



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

TEACHER SATISFACTION SURVEY



INTRODUCTION

Competition for teachers is predicted to increase due to staggering attrition rates for new teachers, the loss of veteran teachers to other professions, and the impending retirement of a generation of baby-boomer teachers. The teacher retention and retirement statistics that schools are facing are sobering:

- Nearly 50 percent of new teachers quit teaching within their first five years of teaching.¹
- In 2007, close to 50 percent of the current teaching force is approaching retirement.²
- Thirty-seven percent of faculty members who responded to the NAIS Independent School Teacher Satisfaction Survey plan to leave teaching or retire by 2016, 14.6 percent of respondents by 2011.

Are there steps independent schools can take to give their institutions an advantage in this competitive environment? Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson's review of the literature on teacher recruitment and retention (*Who Stays in Teaching and Why*) finds that critical factors such as the work environment, school leadership, benefits, compensation, and teacher preparation greatly influence teacher retention.³

To assess how well independent schools are doing in these areas, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conducted an online survey of independent school teachers in Winter 2006.

This report is comprised of five sections:

1. General Satisfaction
2. Benefits
3. Compensation
4. The Independent School Work Environment
5. Preparing and Retaining New Teachers

We hope that the results of this research study will generate discussion and help schools identify their strengths as well as areas that can be enhanced in their teacher recruitment and retention strategies.

¹ *Unraveling the "Teacher Shortage Problem": Teacher Retention is the Key.* (Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and NCTAF State Partners, 2002).
http://www.nctaf.org/documents/Unraveling_Shortage_Problem.doc

² *The Changing Age Structure of U.S. Teachers, AmeriStat.* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, August 2002).
<http://www.prb.org/Articles/2002/TheChangingAgeStructureofUSTeachers.aspx>

³ Susan Moore Johnson, Jill Harrison Berg, Morgan L. Donaldson, *Who Stays in Teaching and Why: A Review of the Literature on Teacher Retention.* (Cambridge, MA: The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2005).
http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org/articles/NRTA/Harvard_report.pdf

GENERAL SATISFACTION

Key factors such as adequate job preparation, the ability to shape and control the classroom and curriculum, realistic job expectations, a collegial work environment, and strong school leadership contribute to a teacher’s overall job satisfaction.⁴

Overwhelmingly, when NAIS independent school teachers were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction with these factors, they reported high levels of satisfaction in almost all of these key areas. Prepared to teach their subject matter, they have the freedom to teach the way they want to teach, and the autonomy and power to make curricular decisions in their classrooms. They feel satisfied with their effectiveness with students and their interactions with parents. The camaraderie of the independent school faculty culture and the care that schools take with the hiring process also

contribute to independent school teachers’ job satisfaction. Faculty members report that they enjoy social support from their colleagues and that their school’s hiring process gave them realistic job expectations. See Figure 1.

One area that independent schools could improve upon is school leaders’ interactions with teachers. While teachers report satisfactory levels of support by school leaders and satisfactory effectiveness of schools leaders, there is room for improvement in this area. Increasing communication with teachers, being visible and accessible to teachers, showing appreciation for teachers’ work, and involving teachers in school-wide decisions can help to strengthen school leaders’ relationships with faculty.

⁴ Ibid

Figure 1. Independent School Teachers’ Satisfaction with Various Factors



ACTIONS SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER

- **In your recruitment efforts, highlight aspects that are important to teachers.** Independent school teachers cite academic freedom, classroom autonomy, and a feeling of effectiveness with students as key reasons that they enjoy teaching in independent schools. Make specific reference to these features in your recruitment efforts.
- **Open up channels of communication between administrators and faculty and actively seek faculty input on school-wide issues and decisions.** Faculty members who have open communication with administrators, feel supported by administrators, and have input on school decisions are more likely to feel satisfied with their jobs.
- **Occasionally schedule an interactive session between your board of trustees and the faculty so that the faculty members understand how the board operates, and the board members can solicit feedback on their work from the faculty.** Faculty members sometimes feel that the operations of the board are a mystery.

Take advantage of these recruitment tools from NAIS:

- The Online Career Center (www.nais.org/go/careers) features free job posting and resume browsing for member schools.
- At www.nais.org/go/advocacy, you'll find a brochure you can purchase to help explain the benefits of teaching in an independent school.
- *An Admirable Faculty: Recruiting, Hiring, Training, and Retaining the Best Independent School Teachers*, a book available through www.nais.org.
- The NAIS website also includes resources geared toward recruiting and retaining teachers of color: NAIS focus group research with teachers of color; "The AISNE Guide to Hiring and Retaining Teachers of Color" by the Association of Independent Schools of New England; and a book available through the NAIS bookstore, *The Colors of Excellence: Hiring and Keeping Teachers of Color in Independent Schools* by Pearl Rock Kane (Teachers College Press 2003).

BENEFITS

Changes in the health care system, demographic shifts, and a tightening labor market are creating greater demands for job benefits. Access to affordable health care will continue to be one of this country's hottest political issues and one of the most important benefits an employer can offer. Family-friendly and work-life balance benefits will become increasingly valuable as employees balance work with childcare and eldercare responsibilities and personal needs and interests. And as more baby-boomer teachers get closer to retirement, benefits such as financial planning and long-term care insurance are becoming more popular.

IMPORTANCE OF BENEFITS

As the population ages and large numbers of baby boomers retire, the pool of skilled workers will shrink and competition for qualified workers will increase. With four generations in the labor market, employers will need to respond creatively to the different needs of employees at different life stages. Smart employers are developing appealing benefits packages for multiple generations and using them as an important part of their recruitment and retention efforts.

Many independent schools already offer robust benefits packages, but which benefits do independent school faculty members value the most? When asked to rate the importance of 21 benefits on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1= Not Important and 5= Extremely Important), responding faculty members gave the following five benefits the highest ratings:

1. Employer contributions to retirement plan (4.76)
2. Employer-paid health insurance for employee (4.75)
3. Professional development opportunities (4.57)
4. Dental insurance (4.31)
5. Health care benefits for dependents (4.28)

Importance of Benefits at Various Life Stages

With a few exceptions, there was agreement among faculty from different age groups on the importance of certain benefits. Faculty in their thirties rated *financial aid for faculty children* (4.55) as higher in importance than faculty in other age groups did; faculty in their sixties gave *financial planning assistance* a higher rating (3.45) than the aggregate rating; and faculty in their twenties and thirties gave *onsite childcare* higher ratings (3.43 and 3.68) than did other age-groups. Schools will appeal to a broader range of teachers if they consider different life-stage needs in their recruitment and retention strategies and benefits offerings. See Figure 2 on page 5 and Figure 3 on page 6.

