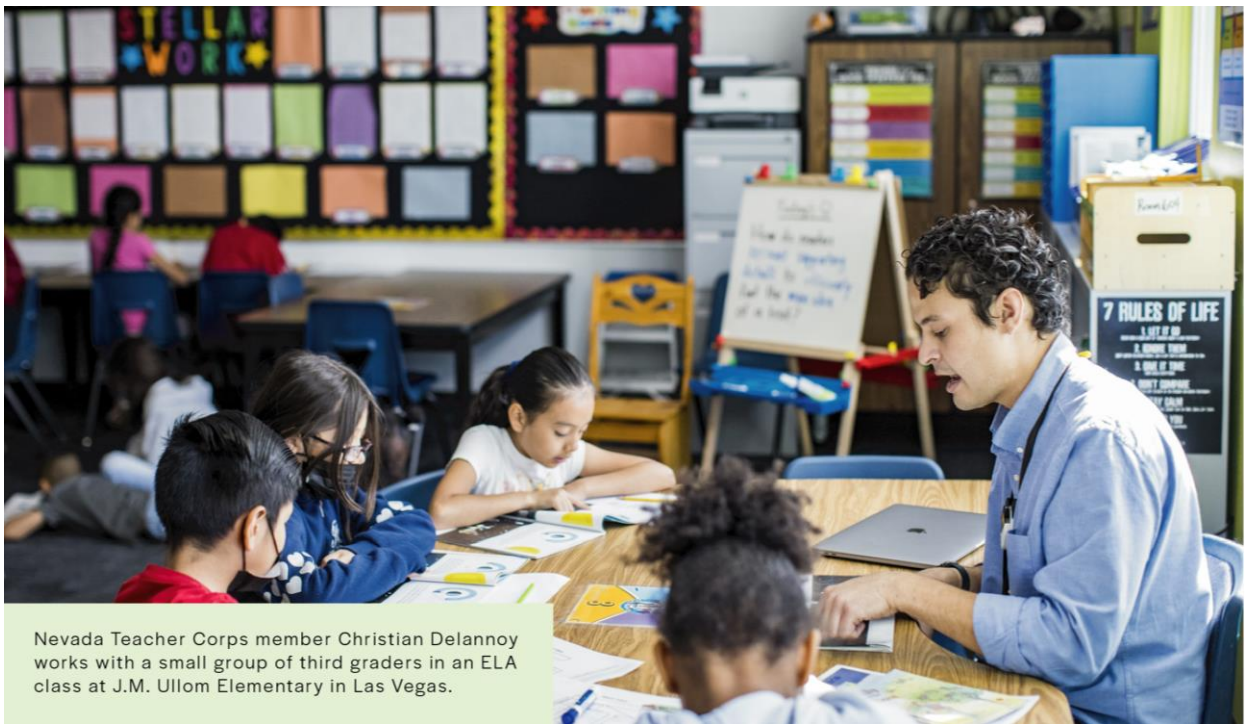**TNTP's Workforce Design Framework**

Designing The Workforce of Tomorrow To Support All Students' Learning

Nevada Teacher Corps member Christian Delannoy works with a small group of third graders in an ELA class at J.M. Ullom Elementary in Las Vegas.

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Designing the Workforce of Tomorrow to Support All Students' Learning

Nationwide, schools and school systems are facing their toughest staffing challenges in at least a generation. Many teachers report feeling burned out, are taking leaves of absence, or have left their jobs altogether. Districts report struggling to find qualified full-time educators and substitute teachers. At the same time, economic conditions are pushing workers away from low-paid, relatively inflexible careers. This is all occurring at a moment when students need effective, diverse educators more than ever as they work to get back to grade level in the face of an unprecedented drop in student achievement.

To greatly improve the experiences of students, teachers, caregivers, and the broader community, school and school system leaders must integrate their talent and academic strategies. Doing so begins with designing a workforce strategy that directly aligns with their vision for students' experiences. Students deserve diverse and effective educators with high expectations who are ready to provide them with strong academic foundations and experiences that lead to career readiness and social capital. In turn, educators deserve sustainable, well-regarded, and competitively compensated careers. Together, we can enable our nation's students to graduate with the pathways to academic, economic, and social mobility that public education has long promised, while ensuring that educators have access to economic and social mobility—but it will require an approach that maximizes the strengths and experiences of all the adults who support students so that they are well positioned to help students reach the goals they have for themselves.

Indianapolis Teaching Fellow Alicia Jones high-fives first-grade ELA students at James Russell Lowell School 51.

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Introduction

TNTP's Workforce Design Framework is a new resource created to help school and school system leaders design students' experiences to align with their workforce strategy, including educator experience and staffing models, in order to future-proof student learning for an ever-changing economy. This approach considers all adults who support education to be assets who can provide coherent, effective learning experiences.

The Framework asks leaders to articulate a specific vision for what they want to be true for all students, and then link that vision to their classroom-level and workforce needs. Schools and school systems can then build learning environments focused on preparing students to reach the ambitious, meaningful goals they have for themselves.

This approach will help school systems in two big ways: first, to deeply understand what currently keeps their students from achieving at high levels, and second, to design innovative workforce models and holistic talent solutions that address their most pressing talent-related challenges. TNTP is eager to support districts in using data to understand their challenges, then deploy their resources to address those challenges such that all students have experiences that lead to graduating with choices, a sense of agency, and lasting economic and social mobility.

Articulating Your Vision:
The Nonnegotiable First Step

The first step for all school and school system leaders is to articulate their vision for the student experience. Naming what should be true for all students in their school and classroom experiences— especially students historically denied, and furthest from, opportunity—provides school systems with a litmus test with which to measure their efforts.

In *Learning Acceleration for All: Planning for the Next Three to Five Years*, we outline how to engage students, educators, and communities (including community-based organizations and economic development organizations) in the effort to articulate a vision for students' experiences. We build on that guidance in *Instructional Coherence: A Key to High-Quality Learning Acceleration for All Students*.

The six levers we identify as critical to creating transformational educational experiences are represented in the graphic below. We won't repeat that guidance here in detail but will emphasize that school system leaders must articulate their Student Experience Vision and their Subject-/ Grade-Specific Student Experience Vision before delving into the Workforce Design Framework.

To articulate those visions, you'll want to answer these kinds of questions:

- What must be true for all students, across all grades and subject areas, so that they're prepared for the future? What does a coherent student experience look like in our system?

- What academic and developmental experiences must all students have to be prepared for the future? What high-quality materials and resources must they have access to in this subject and grade band?

Six Levers for Advancing the Student Experience

SIX LEVERS FOR ADVANCING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Sociocultural System & Community Context

Student Identity & Background | School & Classroom Context

Vision for Excellent Instruction and the Student Experience

Organizational Management

Workforce Experience, Selection, Support, Collaboration, and Design

High-Quality Instructional Resources and Evidence-Based Academic and Developmental Best Practices

Equity-Centered Policies and Practices

Authentic Community and Stakeholder Engagement and Investment

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Developing Your Talent Strategy Using the Workforce Design Framework

Using the Workforce Design Framework to design your talent strategy will be an iterative, ongoing process that will require continual improvement to ensure that your talent strategy ultimately supports your Student Experience Vision. Begin by using data to build a rich, nuanced, and asset-based **understanding of your context**, including students' and educators' experiences and outcomes. This provides critical context for identifying opportunities to **position your people to maximize all students' success** by thinking through the key practices that make up the **strategic core** of every talent strategy. After you articulate your strategy, you'll think through implementation, including how to proactively **remove barriers** that often impede this work.

