Addressing Teacher Shortages:

Practical Ideas for the Pandemic and Beyond

February 2022

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Introduction

Schools across the country are facing their toughest staffing challenges in recent memory: a large number of teachers thinking of quitting, taking leaves of absence, or actually resigning, a depleted pool of substitute teachers, and fewer people applying to fill vacancies in a job market that's pushing workers away from relatively low-paid careers like teaching. It's all happening at a moment when students need diverse, effective teachers more than ever to help them accelerate back to grade level after the disruption of the past two years.

This guide is designed to help district leaders understand and respond to the specific staffing challenges they're facing, based on best practices we've gathered working with hundreds of school systems over almost 25 years. It's focused on time-tested strategies that will make an immediate impact: ideas for covering absences, filling existing vacancies, and addressing chronic shortages exacerbated by the pandemic in key subject areas and in schools serving historically marginalized communities.

But as school systems respond to the staffing issues right in front of them, it's important to acknowledge that those challenges are symptoms of a larger problem. The current crisis has reinforced fundamental questions about our approach to staffing classrooms and the value proposition of teaching as a career. We've known for decades that the combination of low pay, lackluster career growth opportunities, and a job description that borders on impossible (meeting the wide-ranging needs of an entire class by yourself) pushes talented people away from teaching—a trend that is only accelerating amid the "Great Reshuffle" and a lack of investment in accessible, high-quality teacher preparation programs. Especially with the availability of Recovery Act funds, districts have an important opportunity to plan and build momentum for longer-term changes to teacher pipelines, the employee value proposition for teachers, and the teacher role itself that will bring many more talented professionals into the classroom to support students in the critical years ahead. We've included advice throughout this guide on how to jumpstart that planning process.

We know district leaders can't address these long-term challenges on their own, nor should they have to. Teacher shortages affect every corner of our society and economy—because teachers help prepare the next generation of workers for every other industry. Public and private sector leaders at every level need to acknowledge what's happening in public education right now as our country's top workforce development priority and act accordingly. We hope the ideas in this guide will help district leaders start that important conversation in their communities, while also helping them provide more students with the teachers and educational opportunities they need right now.

To learn more about any of the strategies in this guide or find out how to partner with TNTP to implement them in your school system, contact us using this form.

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How to Use This Guide

We've divided this guide into three main sections. In "Diagnosing Your Staffing Challenges," we offer three goals that should drive any district's talent strategy and a set of questions to better understand progress toward those goals in three key areas: recruitment, staffing and instructional delivery, and retention.

In the rest of the guide, we offer ideas across ten categories (summarized in the table below) to help address the challenges you've identified right away, as well as plan for a more sustainable educator workforce over the long run. For example, a district that is struggling to recruit and staff vacancies might want to consider how to expand the reach of their top teachers alongside developing a teacher absence triage plan and addressing immediate vacancies. We invite district leaders to use whatever portions of the document are most relevant in addressing their challenges.

Click any strategy to see corresponding tactics	Recruitment	Staffing & Instructional Delivery Models	Retention
Short Term: Do Now for Immediate			
Develop a vacancy/absence triage plan	●	●	
Address your immediate vacancies	●	●	
Develop a differentiated retention strategy			●
Expand the reach of top teachers		●	
Use data to project future vacancy needs	●	●	
Develop an early hiring strategy		●	
Long Term: Plan Now for the Years Ahead			
Enhance your employee value proposition	●	●	●
Reduce barriers to entry for teaching	●	●	
Develop and expand teacher pathways	●	●	
Reimagine the teacher role		●	

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Diagnosing Your Staffing Challenges

How to identify the challenges preventing you from providing diverse, effective educators for all classrooms— and choose talent strategies that will advance your goals for students.

A school system's talent strategy should flow from its larger goals for student experiences (see our Learning Acceleration for All guide for advice on setting those goals)—as well as from specific goals around educator recruitment, staffing, and retention. We propose the following three goals as the basis for any strong talent strategy; any system that achieves them should be well positioned to also achieve its broader goals for all students.

