Building a Professional Culture

How school leaders can create work environments that inspire effective teaching and teacher satisfaction.
Responding to teacher needs improves workplace satisfaction and allows teachers to focus efforts on improving student outcomes.

Teacher Talent Toolbox

- Development
- Recruitment & Hiring
- Evaluation
- Retention
- Accountability

A high-performing teaching team

Professional Culture

School-tested strategies for growing great teaching teams
Contents of the Building a Professional Culture Toolkit

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

- What factors influence teacher satisfaction?
- How can schools improve the satisfaction of strong instructional teams?
- How can schools develop and maintain open, two-way communication between teachers and administrators?
- How can schools diagnose and monitor teacher satisfaction and professional culture?

**TOOLS**

- Strategies for reducing teacher workload
- Practices around encouraging open, frequent and honest communication between administration and teaching staff
- Staff satisfaction surveys
TNTP surveys show that schools with weak instructional cultures are more likely to lose their most effective teachers – for largely preventable reasons.

37 percent of teachers at schools with weak cultures plan to leave within two years compared to just 19 percent of teachers at schools with strong cultures.

**TEACHERS’ TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING SCHOOLS WITH WEAK CULTURES**

- **18%** Personal reasons having nothing to do with my school
- **18%** Dissatisfaction with school leadership
- **14%** Insufficient development opportunities
- **12%** Financial compensation
- **10%** Student conduct and learning environment

For more information on definitions of strong vs. weak instructional cultures, see the Methodology page.
Teacher satisfaction drops in the third and fourth year at a school.

94 percent of teachers are satisfied with their school choice when they first accept the job offer.

Percent of teachers “Satisfied” or “Very satisfied” with their current school choice, by number of years at school

- First year: 72%
- Second year: 69%
- Third year: 56%
- Fourth year: 56%
- Five years or more: 69%

TNTP Benchmark Survey 2010
# Promising Practices for Building a Healthy Professional Culture

1. **Manage workload**
   - Identify efficiencies that conserve teachers’ time to help prevent high-performers from leaving due to work-life imbalances.

2. **Maintain multiple lines of communication**
   - Provide teachers with multiple open channels for both giving and receiving feedback.

3. **Recognize excellence**
   - Take time to offer formal and informal recognition of achievements, both large and small.

4. **Address all aspects of human capital**
   - Organizations perceived to be strong in all areas of human capital tend to have much more satisfied teachers – simply excelling in one or two areas is insufficient.
### Promising Practices in Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manage workload</td>
<td><strong>Rocketship Education</strong> has made reduction of teacher workload an organizational priority and is implementing concrete action plans to free teacher capacity and allow the teacher to focus on higher-order learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maintain multiple lines of communication</td>
<td><strong>Brownsburg Community School Corporation</strong>’s (CSC) superintendent meets with every school’s staff twice a year for breakfast or lunch to answer questions about the district and get to know staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recognize excellence</td>
<td><strong>D.C. Public Schools</strong> rewards excellent teachers with public recognition at an awards ceremony and formal reception.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Address all aspects of human capital</td>
<td><strong>North Star Academy</strong> has initiatives and programs in place that address each aspect of human capital management.</td>
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</table>
Less than half of administrators and even fewer teachers view teachers’ workload as sustainable.

Percent of teachers who agree that “My workload is sustainable over the long-term.”

- 69% Agree
- 25% Strongly Agree
- 6% All others*

Percent of administrators who agree that “My teachers’ workloads are sustainable over the long-term.”

- 54% Agree
- 35% Strongly Agree
- 11% All others*

*Respondents who chose “Strongly disagree,” “Disagree,” “Somewhat disagree” or “Somewhat agree.”
A key reason for attrition is workload.

The top four reasons for leaving among teachers at all schools who plan to leave within two years.*

- **Workload**: 14%
- **Student conduct, culture and learning environment**: 12%
- **Dissatisfied with leadership**: 10%
- **Financial compensation**: 7%

*Not including “Personal Reasons.”

“"The current amount of work that we have to do on a daily basis is more than expected, and honestly, more than I have time for. If we did not have so much extra work to do outside of school, I would not be considering leaving.”

– 4th year math teacher

“"The school is not as committed to teacher-success as it is to student success. The workload for teachers is far too demanding and not all tasks are necessary.”

– 1st year teacher

TNTP Instructional Culture Insight Survey 2011

TNTP Benchmark Survey 2010
Setting expectations during hiring and orientation can double the percent of teachers who feel their workload is sustainable.

“My workload is sustainable over the long term.”

Of teachers whose hiring and orientation process set accurate expectations…

41 percent agree that their workload is sustainable over the long-term.

Of teachers whose hiring and orientation process did not set accurate expectations…

19 percent agree that their workload is sustainable over the long-term.
Develop and implement a workload management plan with both short and long-term goals.

**Internal 5-year goals:** Make teaching ... a much better job for highly effective teachers by making work hours more maintainable, providing support staff, ensuring job responsibilities are more academic and providing salaries commensurate with social value of a teacher.

**Sub-goal:** 12 Hour Workday by 2015, 10 Hour Workday by 2020

**Actions Taken to Reduce Teacher Workload**

- Developed scope and sequence and unit plans for every course.
- Created homework binders with assignments for every state standard.
- Catalogued lessons and resources online for teachers.
- Uses substitute teachers to administer and score interim assessments.
- Staffs silent reading center with non-certified personnel.
- Uses college students to conduct supplemental tutoring.
- Interns shadow teachers to record how hours are spent and identify additional efficiencies.
Citizens Academy

Provide additional support to teachers to create efficiencies.

Supports teachers with one Instructional Assistant per grade and volunteer tutors to give kids one-on-one attention.