Workforce Design Framework

WORKFORCE DESIGN FRAMEWOK

Position All Your People to Maximize Student Success

Pathways to Enter
How can we strengthen pipelines while increasing students' access to effective, diverse educators?

The Right Workload
How can we change the role to deliver a better experience for students and teachers?

Reasons To Stay
How can we cultivate supportive, thriving cultures that foster educator development and promote retention of top talent?

What new or innovative models, policies, partnerships, and structures must we design and deploy to most effectively invest and utilize staff and maximize student learning and success?

The Strategic Core

Know Your Context

Students
What are our students' assets, and what is the most critical learning our students must accomplish? Which of our students are often furthest from opportunity and from realizing the vision we have articulated?

Workforce Community
What personnel do we need to realize our academic vision for students, both now and in the future? What expertise, skills, and shared identities must be reflected within our workforce? How does our current workforce compare to our projected needs?

Data
Based on student and workforce data, how close are we to our envisioned student experience and outcomes?

Increase Collective Agency

Capacity
What capacity gaps do we foresee? What external stakeholders, cross-sector partners, or community members can we leverage to minimize or eliminate these gaps, in school and out?

Policy
Which federal, state, system, and school policies propel or impede our talent strategy and our ability to secure workforce needs? What new policies will drive our vision and strategies forward?

Leadership
Who will own, manage, invest, and inspire our workforce and community to ensure we deliver on our promises to students, caregivers, and educators?

Vision for Excellent Instruction and the Student Experience

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Know Your Context: Students

What are our students' assets, and what is the most critical learning they must accomplish? Which of our students are often furthest from opportunity and from realizing the vision we have articulated?

Talent strategy is not one size fits all. It must be tailored to the specific student population a system serves and aligned to the vision for student experience, especially for the students furthest from opportunity. After you have articulated your vision for the student experience, both broadly and in grade-level, subject-specific form, you must deepen your understanding of your students, including the assets and diversity they represent, the barriers they face, and the most critical learning they need.

The first step you'll take is to gather data to deeply understand your students, especially those furthest from opportunity.

Often, when school system leaders begin planning their talent strategy, they consider current and projected enrollment, both district-wide and by school. They also consider how student demographics might be changing. These data points are critically important but will not tell you everything you need to know to center the students who are furthest from opportunity in your system.

To understand who your students are and how well the school system has served them, identify, gather, and analyze a variety of data. Look at these data sources next to your student experience vision and your subject- and grade-specific student experience vision. You may get started with currently available data and then plan to collect more data as you proceed through your talent planning process.

What are our students' assets?

Feedback from Students, Caregivers, and Educators

Gather survey results or focus-group notes you already have from key stakeholders in your system and examine them for the students' strengths and assets. Consider:

- Who are our students, and how can we honor their identities and assets as we move throughout this process?
- What strengths do our students bring to school every day?
- What resources exist in our community, and how do our students benefit from them?

Community Asset Maps

In addition to considering the assets of your students, consider how you might develop a family and community asset map or a resource map to support your understanding of the strengths of the communities from which your students come.

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What is the Most critical Learning Our Students Must Accomplish?

Assessment Data

Consider your students' state assessment results, as well as their diagnostic and interim data, overall and disaggregated by demographic groups.

Which of your students are hitting key academic benchmarks that we know are correlated with important long-term life outcomes, like proficiently reading by third grade[1] or successfully completing Algebra I by ninth grade?[2]

In what subject areas and at what grade levels are your students truly successful? In what subject areas and at what grade levels are students struggling the most?

Which of our students are often furthest from opportunity and from realizing the vision we have articulated?

Assessment Data

Use state assessment results, as well as other assessment results you have available, to identify which student groups are furthest from demonstrating the learning needed to realize your Student Experience Vision.

Teacher Evaluation Data

Consider which students in your school system consistently have access to your most effective educators, including teachers and school leaders.

Feedback from Students, Caregivers, and Educators

Examine your feedback from students, caregivers, and educators for inequities, focusing especially on which groups of students offer the most critical feedback of your system.

Given what you learned in your prioritization process, make teamwide commitments about how you will center students furthest from opportunity as you make decisions about your talent strategy. This might mean committing to increasing resources (in the form of educators or other financial resources), engaging these students or the stakeholders closest to them in the planning process, sharing your goals for improvement publicly for transparency and accountability, or including equity pauses throughout your planning process.

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1 Lesnick, J., George, R., Smithgall, C., & Gwynne, J. (2010). Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment? A longitudinal analysis of third-grade students in Chicago in 1996-97 and their educational outcomes. A report to the Anne E. Casey Foundation. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED517805

2 7 Muller, R., & Beatty, A. (2008). The building blocks of success: Higher-level math for all students. Achieve. https://www.achieve.org/BuildingBlocksofSuccess

Know Your Context: Workforce Community

What personnel do we need to realize our academic vision for students, both now and in the future? What expertise, skills, and shared identities must be reflected within our workforce? How does our current workforce compare to our projected needs?

Once you have gathered a holistic set of data points to deepen understanding of your student population, the next step is to focus on your educator workforce community.

Research confirms that teachers and leaders have a tremendous impact on students, as do the other adults at a school, including support staff and community members. To realize the vision for student experience that has been articulated, leaders must attend to their educators, not only by hiring well but also by supporting, respecting, and affirming them. This is especially critical for educators of color, as a growing body of research shows that a more diverse teacher workforce leads to better outcomes for all students—especially students of color.

Students of color who have teachers of color are more likely to achieve at higher levels, more likely to aspire to attend a four-year college, and less likely to be suspended or drop out.[3] Yet while nearly half of American public school students identify as people of color, only 21 percent of their teachers do.[4] At the same time, teachers of color who enter the profession leave at a higher rate than their colleagues.[5] School systems must prioritize developing meaningful supports for their educators, particularly educators of color, and can start by understanding educators' experiences.

Throughout this process, leaders should also keep students, particularly those furthest from opportunity, top of mind. For instance, you might ask, "How does this vacancy impact learning for our students furthest from opportunity?" It might also mean reallocating resources to ensure that schools serving such students have access to your strongest educators.

Gather data on the current educator workforce, using student enrollment projections and predicted workforce transitions to forecast future needs. As with the steps above, we suggest reviewing multiple qualitative and quantitative data points while planning for workforce needs. Reflect on questions such as the following:

What personnel do we need to realize our academic vision for students, both now and in the future?

Academic Vision and Priorities

Review your long-term academic vision, goals, and priorities for students to pinpoint the specific instructional and social experiences your system will deliver. Consider:

- What educator skills, content knowledge, mindsets, and beliefs will be necessary in realizing this vision for students?
- How does this align to our current workforce and where are there gaps?

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3 Dee, 2004; Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay & Papageorge, 2017; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Lindsay & Hart, 2017.

4 Dee, 2004; Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay & Papageorge, 2017; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Lindsay & Hart, 2017.

