

Aug. 8, 2024

30 MINUTE WEBINAR

Slides available at
edunomicslab.org

The Big Hire: Massachusetts's School Staffing Changes

Marguerite Roza

@MargueriteRoza

MR1170@georgetown.edu

Maggie Cicco

Maggie.Cicco@georgetown.edu



Key findings in staffing changes from 2019-20 to 2023-24

➤ New money brought over 10,000 new staff to MA schools

- MA schools got an influx in funding in recent years, from state sources as well as federal relief funds (both were intended to target the highest-needs students).
- The new funds fueled a rise in staffing of over 10,000 new positions or an increase of over 7%.

➤ New staff did disproportionately land on the highest-needs districts and schools

- The highest-poverty schools (75-100% poverty) started with higher levels of staffing, and have since added even more.
- Before the hiring surge, schools with 50-75% poverty averaged fewer staff than lower- or higher-poverty peers. Since then, they've added staff at a higher rate, surpassing staffing levels of 0-50% poverty schools and districts.

➤ Who are these new staff?

- New staff include over 3,000 new aides, with just under half serving as paraprofessionals in classrooms.
- Non-teaching certificated staff saw the greatest proportionate increase, with many new staff in SEL, mental health, and counseling.

➤ Beneath the averages, some challenges linger

- Schools in the 50-75% poverty level are still shortchanged in larger districts.
- Districts deployed staff earlier to their wealthier schools (with the poorest schools seeing a larger share of their new staffing arrive later in the more recent year).
- Leaders need to remain vigilant that additional resources are indeed landing where intended.

➤ MA schools have work to do to ensure that these new staff deliver value for students

- Academic recovery in MA districts has been slower than in other states, with low-income students seeing continued decline.
- That said, additions in SEL/mental health/counseling do appear to be delivering stronger attendance growth than other states.



Between 2020 and 2024, MA schools added over 10,000 additional staff positions, making MA one of the higher-staffed school systems in the country

Since 2019-20, MA districts have added:

+ 2,632	Teachers	}
+ 1,285	Administrators	
+ 2,906	Other Certificated	
+ 3,230	Aides/Non Certificated	
<hr/>		
10,053	Total new staff	

Over 6,000 new staff with training/expertise in schooling

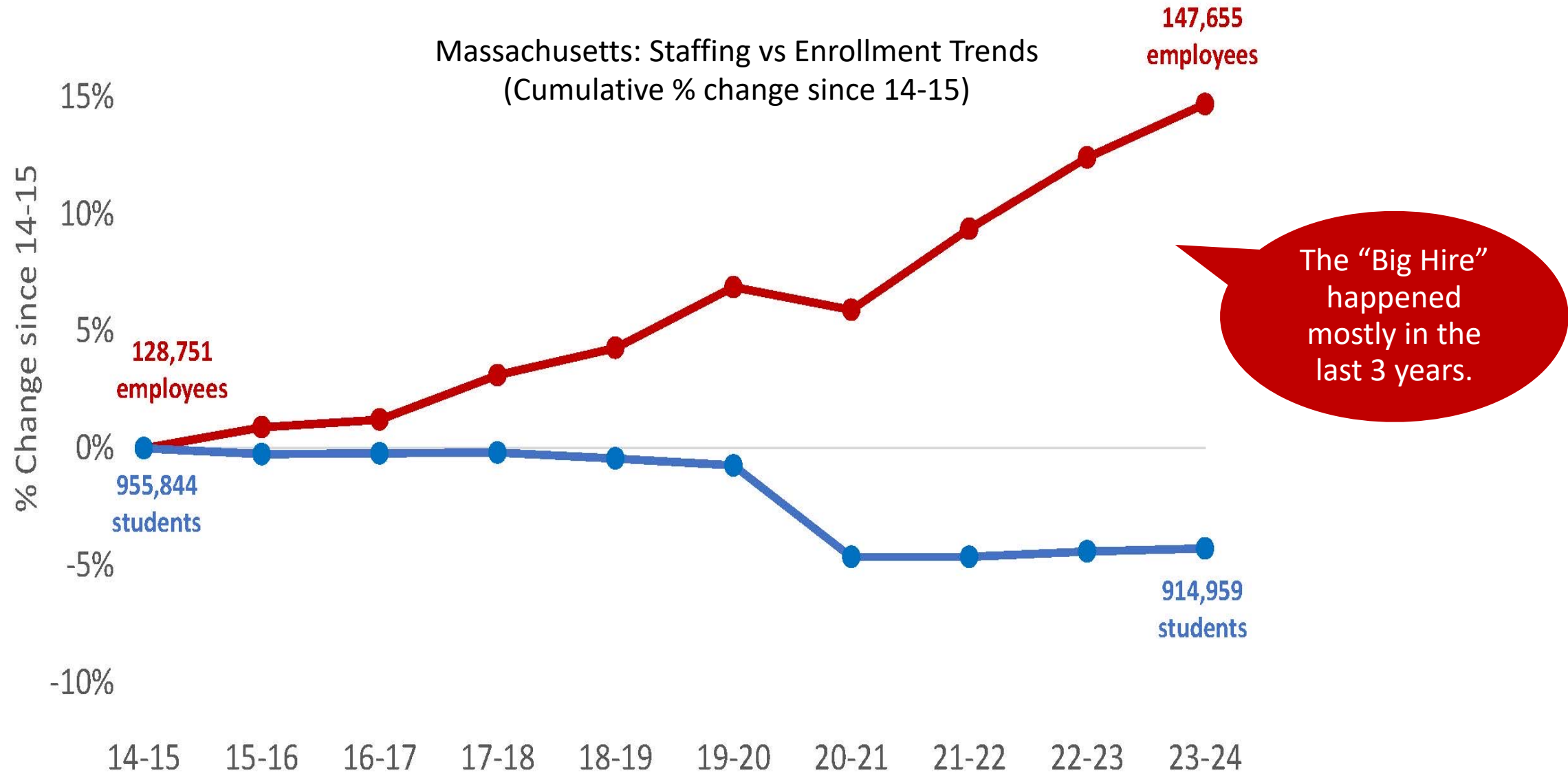
Another 3,000 paras/aides help with workload, etc.

New staffing boosts MA school staffing by 7%

The additions amount to 5 new staff per 500 students (or ~ 5 new staff per school).

MA schools now have 78 staff per 500 students, 9 more than the national average.*

Over the last decade, Massachusetts staff is up 15% while total enrollment is down 4%

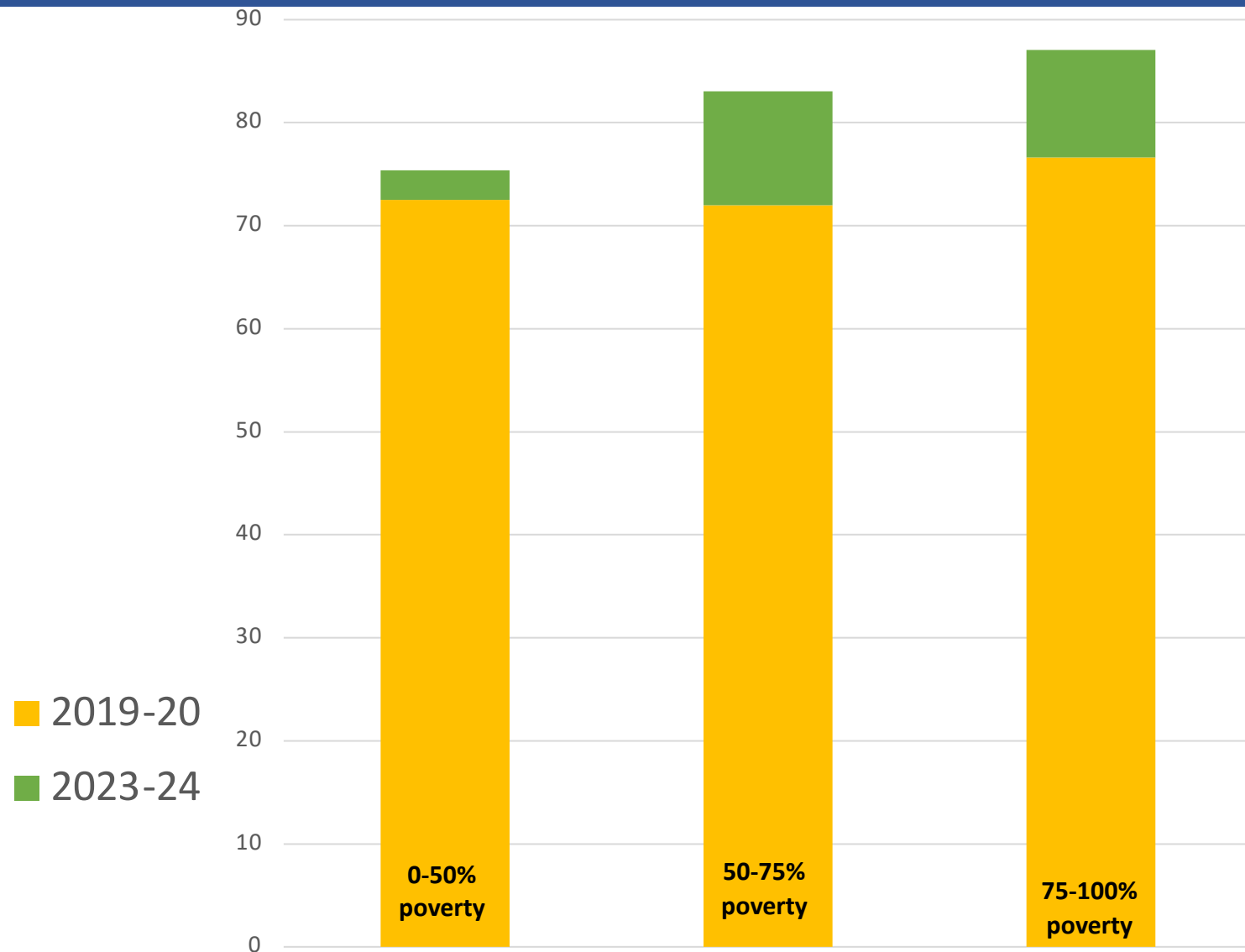


More staffing was concentrated on MA's highest-poverty districts

Districts with 75-100% poverty started with slightly more staff, and have since added an average of 11 additional staff per 500 students.

