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EFP Takeaways

More Than Shortages: The Unequal Distribution of Substitute Teaching

Background

Substitute teachers play a major role in the education system, as they often step in when classroom teachers are absent—6 percent of a school year, on average. There is surprisingly little prior research concerning how schools address teacher absences and utilize substitute teachers. Jing Liu, Susanna Loeb, and Ying Shi explore the prevalence, predictors, and distribution of substitute coverage across schools. Their work is published in vol. 17 issue 2 of *EFP*.

The Study

The authors use detailed administrative data covering school years 2011-12 to 2017-18 from a large urban school district in California. Importantly, they have data which provide a day-to-day account of each time a teacher is away from the classroom and link daily teacher absences to substitute teachers and their characteristics. Additionally, the authors surveyed both regular and substitute teachers in 2017-18 to gauge perceptions of substitute teaching.

For more details:

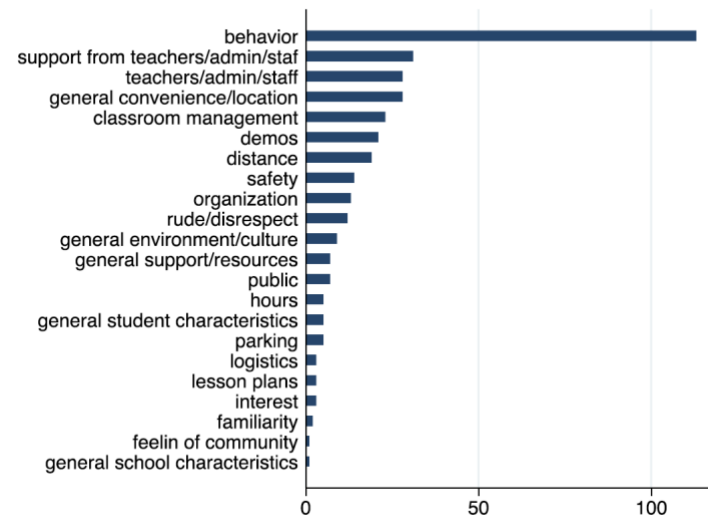
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- Summary of:
Liu, J., Loeb, S., & Shi, Y. (2022). More Than Shortages: The Unequal Distribution of Substitute Teaching. *Education Finance and Policy*, 17 (2): 285-308.

Findings

The authors find that a number of factors are associated with whether an absence receives substitute coverage, including the course subject, the timing of when a substitute job gets advertised, and teacher experiences.

The authors find that less-advantaged schools systematically exhibit lower rates of substitute coverage compared with peer institutions. Much of the variation seen in the distribution of substitution coverage across schools comes from substitute teachers' preferences for specific schools, mainly driven by student behavior and support from teachers and school administrators.

Figure 5 Substitute Teacher Reasons for Designating a Least Favorite School



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