5 Dixon, R.D., Griffin, A.R., & Teoh, M.B. (2019). "If you listen, we will stay: Why teachers of color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover.", The Education Trust & Teach Plus, Washington DC.

- How can strengthened educator capacity remove or minimize barriers to student success?

Workforce Demographic and Performance Data

Gather human resources and evaluation data to assess the diversity, skill, and performance levels of your workforce. Consider:

- To what extent do educators reflect students' racial, linguistic, gender, and ethnic diversity?
- To what extent do educators have the subject matter knowledge and skills to serve students academically and socially, including students who are furthest from opportunity in our system?
- How do these trends impact students' experiences and connect to the learning trends we see in our school system?
- What are the assets of the other adults in our school system and community who may be able to support our vision for the student experience?(In addition to looking at the qualifications and skills of your entire workforce, connect this to your community asset mapping as you consider who in your community might be well suited to meet the needs of your students.)

Student Enrollment Projections

Use forecasted enrollment to understand how your student population is likely to shift in the coming years. Consider:

- How will overall student enrollment change over time? What does this look like at the school level?
- How may key student groups grow or shrink over time (e.g., do you anticipate more multilingual learners)?

How can we better support educators, particularly educators of color, and create the conditions for a strong and stable workforce?

Feedback from Students, Caregivers, and Educators

To learn more about key stakeholders' current experiences, it may be helpful to review survey data and convene focus groups to probe deeper into perspectives, mindsets, and beliefs. This is also an opportunity to gauge whether educators intend to remain in their roles. TNTP's Instructional Culture Insight Surveys can be a powerful tool for collecting and analyzing this data. Consider:

- What are students' and caregivers' experiences with schools and educators? What do they hope to see change, stop, or continue?
- To what extent do educators have the mindsets and beliefs to serve students academically and socially?(You can use TNTP's Teacher Expectations Survey to gather information on this question and identify opportunities to develop and foster high expectations.)
- Which educators plan to stay and which ones plan to leave? What's driving these decisions?
- How do these trends impact students' experiences?

Recruitment, Pipeline, and Vacancy Data

Analyze data from the past three years and any pipeline projections to understand your current supply of educator candidates and what you might anticipate in the future. Consider:

- Where are there gaps in our workforce? What's causing them?
- How many educators should we plan on hiring in the future and in what content areas and roles? (Use the vacancy forecasting tool to estimate these numbers.)
- Are current teacher pipelines and partners providing the educators we will need in the future? How sustainable are these sources?
- Do candidates of color have inequitable experiences and outcomes across these systems? What are they and what's causing them? How do we understand and mitigate or eliminate these inequities?

- What gaps do we forecast? How could we address them?

Staffing Data

Gather and review the past three years of retention, attrition, hiring, and vacancy data to understand key patterns related to the educators leaving, staying, and coming in, as well as the positions that are hard to fill. Consider the questions below and use the staffing diagnostic tool for additional questions and guidance.

- What educator retention and attrition patterns do we see and how do they influence students' experiences?
- What supports are educators provided, and are they effective in helping educators deliver on the vision for the student experience?
- What are the experiences of our educators of color?
- Do we see differences in retention by race or ethnicity?
- Which vacancies are persistently challenging to fill?

What other resources can we consider using flexibly to improve students' experiences?

Systems and Resources Audit

Review the systems (such as scheduling and staffing) and resources (like time, space, or technology) currently in use and possibly available and identify opportunities to better leverage these tools. Use the Teacher Workload Assessment to understand how teachers are spending their time, then create more efficient, manageable scheduling and staffing models that enable the focus on instruction. Consider:

- How do current educator staffing and scheduling models ensure all students have access to effective, racially diverse educators?
- How are we using resources like technology and partnerships (e.g., tutoring) to realize our vision for the student experience?

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Strategic Core: Pathways to Enter

How can we strengthen pipelines while addressing barriers to entry for educators?

Taking action on pathways to enter includes considering how you might improve your educator pipelines, recruitment, selection, and hiring practices, both in the short and long term.

Short-Term Actions to Address Immediate Needs

Time-tested talent strategies can help school systems fill vacancies with strong candidates. Even during challenging job markets for teachers, well-established best practices in recruitment and staffing can help fill vacancies with effective, diverse educators as quickly as possible:

Update recruitment materials.
Update online postings, social media posts, etc., to ensure they are compelling, targeted, and effective. (If you prioritize this step, consider updating your employee value proposition, too.) It may be helpful to field-test a few messages or ask teachers to share feedback. Be sure your recruitment materials acknowledge the challenges and opportunities of the current moment in a way that is inspiring yet realistic. For example, we've seen some districts focus recruitment messages on the fact that they need excellent, diverse teachers and are increasing compensation accordingly. See our guide to using social media in teacher recruitment for additional recommendations.

Host virtual recruitment events.
Organize virtual recruitment events such as webinars or online job fairs. Use this opportunity to engage candidates through interactive sessions, virtual tours, and Q&As. Find innovative ways to showcase your school's mission, values, staff, and openings.

Revisit past and potential candidate pools.
Share current employment opportunities with past candidates who dropped out of the pool or advanced to later stages but ultimately weren't offered a role. Similarly, reach out to recently retired teachers. Lean on relationships and a personal touch to encourage these candidates. For instance, share sample emails or phone scripts that former colleagues or recruiters can use to contact these groups.

Implement a robust cultivation strategy.
Develop a cadence for outreach to potential and current candidates, craft specific cultivation messages, and use a strategic mix of high- and low-touch efforts. For example, you might offer informational phone calls to candidates applying for hard-to-fill roles but send batch cultivation messages to candidates in less urgent pools. Reach out to all candidates in the later selection stages to ensure a high acceptance rate. Consider establishing a system to collect referrals from current employees; here is guidance on involving staff in recruitment. You may also design and share interview guides to help candidates be well prepared to demonstrate their qualifications. This will help create stronger interviews that generate better data to inform hiring decisions. Here is additional guidance on candidate cultivation, a sample work plan, and a sample tracker for managing these efforts.

Review your application, selection, and hiring processes.
Focus on bottlenecks and inefficiencies you can remove quickly. Systems often create unnecessary steps in the hiring process beyond what is required in their collective bargaining agreements—so reconsider which steps are absolutely critical. TNTP's suggestions for streamlining selection include guidance for common ways school systems can design more efficient processes. If contract requirements are a hindrance, seek to negotiate a temporary exception with your local teachers union. Similarly, staffing teams should work with talent and school leaders to prioritize the most urgent vacancies. Moving some or all selection activities to video calls will likely create efficiencies (see our guide to conducting effective

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virtual interviews for recommendations). Finally, use a work plan to articulate when your system would ideally make most teacher hires and determine what that means for moving up the timeline for each step in your recruitment and hiring process. Lastly, ensure that school leaders have the resources and guidance they need to make offers to top candidates efficiently. Share a quick talent training and sample resources like competency-based interview questions or a template school one pager with them.

Reconsider how a vacancy (sometimes called a "position control number" or a "position number") is generated in your system.

In many systems, a vacancy can't be created when a teacher takes a long-term leave of absence because that teacher still technically fills their position. This can cause delays in backfilling effective teachers into vacancies created by teachers on a long-term leave of absence. Develop criteria for when a leave of absence or long-term planned vacations generate a vacancy—then implement a process to help school leaders fill those vacancies quickly and efficiently. This shift will require some movement of educators across your system, and it may require negotiation with your union, but it will help fill long-term vacancies more quickly.