In contrast, districts with 50-75% poverty had been operating with fewer staff than peers. The new staffing additions raised levels above lower-poverty peers.

The higher-poverty districts now have about 1 staff member for every 6 students (excludes custodial, facilities, food, transportation).



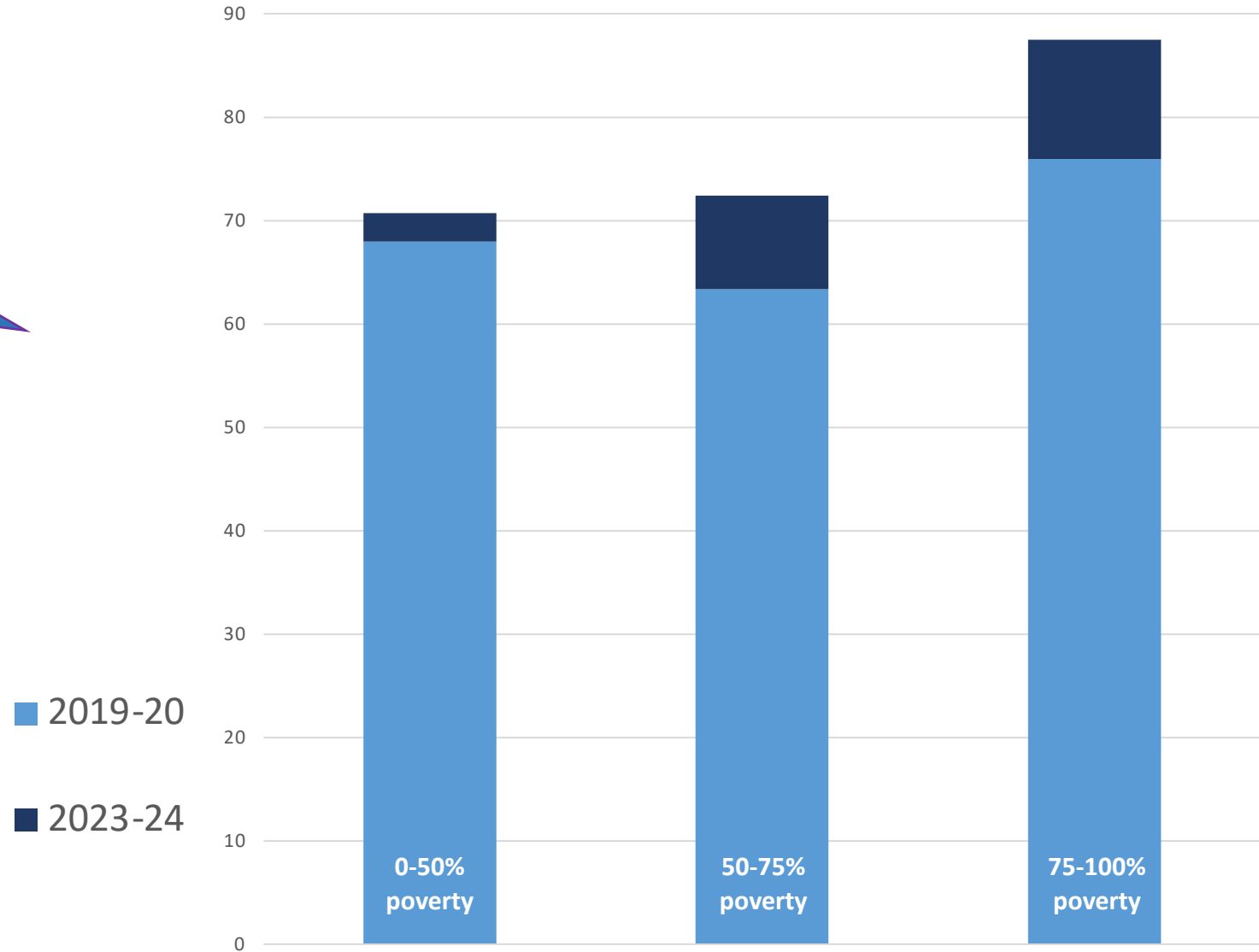
Within districts, highest-poverty schools benefitted the most

Q: Did districts direct new staff to their highest-poverty schools?

A: On average, yes

New hires tended to raise staffing levels in MA's highest-poverty schools.

Note that staff additions to schools with 50-75% staffing worked only to bring staffing levels to parity with wealthier peers.