> ## Goals For Your Talent Strategy
>
> 1. All students will have access to diverse, highly effective educators who provide access to a high- quality academic experience every day, in every class. All educators consistently will hold high expectations for all students—regardless of their race, ethnicity, or any other part of their identity— and will be committed to developing and growing as professionals.
>
> 2. Our school system's workforce will reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender demographics of the students we serve.
>
> 3. Our school system will retain strong and promising educators.

It's important for system leaders to take stock of their staffing challenges with these goals in mind. The more specific your understanding of the current situation—keeping in mind that teacher labor markets have always been local and nuanced—the more effective your talent strategy will be. For example, if the crux of the challenge you're facing is that you have fewer vacancies than in previous years but are struggling to cover teachers' absences or leaves of absence, you'll want to take a different approach than if you have significantly more teacher vacancies than in past years.

To diagnose your current state, we suggest working to answer the following questions using the data you have available—considering when you might use quantitative data you've collected, when you might collect additional qualitative stakeholder feedback to fully answer a question, and when you might analyze your policies and procedures for shifts that will ensure all your students have access to effective, diverse educators.

We've organized the questions you might want to answer around three big buckets: recruitment, staffing, and retention.

Recruitment: Are we attracting effective, diverse applicants who mirror the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of our student population?

- What are our key sources for applicants, especially for hard-to-staff roles?
- When are vacancies posted? How many applicants are there for each vacancy? In high-need subjects? How are they identified?
- What is the strategy for recruiting racially diverse and gender diverse candidates, and is it effective?
- Which recruitment techniques and channels are most effective at producing effective teachers?
- Do recruitment strategies purposefully attract applicants who are committed to serving students and their communities?

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- How many individuals are active in the substitute teacher system? How has that changed over the past five years?
- For each month of the school year, how many individuals are active in the substitute teacher system? How has that changed over the past five years?
- What is our relationship with our education preparation programs and our state licensure office? What is our asset map of local and regional educational preparation programs?
- What staff resources have we dedicated to recruitment? Do we have adequate resources and staff applied to our recruitment challenges?
- How has COVID-19 affected recruitment? How have the answers to the previous few questions changed over the past five years?

Staffing and Instructional Delivery Models: Are we consistently identifying diverse and effective candidates and efficiently filling our vacancies with those candidates? Are we maximizing the reach of the most effective educators in our system?

- Does our selection process consistently identify diverse and effective candidates?
- What is the screening and interview process for candidates? How long does it take to move through the selection process (from application to offer)?
- Does the current selection model advance applicants who prove to be successful in their first year? Stay into their second year?
- When do hiring managers identify vacancies for the year?
- How are teachers staffed to positions in the district? Is this process as efficient as it could be, and does it promote the best-fit candidates for individual positions?
- What proportion of daily substitute requests are filled? How has that changed over the past five years?
- What proportion of long-term substitute requests are filled? How has that changed over the past five years?
- Are we rethinking who is delivering instruction and how it is being delivered? Are there opportunities to increase the reach of our most effective educators so that more students have access to our best teachers?
- What are our class sizes, and how do we assign students to teachers? Can we use staff in different ways to ensure that our students are receiving instruction from our best educators?
- How has COVID-19 affected staffing?
- How have the answers to the previous few questions changed over the past five years?

Retention: Are we retaining our most effective educators—especially our most effective teachers of color?

- What is year-over-year retention? How does it compare to similar school systems? Are there differences by demographics, tenure, or school characteristics? If so, why?
- Are there leaders or types of schools (e.g., Title 1 schools) that have higher turnover? Why? Have we supported school leaders or taken other action where we have seen low retention rates? Was it effective?
- What factors influence teachers' decisions to leave the district or to move between schools (e.g., compensation, relationship with leaders, working conditions, affinity spaces, culture)? Are there any trends by demographic data point?
- Is the district differentially retaining our strongest teachers? Do we have the performance data we need to discern the teachers we want to prioritize retaining?
- How has COVID-19 affected staff retention and daily staff attendance?
- How have the answers to the previous questions changed over the past five years?

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Short-Term Strategies: Do Now for Immediate Impact

This section offers advice most school systems can begin implementing immediately to see results around recruitment, staffing, and retention this school year.