Develop an early hiring strategy.

Identify and give offers to promising candidates—even if you don't yet know where they will teach. School systems that hire early (typically by the end of May) are better positioned to secure strong teaching talent compared to systems that make most of their hires in the summer. That's especially true in a labor market where school systems are increasingly competing with other employers who offer educators increased flexibility and higher salaries. Our research has shown that both the quality and quantity of the teacher applicant pool declines throughout the course of a hiring season. School systems that make hiring decisions in late winter or early spring for the next school year will attract stronger candidates. Additionally, school systems should consider several strategies that will enable earlier offers to strong candidates.

Offer early employment contracts to top candidates.

"Open job offers" are employment contracts issued to new hires without a specific school assignment, often early in the hiring season (January-March) before staffing budgets are finalized. This is an excellent strategy to facilitate early hiring, as it allows school systems to hire before or as they confirm vacancies. It's also attractive for candidates, as these open offers guarantee employment while still providing flexibility in school choice. Systems may also consider incentivizing early commitment by offering professional development stipends, signing bonuses, reimbursement of certification costs, or relocation assistance. Most school systems wait until after budgets are finalized to hire, which often doesn't happen until early summer. To attract the best candidates, systems should become more comfortable with extending early offers based on historical projections.

Determine a selection process for identifying top candidates for an early offer.

Consider using TNTP's selection resources for this step, such as competency-based interview questions and activities that help hiring managers gather evidence on the selection competencies most important to them.

Involve school leaders in the selection, offer, and hiring process.

Research shows the importance of ensuring that both school leaders and teachers choose to work together via mutual consent. System leaders should plan to communicate clear instructions to school leaders for interviewing and hiring open-offer candidates and track progress toward placing these candidates. School leaders can also help make open-offer decisions (e.g., invite a few school leaders likely to hire these candidates to open-offer interview events).

Developing Long-Term Solutions for Pathways to Enter

What new or innovative models will we need to design and deploy to ensure all students have steady access to effective, diverse educators?

Below we offer long-term recommendations for ensuring more equitable, reliable, and productive pathways into teaching.

Develop and expand teacher pathways.

By building and investing in educator pipelines, school systems can ensure their students have access to a strong, diverse teacher workforce for years to come. Current staffing challenges have highlighted the need to reimagine and strengthen teacher pipelines—from staffing and training to who we identify as prospective teachers in the first place.

Most districts rely overwhelmingly on traditional education programs to provide new teachers, but these pathways present barriers that derail too many capable people. While there's some evidence of a recent uptick in enrollment in education programs, we are still falling short of the demand for new teachers, particularly for chronically underserved schools and subject areas. Universities alone cannot meet the growing need for diverse, effective educators—a point we detail in our recent report *A Broken Pipeline.* In this resource, we go into detail describing possible teacher certification programs that districts can create, focused on two groups of potential teachers often excluded from traditional preparation programs: uncertified school-based staff and career-changing professionals. We also describe how strategic cultivation at the high school level can support local recruitment by generating interest in the teaching field among younger candidates.

While dedicating time and energy to a long-term teacher pipeline may feel challenging in the current moment, we encourage school system leaders to consider how short-term decisions (such as recruiting more paraprofessionals or investing in a robust substitute pool) can set the stage for successful, sustainable pipeline programs down the road. See here for an overview of different pipeline models and here for guidance on selecting a best-fit pipeline.

Strategic Core: The Right Workload

How can we change the educator role to deliver a better experience for students and teachers?

Below we explore how educator roles can be better designed and implemented to ensure stronger outcomes and experiences for students and staff.

Short-Term Actions to Address Immediate Needs

Find opportunities to reduce teachers' workload.

Reviewing how teachers spend their time is essential, and the workload assessment tool can help system and school leaders gather and analyze this data. Teachers—especially your strongest ones—should spend nearly all their time on instructional responsibilities. This means, where possible, leaders should eliminate or reduce activities like lunchroom or recess duty, translation services, and unnecessary staff meetings. Non-instructional school staff, central office staff, and family and community volunteers may be able to cover these duties. Leaders should also look for ways to shorten meetings and communicate all but the most critical information via newsletter or email. Additionally, examine professional development trainings to ensure teachers are only asked to participate in high-quality sessions that offer immediate, practical resources and strategies. (See TNTP's publication *The Mirage* for guidance on assessing the effectiveness of professional development.) Finally, look for opportunities to create structures for teachers to share high-quality lesson plans and other classroom materials across schools and systems, and be sure to compensate teachers who are generating the shared lesson plans/materials, using ESSER dollars or other funds.

Expand the reach of top teachers.

Use technology and other strategies to help more students get a chance to learn from your strongest teachers. Recent years have brought advances in both technology and child development research that have huge implications for how students experience school. With the sum of human knowledge at students' fingertips, teachers can focus less on imparting knowledge and more on helping students make sense of that knowledge. Furthermore, teachers can use technology to reach far more students than simply the ones sitting in their classroom. School staffing structures haven't kept pace with these changes. While rethinking your school staffing model and your teachers' job responsibilities, here are steps you can take to expand the reach of top teachers and address vacancies this year:

- **Use high-quality instructional materials as the base for your instruction.**
  Teachers report spending significant time creating and finding materials to use for their lessons; ensure they have access to high-quality instructional materials and the supports to use them well. You can learn more in Instructional Coherence: A Key to High-Quality Learning Acceleration for All Students.

- **Consider using live-streamed and recorded lessons.**
  The technology that schools relied upon in the earlier stages of the pandemic can help offset some of today's staffing challenges. For example, school systems could create lead content teacher roles in which the strongest teachers record their direct instruction so that novice teachers can play the recordings in their classrooms while reinforcing key messages. If necessary, combine classes under one teacher with more resources and supports (such as paraprofessionals or prepared members of the community).

  For example, rather than assigning each seventh-grade classroom one lead teacher, schools could make strategic decisions to assign the entire grade to one highly effective lead teacher and a team of novice or student teachers. This grade-level team would be supported by a larger group of school leaders, paraprofessionals, and community educators.

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- **Consider restructuring teacher teams across the system.**
  Strong teachers could also be appointed as lead lesson planners who share those plans across their grade band or content area so that other teachers can focus on implementation. These lead teachers could record instruction in advance to set aside for absences. Transcend Education offers ideas for "tinkering toward transformation" that include small steps for getting started, as well as promising examples from the field.

Systems should work with their strongest teachers to design these models and ensure they are sustainable and attractive to top teachers. For example, consider how lead teachers will be compensated for their additional responsibilities, such as a stipend or workload reductions (e.g., other staff members covering duties like lunch and recess so lead teachers receive additional preparation time during the school day).

Develop a Districtwide Absence Triage Plan.