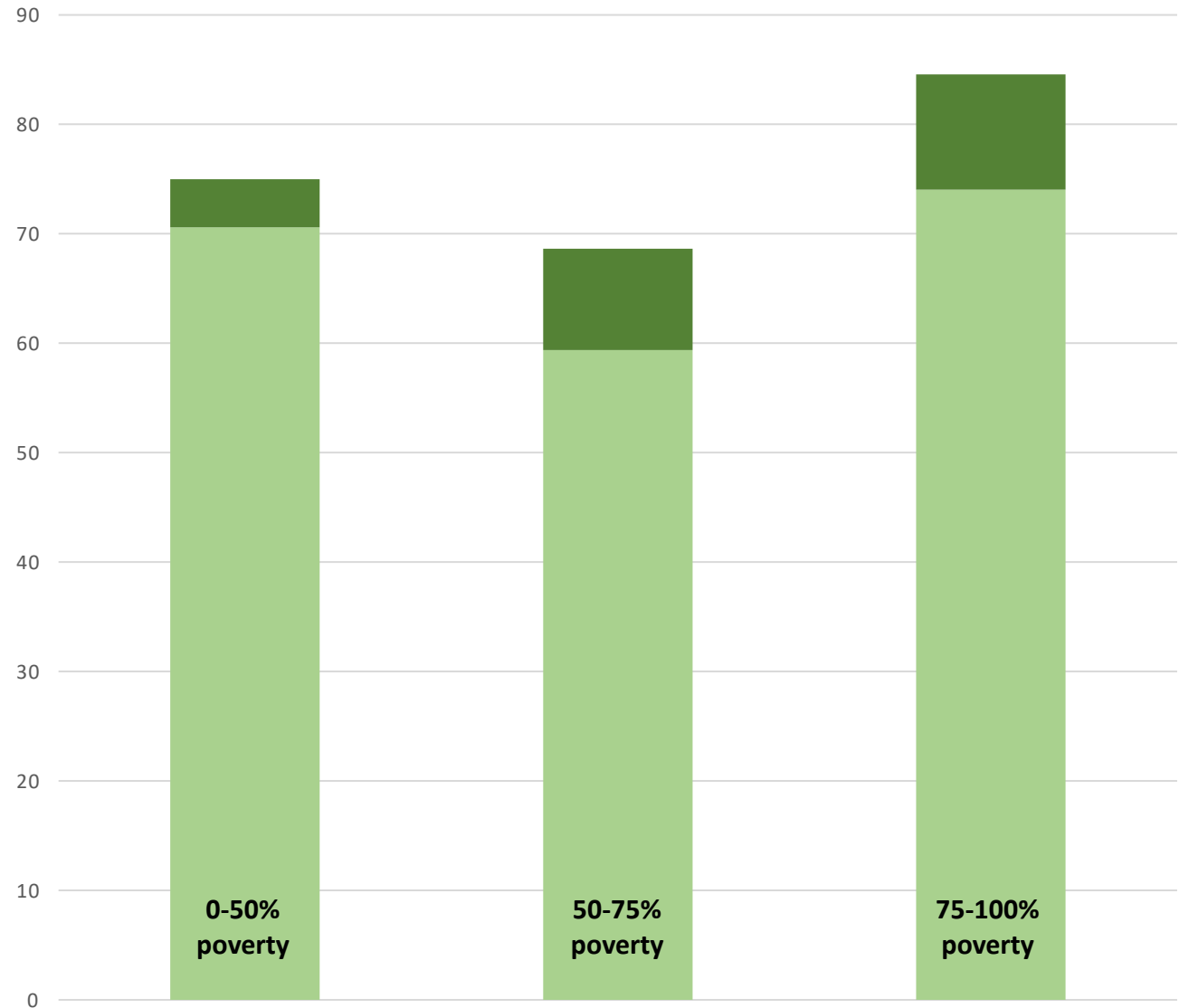


MA's largest districts (>10,000) struggle a bit to staff 50-75% poverty schools

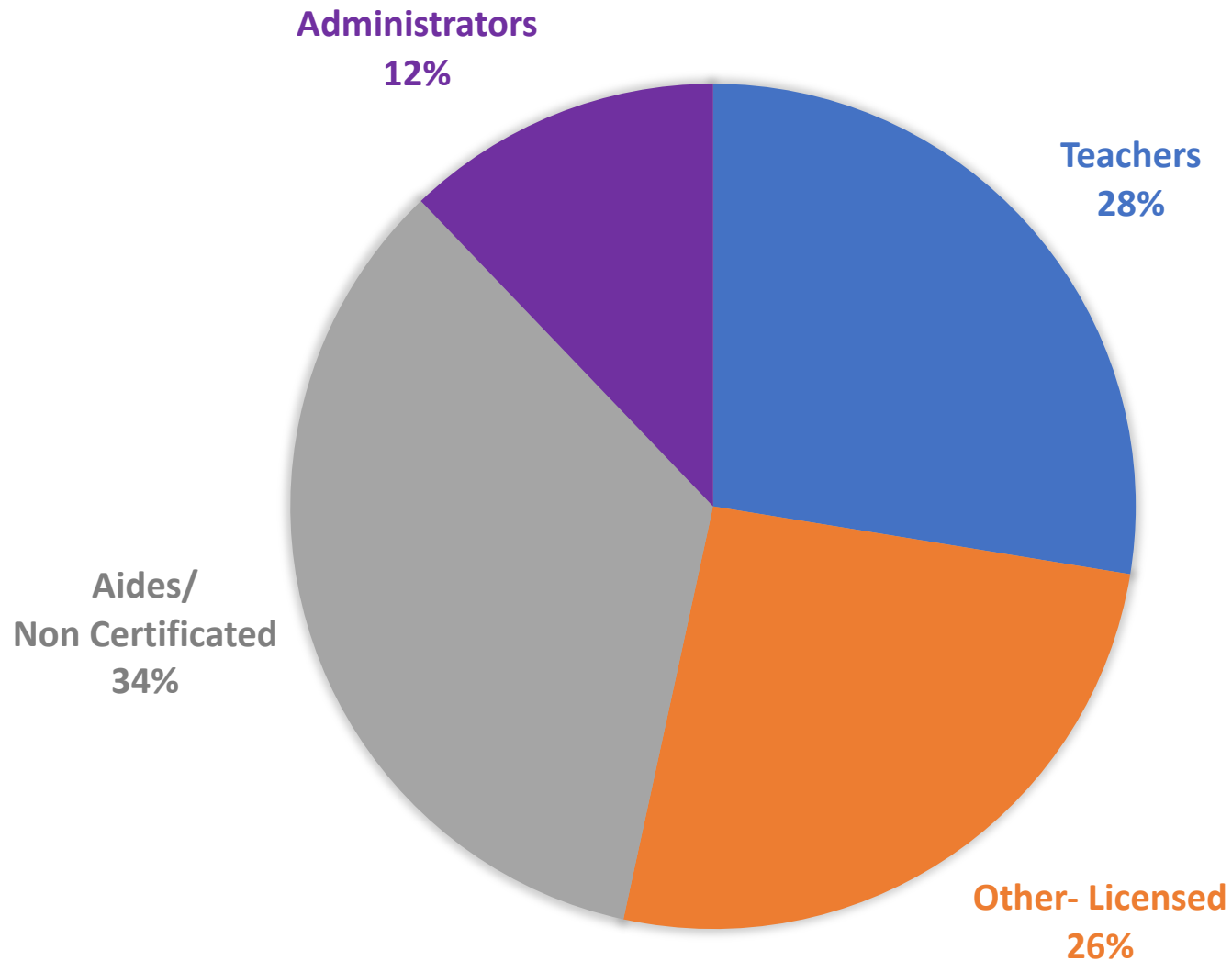
When it comes to adding staff, districts are prioritizing highest-poverty schools, but at the same time **de-prioritizing schools with 50-75% poverty.**

Larger districts especially need to track how staffing are distributed across all their schools.

■ 2019-20
■ 2023-24

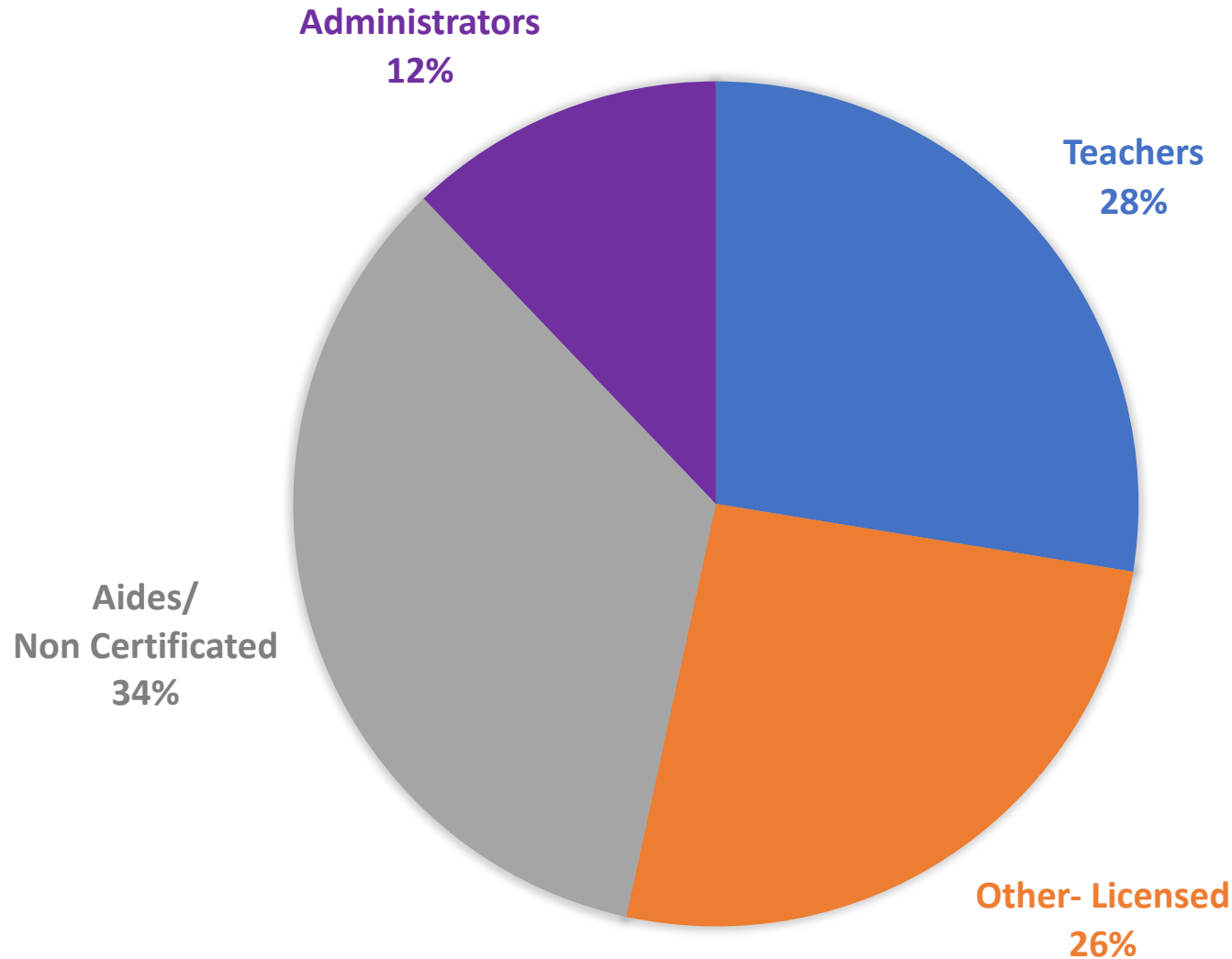


Who are all these new staff?



- Districts added roughly equal shares of teachers and “other licensed” (counselors, reading coaches, social workers, psychologists, etc.).
- Amounts to 7.3% increase in total staffing.
- “Other Licensed” had **the largest** proportional growth (amounting to an increase of 22%).
- Proportionately, the category of Teachers amounted to **the smallest** growth (amounting to 3% more teachers).
- These figures exclude non-licensed staff who work in food, custodial, transportation, facilities, etc.