Develop a teacher vacancy and absence triage plan that is focused on accelerating learning

Focus on minimizing the negative effects on students—especially the most marginalized students—of continued staff absences and any uptick in resignations.

Recruitment; Staffing & Instructional Delivery

Developing a District-Wide Absence Triage Plan

In the rush to cover current teacher vacancies, leaves of absence, and absences, it's easy to operate as if every teacher vacancy is created equal—particularly as you are considering how to ensure all students are safely under adult supervision in your schools. But while it may feel wholly operational, covering absences and vacancies offers an important opportunity to prioritize learning acceleration for historically marginalized students. You should name that learning acceleration for historically marginalized students is your top priority as you respond to short and long-term absences and vacancies—and then implement a plan to make it happen:

- *Designate central staff who are responsible for your teacher vacancy and absence triage plan* and for providing guidance to schools on triaging vacancies and long-term absences. Make sure that team is clear that they should be thinking about how to cover vacancies caused by resignations as well as shorter-term vacancies caused by teacher leaves of absence. Then, ensure those staff members are clear on how they should prioritize across schools and subject-specific vacancies as they work to attract talent to your system. This group should determine an accurate count of all current vacancies—both long-term (vacancies from teacher resignations) and short-term (vacancies from teacher leave-of-absences)—across each of your schools. (See "Address your immediate vacancies" for more information about doing this using position control numbers.)
- *Name which of your schools—given the students they serve and the results they have experienced—are the highest priority for filling vacancies and leaves of absence.* Work with your academics and schools teams to prioritize schools that serve a large proportion of students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with learning and thinking differences, and multilingual learners as you think about which vacancies you'll work to fill first, given limited central office capacity.
- *Articulate which of the vacancies and leaves of absence in those schools will be the highest priority for your team's efforts.* Ensure that you make vacancies in early childhood, core classrooms, special education, social work, and ELL/EL/bilingual your highest-priority positions to fill: they will make the biggest difference in accelerating learning for historically marginalized students. Consider how you might incentivize candidates to take these priority positions by offering a signing bonus or other incentives.
- *Give clear guidance to schools on how they should triage their daily absence coverage* to prioritize learning acceleration for historically marginalized students. Name that their highest priorities for absence coverage are core subject area classes, special education, and ELL/EL/bilingual supports. Be sure to clarify that coverage for teacher absences should not come at the expense of high-priority (and legally mandated) supports for students receiving special education services or ELL/EL/bilingual supports. Share how schools can deploy non-classroom-based instructional staff (like coaches) or any central staff you're providing to cover absences.
- *Ensure that your entire central office team—including your family engagement and communications teams— are involved in this effort so they can help families across your system understand your*

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approach. You may need to deprioritize recruitment and staffing of vacancies in schools that serve relatively more affluent families—a difficult but necessary decision if accelerating learning for your most vulnerable students is your top priority.

Other District-Level Supports for Covering Absences

- *Identify all certified staff members currently in roles outside the classroom, especially in the central office, and develop a coverage rotation plan and schedule for the remainder of the current school year.* This coverage rotation plan should include details on how you will use certified staff in classroom-based roles where they are needed, key messages for staff about this shift, and an acknowledgement of how this shift may affect other areas of the school system. In some cases, this might mean using central office staff members to cover daily absences; in other cases, you might want to consider designating central office staff or other certified staff to cover longer-term absences caused by a teacher taking leave.

- *Reach out to family and community members who may be interested and eligible in substituting or volunteering to cover non-instructional duties like lunch, recess, arrival, and dismissal.* Research the requirements to becoming certified as a substitute, and support interested stakeholders in the process. Systems may also consider moving beyond volunteers and creating part-time, paying roles for community members to cover these kinds of duties and other services like translating documents, preparing materials for lessons, and coordinating school events. This is a good opportunity to establish formal partnerships with community-based organizations or faith-based organizations that could benefit students well beyond the current staffing crunch (and potentially reduce your system's reliance on for-profit sources of substitutes).