In many districts, teacher absences are the leading cause of interrupted learning time for students. We recognize that absences can strain school resources, and that in the rush to cover them, it's easy to operate as if every teacher vacancy is created equal—particularly while ensuring all students are safely under adult supervision. But while it may feel wholly operational, covering absences and vacancies offers an important opportunity to prioritize learning acceleration, especially for historically marginalized students. With strategically designed roles, schools can keep a single or even a handful of absences from derailing learning. Structure classrooms with teacher teams so that an absence does not disrupt instruction. Designate learning acceleration for students furthest from opportunity as the top priority as you respond to short- and long-term absences and vacancies. See here for school- and system-level guidance on creating student-centered absence coverage plans.
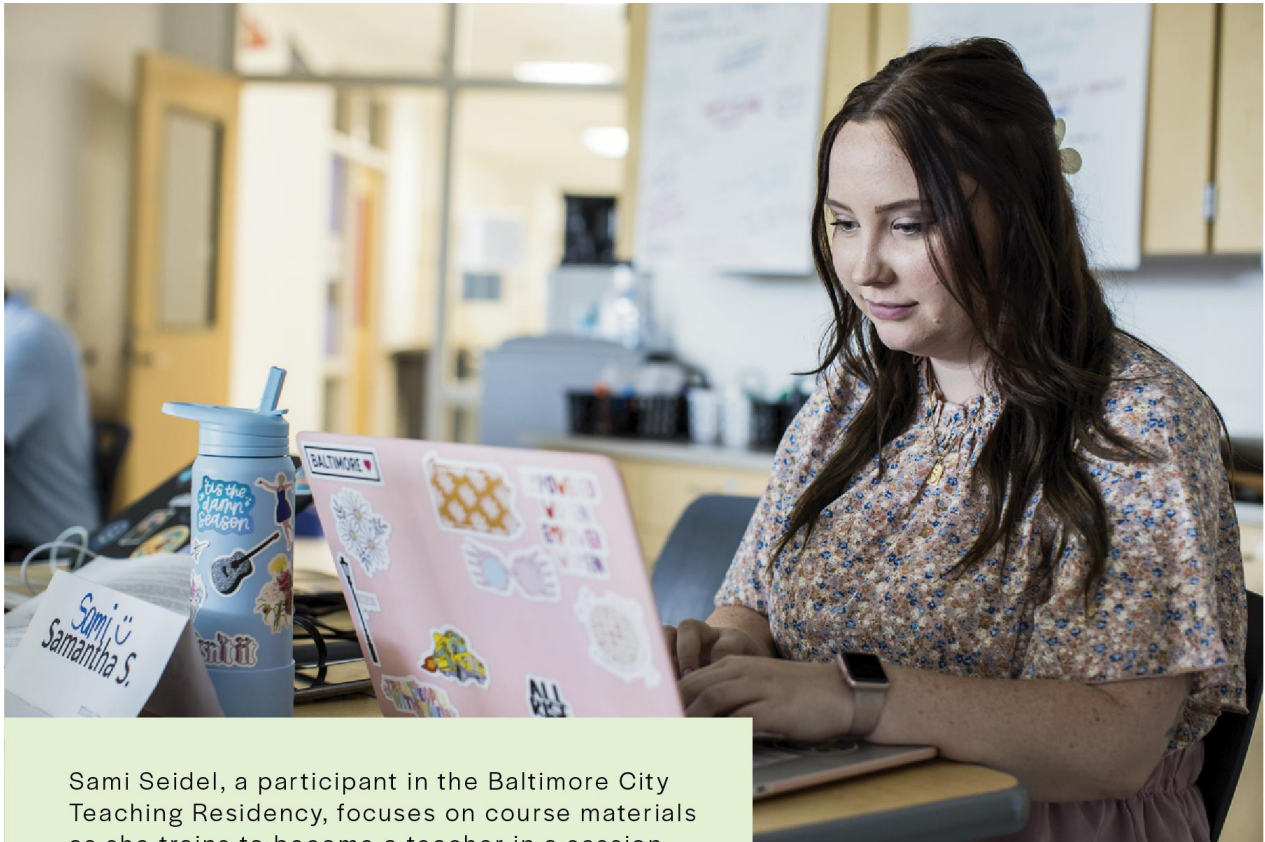
Sami Seidel, a participant in the Baltimore City Teaching Residency, focuses on course materials as she trains to become a teacher in a session held at the Academy for College and Career Exploration in Baltimore.

Developing Long-Term Solutions for the Right Workload

What new or innovative models will we need in order to maximize and develop educators' assets so that we can improve student learning?

Below, we offer long-term recommendations for pioneering more sustainable and strategic educator roles to improve experiences and outcomes for educators and students alike.

Reimagine the teacher role.

The model of one teacher in front of 30 students doesn't lead to the student outcomes we aspire to at scale, so we must build on promising ideas to reimagine it. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that the traditional teaching role isn't sustainable or attractive for enough people, and that it has failed to keep pace with the workforce innovations technology allows. Each teacher currently shoulders countless responsibilities; removing that constraint from instructional planning can lead to exciting breakthroughs.

Current staffing challenges—and the high likelihood of future staffing challenges due to weak teacher pipelines—have increased the urgency to find new approaches. Thinking beyond the traditional staffing model can help solve that problem. The current momentum around rethinking traditional teacher roles makes now the perfect time to pilot new approaches:

- **Examine the vision for student experience and identify the specific talent supports necessary to achieve it.**
  For instance, systems will need staff who can design and tailor curricula and lesson plans, deliver these lessons, reinforce student learning, attend to the mental health and well-being of students, and engage families and caregivers.

- **Think creatively about how to distribute those supports efficiently across staff depending on their strengths.**
  Current technology and workforce innovations mean that systems can and should plan to use fewer staff members more efficiently. For instance, one skilled secondary math teacher may take the lead on designing instructional materials while a small team of novice or student teachers deliver lessons, supported by a larger team of support staff and teachers who play less instructionally focused roles across multiple grade bands. School systems should also consider the roles technology or noncertified staff can fill. For instance, it may be possible to outsource tutoring or instructional practice activities to online platforms or community organizations or assign noninstructional staff to advise a small group of students as a way to reduce the amount of individual follow-up required of teachers.

Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce offers a model and resources for reallocating the traditional responsibilities of classroom teachers across a cadre of professionals. In their team-based approach, community educators, paraeducators, certified and student educators, and educational leaders each play a distinct role in providing all students with excellent learning opportunities. See here for more information on the Next Education Workforce, including sample schedules and educator training guides.

Consider revising role expectations to be more fluid. Perhaps instead of being assigned to one school, elementary specials teachers or secondary science teachers could serve multiple campuses, or central office staff could spend one day a week supporting instruction at a school. See Transcend Education's *Transforming the Teacher Role*, Part 3: Innovating on the Role of the Teacher for additional ideas and steps toward designing more flexible staffing models.

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It is critical that key stakeholders, including teachers unions, teachers, and school leaders, are part of these conversations from the start and have meaningful, consistent opportunities to offer feedback. Partnerships with union leaders should be a top priority for investing and engaging in these shifts.

Changes to the teacher role also require shifts to the compensation model. All teachers deserve a professional-level salary from the beginning of their careers. Over time, those who have a positive influence on student learning deserve to be paid even more for their success in the classroom. Starting teachers should be paid a competitive salary commensurate with the demands of their role, and as they advance into lead teacher roles, their pay should increase. A compensation system that takes performance into account, coupled with innovative teaching roles that offer more flexibility and leadership pathways, will help districts attract and keep more top talent. (See "Improve and enhance your teacher value proposition" for more ideas here.)