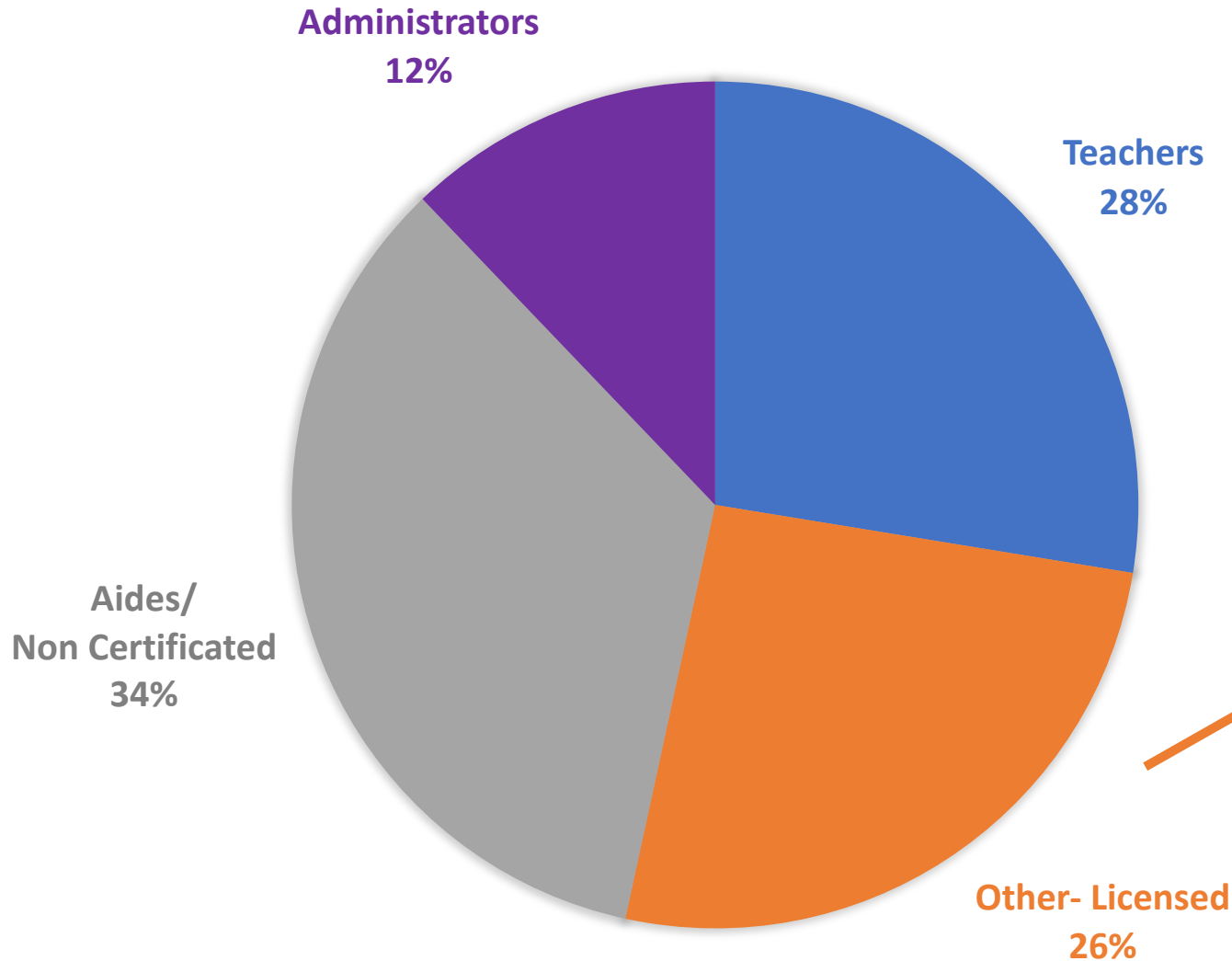
More teachers added in Gen Ed and ELL



Change in teachers 19-20 to 23-24		
Gen Ed	2070	+ 3%
SpEd	-360	- 4%
Voc	107	+ 5%
ELL	661	+ 37%

- Most of the new teachers were in Gen Ed.
- Proportionately, the increase in teachers was greatest in ELL.
- The decline in Sp Ed teachers could be a result of difficulties in staffing open positions. Note too the growth in paraprofessionals and other-licensed, which may suggest districts are using an alternative staffing arrangement for Sp Ed services.

Substantial expansion in “Other Licensed” (non-teaching certificated) staffing



- “Other licensed” are non-teaching, non-administrative certificated staff.

Who are the “Other Licensed”?

19-20 to 23-24

Academic	46	+ 8%
Counseling/SEL/ Psych, etc.	1347	+ 22%
Sp Ed	694	+ 16%
Other	29	+ 12%

- Over 1,300 of the new “Other Licensed” were in counseling, SEL, Mental Health, and other non-academic student supports, representing a **major new investment in this area.**

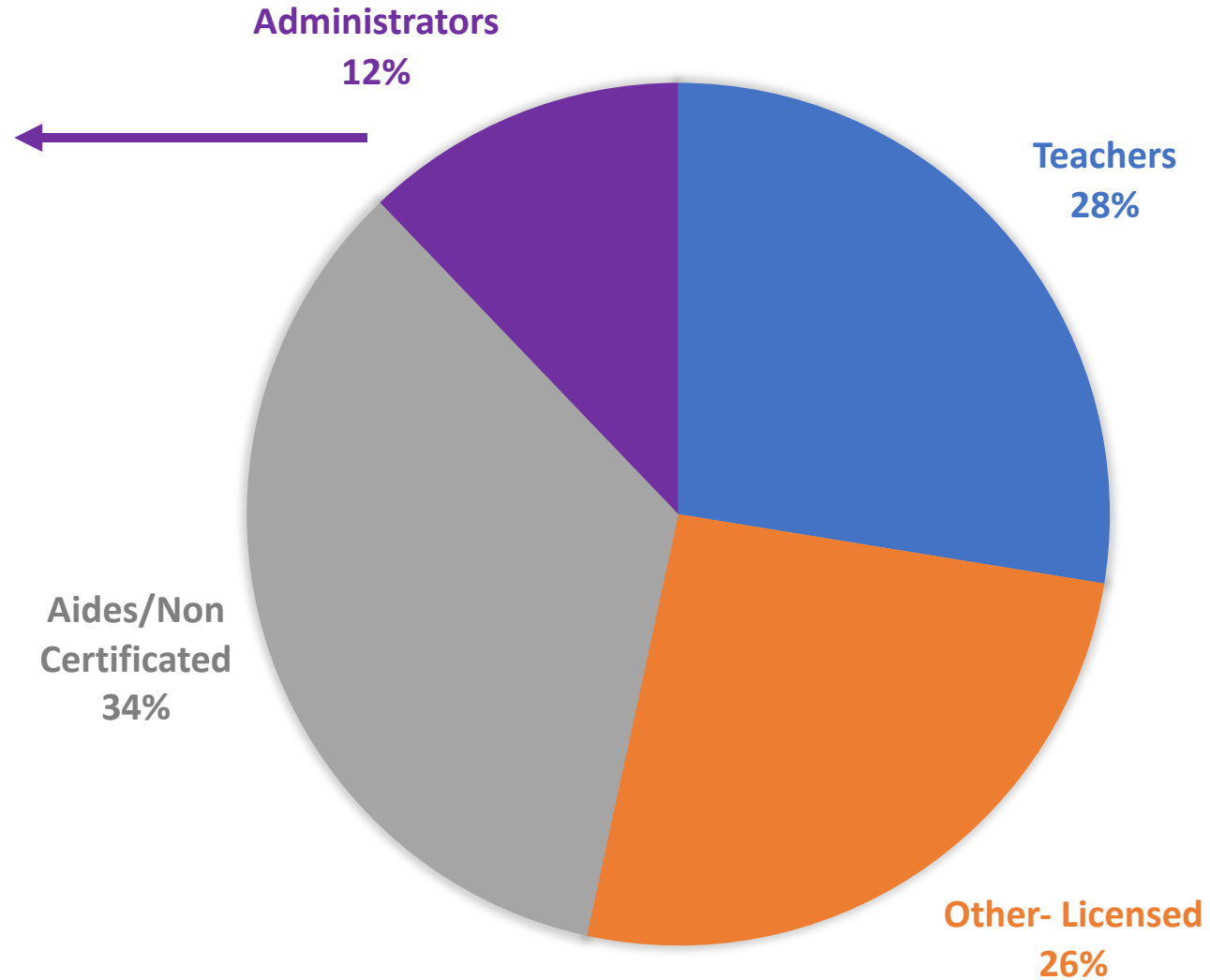
Administrators were added to both central office and schools

Where are the Administrators?

19-20 to 23-24

District office	636	+ 18%
Schools	649	+ 11%

- The second-largest proportionate growth in staffing was to administrators.
- New administrators were split roughly evenly between positions assigned to central office vs schools.