"I have two small children in the same school and on the same campus and I love this."

Figure 2. Importance of Benefits as Rated by All Faculty Members

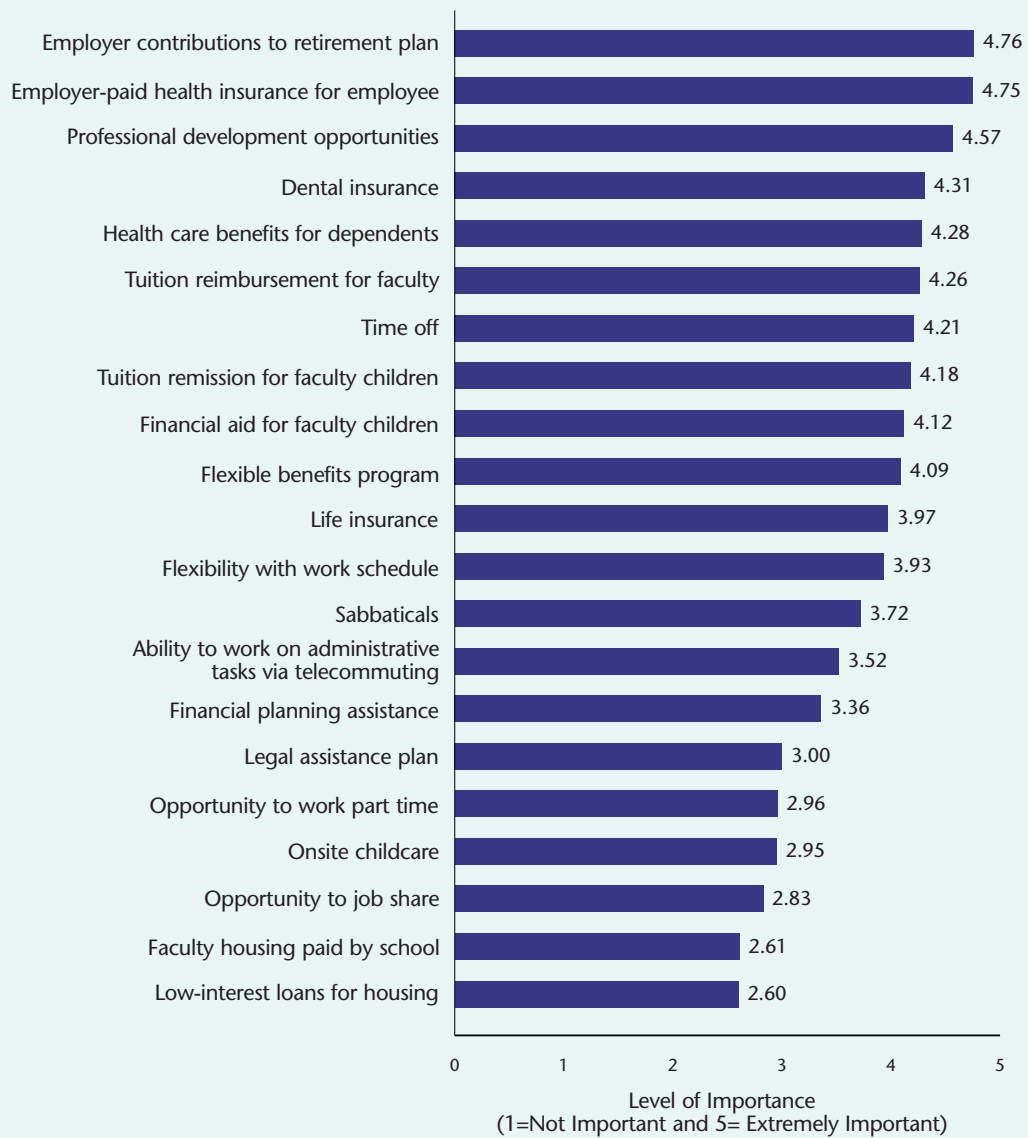


Figure 3. Importance of Benefits Overall and by Age Group

The numbers listed to the right of the bars represent the overall ratings.