- *Consider how you might identify, cultivate, and invest in strong substitutes.*
  - Review the current requirements and pay structure for substitute teaching, and consider shifts that may expand the candidate pool without compromising quality. For example, Shelby County Schools recently opened non-instructional substitute roles to candidates with at least a high school diploma and increased compensation for substitutes with teaching certification.
  - Where possible, offer part-time substitute positions to broaden candidate pools. As substitutes are hired, position them for success by working with school leaders to provide materials, guidance, and light-touch training to effectively run their classrooms.
  - Encourage school leaders to practice strong talent management practices with substitutes: for instance, they should inform their best substitutes they are high performing and valued members of the school community, and talk to them about obtaining teacher certification or exploring potential employment opportunities in your system. It may be helpful to create a one pager that outlines the pathways to teacher certification and the resources that can support this effort, including details about how your system might help teachers cover the financial burden of certification in exchange for a commitment to teach in your system for a certain number of years.
  - Consider using ESSER funding to provide financial incentives for recruiting and retaining substitutes.

School-Level Strategies for Covering Absences

Be sure to codify ideas that are working across your district to provide strong learning experiences amid staffing challenges, and encourage schools to adopt them. Promising ideas from school teams we've worked with include:

- *Redesign your school day*—based on authentic engagement with students, teachers, and caregivers—to ensure students have access to the highest-priority learning experiences. In some schools, this has meant blocking longer workshop times that include a blended learning option.
- [Consider how you can expand the reach of your most effective teachers at the school level.](#)
- *Set up a grade-specific communications channel* (using Whatsapp or another similar service) so that educators can share absences early in the day; ensure that a lead teacher in each grade level helps the principal problem solve coverage with teachers on the team.
- *Ensure that your school leadership team and administrators set office hours to complete administrative duties*; hold time outside those office hours to support in classrooms as needed. Create a sub rotation schedule to ensure you're not asking the same staff members to sub every day in cases where that is avoidable.
- *Work with your teachers to create standing weekly sub folders* (virtual or paper-based). Include grade-level work that students could complete independently in cases where a sub does not have deep instructional expertise.
- *Consider using ESSER funds to hire additional support staff or extended day teachers* who can provide additional coverage across classrooms. Make some of those positions part-time, focused on covering your highest-need times of day.

Address your immediate vacancies

Time-tested talent strategies can help systems fill current vacancies with strong candidates—and ensure more students have reliable access to great teaching.

Recruitment; Staffing & Instructional Delivery

Even during a teacher job market as challenging as today's, well-established best practices in recruitment and staffing can help you fill any vacancies with effective, diverse educators as quickly as possible:

- *Update all your recruitment materials* (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 different messages or ask teachers to share feedback. Be sure your recruitment materials acknowledge 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 hiring and retention bonuses. See our guide to using social media in teacher recruitment for additional recommendations to leverage online recruitment.
- *Revisit past and potential candidate pools.* Share current employment opportunities with past candidates who dropped out of the pool or advanced to later selection stages but ultimately weren't offered a role. Similarly, reach out to recently retired teachers, who have both the expertise and experience to teach. Lean on relationships and a personal touch to encourage these candidates (for instance, share sample emails or phone scripts prior colleagues or recruiters can use to contact these groups).
- *Implement a robust cultivation strategy* that includes a cadence for outreach to potential and current candidates, specific cultivation messages, and a strategic mix of high- and low-touch efforts. For example, systems might offer informational phone calls to candidates applying for hard-to-fill roles but send batch cultivation messages to candidates in less urgent pools. Given current staffing shortages, systems should send personal outreach to all candidates in later selection stages to ensure a high offer acceptance rate. Systems may also design and share candidate interview guides that help them prepare to best demonstrate their qualifications. This will help create stronger interviews that generate better data to inform hiring decisions. Here is additional guidance on candidate cultivation, and a sample workplan and tracker for managing these efforts.
- *Use existing policy flexibility,* such as any ability to staff classrooms with candidates whose certification is in process or with students enrolled in educator preparation programs. Issue or obtain emergency certificates for individuals who qualify, and, if your state allows it, hire non-teaching professionals or other teachers on a part-time basis to allow for more flexibility. 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.
- *Review your application, selection, and hiring processes* to make them as efficient as possible, focusing 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 what steps in you hiring process are absolutely critical. If contract requirements are a hindrance, seek to negotiate a temporary exception with your local teachers' union to ensure more flexibility to fully staff schools. Similarly, staffing teams should work in close coordination with talent and school leaders to ensure they are prioritizing the most urgent vacancies. Moving some or all selection activities to video calls will likely create efficiencies for candidates and systems (see our guide to conducting effective virtual interviews for recommendations). Lastly, ensure that school leaders have the resources and guidance they need to make efficient offers to top candidates. Share a quick talent training and sample resources like competency-based interview questions and 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 on-leave teacher still technically fills their position. This can cause delays in backfilling effective teachers into vacancies created by teachers on long-term absence. Develop criteria for when leaves 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 may require negotiation with your unions, but will help fill long-term vacancies with an effective teacher more quickly.