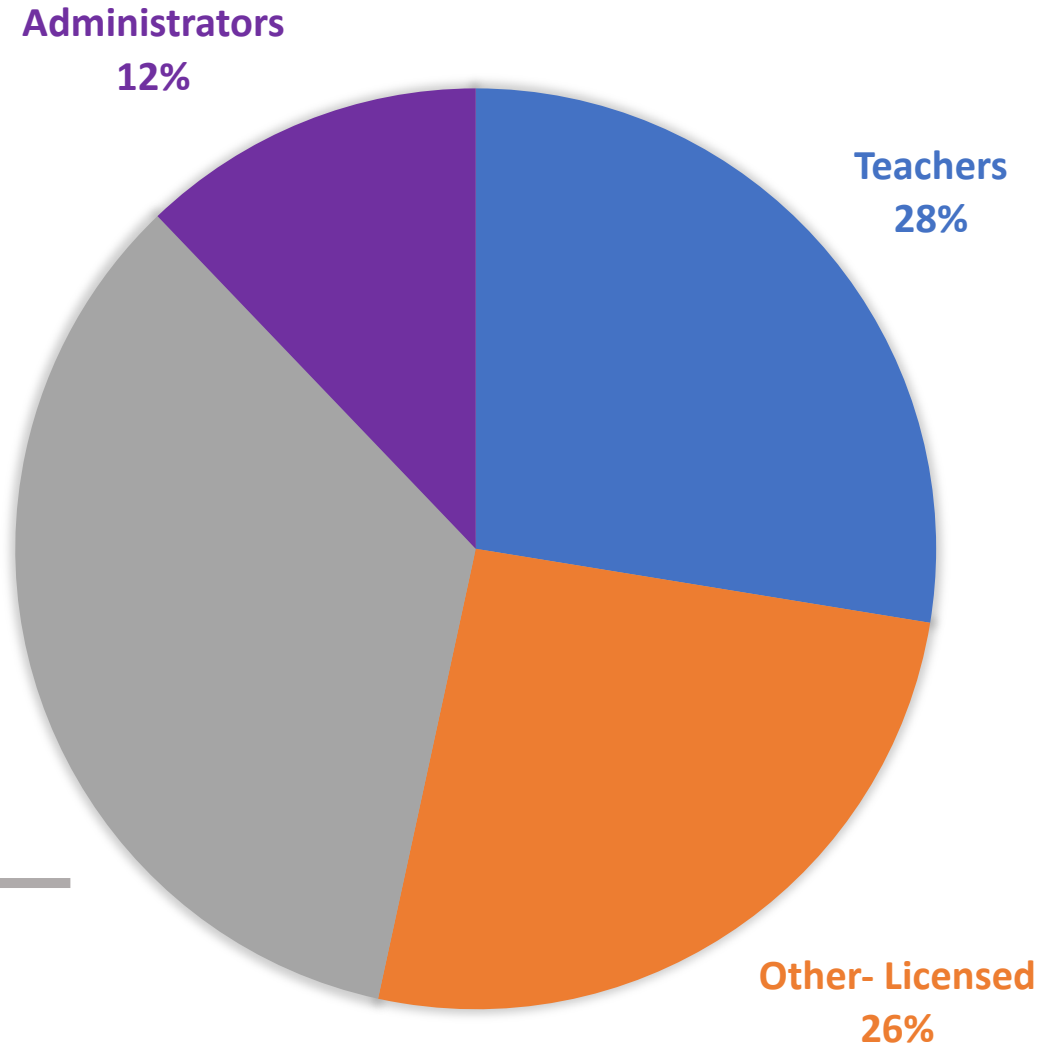


Much of the growth in staff in the state was driven by Aides and other Non Certificated Staff

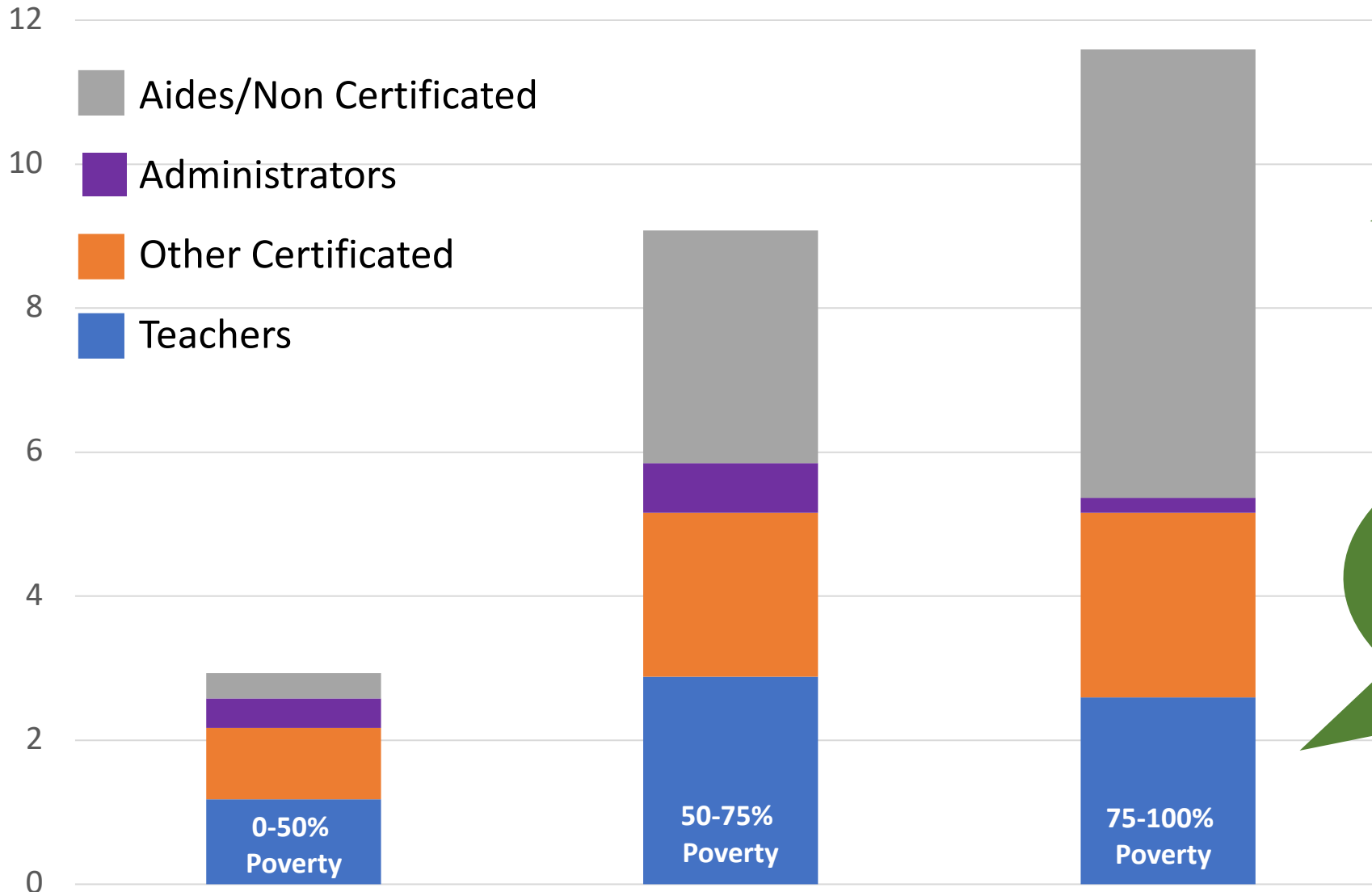
- Aides can provide support in classrooms or add clerical or other support outside classes, often to help with workload of certificated staff.

What role do aides play? 19-20 to 23-24		
Paraprofessionals (Classroom support)	1,227	+ 5%
All other (Clerical, etc.)	2,002	+ 14%

Aides/
Non Certificated
34%



Schools with higher/lower poverty got a different mix of new staff

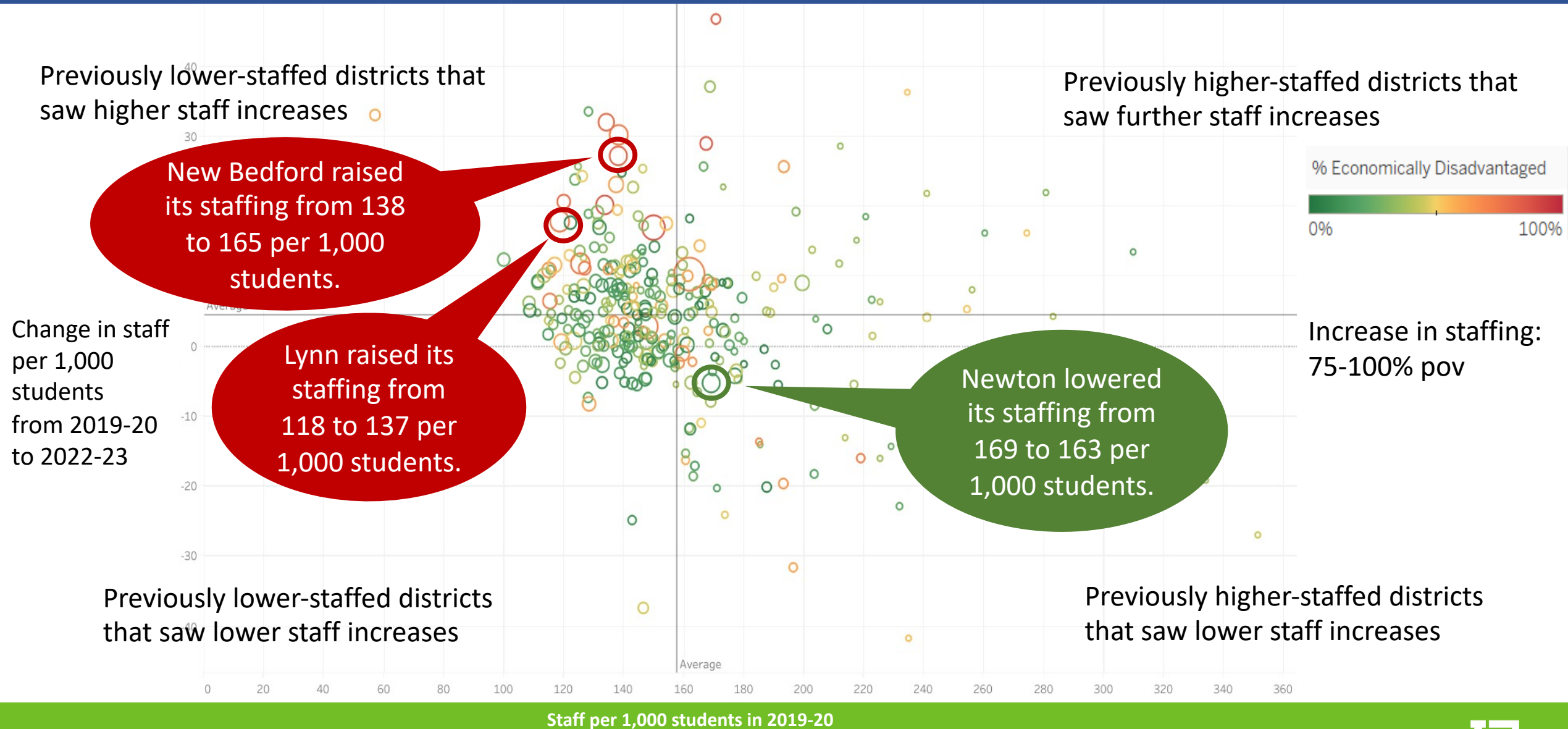


In higher-poverty schools, a larger share of added staff were non-teachers (Aides, Certificated Non-teachers).