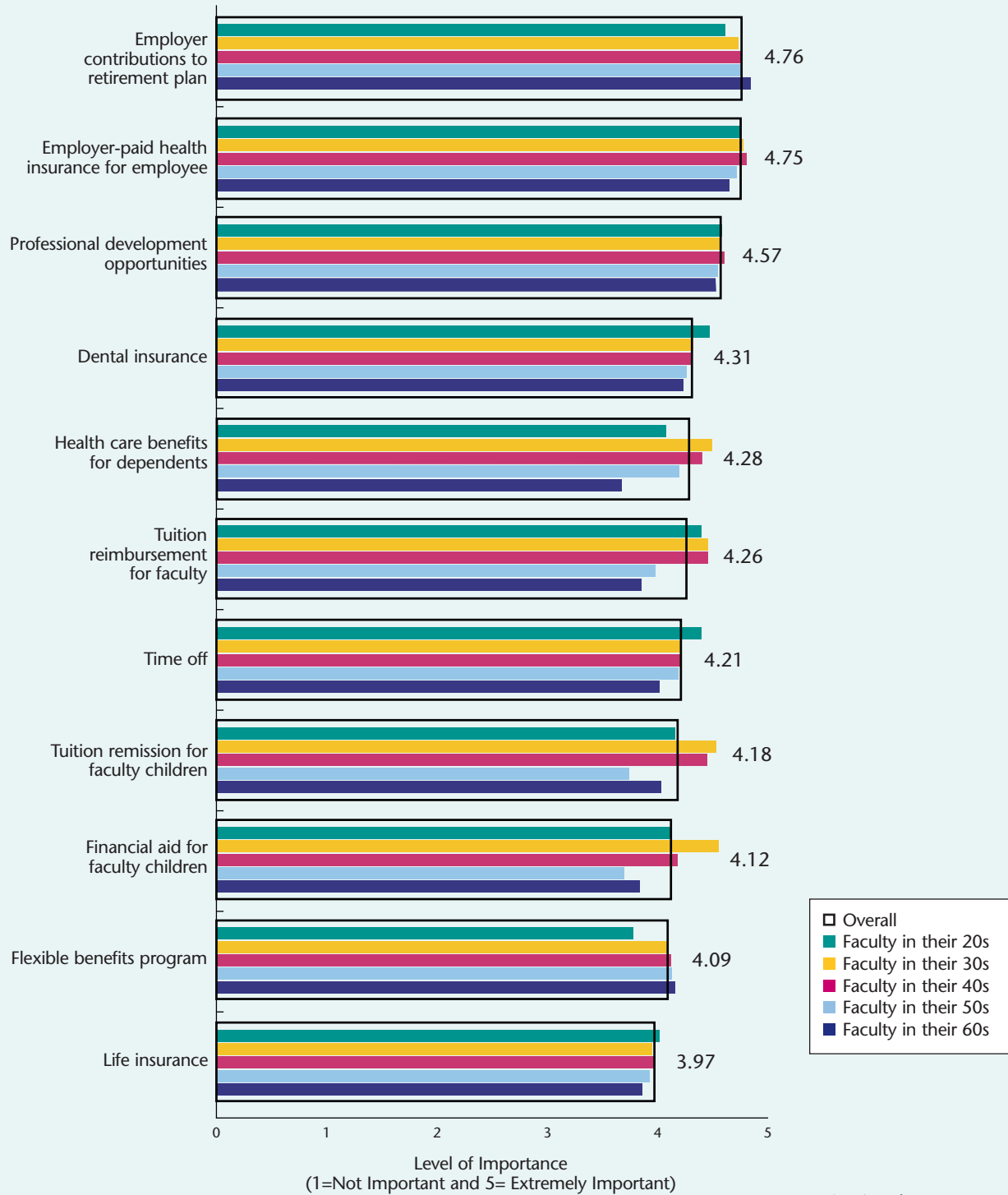
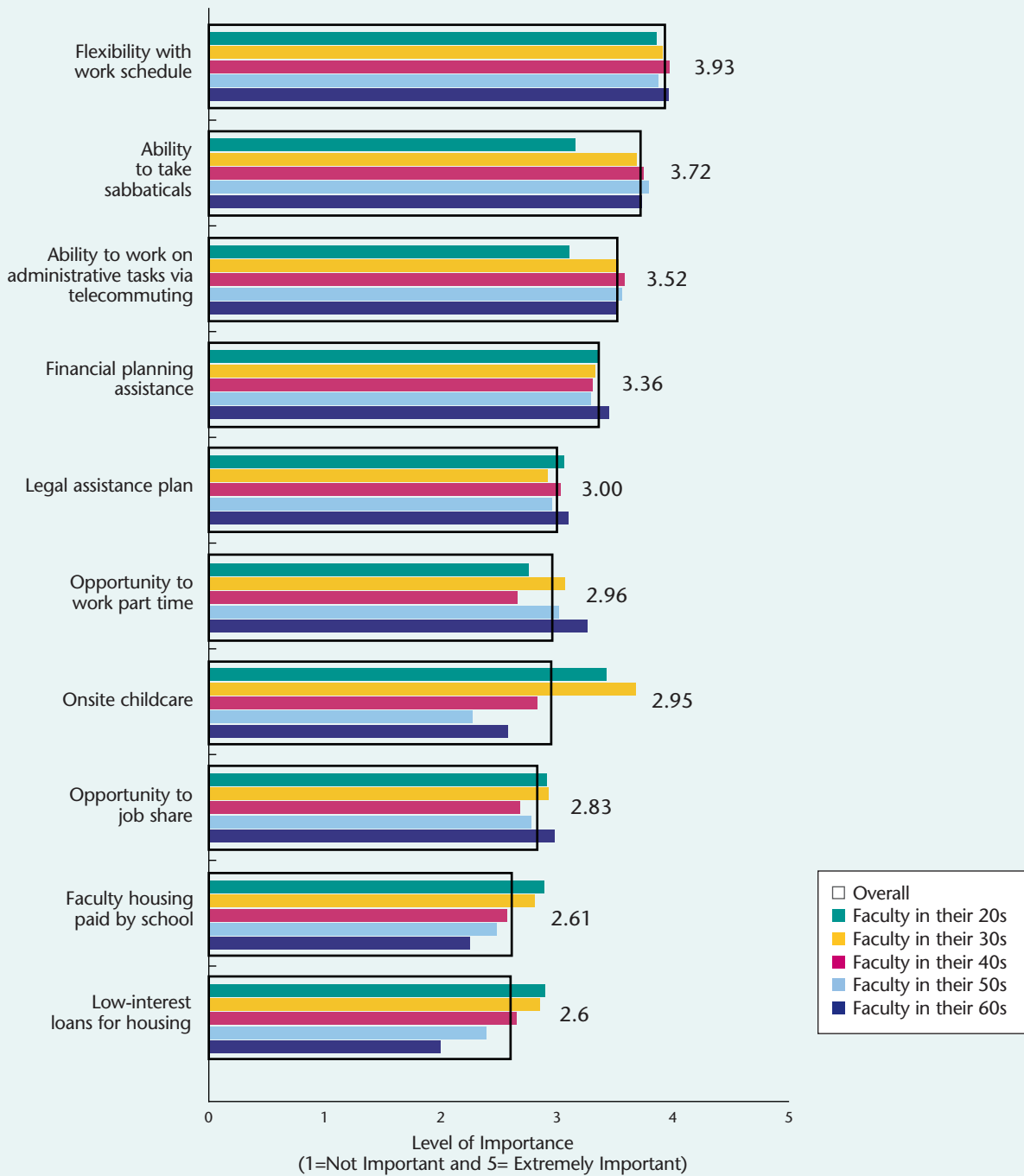


Figure 3. Importance of Benefits Overall and by Age Group

The numbers listed to the right of the bars represent the overall ratings.



SATISFACTION WITH BENEFITS

Satisfaction with job benefits is consistently rated by employees as a key factor in overall job satisfaction.⁵ How satisfied are independent school teachers with their job benefits – especially the benefits that are most important to them?

Responding teachers report very high levels of satisfaction with many of the benefits that they rate as highly important. An overwhelming majority of teachers are satisfied or extremely satisfied with their school’s professional development opportunities (82 percent), employer contributions to retirement plan (81 percent), flexible benefits program (75 percent), employer-paid health insurance for employee (70 percent), time off (69 percent), life insurance (63 percent), and flexibility with their work schedule (62 percent). See Table 1a.