“If you need stuff, they don’t want you going out to buy supplies. They respect teachers’ time, by giving us additional in-school time for report cards. It’s little things to make sure you don’t feel stressed. The just give it to you, and that for me is helpful.”

-1st year elementary teacher

Provides supplies, materials, and instructional support on request.

“If you need stuff, they don’t want you going out to buy supplies. They respect teachers’ time, by giving us additional in-school time for report cards. It’s little things to make sure you don’t feel stressed. The just give it to you, and that for me is helpful.”

-6th year elementary teacher
Many teachers express frustration over a lack of communication.

“[Our school could have] better communication and better reception to and **more solicitation of input from teachers** especially when matters concerning classroom policies, organization and instruction are concerned.”

- 1st year high school English teacher

“I really like my principal, but she can have a ‘kill the messenger’ approach to problems that **discourages complete communication**.”

- 28th year elementary teacher

“There is a very top down management style which **does not invite faculty participation** on school wide decisions, yet expects the faculty to enforce those decisions with little buy in...Overall, I think the school is accomplishing results for students but could be greatly improved by creating **systems through which teacher input is truly invited, valued, and cultivated**.”

- 3rd year high school history teacher
Administrators overestimate teachers’ opportunities to provide feedback.

Percent of administrators who “Agree” or “Strongly agree” that “teachers have avenues to deliver feedback to their supervisors about their performance.”

- 29% Strongly agree
- 46% Agree
- 25% All others

Percent of teachers who “Agree” or “Strongly agree” that “I have avenues to deliver feedback to my supervisor about their performance.”

- 16% Strongly agree
- 59% All others
- 25% Agree

TNTP Benchmark Survey 2010
## Challenges around communication can hinder districts, charter schools and networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common communication pitfalls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bunker Mentality</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mission Above All</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Inadequate Capacity to Be Strategic</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Program Fatigue</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Insufficient Feedback Systems</strong></td>
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*All quotes – Sylvia Ewing – Director of External Affairs, Illinois Network of Charter Schools
Create multiple communication channels for teachers to give and receive information.

Communication Indicators

1. “I know who to contact when I have a question or problem.”
2. “There is open and honest two-way communication between administration and staff.”
3. "I have avenues to deliver feedback to my supervisor about their performance."

Percent of Teachers Satisfied with School by Number of Communication Indicators Present*

- None: 21%
- One: 38%
- Two: 73%
- Three: 83%

*Respondents who chose “Strongly agree” or “Agree.”
Use an assessment of school culture as one method of communication.

**Aspire Public Schools** – Administers annual satisfaction surveys of staff, parents and students to get a 360-degree picture of building and network-level culture. Results are regularly monitored by Aspire’s Board of Directors.

**North Star Academy** – Conducts annual School Culture survey of all teachers. Currently testing other tools that informally assess collegiality and professional culture by observing teacher habits in the hallways, teachers’ lounge, while collaborating, etc.

**Brownsburg CSC** – The superintendent meets with every school’s staff twice a year for breakfast or lunch to answer questions about the district and get to know staff.

“[The principal] makes time to see us… she asks if there are concerns, do you know what to do… Those 10-minute meetings have such an impact…Having emails in class is nice. If I feel overwhelmed during class I can email [the principal], there is a consistently open line of communication.”

– 1st year elementary teacher
Teachers who feel appreciated report higher planned retention.

Percent of Teachers who “Agree” or “Strongly agree” that “I feel appreciated for my hard work at my school.”

- 24%
- 55%
- 74%

I plan to stay at my school until...the end of this school year
2 or 3 more years
4 or more years

“There’s nothing like the shout-out. It’s the most satisfying thing. It’s like, ‘I’m seen’.”
– 4th year elementary teacher

“I just love getting shout-outs in our newsletter and at our meetings...it is simply satisfying intrinsically.”
– 4th year elementary teacher

“I appreciate] recognition of contributions through staff awards or notes of praise all of which are felt to be sincere and are appreciated.”
– 6th year English teacher

“My administrators tell me I'm a star all the time. Positive reinforcement works with teachers, too!”
– 2nd year English teacher

TNTP Benchmark Survey 2010
Recognize excellence to show appreciation of teachers.

Holds an annual *awards ceremony* and reception for recognized teachers. The event is a formal affair and is normally held in a prestigious performance venue.

In addition to rewarding individual teachers with increased compensation as they advance through stages, distributes *school-wide bonuses* based on school achievement.

Uses *billboards* throughout the city to recognize master teachers as part of its “I teach. I am” campaign.

Teachers have opportunities to receive financial rewards and recognition at several *different levels*, from individual to team, school and district.

Refer to the *Retaining High Performers* toolkit for more information on how recognition of excellence can increase teacher retention.
# A comprehensive approach to human capital management drives greater teacher satisfaction.

## Key Teacher Survey Questions

### RECRUITMENT
“The recruitment process effectively prepared me for what to expect in my role at my school.”

### EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT
“The professional development I receive at my school is tailored according to feedback and/or development areas from my performance evaluation.”

### RECOGNITION
“Teachers’ accomplishments are regularly recognized and celebrated.”

### PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY
“Teachers are held accountable for their performance.”

### SCHOOL CULTURE
“I feel appreciated for my hard work at my school.”

## TNTP Benchmark Survey 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of questions with which teacher agreed*</th>
<th>Percent of teachers satisfied with their current school**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Five</td>
<td>95%</td>
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*Includes “Strongly agree” or “Agree.”

**Percent “Satisfied” or “Very satisfied.”

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Explore additional tools for this Toolkit on the Full Toolbox page. Also, be sure to access the five other Toolkits of the Teacher Talent Toolbox to craft a complete talent management strategy.

Teacher Talent Toolbox

A high-performing teaching team

School-tested strategies for growing great teaching teams