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Introduction: The Fairfax County Public Schools does not report on the reasons teachers leave the FCPS system. Possible reasons include moving away, marrying and moving away, marrying and starting a family, tiring of teaching, desiring an easier commute, or switching to a neighboring school district to earn a higher salary. Herein we examine the last of these possible reasons.

Summary: Of the ten WABE school systems, Fairfax County pays its teachers the most, except for two of the small school systems. These two small systems do not have a high enough need for new teachers to absorb the number that leave the FCPS system; therefore, most teachers who are leaving must be leaving for reasons other than remuneration.

We might wonder why teachers from other school systems are not applying in Fairfax County. Apparently they do, because Fairfax hires teachers well above entry level (Exhibit 1).

Discussion: In Report 146, we showed the following profile of teachers leaving the FCPS system over a two-year period (Exhibit 1). (The annual number is half of that shown. The salary number is the top of the salary bracket.) The greatest number leave while earning between \$45,000 and \$60,000. This same salary brackets also have the maximum number of teachers. Over this salary range, the percent leaving is 12% (Exhibit 2). This turnover rate is not much different from the turnover rate for all private-sector jobs (11.5%). Those teachers earning on the order of \$80,000 per year have a lower turnover rate – probably because they are awaiting retirement.

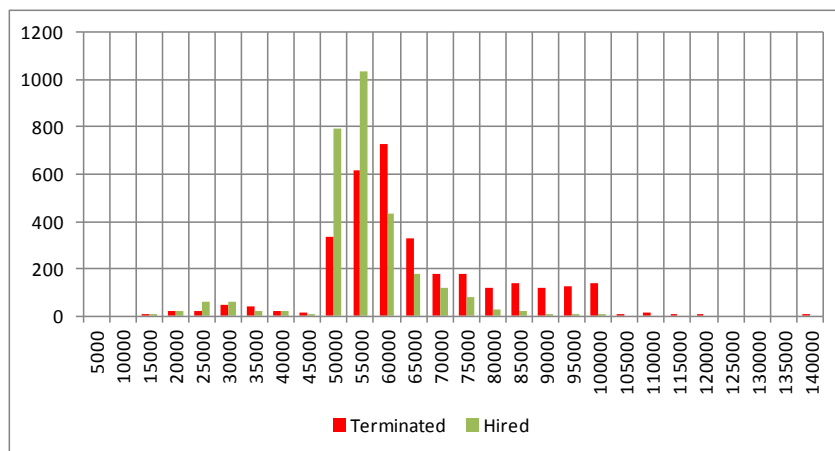


Exhibit 1: Number of Teachers Leaving the FCPS System over a Two-Year Period

Where do the teachers go when they leave? The salary range from \$45,000 to \$60,000 corresponds to a teacher with a Masters degree with fewer than nine years of experience, probably teachers on the order of 30 years of age or younger. They may move away, marry and move away, marry and start a family, tire of teaching, desire an easier commute, or switch to a neighboring school district to earn a higher salary. Without data from exit interviews, we can only speculate about the reason – except for the last. For the last, we can compare remuneration (salaries plus benefits) for teachers in the Fairfax County system to those in neighboring school districts (i.e., those belonging to the Washington Area Board of Education (WABE)).

Of the ten school systems belonging to the WABE, only the larger four have the capacity for absorbing a significant number of teachers leaving the FCPS system (Exhibit 3). Of these, FCPS pays the most, when benefits are