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Develop a differentiated retention strategy
The easiest way to fill a teaching vacancy is to prevent it from becoming vacant in the first place.

Retention

Teachers choose to leave the classroom for many reasons—some of which are beyond the control of individual schools or districts (especially right now). But principals and district leaders often have more sway over a teacher's decision to stay or leave than they think. Use these strategies to maintain high levels of staff engagement and ensure your most effective teachers stay in the classroom:

- *Use a school climate survey*, such as Insight, to give school staff an opportunity to share their feedback, ideas, and concerns. Leaders should then engage staff in the results and action planning. This could look like sharing an overview of results with all staff, gathering their input on potential next steps, and forming smaller committees focused on implementing and assessing the impact of these actions. Leaders may also convene focus groups to dig deeper on staff experiences 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 principals can employ quickly. For instance, principals should hold stay conversations with all effective and promising staff as soon as possible, making explicit that they are valued members of their school community and that their leadership team wants them to stay. Principals should also talk with top performers about what they need to remain in their current teaching positions.
- *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' dedication and hard work during these especially tough times.
- *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 2-3 years, and then coordinate a development plan to support these high performers as they grow into a leadership role. The Leadership Programs offered by KIPP Public Schools provide a few examples of how high- performing teachers can be retained while preparing to lead schools.
- *Help school leaders be more effective people managers.* Given their focus on instructional leadership, principals often benefit from management training, especially in these challenging circumstances. This professional development could focus on helping their staff prioritize their time, receiving and delivering feedback, communicating difficult decisions, and building relationships and trust.
- *Find opportunities to reduce teachers' workload* by reviewing how they're spending their time maximizing efficiencies. Teachers—especially your strongest teachers—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 support with these duties. Leaders should also look for ways to shorten meetings or communicate all but the most critical information via newsletters or email updates. Additionally, examine professional development trainings to ensure teachers are only asked to participate in sessions that are high-quality and offer immediate, practical resources and strategies (see TNTP's publication, *The Mirage,* for guidance on assessing the effectiveness of professional development). Finally, look for

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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 you have available).

- *Provide mental health services to staff.* Create an accessible, easy to navigate overview of available supports (through the employee benefits package, community programs, and national organizations). Share this overview with staff, and encourage them to take advantage of these supports. For resources to get started, see Transforming Education's SEL for Educators Toolkit and guidance from FuelEd on adult SEL supports.

- *Provide supports for teachers and school leaders dealing with hot-button political issues.* Laws in several states aimed at regulating how schools talk about a range of issues—from mask mandates to critical race theory to gender identity—are adding even more stress for educators during an already stressful time. School systems can help support school leaders, teachers, and students by providing their staff with clear guidance, messaging, and even talking points to use when dealing with these issues.

- *Invest time and resources in helping school leaders build strong, inclusive cultures.* School leaders directly influence teachers' decisions to remain in their schools and are key drivers of teacher effectiveness. That means any long-term talent strategy should include efforts to develop strong, diverse school leaders who are not only effective instructional leaders, but also successful people and culture managers. For example, districts can help principals facilitate continuous improvement cycles at their schools, a process that requires them to gather staff feedback (via the use of a school climate survey like Insight), share that feedback, and involve staff in responding to the feedback on a regular basis. We also recommend intentionally engaging teachers of color to learn more about their experiences and identify specific steps school leaders can take to create safe, inclusive cultures. (Teach PLUS's resource, To Be Who We Are: Black Teachers on Creating Affirming School Cultures, contains valuable guidance for this work.) Be sure to take purposeful steps to develop and coach school-based leaders in this work—since a healthy leadership pipeline is a key factor in ensuring long-term teacher retention and effectiveness.