As schools compete in a tighter labor market, highlighting these benefits — especially benefits that are becoming increasingly important to employees such as time off and flexibility — will strengthen their appeal to job candidates.

Remember Faculty Members’ Children in Your Benefits Offerings

While independent schools are very successful in offering important benefits such as professional development, there are other areas that are in need of attention. Five of the benefits that teachers rated as their top 10 most important benefits are not being offered by all schools or are not being delivered in a manner that teachers find satisfactory. Of these five benefits, three are benefits specifically for faculty children: (1) health care benefits for dependents, (2) tuition remission for faculty children, and (3) financial aid for faculty children. See Table 1b.

Table 1a. Highly Important Benefits with High Satisfaction Ratings

Benefit	Importance Rating by Faculty*	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
Employer contributions to retirement plan	4.76	41%	40%
Employer-paid health insurance for employee	4.75	42%	28%
Professional development opportunities	4.57	35%	47%
Time off	4.21	41%	28%
Flexible benefits program	4.09	34%	41%
Life insurance	3.97	42%	21%
Flexibility with work schedule	3.93	42%	20%

* Rating based on scale of 1-5 (1=Not Important and 5=Extremely Important)

Table 1b. Highly Important Benefits with Low Satisfaction Ratings

Benefit	Importance Rating by Faculty	Not Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	My school does not offer the benefit
Dental insurance	4.31	14%	15%	13%
Health care benefits for dependents	4.28	13%	16%	27%
Tuition reimbursement for faculty	4.26	9%	13%	26%
Tuition remission for faculty children	4.18	13%	11%	34%
Financial aid for faculty children	4.12	9%	13%	41%

* Rating based on scale of 1-5 (1=Not Important and 5=Extremely Important)

⁵ Evren Esen, *SHRM Job Satisfaction Series: 2005 Job Satisfaction*, SHRM Research, Society for Human Resource Management, 2005.

ACTIONS SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER

- **Highlight in recruitment materials the benefits that your teachers are very satisfied with,** such as professional development opportunities.
- **Each year, provide teachers with benefits statement sheets that outline the monetary value of the benefits they receive.**
- **Assess and respond to the benefit needs of faculty at different life stages.** Will your school succeed at recruiting faculty in their twenties, thirties, or forties if you do not offer benefits for faculty children? What benefits do your most experienced teachers value?
- **Consider benefits that are not typical and that would give the school a recruitment advantage,** such as paying the interest and principal on student loans for as long as a teacher stays at the school.
- **Consider making tuition remission “affordable to the school”** by making faculty kids the “over-limit” count in classes: i.e., if class sizes average or are limited to 16, fill classes with paying customers, and make the faculty kids the 17th and 18th addition to the class.
- **Consider some of these “additional” benefits in your benefits package.** When asked if there were other benefits that would be of great value to them, respondents frequently listed the following:
 - Vision insurance, including coverage for glasses
 - Equity adjustments or financial compensation for single, childless teachers who do not use family-related benefits
 - More time off for sabbaticals, personal days, vacation, family leave, and comp time
 - More time allotted by the school for administrative tasks, planning time, and professional development
 - Continuation of health insurance after retirement
 - Tuition exchange programs that allow faculty to receive tuition reimbursement at sister schools. Several respondents mentioned that they teach at a single-sex school and that their children are not the “right” sex to attend the single-sex school.
 - Lunch provided and paid for by the school
 - Wellness benefits, especially exercise or health club benefits, or benefits that allow faculty to work out at the school. (Benefits such as free lunches for faculty and wellness programs are not high in cost but could greatly lower teacher stress levels and increase overall job satisfaction.)

COMPENSATION

In 2006-2007, the national average salary for all NAIS member school teachers was \$46,441⁶ while the national average salary for public school teachers was \$49,294.⁷ This reflects a gap of 6.14 percent. For both independent and public school teachers, salaries can vary dramatically depending on region, years of teaching experience, tenure at school, school size, and degrees earned.

Unfortunately, the pay gap between teachers and other professionals has widened during the past two decades. The Economic Policy Institute reports the following: “A comparison of teachers' weekly wages to those of other workers with similar education and experience shows that, since 1993, female teacher wages have fallen behind 13 percent and male teacher wages 12.5 percent (11.5 percent among all teachers). Since 1979 teacher wages relative to those of other similar workers have dropped 18.5 percent among women, 9.3 percent among men, and 13.1 percent among both combined.”⁸

While research has found that individuals often choose to teach in independent schools for reasons such as autonomy and empowerment, school culture, quality of students, and quality facilities, these factors may become less important and salary may become more important as baby-boomer teachers retire and the competition for new teachers increases. Schools will be pressed to make their teacher salaries more competitive with salaries of professionals with similar degrees, experience, and workloads.

When asked to rate the importance of the competitiveness of their independent school salaries and the degree to which they are satisfied with the competitiveness of their salaries,

“It would be good to know the pay scale at my school. The pay scales in public schools are based on a teacher’s education and the number of years of experience in education. Stipends for extracurricular work are also set. The pay scale I saw was guarded and not public. It gave me an uneasy feeling.”

independent school teacher respondents indicated that having a competitive salary is very important to them and that they are not satisfied with how their salaries compare to local salaries, including local public school salaries.

Respondents felt that it is extremely important that their salaries be comparable to other local independent school salaries and very important that

⁶ National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), “NAIS Facts at a Glance,” 2006-2007.

⁷ *Salaries & Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2006-2007.* (Alexandria, VA: Educational Research Service, 2007).

⁸ Sylvia A. Allegretto, Sean P. Corcoran, Lawrence Mishel, *How Does Teacher Pay Compare? Methodological Challenges and Answers* (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2004) page 5. http://www.epinet.org/books/teacher_pay-intro.pdf

their salaries be comparable to local public school salaries and local salaries in general. Respondents also indicated some interest in supplementing their salaries with summer, coaching, tutoring, and other types of employment at the schools where they work. See Figures 4a and 4b.

Respondents gave low satisfaction ratings with their salaries in comparison to local public school salaries and local salaries in general. They gave moderate to high satisfaction ratings for how satisfied they are that their salaries are comparable to other local independent school salaries.