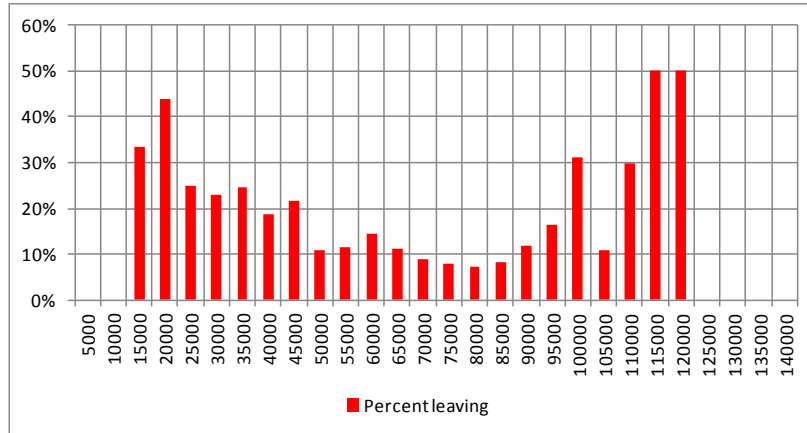


Exhibit 2: Percent of Teachers in Each Salary Bracket That Leave the FCPS System

included¹. The FCPS system pays the most for those starting with no experience, whether they had a Bachelor degree or Masters degree, and for those with a Masters after nine years (nine step changes). The salary of those with a Masters plus nine years of experience is approximately equal to the average salary of all teachers.

Alexandria City pays much more than other school systems. The low SAT scores for Alexandria City implies that the teaching experience may not be as desirable as in other school districts.

2014 Enrollment		Salary + benefits		
		BA start	MA start	MA+9
2,421	Falls Church City	\$71,912	\$80,067	\$101,628
3,260	Manassas Park City	\$62,645	\$71,093	\$82,193
7,220	Manassas City	\$66,218	\$74,122	\$88,585
13,563	Alexandria City	\$74,154	\$85,057	\$120,277
23,421	Arlington County	\$69,270	\$76,373	\$110,729
70,858	Loudoun County	\$70,778	\$79,206	\$89,532
85,439	Prince William County	\$66,329	\$74,286	\$90,099
125,136	Prince George's County	\$59,852	\$67,966	\$83,591
151,289	Montgomery County	\$62,389	\$68,732	\$91,041
183,895	Fairfax County	\$71,665	\$80,516	\$93,886

Exhibit 3: Remuneration for School Systems belonging to the WABE

Arlington County definitely pays more than other school systems. Its SAT scores are comparable to those of other school districts. The benefits amount to 43.6% of the salary, as compared to 53.3% for Fairfax; however, in terms of total remuneration, Arlington pays more for teachers with 5 to 21 years of experience (Exhibit 4). In the private sector, people rarely change jobs if the new job does not pay at least 10% more than the present job. More commonly, the difference must be more than 20%. If teachers change for 10%, then they would switch to Arlington only when they have 7 to 16 years of experience. At a turnover rate of 12% and a retirement rate of 3%, Arlington would hire only approximately 300 teachers per year. Fairfax has approximately 1200 teachers leave per year, not including those who retire. Therefore, there are many Fairfax teachers who leave for reasons other than a higher salary in another school system. Teaching in Arlington may also require a more difficult commute, so the 10% may not be sufficient. The prospects of a lower income after 21 years of experience may also be a deterrent.

¹ The remuneration is based on salaries and benefit percentage for FY2015, as reported in the WABE 2015 reports, with the percent benefits based on the typical salary of \$65,000.

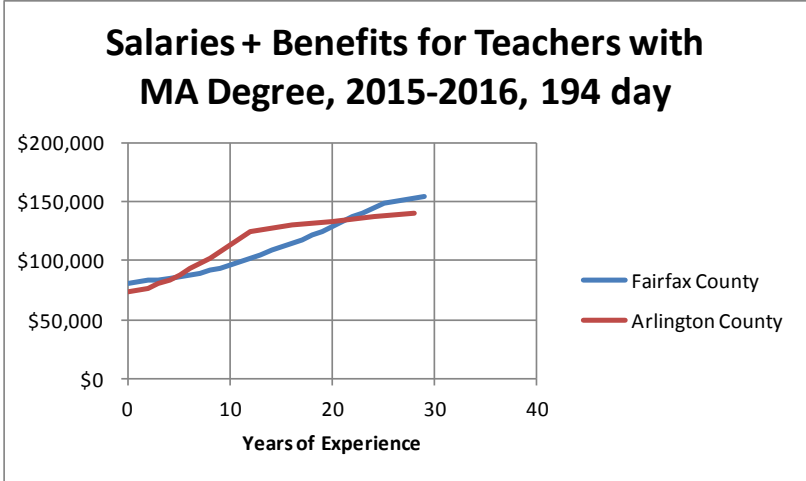


Exhibit 4: A Comparison between Arlington and Fairfax Teacher Remuneration