



# **Teacher Qualifications and Work Environments Across School Types**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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### *Executive Summary*

The academic success of any school depends on the instruction provided by high quality teachers. Yet the impact of school choice on teachers and teaching has received less attention than other components of school operations. This brief addresses that lack by reviewing teacher quality in choice schools and differences in work environments across school types. It also includes the scant information available about what impact school choice may have upon the teacher labor market.

Findings, broken out by types of schools, are based on a review of relevant research as well as original analyses of the 2003-2004 Schools and Staff Survey published by the National Center for Education Statistics. Both the existing literature and the new analyses find differences in the qualifications of teachers across private, charter, and public schools. Among private schools, Catholic school teachers appear most similar to teachers in traditional public schools. There are some differences in the qualifications of teachers in public choice schools, but they are not consistent. While choice schools tend to have more teachers who graduated from more selective colleges and fewer teachers who graduated from less selective colleges, they also have more inexperienced teachers.

Private school teachers are the most satisfied with their jobs, despite having the lowest salaries. This may be partially due to the finding that they also have smaller class sizes and work fewer hours. Contrary to expectations, charter schools have class sizes similar to those in traditional public schools. Overall, the analysis suggests that teachers in forms of public school choice and in traditional public schools have similar work environments.

There is limited evidence that charter schools use different hiring practices than public schools, although the extent to which these differences may contribute to qualification differences is unknown. The little that is known about what impact school choice has upon the teacher labor market suggests that public schools do not experience competition for high quality teachers, and they make few changes in staffing policies as a result. Although charter and private schools lose teachers at higher rates than public schools, there is no strong evidence about the place of choice schools in teacher career patterns.

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Based on these findings, it is strongly recommended that extensive additional research be conducted to fill the many existing knowledge gaps exposed in this study, especially regarding the question of how school choice affects the overall teacher labor market.