Strategic Core: Reasons to Stay

How can we cultivate supportive, thriving cultures that foster educator development and promote retention of top talent?

Below, we focus on strategies for educator development, experience, and recognition that encourage workforce retention and growth.

Short-Term Actions to Address Immediate Needs

Develop a differentiated retention strategy.

The easiest way to fill a teaching vacancy is to prevent the vacancy in the first place. Teachers choose to leave the classroom for many reasons—some of which are beyond the control of individual schools or districts. But principals and district leaders often have more sway over a teacher's decision to stay than they think. Use these strategies to retain your most effective teachers:

- **Use a school climate survey, such as Insight, to give staff an opportunity to share feedback, ideas, and concerns.**
  Such tools help leaders gain insight into educators' experiences, including whether groups of educators, such as educators of color, have different experiences. Data like this is critical to building affirming, respectful, and inclusive cultures. Leaders can then engage staff in next steps—for instance, by sharing an overview of results with all staff, gathering their input on potential actions, and forming smaller committees focused on implementing and assessing the impact of these actions. Leaders may also convene focus groups or offer one-on-one conversations so that staff have multiple options for engagement.

- **Equip school leaders with** evidence-based retention strategies**.**
  While some retention approaches require more resources and planning, The Irreplaceables shows that there are plenty of low- and no-cost retention strategies that principals can employ quickly. For instance, principals should hold stay conversations with all effective and promising staff as soon as possible. Principals should also talk with top performers about what they need to remain in their current teaching positions. Whichever retention strategies you choose, ensure that they are equitably targeted to effective teachers of all races and ethnicities, as we've seen that educators of color experience these strategies less frequently than their white colleagues.

- **Celebrate great teaching.**
  Be intentional about recognizing the specific accomplishments of strong teachers and their impact on students at the school and system level. Here's a sample email a school leader could share to recognize excellent instruction. Engage local media to tell stories about teachers' achievements.

- **Cultivate high-performing teachers as future leaders.**
  By providing career advancement opportunities to high-performing teachers, schools can offer a retention incentive while developing a pipeline of school leaders. For example, systems could offer "early contracts" to their best teachers for leadership positions in two to three years, then support these high performers as they grow into leadership roles. The Leadership Programs offered by KIPP Public Schools provide examples of how high-performing teachers can be retained while preparing to lead schools. As with retention strategies, ensure these opportunities are made available to all qualified staff and that the process for determining qualifications is free from bias, as teachers of color often have less access to advancement opportunities.

- **Help school leaders be more effective people managers.**

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Principals often benefit from management training, especially in these challenging times. This professional development could focus on helping their staff prioritize their time, receiving and delivering feedback, communicating difficult decisions, and building relationships and trust.
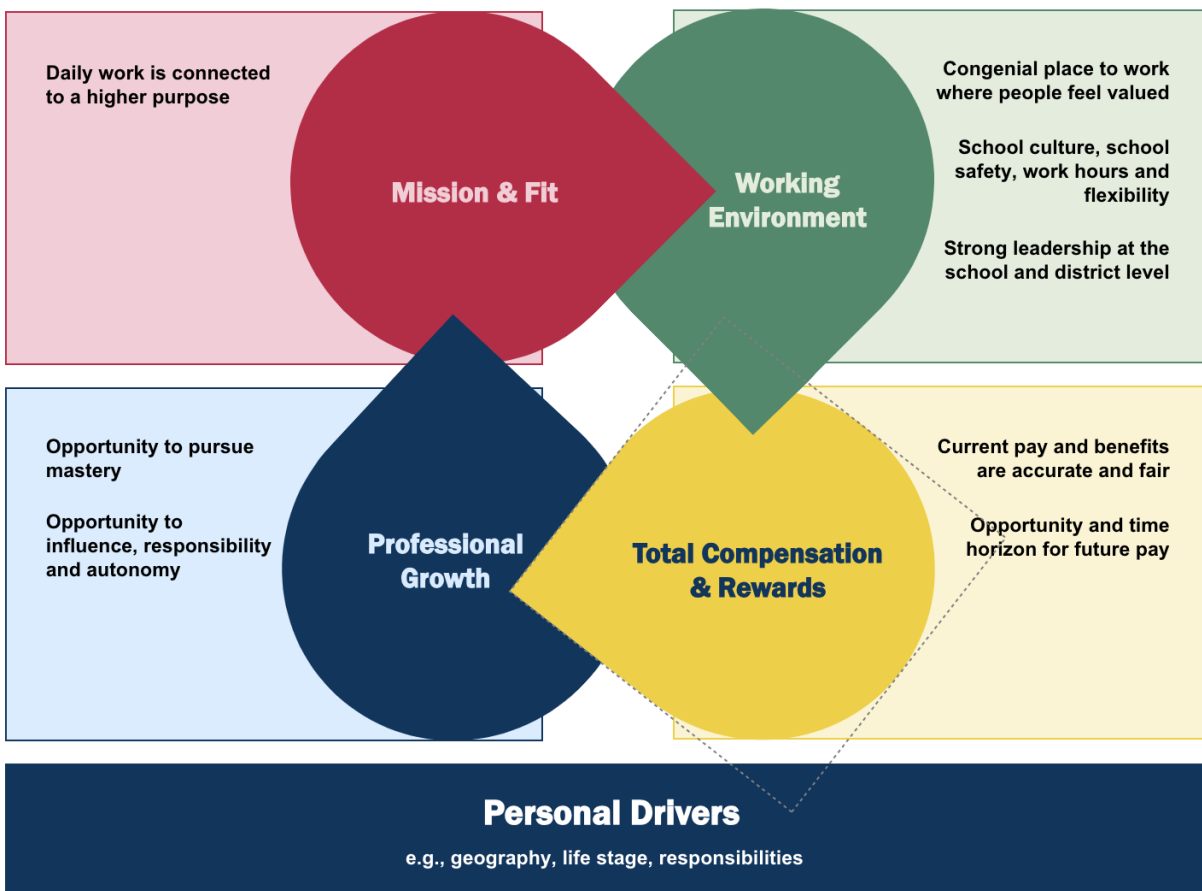
Developing Long-Term Solutions for Core Reasons to Stay

What new or innovative models will we need in order to maximize our staff resources to improve student learning?

Below, we offer long-term recommendations for pioneering more innovative, large-scale strategies for cultivating better, more stable workforce retention and development.

Improve and enhance your overall employee value proposition.

Help teachers and prospective teachers understand why your system's combination of compensation, professional growth, working conditions, and mission offers the best career opportunity for them. While it's true that low salaries often put teaching at a disadvantage—especially in the current labor market—we encourage systems to use this moment to rethink their entire employee value proposition (EVP). An EVP is the collective set of factors that shape employees' experiences, including the mission of and their fit within the organization, working conditions, total compensation and rewards, and opportunities for professional growth (see figure below).