Figure 4a. Importance of the Competitiveness of Salary

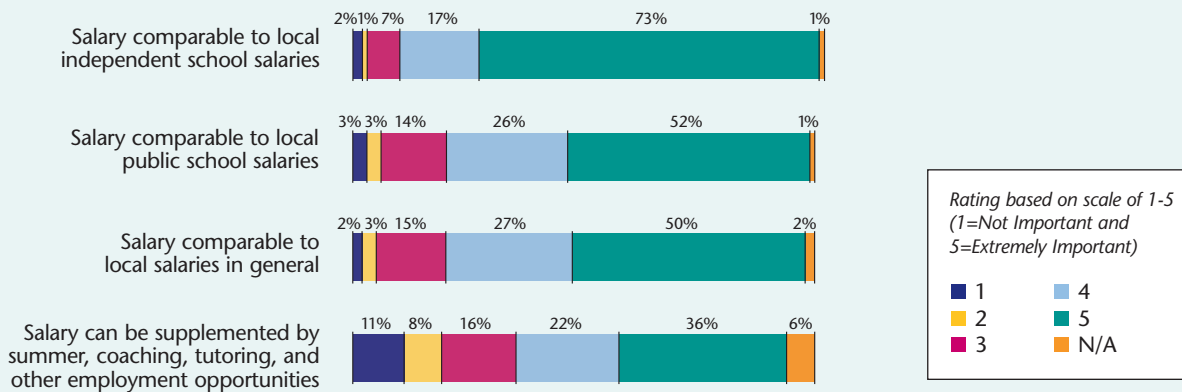


Figure 4b. Level of Satisfaction with Competitiveness of Salary





ACTIONS SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER

- **Every two to three years, conduct a formal salary study** to ensure that your school's salaries and benefits are competitive with local salaries and benefits. NAIS's StatsOnline database provides a benchmarking tool that allows you to compare salaries at your school with those at other independent schools.
- **Make your salary system more transparent** by informing faculty members how your school determines salaries and salary increases.
- **Explore with faculty** various "pay for performance" systems that reward excellence and that pay additional stipends to teachers who take on leadership and/or more work.

THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment has a profound impact on a teacher's ability to do his or her job and the feelings of efficacy and satisfaction. As Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson report in *Who Stays in Teaching and Why*, the "psychic rewards" associated with helping students achieve are especially important to teachers. The desire to help students is one of the primary reasons why people become teachers in the first place and why they continue to teach. When teachers feel thwarted in their efforts to help students achieve because they do not have supplies and resources to do their jobs, have unproductive relationships with parents and students, or work in schools without a culture of commitment to students, they are much more likely to feel ineffective as teachers, dissatisfied with teaching, and to leave the profession.⁹

When asked to rate how important different aspects of the work environment are to them, independent school faculty respondents mirrored these findings and also rated other aspects of the work environment as being very important to them. Being able to balance their work lives with their personal lives, having a job that is located in an area where the cost of living and housing are affordable, and having a diverse faculty and student body are also highly important to independent school teachers. In keeping with the research on the value of psychic rewards and positive student relationships for teachers, respondents rated having positive interactions with students as the most important aspect of their work environment. See Figure 5 on page 14.

A RED FLAG: WORK/LIFE BALANCE

When asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the work environment, responding faculty members reported high levels of satisfaction with many work aspects that are very important to them. However, for a few areas, a significant gap exists between the level of importance faculty members assign to the aspect and their level of satisfaction with the aspect.

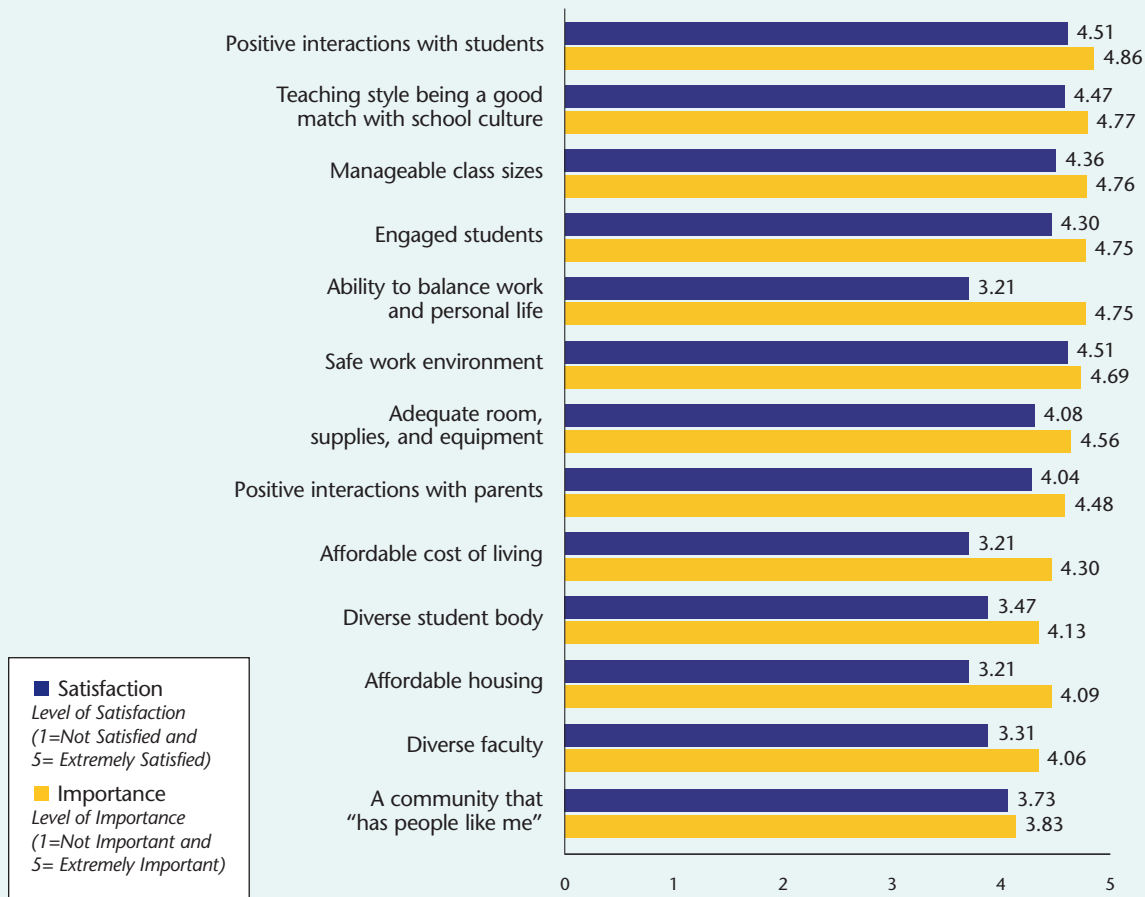
The largest discrepancy occurred with respondents' ratings on *the ability to balance work and personal life*. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1=Not Important and 5=Extremely Important, respondents gave this aspect a rating of 4.75 indicating that it is of great importance to them. However, on a 5-point scale with 1=Not Satisfied and 5=Extremely Satisfied, faculty rated their satisfaction with this condition at their current job as 3.21. Female respondents and respondents in their twenties, thirties, and fifties rated their satisfaction in this area even lower, with respondents in their twenties giving the lowest satisfaction rating of 3.14.

