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Teachers are an essential and influential part of student learning. A good teacher can add as much as one and a half years of learning in one academic year;¹ whereas a poor quality teacher can set a student back months.² But despite the value teachers can provide to their students, states and districts face numerous challenges in recruiting new teachers well positioned to contribute to their students' academic growth.

One challenge to recruitment is salary. Teacher pay has gained media attention as a result of teacher strikes in West Virginia and Oklahoma.³ Calculating starting teacher salaries adjusted for cost of living, EdBuild determined that the average cost-adjusted starting teacher salary for the 2012–2013 school year was approximately \$33,000⁴—more than \$10,000 less than the average starting salary for college graduates generally (\$45,739). These incentives and adopted new evaluation systems that aimed to better differentiate among teachers,

⁸ and some simultaneously repealed teacher tenure protections. A recent study found that these changes to evaluation systems and tenure policies have dissuaded some new teachers—mostly from less selective universities—from entering the profession.⁹

Further increasing the difficulty of recruiting new teachers may be the decline in teacher job satisfaction, which in 2012 fell to 39% from a high of 62% in 2008.¹⁰ School funding may have been a factor in the decline: teachers in schools where budgets had decreased in

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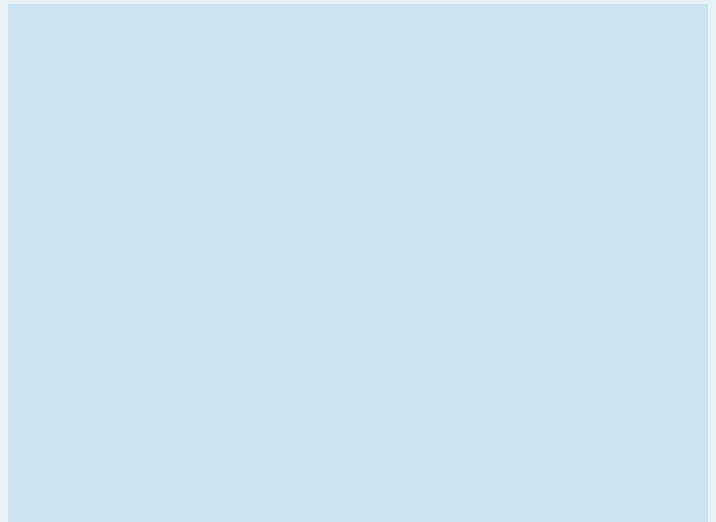
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the last twelve months reported lower satisfaction rates than teachers in schools where the budget stayed the same or had increased.

Given these many challenges, and that teacher shortages affect some subject areas and geographic locations more than others,¹¹ it is important to better understand to what degree different facets of teaching attract or dissuade students

from entering the teaching profession. This study, of how high school students perceive teaching as a profession, is intended as a step towards improving this understanding.



Who wants to be a teacher?

To gauge student interest in and perceptions of the teaching profession, we surveyed a sample of students participating in national administrations of the ACT test during the 2017–2018

When asked to rank the top three reasons they were interested in teaching, interested students were most likely to report that they enjoyed working with children and young people (60%), wanted to make a difference in or give back to their community (51%), were inspired by one or more of their own teachers (42%),

or had a passion for a specific subject (41%) (Figure 3).

Notable differences between the reasons cited by “potentially” and “definitely” interested students included that the former group were more likely than the latter to cite passion for a specific subject (43% vs. 37%) or “to show others how to

do things” (23% vs. 12%) as one of their top three reasons, while the latter group were more likely to cite being inspired by a teacher at school (46% vs. 39%) or that they enjoy working with children and young people (68% vs. 55%) as one of their top three reasons.

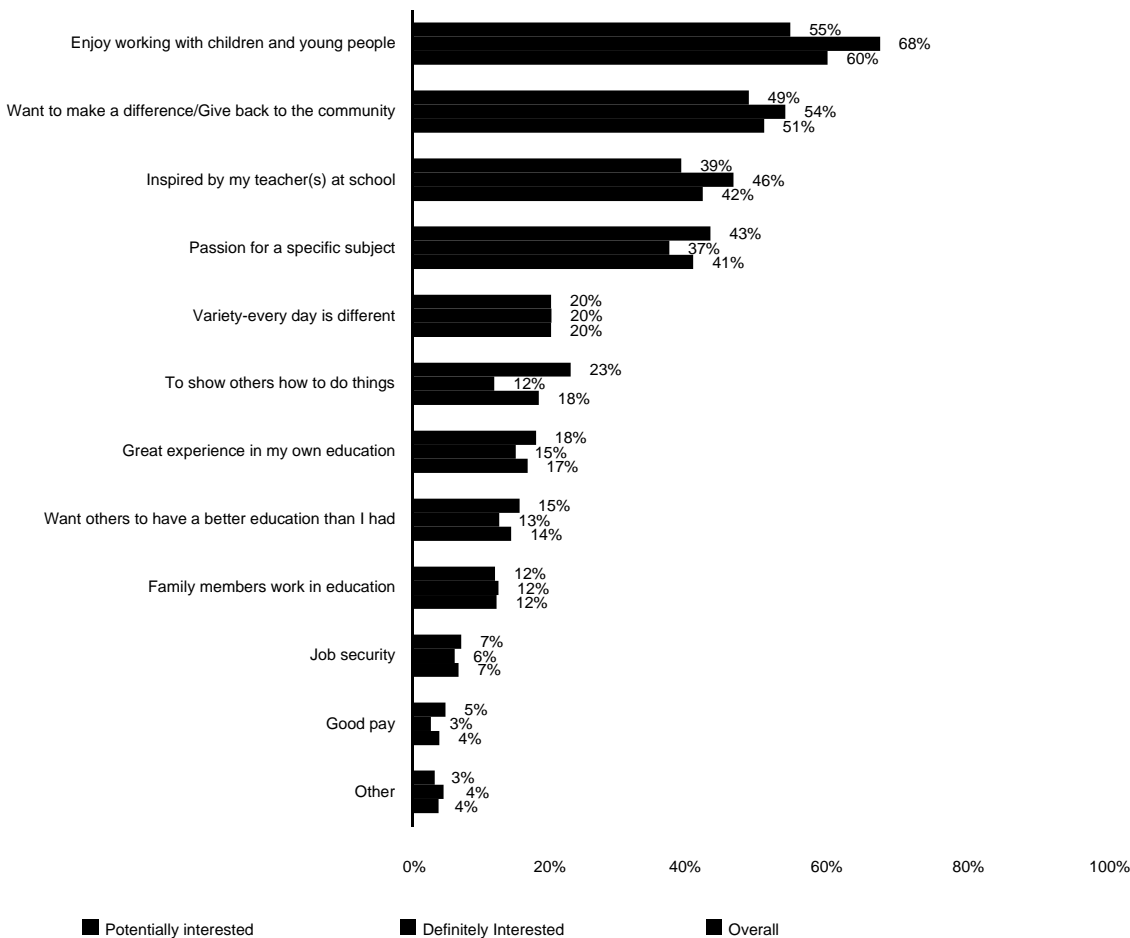


Figure 3. Top three reasons cited by survey respondents for reporting an interest in becoming a K–12 teacher

Note: 6 HOHFW L WHPV ZHUH RPLWWHG IURP WKH ¿ JXUH GXH WR D ORZ QXPEHU RI

