since that time. Experience in other states indicates that career ladder systems often require additional funding.

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