It is vitally important that independent schools respond to faculty needs in this area. The Society for Human Resource Management's *2006 SHRM Workplace Forecast* identified "increased demand for work/life balance" as one of the top five trends affecting the workplace.¹⁰

⁹ Johnson, Berg, Donaldson.

¹⁰ Jennifer Schramm, *SHRM Workplace Forecast*. (Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management, June 2006).

Figure 5. Faculty Members' Ratings of Both Importance of and Satisfaction with Aspects of the Work Environment



As SHRM suggests in its *2005 Benefits Survey Report*: “Offering employees more flexibility in terms of work/life balance is and will remain an important component of the workplace. Employers who can offer flexibility in schedules and workplaces will be the future employers of choice, as demographic trends indicate that employee expectations of flexibility are likely to increase.”¹¹

Schools should also pay attention to other areas that are important to faculty but did not receive high satisfaction ratings. These include affordable cost of living and housing in the area where a job is located and having a diverse faculty. When asked to

identify other work conditions that have an impact on teacher satisfaction at their schools, respondents frequently mentioned collegiality and professionalism among faculty and departments, the relationship between the school administration and faculty, workload, and additional duties outside the classroom that make work/life balance difficult, and school support for faculty dealing with difficult parents.

¹¹ Mary Elizabeth Burke. *2005 Benefits Survey Report*. (Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management, June 2005) page 57.

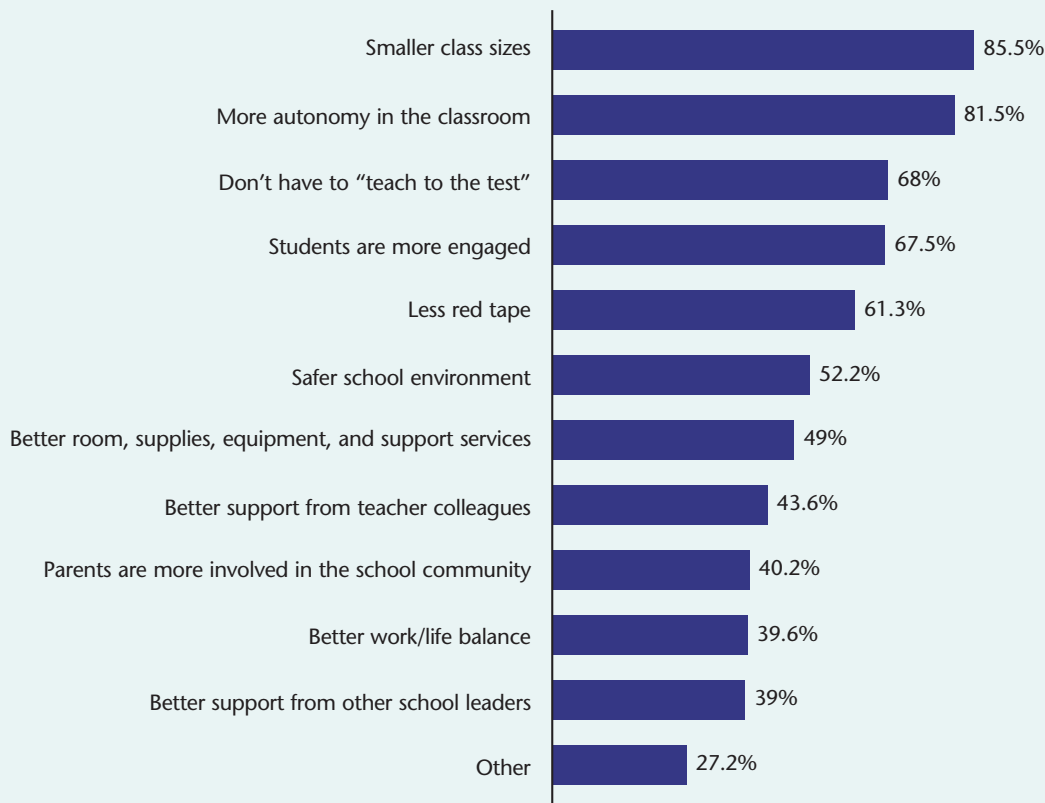
WHY TEACH IN AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL?

When asked why they choose to teach in an independent school instead of a public school, the overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that having smaller class sizes (85.5 percent), being more autonomous in the classroom (81.5 percent), not having to “teach to the test” (68 percent), and having students who are more engaged (67.5 percent) are the top reasons that they choose to teach in an independent school. Encountering

less red tape (61 percent) and being in a safer school environment (52 percent) also strongly influenced their decisions to teach in independent schools. A number of respondents added the following reasons to the list of why they made the choice to teach in an independent school rather than a public school (See Figure 6):

- Faculty children can attend the same school as their parent at a reduced cost or for free. Faculty children also become part of the community.
- Teacher certification is not required.

Figure 6. Reasons Respondents Teach in an Independent School instead of a Public School



- The poor quality of the public schools led them to independent schools.
- Independent schools allow faculty to be more creative and versatile in their work.
- The independent school environment is family-like — they are happy to be part of a positive, caring community.
- Their independent schools are a good fit with their teaching styles and educational philosophy.

Interestingly, more than half of the respondents (55.4 percent) reported that they have received job offers from both public and independent schools. A large number of respondents (46.4 percent) have taught only in independent schools and a significant number of respondents (38 percent) taught previously in public schools and then moved to independent schools. The large numbers of respondents who have received job offers from public schools or have taught previously in public schools highlight the need for independent schools to stay abreast of the compensation and teaching practices of local public schools.