A typical low-income school got just >11 new staff:
~ 2.5 new teachers
~ 2.5 new cert specialists
~ 6 new aides



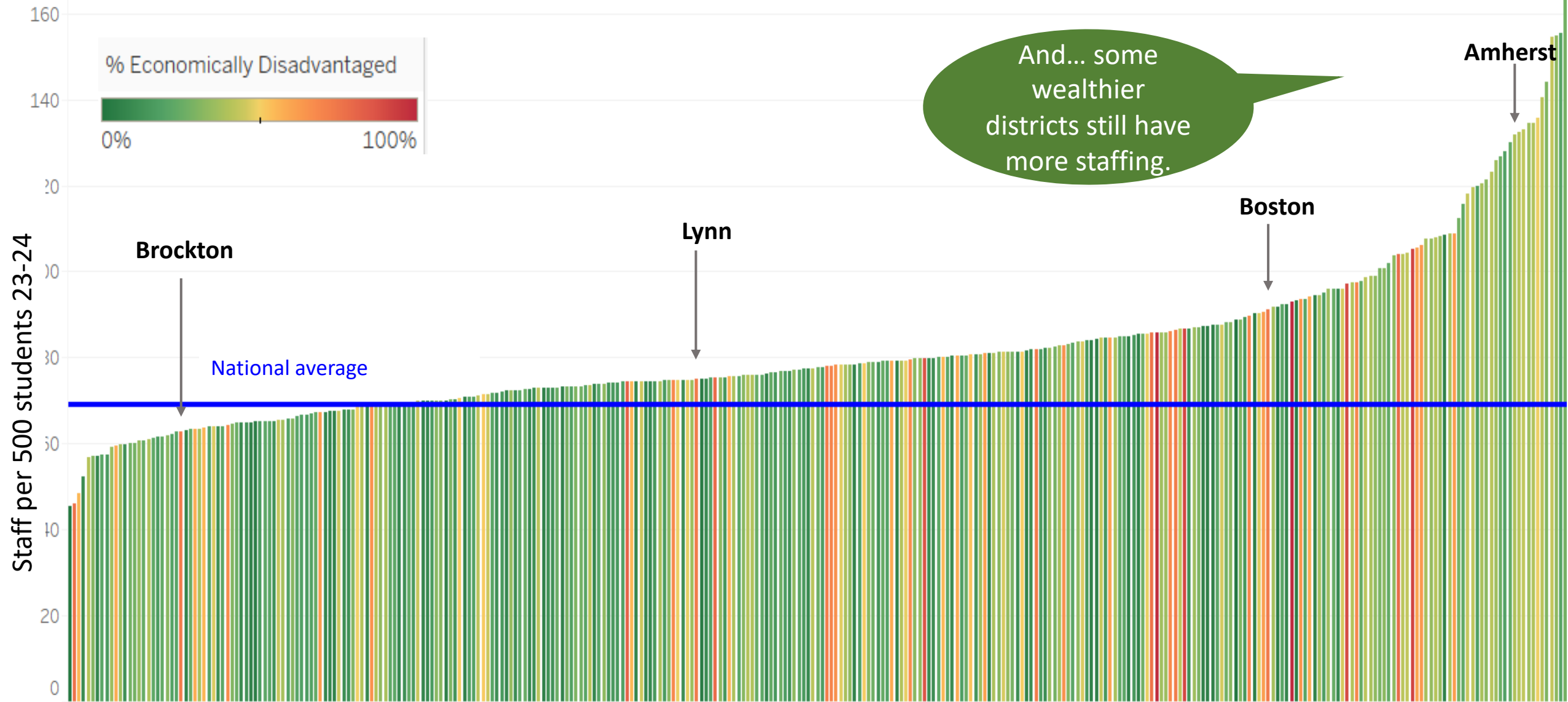
Beneath the averages: Staffing changes varied substantially among districts



Analysis by Edunomics Lab using: NCES Common Core of Data



Beneath the averages: staffing in most districts exceeds the national average, but not all



Analysis by Edunomics Lab using: Massachusetts DESE Staffing Data
Excludes Charters



Beneath the averages: In MA's largest districts (Boston, Lawrence, Springfield, & Worcester) higher-poverty schools got smaller increases in teachers than lower-poverty schools

Change in teachers per 200 students from 2019-20 to 2023-24

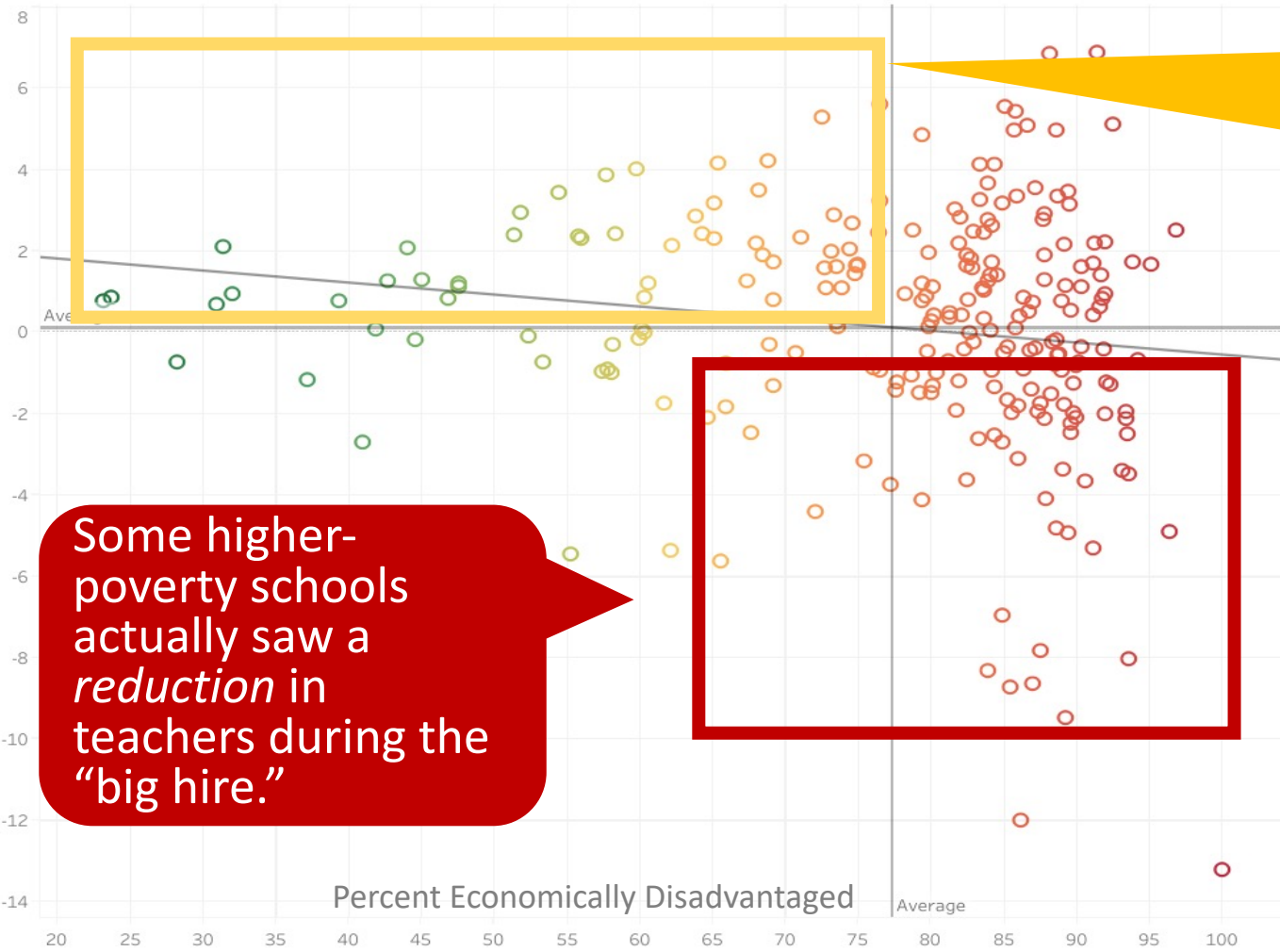


As larger districts got new money and started hiring, new positions may have filled first in lower-poverty schools.



Beneath the averages: In MA's largest districts (Boston, Lawrence, Springfield, & Worcester) higher-poverty schools got smaller increases in teachers than lower-poverty schools

Change in teachers per 200 students from 2019-20 to 2023-24



Some higher-poverty schools actually saw a *reduction* in teachers during the "big hire."

Meanwhile, lower-poverty schools tend to have lower turnover, and are typically able to fill new openings more quickly.



