



# Florida Teaching Trends

Jim Horne, Commissioner

**Florida Has the Fourth Largest School System in the Nation.** Florida public school districts employ 141,000 classroom teachers. Including librarians, guidance counselors and other instructional personnel, the number of instructional staff totals 158,000.

**Teacher Termination.** Approximately 10 percent of Florida's teachers resign each year. Some of these teachers are merely moving from one district to another, but others are leaving the classroom for a variety of reasons, often not to return. Teacher retirements make up from 13-19 percent of the terminations.

**Increase in Teacher Retirements.** Two trends are likely to affect the numbers of teacher retirements over the next few years.

- **Aging of the Current Teacher Workforce.** One third of Florida's teachers in 1992-93 were born from 1946-1954. The state may soon begin to experience significant increases in the number of teacher retirements, with the likelihood that retirements will reach unprecedented heights in the decade following 2006.
- **Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP).** DROP is a retirement plan implemented by the Florida Retirement System in July 1998. An analysis of information from the school districts and from the Division of Retirements indicates that nearly three fourths of the teachers who were eligible to retire in 1998 entered DROP. DROP will have its greatest effect on demand for teachers in fall 2003, the year those who entered DROP in 1998 complete five years in the program, the maximum time permitted.

**Projected Number of Teachers Needed.** To take the place of retiring and resigning teachers—and to staff additional classrooms needed because of enrollment increases—each year Florida school districts will need to fill 16,000 to 19,000 vacancies. The annual vacancies represent more than 10 percent of the teacher workforce. These projections do not include additional teachers needed as a result of the new class-size amendment.

**Categories of New Hires.** Not all new hires are new teachers. An estimated 19 percent taught the prior school year in another Florida school district. An additional estimated 62 percent were returning after longer absences or transferring from nonpublic schools or schools out of state.

**Certification Status of New Hires.** Almost all of the newly-hired teachers are certified. However, not all of them have certification appropriate to the subject they are hired to teach. In fall 2001 new hires teaching in areas in which they were not certified included 16 percent of science teachers, 17 percent of reading teachers, 20 percent of math teachers, and 31 percent of teachers in exceptional student education (ESE) programs.

**Teachers Currently Teaching Out of Field.** In 2001, overall 7 percent of foreign language teachers, 9 percent of math and science teachers, 12 percent of reading teachers, 13 percent of the ESE teachers, 25 percent of the industrial arts/technology education teachers, and 33 percent of ESOL teachers (English for Speakers of Other Languages) were teaching out of field.

**Critical Teacher Shortage Areas.** All of these fields, along with the highly specialized field of school psychology, have been identified as Critical Teacher Shortage Areas, enabling teachers and teacher candidates in these areas to receive financial assistance under Florida's Critical Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness and Tuition Reimbursement Programs.

**Teacher Education Graduates.** Approximately 5,700 teacher candidates graduated in 2001-02 from approved teacher education programs in Florida colleges and universities. Of these, from 9-10 percent were already teaching and thus were receiving add-on certification.

**Tracking Graduates to the Classroom.** Among new graduates (those not already teaching), from 56-60 percent were teaching in Florida public schools the fall after they graduated.

**Alternative Routes to Certification.** Not included in the count of new graduates are those completing alternative routes to certification administered by the school districts.