WHAT FACULTY MEMBERS LIKE BEST AND LEAST ABOUT TEACHING IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

When asked to describe what they like *best* about teaching in independent schools, many respondents mentioned the engaged students, strong sense of community and collegiality, academic freedom and autonomy, and committed parents. When asked to describe what they like *least* about teaching at an independent school, a large number of respondents wrote about heavy workloads and extracurricular duties that make it

difficult to balance their work with their personal lives. Challenging, “customer-like,” “entitled” parents and students and the sometimes elite and isolationist nature of their communities were also mentioned by some respondents as negative aspects of working at an independent school.

See a sample of verbatim comments on pages 18–19.

LEAVING INDEPENDENT EDUCATION

Thirty-seven percent of responding faculty members plan to leave teaching or retire by 2016, 14.6 percent of respondents by 2011.

When asked what they would like to be doing in five years, the majority of respondents (69 percent) indicated that they would like to remain in independent education, either in the job they currently hold (42.7 percent), in another teaching job (8.2 percent), or in an administrative position (18.1 percent).

Although this large majority plan to stay in independent education for the near future, when the figures are projected 10 years out, the statistics become alarming. Thirty-seven percent of respondents plan to leave teaching or retire by 2016 and 14.6 percent of respondents plan to leave by 2011. Respondents who plan to leave independent education but do not plan to retire cited low pay, heavy workloads, parenthood, and a desire to help disadvantaged students as reasons for leaving independent education. Respondents’ most frequently mentioned reason for leaving was to increase their salaries to be able to provide for themselves and their families.

ACTIONS SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER

- 1. Stay abreast of workplace trends and what features employees seek in their work environment.** Go to www.shrm.org to peruse the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) bookstore or to become a SHRM member and receive the latest information and research on trends affecting the workplace.
- 2. Seek input from faculty and analyze ways** to make your workplace more flexible and to help faculty members achieve the work/life balance they desire.
- 3. Conduct exit interviews with faculty** who leave your school to assess whether work environment issues are impacting faculty retention.
- 4. Support faculty in their relationships with students and parents.** Hold in-service training sessions on how to work and communicate with today's parents and students.

What Do You Like Best About Teaching in an Independent School?

A sample of verbatim comments from respondents

- *I like the parental involvement and their support of the faculty. I have contact with my students' parents daily at the beginning and at the end of the day.*
- *At my school, I am able to teach what I am passionate about, my colleagues are all engaged in their areas of expertise as well as being terrific at teaching their area of expertise, and I can allow the class to go off on a tangent when they are interested in something particular.*
- *I love working freely with bright, engaged students.*
- *I enjoy knowing the students and families on a more personal level. I like teaching children how to think and to be creative rather than how to pass a test.*
- *The flexibility of curriculum; the qualified student body; the high academic standards; the balance of academics, athletics and opportunities for artistic expression; excellent and supportive relationship between parents, teachers, staff, and students.*
- *I feel valued, trusted, and taken care of. The administration, parents, colleagues, and students make my job wonderful.*
- *I love the opportunity to teach engaged children, interested in learning. I love the home-school connection and the support of my school leadership team.*
- *My colleagues and the administration are extremely supportive and very dedicated to the students and school. Everyone works together to help each student grow both academically and socially. I am proud to be a member of such a caring group.*
- *I know my students intimately. I know what's going on in their lives and the lives of their families. This allows me to adjust my teaching to the needs of the individual (to some degree).*
- *Highly motivated students and creative administrators who value and respect teachers and students. Wow! I can actually teach, because class sizes are small. This is the MOST important key to a successful school. Our standards are all about challenging the mind, not preparing for a politically-driven test.*
- *I really enjoy the high level of professionalism and collegial relationships at my school. I am respected as a professional, given a high degree of autonomy in my classroom with respect to curriculum, and feel fulfilled by the enthusiasm of my students. I am also given ample professional development opportunities.*

What Do You Like Least About Teaching in an Independent School?

A sample of verbatim comments from respondents

- *The heavy demands upon my time. It is difficult to have a life outside of the school.*
- *The amount of hours that you are expected to work with little compensation.*
- *The pay and the demands on personal time.*
- *Demands on personal time can be daunting during certain periods of the academic calendar. Having to "wear multiple hats" and spending a great deal of my "personal" time working.*
- *It is hard to maintain a balance between school life and personal life because there is always so much to do, so many responsibilities. And more keeps piling on!*
- *Overly demanding parents and not enough tuition remission for faculty children.*
- *I dislike the lack of time I have for a personal life and that my salary doesn't really support me adequately — especially since I'm still paying hefty student loans as a result of my graduate education.*
- *Huge demands on time without any level of comparable compensation.*
- *The many EXTRAs that surmount in addition to the required teaching load (i.e. after-school meetings, coaching, and other extra-curricular requirements).*
- *The salary and benefits don't compete with public school.*
- *Frankly, the hours are exceptionally long with lots of duties and the compensation is relatively low for the responsibility.*
- *It's difficult to live on a teaching salary. If I did not have to work in the summer, I would have done more professional development work.*

PREPARING AND RETAINING NEW TEACHERS

What keeps new teachers in the teaching force? With more than 30 percent of new teachers leaving after their first three years of teaching and close to 50 percent of new teachers leaving the teaching profession in their first five years of teaching, preparing and retaining new teachers is critical to maintaining an adequate pool of teachers. As Peter Gow reports in *An Admirable Faculty: Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining the Best Independent School Teachers*, new teachers need support and mentoring in order to thrive. New teacher induction programs, professional development opportunities, mentors, and open communication with experienced teachers and administrators are some of the many ways that schools can support and nurture new teachers.¹²

Survey respondents gave their schools moderate to low ratings in their new teacher support practices. With a large number of independent school baby-boomer teachers poised to retire, this critical piece of a school's teacher recruitment and retention strategy requires immediate attention and resources. Schools have a solid base to build on with a large number of responding faculty indicating that their schools are doing extremely or very well in the areas of department heads and

co-teachers communicating regularly with new teachers (44 percent) and having mentoring or buddy systems for new teachers (43 percent).

When asked to identify other practices their schools should use to prepare and retain new teachers, many respondents suggested reducing the workloads of first-year teachers, establishing formal systems for mentoring and support of new teachers, and setting clear expectations and evaluations for teacher mentors and mentees. Schools should consider strengthening these support practices for welcoming and retaining new teachers.