Beneath the averages: The highest-poverty schools had to wait longer to get their new staff

Open positions were filled earlier in wealthier schools

A concern is whether stronger applicants landed first in wealthier schools, with openings lingering longer in poorer schools.

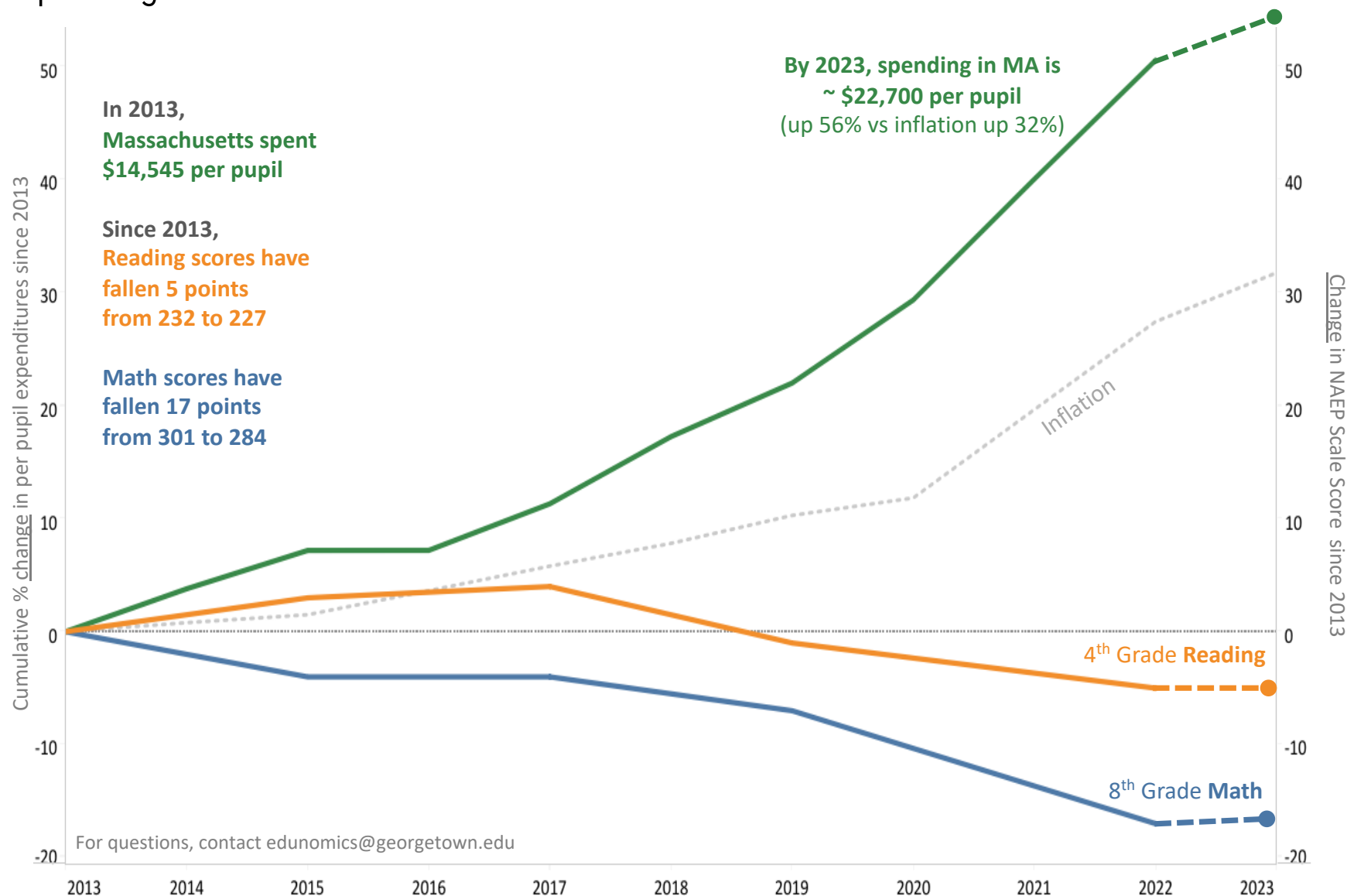
	Share of new staff brought on from FY21 - FY23	Share of new staff brought on in final year FY24
0-50% poverty schools	79%	21%
50-75% poverty	71%	29%
75%-100% poverty	59%	41%

And filled later in poorer schools.



To what extent are investments in MA translating into improved outcomes?

Spending and Scores: A look at the last decade in Massachusetts

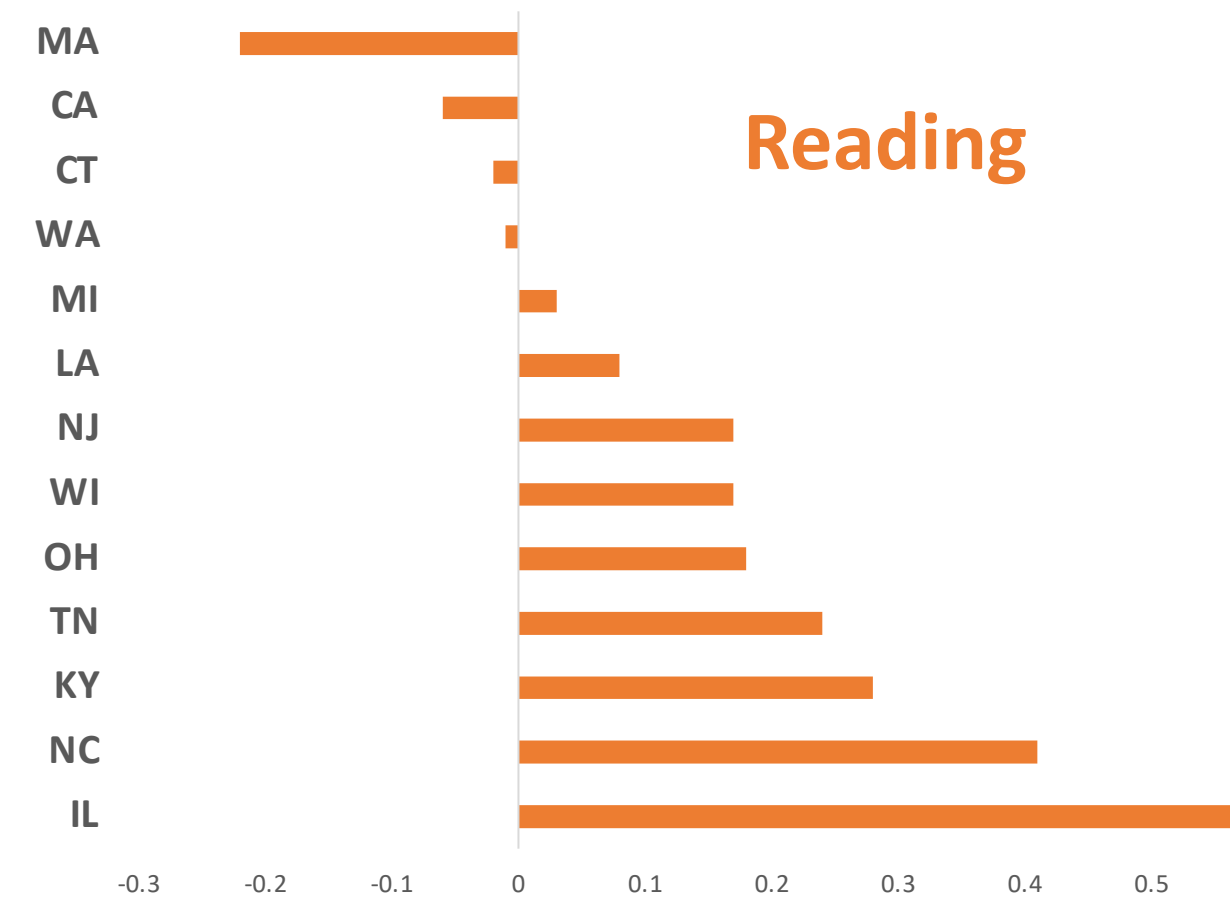
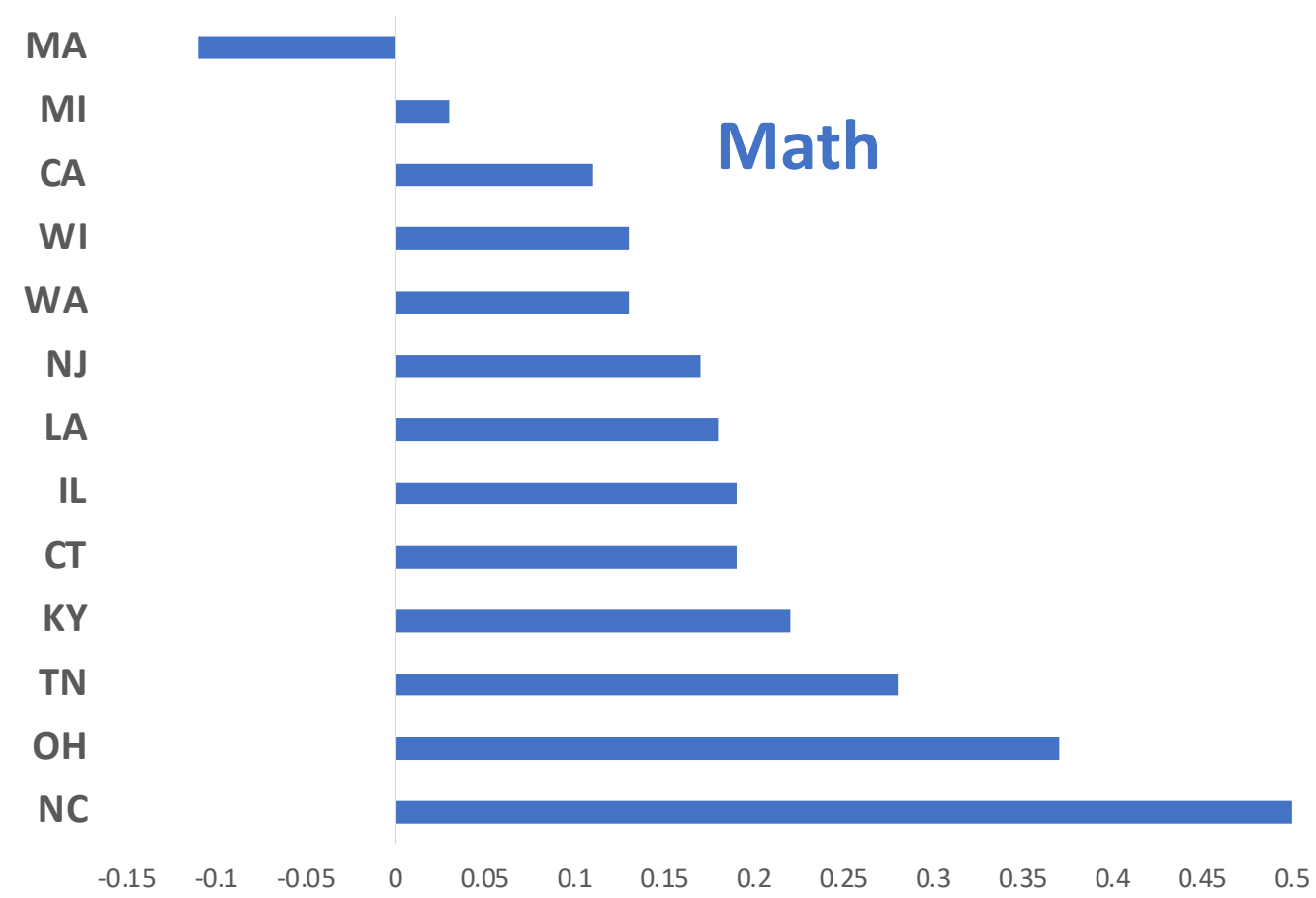


