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## Report shows increase in teacher vacancies

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Jan 3, 2023

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The S.C. Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) has released its 2022-23 Annual Educator Supply and Demand Report, detailing teaching positions, vacancies, departures and new hires in S.C. public schools.

The main finding of this year's report was that there was a 39% increase in teacher vacancies compared to the 2021-22 report.

Dr. Jennifer Garrett, coordinator of research and program evaluation for CERRA, said last year's vacancy numbers were the highest they had ever seen, and this year was even higher.

"There was nearly a 40% increase" in vacancies in classroom teaching and service positions, such as school psychologists, counselors and speech-language pathologists, she said.

Statewide, there were 55,605 total teaching positions, 8,320 departures, 8,004 hires and 1,473 vacancies for 2022-23. In the 2021-22 report, there were 56,166 positions, 1,568 departures, 7,014 new hires and 1,062 vacancies.

In Lancaster County, there were 1,052 total teacher positions, with 143 total departures, 220 total hires and 39 total vacancies this year. In 2021-22, there were 956 total teacher positions, with 129 total departures, 145 total hires and 30 vacancies.

Lydia Quinn, director of human resources and chief operations officer for Lancaster County School District, said the increased teacher vacancies have put a strain on the district.

“It is extremely challenging filling teacher vacancies of all types right now,” she said. “Typically, we would not have any vacancies or at most, five to 10. There are many times now that we have no applicants for positions or no qualified, certified applicants. Instructional assistants, bus drivers and cafeteria workers are also in short supply.”

Garrett said the compiled report is based on individual surveys sent to her from every public school district in South Carolina. The report is broken down by subject area and grades served.

“It (the report) asked them for information on new hires in their district. It asked for information on any teachers who left their district, how many years of experience they had, when they left, and then how many vacancies they still have at the beginning of each school year,” Garrett said.

She has been compiling CERRA reports since 2008, and the organization has been collecting data since 2001. This year’s report featured graphics and bullet points to improve readability, unlike previous years that just were a long list of facts and figures.

Garrett said that while teacher departures increased this year, the report also counts a teacher moving from one district to another as a departure, as well as retirements. She said this means the turnover rate for South Carolina is not actually that high, because so many teachers move from district to district.

“It does create that vacancy for that particular district,” she said, noting that it often affects districts that are already struggling.

Garrett said the goal of the report is for policymakers to see the statistics and make changes that will benefit school districts.

“This is really the only sort of statewide report that does provide that that raw data, that concrete data, that does indicate that there is a problem,” she said, adding that CERRA’s hope is that someone who can do something about it is sees the data and takes it seriously.

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