- **Mission & Fit**
  - Daily work is connected to a higher purpose

- **Working Environment**
  - Congenial place to work where people feel valued
  - School culture, school safety, work hours and flexibility
  - Strong leadership at the school and district level

- **Professional Growth**
  - Opportunity to pursue mastery
  - Opportunity to influence, responsibility and autonomy

- **Total Compensation & Rewards**
  - Current pay and benefits are accurate and fair
  - Opportunity and time horizon for future pay

- **Personal Drivers**
  - e.g., geography, life stage, responsibilities

In education, we've generally tolerated a situation in which people must choose to become teachers despite difficult working conditions, low pay, and a job that's often perceived as impossible. Furthermore, teaching is rarely a viable pathway to economic mobility or security, as many teachers rely on second jobs to afford living costs and face difficulty purchasing a home or even renting close to their schools. This was never an acceptable value proposition, but especially not in the current labor market. An EVP is a useful way to understand teachers' holistic experiences and apply differentiated, creative approaches to recruitment and retention, including—but not limited to—compensation. Attracting and retaining the right talent becomes easier when a system's EVP reflects and supports the organization's mission and fits with the broader labor market. While a strong EVP won't solve every challenge, school systems without one will have trouble even getting people in the door.

As you consider revising your EVP, check that it describes the experience you want educators to have. For example, if you are leveraging high-quality instructional materials to accelerate student learning, your EVP should acknowledge that teaching in your district is about building relationships with and supporting students in grade-level content, rather than investing time in duplicative work like writing your own lessons.

In this resource we offer several strategies to make the most of your system's EVP in the short term, while also acknowledging that the broader EVP for teaching may need to change dramatically to attract and retain highly effective, diverse educators in the years ahead. For additional information and research on building and sustaining educator satisfaction, see Part 2: Drivers of Satisfaction in Transcend Education's *Transforming the Teacher Role*.

The Workforce Design Framework

Increase Collective Agency

The following Framework components focus on how school systems can implement their talent strategy and position themselves for impactful, collaborative, and sustainable approaches.

Giselle Allen (center) coaches TK (left) and Lateef Walker (right), members of the Baltimore City Teaching Residency, held at the Academy for College and Career Exploration in Baltimore.

Capacity

What capacity gaps do we foresee? What external stakeholders, cross-sector partners, or community members can we leverage to minimize or eliminate these gaps, in school and out?

Rather than trying to do everything by themselves, school system leaders can consider cross-sector partnerships that leverage community assets. Begin by identifying which aspects of your talent strategy lend themselves to partnership. For instance, one system may have difficulty hiring bilingual teachers and consider partnering with an educator prep program to create a teacher residency program, while another may work with a community organization to provide after-school tutoring. Next, develop a deep understanding of your community assets and networks, including organizations, local policymakers, institutes of higher learning, tech organizations, etc. Finally, identify where partnership needs and potential partners align and explore potential collaborations.

Every partnership will look different, but in general we recommend the following best practices:

- Establish a vision for each partnership, clear expectations for each partner, and a mutual understanding of what they will look like in practice.
- Designate a person to lead each partner relationship and ensure they have the necessary capacity, support, and knowledge to own this work.
- Set progress-monitoring metrics to assess the return on investment in each partnership and determine how to adjust course accordingly.

Partnership Resources

Engaging Families and Community Partners

Decades of research shows that when schools partner with families and caregivers, students benefit. As systems and schools develop and implement their vision for student experience, they should make engaging families, caregivers, and a wide range of community organizations a top priority. This guide outlines five key steps for kicking off the engagement process, as well as things to consider once you start crafting a comprehensive community education support plan. Additionally, Learning Heroes provides a curated selection of resources, tools, and content to build, sustain, and strengthen community partnerships.

Educator Pipelines

Alternate pathways to teacher licensure are not a recent innovation, but they've gained popularity in many regions as state policies have changed to accommodate accelerated routes to the classroom for candidates outside the traditional university system. Some programs are run by school districts, but many of the largest programs are operated by national nonprofit or for-profit organizations approved by states to help solve critical teacher shortages. See here for an overview of different pipeline models and here for guidance on selecting a best-fit pipeline.

Student Support Partnerships

Many districts are pursuing partnerships to provide academic and well-being support to students. The National Partnership for Student Success created a district toolkit to guide leaders in designing and implementing successful partnerships, including a set of standards to inform visioning, goal setting, progress monitoring, and improvement.

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High Impact Tutoring

High-impact tutoring (HIT) has emerged as a promising practice to address unfinished learning. These resources can help leverage partnerships to design and implement your HIT program.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental health is a critical issue for both adults and students, and many schools and systems often lack the resources to provide comprehensive, wraparound supports, which makes this a strong opportunity for leveraging partnerships. See Transforming Education's SEL for Educators Toolkit, guidance from FuelEd on adult SEL supports, and a K-12 mental health toolkit from SchoolSafety.Gov.

Policy

Which federal, state, system, and school policies propel or impede our talent strategy and ability to secure workforce needs? What new policies will drive our vision and strategies forward?

Most education policy is made at the state and district level through a mix of actions by elected officials and state and local education agencies. For more information on how education policy is made in your state, the Education Commission of the States (K-12 Governance Models map) and the National Association of State Boards of Education (State Education Governance at a Glance) provide visualizations of state-by-state differences in education governance across the country.

Understanding the restrictions and flexibilities created by policy can help talent leaders think creatively and leverage the possibilities your current policy landscape offers. If there's any existing policy flexibility, such as the ability to staff classrooms with candidates whose certification is in process or with students enrolled in educator preparation programs, take advantage of it. Issue or obtain emergency certificates for individuals who qualify, and if your state allows it, hire nonteaching professionals or other teachers on a part-time basis. Publicize these options in recruitment materials and directly contact potential candidates who may be eligible. Encourage your staff to share these opportunities with their professional networks as well.

Another key set of policies are those that govern how schools and classrooms are managed. This includes rules like line-of-sight policies for teacher trainees, seat time, and use of school space, as well as logistical considerations like attendance and student data regulations. These may be decided at the state and/or local level. As schools pioneer more innovative staffing and scheduling models and reshape educator roles, leaders will need to ensure their school systems are in compliance while also maximizing any permissible flexibility.

Key Education Policy Priorities

Diversify teacher preparation programs.

Closing the teacher diversity gap is one of the most important steps we can take to improve public education. To address the lack of diversity, all stakeholders involved in creating and sustaining the educator pipeline—from state and federal government to teacher preparation programs to districts—need to commit to and be held accountable for doing better. See TNTP's *A Broken Pipeline* for recommendations on key policy shifts at the program, district, and state level that would help ensure more teachers of color are entering the profession.

Teacher preparation program policy is most often set at the state level. The federal government, through the Higher Education Act, also influences how teacher preparation programs operate but to a less influential degree than state policy. While districts do not set policy for teacher preparation programs, they can create pathways or partnerships with teacher preparation programs that can have an influence on how those programs operate and the types of teacher candidates they produce.

Reduce barriers to entry for teachers.

Teachers should earn certification based on their demonstrated skills, not just paper credentials. Teacher licensure rules in some states have long kept promising teachers out of the classroom. Many couldn't afford the time and expense to meet seat time requirements in traditional educator preparation schools, or were unable to navigate the maze of certification tests that don't consistently predict success in the classroom in the first place—even as they disproportionately screen out people of color. These barriers

were always a problem, but they're especially harmful at a time when so many schools are struggling to recruit the teachers they need.