In MA, scores fell during the pandemic era and have since been flat in reading and crept up a bit in math.

MA districts have more work to do in order to rebuild student outcomes, especially in math.

Analysis by Edunomics Lab using data from these sources: Scores: The Nation's Report Card (NAEP) 2013-2022. Subsequent dashed lines use Stanford Ed Opportunity Project's estimated change in NAEP points from state tests. Spending: U.S. Census Annual Survey of School System Finances through 2022, then NEA's Ranking of the States' estimate for 2023. Inflation: CPI, BLS. Questions: Edunomics@Georgetown.edu

Scores for MA's low-income students dropped further from 2022 to 2023, even as many other states started seeing recovery for this group



By 2023, new hiring had yet to deliver score increases for low-income students.

Analysis by Edunomics Lab using: The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University

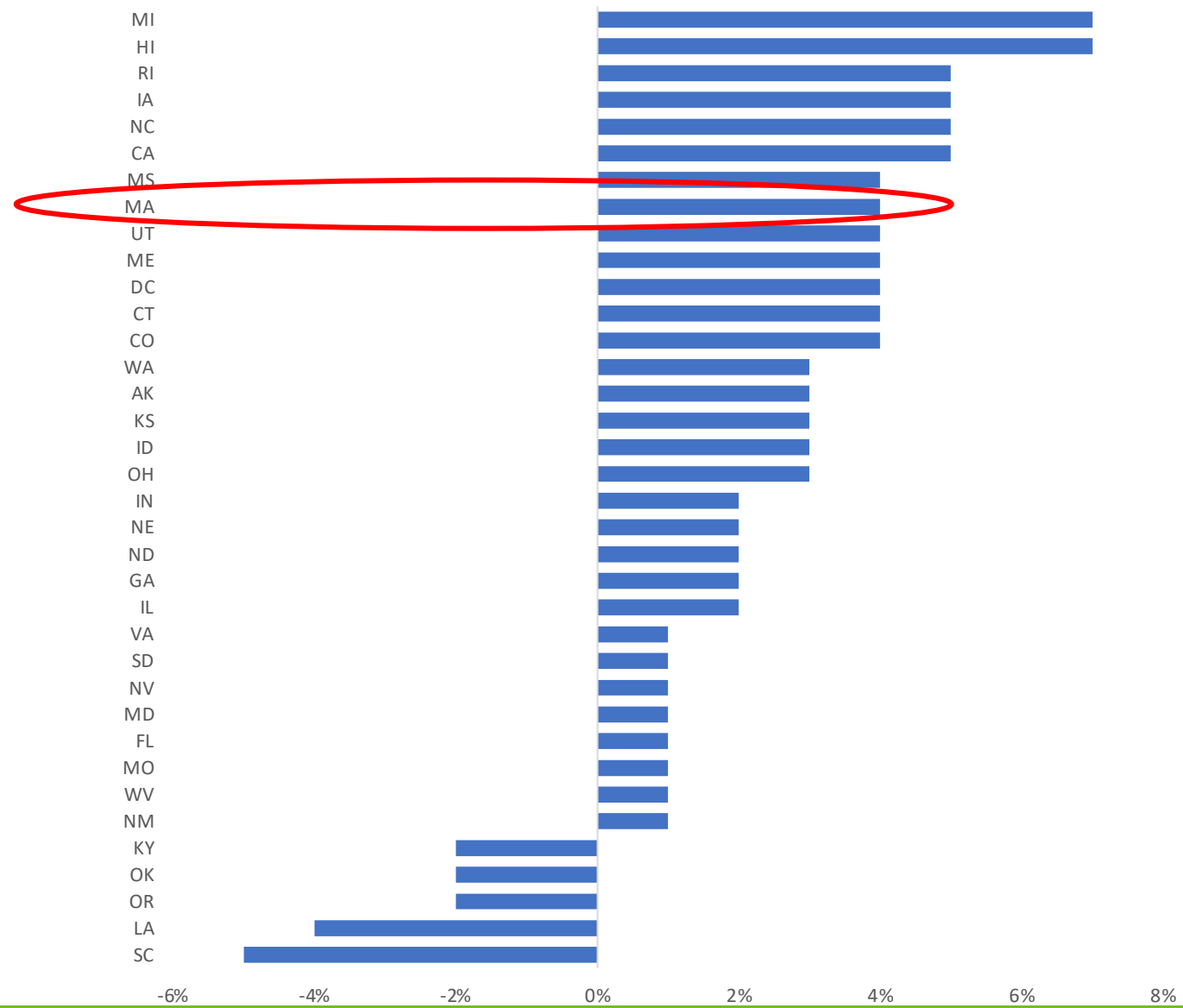


MA schools are seeing improvements in attendance (for the dollar spent).

Perhaps the substantial investments in SEL, mental health, counseling are paying off here.

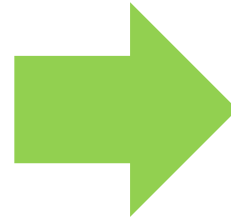
Are there other indicators of success from SEL investments?

Reduction in Absenteeism rate from 2022 to 2023



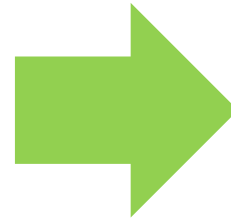
The “Big Hire” is over

Open positions in MA districts have fallen dramatically from the peak to only **3%** of the workforce (far below replacement levels*).



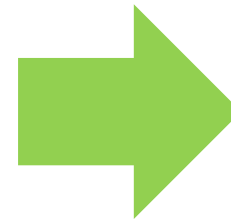
Districts won't need to work as hard (or give away as much) to attract or retain staff as competition for labor subsidies.

Of the open positions:
31% are for Special Ed
18% are for Math, Science, or Tech



Going forward, districts can target hiring/retention efforts to specific roles.

The upside to less hiring: Teachers brought on during reduced hiring are more effective.



Looking ahead, districts should aim to be choosier in hiring.

*In a typical year, the average district replaces ~8% of teachers.

** Edunomics Lab analysis of WorkInEd (data collected June 10, 2024): <https://workined.org/jobs>



Looking ahead

MA schools must find a way to leverage new and existing staff to reverse the troubling academic trends especially for the lowest-income students.

With much of the growth in certificated student support staff (counseling, social emotional learning, etc.), leaders must clearly articulate desired outcomes and ensure the added staff is achieving those intended outcomes.

And with many new aides, workloads for existing staff should be more manageable. Again, will students benefit?

With staffing shortages ending, districts should alter their hiring/compensation/staffing strategies to more efficiently target resources.

Looking ahead, these staffing investments will be difficult to sustain (financially). Leaders can use data to better understand where staff are delivering value, and where changes are needed.



THANK YOU

Marguerite Roza

@MargueriteRoza

MR1170@georgetown.edu

Maggie Cicco

Maggie.Cicco@georgetown.edu

Laura Anderson

LMA86@Georgetown.edu

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