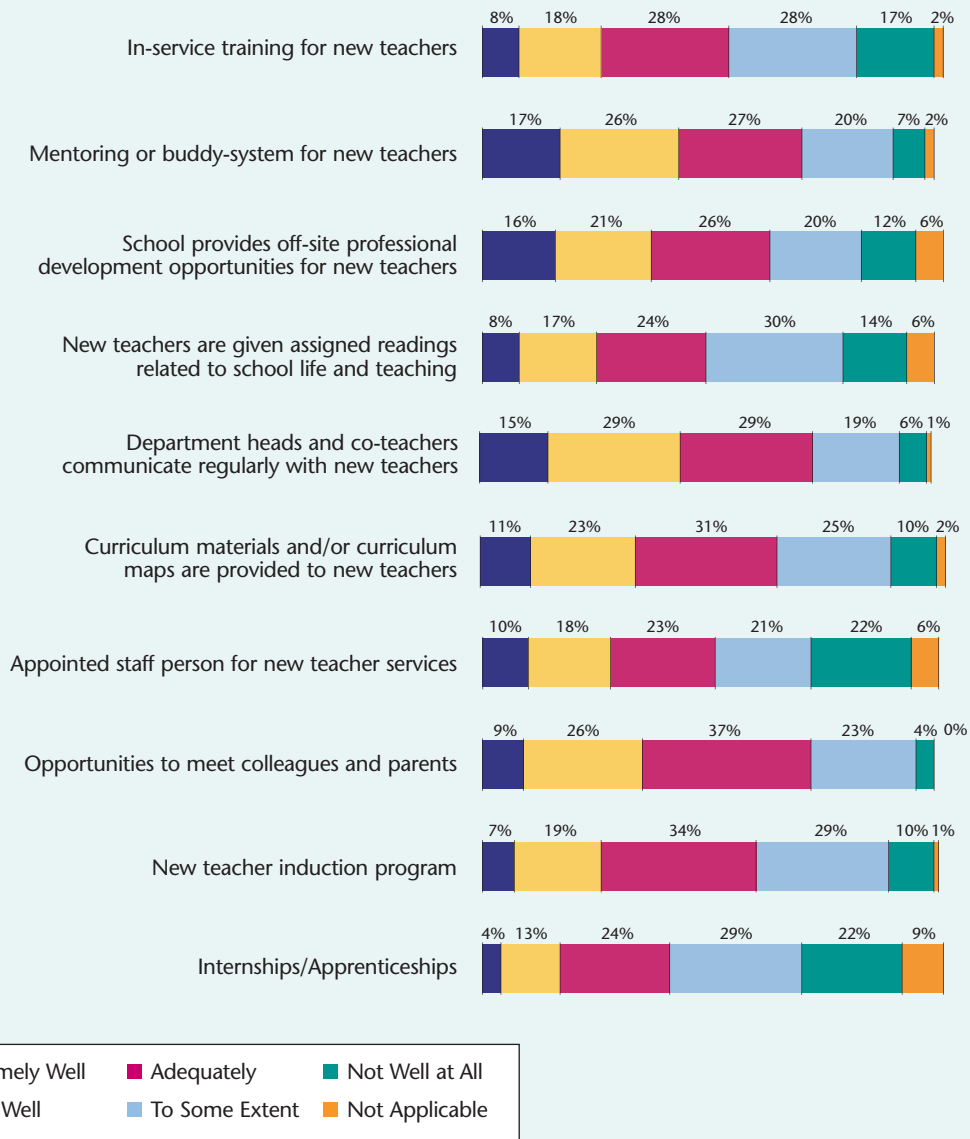
Respondents know first-hand the value of mentoring and supporting teachers during their first years. The majority of survey respondents (62 percent) had a mentor during their first year of teaching—some as part of a formal arrangement (27 percent) and others on an informal basis (34.8 percent). More than half of the respondents (53.9 percent) participated in experiential training as part of their education. Figure 7 on page 21 lists support practices that have been found to have very positive effects on new teacher retention, along with respondents' ratings of how well their schools follow these practices.

“Do not give new teachers the heaviest load. They need a lighter load in order to adjust, and they may need to pick up extra duties in order to earn more money.”

¹² Peter Gow, *An Admirable Faculty: Recruiting, Hiring, Training, and Retaining the Best Independent School Teachers* (Washington, DC, National Association of Independent Schools, 2005).

“There needs to be some sort of guideline/ checklist about training the new teacher. What is the teaching partner helping with, what is the faculty head helping with, and anyone else who works with new teachers.”

Figure 7. Faculty Members’ Ratings of School Support for New Teachers



ACTIONS SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER

1. Peter Gow offers numerous strategies for supporting new teachers in *An Admirable Faculty: Recruiting, Hiring, Training, and Retaining the Best Independent School Teachers*, including:
 - a. *Appoint someone, informally or formally, as “director of new teacher services.”*
 - b. *Provide as much material as possible to new teachers. Collect curriculum materials from departing teachers. Consider maintaining curriculum maps, which can be useful resources for new teachers.*
 - c. *Offer new teachers a comprehensive before-school induction program, featuring aspects of the school’s academic and nonacademic programs as well as its values and culture, and offering opportunities to meet colleagues.*
 - d. *Assign new teachers course loads and classes based on experience levels and expertise. Do not give new teachers the sections or courses that “nobody else wants to teach.” Set new teachers up for success.*
 - e. *Consider the establishment of a full-blown mentoring system, or at least a new teacher-established teacher “buddy system.”*¹³

¹³ Ibid, pages 60-61

CONCLUSION

Since a high-quality faculty is one of the most important factors for the success of an independent school and the driver of a school's reputation, it is wise for school leaders and boards to develop a strategic plan for the

3 R's of school staffing: recruitment, retention, and reward systems. In the coming war for talent, schools need to have an arsenal of tactics to woo and satisfy this critical constituency.

METHODOLOGY/ PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

To collect the information contained in this report, NAIS sent an online survey to a random sample of 3,010 independent school teachers. A total of 851 teachers completed the survey, producing a response rate of 28 percent. The majority of respondents have been teaching for more than 10 years (75.6 percent), have held their current positions for more than seven years (56 percent), and teach in day schools (80 percent). Respondents were highly educated, with 44 percent of respondents holding an MA or MS degree and 23 percent of respondents holding a M.Ed. degree. Demographically, the majority of respondents were female (62 percent) and indicated that they are in their thirties (25.6 percent), forties (25.3 percent), and fifties (33.3 percent).

This report was prepared by Susan Booth of the NAIS staff in May 2007.

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1620 L Street, NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036-5965
(202) 973-9700
www.nais.org