Teacher certification and licensure policy is set at the state level, through state law and/or regulation from state-level agencies, such as departments of education and/or agencies focused on higher education. While districts do not set these policies, they can offer supplemental programs (financial assistance, targeted recruitment programs, etc.) to support recruitment of teachers.

Create a better approach to licensure.

Teacher certification requirements exist to ensure that all teachers have the skills they need to help students learn. But so long as certification policies value paper credentials over student impact, too many talented people will be shut out of the teaching profession. In most states, teacher certification requirements are based on proxies for effectiveness, such as standardized tests. Proxies aren't necessarily a bad thing if they accurately measure the things they are standing in for. But standardized tests for teacher certification are generally not strong predictors of teacher effectiveness. Many of these tests are also a disproportionately large barrier for teacher candidates of color—which compounds the harm these policies inflict on students and schools. Instead, states should set clear expectations for what great teaching looks like and align certification requirements with whether teachers meet that high bar—primarily using observations and evidence of student learning.

As mentioned above, teacher certification and licensure policies are set at the state level. While district leaders cannot directly affect the state policies that dictate teacher certification and licensure, they should understand those policies and look for opportunities to advocate for changes that could help them recruit and retain diverse, effective teachers.

Rethink layoff policy to protect teacher diversity.

School districts commonly use seniority—"last in, first out," or LIFO—to determine which teachers to lay off. But LIFO is not color-blind: Early-career teachers are more likely to identify as people of color and thus most likely to be let go. States and districts, which mostly set layoff policy through collective bargaining agreements, must reform their layoff policies to protect students' access to diverse teachers. Grounding layoff decision making in what is shown to support student learning can protect recent progress in diversifying the educator workforce. For more information, including policy examples and recommendations, see TNTP's and Educators for Excellence's *So All Students Thrive: Rethinking Layoff Policy to Protect Teacher Diversity*.

- **Resources for Learning about Current Education Policies Statutes**
  Statutes are laws passed by a legislature and are binding, except where individuals or organizations are specifically exempted (as with charter schools) or when they have obtained a valid waiver. Statutes are typically written broadly and often direct another state or local entity to flesh out the details of their implementation. This website includes links to the statutes in all 50 states. Each state should have a section dedicated specifically to its education laws. The most effective way to search the education code is to skim the table of contents and read all sections that seem like they may be relevant.

- **Administrative Rules and Regulations**
  Rules and regulations are adopted by state entities to clarify how statutes will be carried out. They are typically organized and published according to the state actor that produced them and binding in the same manner as statutes. This website includes links to administrative codes or rules and regulations for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Each should be organized by issuing agency or subject.

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- **Guidance**
  Sometimes an agency, like a state department of education or state board of education, or an individual, like a state commissioner of education, will publish a document that provides guidance on a specific topic, such as intervention strategies or teacher certification. State boards or departments of education and agency and district websites are the best places to find guidance.

- **Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)**
  CBAs are contracts between school districts and teachers unions that establish the rights and responsibilities of each group. These agreements can set policy on a range of issues, such as length of school day, class size, and teacher hiring, firing, evaluation, tenure, salaries, and benefits. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) warehouses contracts for 145 of the largest districts nationwide. CBAs are also frequently available on district and/or union websites. Note that Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia do not allow teachers to collectively bargain, so there will not be district-level CBAs in these states.

Leadership

Who will own, manage, invest in, and inspire our workforce and community to ensure we deliver on our promises to students, caregivers, and educators?

The final framework component is leadership, which includes identifying the people and teams responsible for overseeing and carrying out this work as well as engaging and investing in stakeholders. Outline the parameters they will work within and name the places where they will have authority over key decisions. Determine how this person or team will track progress and share updates with key stakeholders, and ensure they have the resources to do so. Be sure this work is documented.

An important consideration is clarifying the autonomy that school leaders have. Which decisions can they make on their own, which will need district-level approval, and which will actually need to be made at the district level. As schools and districts think about pioneering new innovations or shifts, we suggest starting with school-level pilots, then scaling the approaches that prove to be successful; this requires granting schools a certain amount of permission to act creatively. Districts may consider which of their schools are best positioned to test out new models and should work with these leaders to establish clearly defined parameters. Lastly, clarify all decision making and guidelines related to budget and finances at the school versus system levels.

Who will own, manage, and give input on this work?

For each initiative, leaders should define clear and logical roles and responsibilities and share them widely to create accountability and transparency. A MOCHA is a helpful structure for creating collaborative and thoughtful project structures.

Given the interconnectedness of this approach, we suggest ensuring each project team MOCHA includes people and teams who represent talent and academic lenses, and that families/caregivers and students have meaningful opportunities to engage.

How are they building awareness of their identity and how might that impact this work?

Leaders must understand how their identities and positionality influence how they view and approach their work. The National Equity Project's Liberatory Design Principles are an excellent resource for building intentional time for reflection into any project or initiative.

Have they been given the authority to do so?

For each initiative they take on, leaders need to articulate the specific outcomes they seek, while also understanding the magnitude of change required and the impact on stakeholders. This thinking enables leaders to identify the level of authority MOCHA approvers, owners, and managers will need to work effectively.

Leaders should understand the principles of change management, which is a structured approach to implementing change in an organization. These principles recognize that change can be a painful process and have a far-reaching impact on the organization and the people who work for it. Select a change management framework, such as the examples below, and ensure that MOCHA members understand how to apply this framework in the context of their work.

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- [Kotter Change Model](#): This eight-step model helps leaders take a thoughtful, sustainable approach to creating change.
- [Switch](#): This model helps leaders harness their stakeholders' emotional and rational sides to work toward change.

Where will they need autonomy and where will they need to operate within constraints?

MOCHA team members must understand where they have freedom to innovate and where they will need to operate within specific constraints. To encourage innovation, we suggest giving teams as much leeway as possible. Using a protocol like [this one](#) can help encourage creativity and make space for many voices.

Leaders also need to ensure the constraints—policies, conditions, and boundaries within which the project must operate—are clearly explained. See this [resource](#) for more information on defining constraints and exploring their impact. In addition to the six constraints named here, leaders should also understand the relevant [policy](#) constraints and flexibility.

The Workforce of Tomorrow Starts Today

TNTP's Workforce Design Framework provides a road map for a talent strategy designed to help school systems realize their vision for supporting educators in maximizing their strengths while creating conditions for sustainable, successful student experiences. Yet this framework also demonstrates that talent and academics must integrate—while keeping students at the center—to improve outcomes, growth, and opportunities. This requires us to deeply know the students and communities we serve.

This work is important and complex, and TNTP welcomes the opportunity to partner with leaders to create excellent opportunities and experiences for students, educators, and communities. Given our decades of experience in both the academic and talent spaces, we help leaders see and create connections and coherence in complex systems and ensure there are opportunities for all stakeholders to engage. This positions TNTP to be an effective, equity-centered, and knowledgeable partner in this mission.

TNTP has long been on the ground supporting clients in solving the most pressing challenges and at the forefront of policy issues like tenure, evaluation, and compensation, so we also have direct experience confronting barriers and designing impactful educator pathways and pipelines. Most importantly, our work is centered on students and the caregivers and communities that see, support, and have big dreams for them—and we are excited about opportunities to continue to bring this student-centered talent approach to life in the classroom.

To learn more about bringing TNTP to your school or system, contact info@tntp.org

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