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Expand the reach of top teachers
Use technology and other strategies to help more students get a chance to learn from your strongest teachers.

Staffing & Instructional Delivery

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 those 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 is more of a longer-term strategy, there are steps you can take to expand the reach of your top teachers and address vacancies this year—and ensure more students benefit from the strong instruction that will accelerate their learning:

- *Consider using live-streamed and recorded lessons.* The technology schools relied upon in the earlier stages of the pandemic can help offset some of today's staffing challenges. For example, systems could create lead content teacher roles that require these teachers to record their direct instruction— so that novice teachers can play the recordings in their classrooms while reinforcing key messages and supporting student learning.
- *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 7th grade classroom one lead teacher, schools could make strategic decisions to assign the entire 7th grade to one highly effective lead teacher supported by a team of novice or student teachers. This grade-level team would be supported by a larger group of leaders, paraprofessionals, and community educators.
- *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 also record instruction in advance to set aside for absences. (Public Impact has great ideas and resources to support systems who are considering this option; CCSSO's Restart & Recovery Guidance also offered some unique insights into how systems could structure their school days and teacher teams early in the pandemic.)

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, with 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).
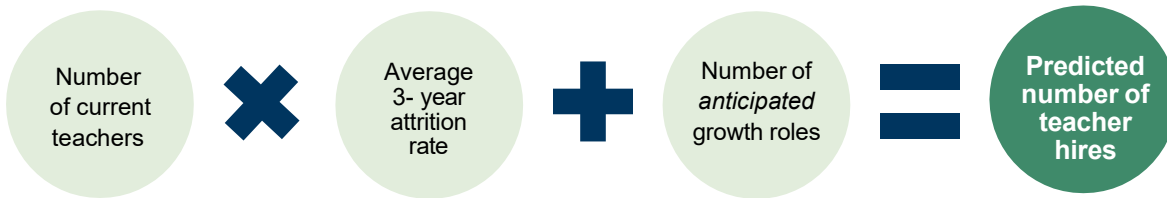
Develop and implement a data analytics strategy to project future vacancy needs

Use historical data to project vacancies—so that you're positioned to fill them as early in the year as possible.

Recruitment, Staffing & Instructional Delivery

It's important to base your recruitment efforts on accurate projections of your vacancies. This section provides tips on how to do that. With these projections in hand, you should plan to post positions now based on vacancy projections for the 2022-2023 school year. (See "Address your immediate vacancies" and "Develop an early hiring strategy" for more tips.)

- *Review your data to project vacancy needs for the 2022-2023 school year*. To effectively recruit teachers for next school year, it's essential to use current data to predict the number and type of vacancies systems anticipate needing to fill so that you can hire early for the positions most likely to open. Pre-pandemic, we suggested systems use the formula below to project vacancies for the upcoming school year; however, we know that pre-pandemic data may not always provide the best gauge. Staffing forecasts should always be adjusted using current context.

Number of current teachers **✗** Average 3- year attrition rate **✚** Number of *anticipated* growth roles **=** **Predicted number of teacher hires**

  For instance, if there are 9,193 teachers in the school system and average attrition over the past 3 years has been 15%, and there will be 32 new roles (9,193 x .15 + 32 = approximately 1,411 new hires).

- *Determine an additional assumed vacancy rate based on trends you're seeing and hearing across your system*. This might mean bumping your projected vacancies by 10% in low-need subject areas and 20% in high-need subject areas. For projecting school and subject-area vacancies, use specific attrition rates (three-year averages of the percentage of math teachers or of science teachers by school who leave each year). If this data is not available, use general attrition rates. You can also use current retention data collected via intent to return surveys instead of or with the average to calculate a more precise projection.
- *Share individual school hiring projections with school leaders*, and ask them to share their projected needs with district staff, so that they can use this information to inform their own recruitment and hiring planning. They will likely be able to refine these projections further based on the current context and their knowledge of teachers' retention plans.

Develop an early hiring strategy
Identify and give offers to promising candidates—even if you don't yet know where they will teach.

Staffing & Instructional Delivery Model

School systems that hire early (typically by 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—so systems that are able to make hiring decisions in late winter or early spring for the next school year will attract more effective candidates.

To do this, school systems should consider several strategies that will enable earlier offers to strong candidates:

- *Assess and streamline the recruitment and hiring timeline*. Many school systems still hire most of their teachers in the late summer or early fall. School systems should begin planning for hiring in the fall of the previous school year (i.e., Fall 2021 for the 2022-23 school year). Start by reflecting on and assessing your current recruitment, selection and hiring processes. Review all available data such as the typical number of applicants by month and subject area, the number of communication touchpoints to applicants during the hiring process, and the length of time between job posting and hire offer. Talk with staff about their ideas and recommendations for streamlining each step of the hiring process, and make sure you gather feedback from applicants and recent hires to better understand their experience. Finally, use [TNTP's Teacher Talent](#) [Toolbox workplan resource](#) to chart a current and ideal future state for each step of the hiring process. This tool will help you articulate when your system would ideally make most teacher hires, and determine what that means for moving up execution timeline on each step in your recruitment and hiring process. You can share this workplan with your teams and use it to monitor your progress throughout the hiring season.

- *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 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. However, in many school systems, budget and staffing cycles present the biggest barriers to early hiring. Most systems wait until after budgets are finalized to hire, which often doesn't happen until early summer. This causes them to miss out on the best candidates that are snapped up by systems that can hire more quickly. To attract the best candidates, systems should become more comfortable with extending early offers based on historical projections.

  To do this, system leaders should build a clear, consistent process and set of expectations for extending open offers. This should include specific, objective, and measurable selection criteria that ensures these offers are reserved for strong candidates the system is confident a school will hire. As with all aspects of selection, determining who receives an early offer should be competency-driven, aligned to the existing selection model, equitable, and based on a selection protocol around which all decision makers are normed. After you've determined how many early offers you will make, given the vacancy projection work described above, you should:

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- *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 specific selection competencies most important to them.
- *Determine how to involve school leaders in the selection, offer and hiring process.* [Research](#) shows the importance of ensuring both the school leader and teacher choose to work together via mutual consent. System leaders should also plan to communicate clear instructions to school leaders for interviewing and hiring open offer candidates and should track progress towards placing these candidates. School leaders could also help make open offer decisions (e.g., invite a few school leaders likely to hire these candidates to open offer interview events).

Long-Term Strategies: Plan Now for the Years Ahead

This section offers advice to help school systems start planning—and engaging their communities—to address the root causes of current staffing challenges. While it may take several years to fully implement these ideas and see results, systems shouldn't miss this opportunity to tackle these issues at a moment when stakeholders inside and outside K-12 education are highly attuned to them—and when Recovery Act funding is available to support the work.

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.

Recruitment; Staffing & Instructional Delivery Model; Retention

Many districts are using ESSER money to offer one-time bonuses and compensation incentives to help recruit and retain educators. While it's true that low salaries often put teaching at a disadvantage compared to other careers— especially in the current labor market—we encourage systems to use this moment to rethink and broaden their entire employee value proposition (EVP). An EVP is the collective set of factors that shape employees' experiences, including the mission of and fit with the organization, working conditions, total compensation and rewards, and opportunities for professional growth (see figure below).

As a sector, we've generally accepted a situation where people must choose to become teachers despite a set of difficult working conditions, low pay, and a job that's often perceived as impossible. This was never an acceptable value proposition—but especially not for the current generation of workers in the current labor market. An EVP is a useful framework for understanding teachers' holistic experience and applying differentiated, creative approaches to recruitment and retention, including—but not limited to—compensation. When a system's EVP aligns with its talent strategy, reflects and supports the organization's mission, and fits with the broader labor market, attracting and retaining the right talent becomes much easier. While a strong

EVP won't solve every factor making recruitment and retention difficult right now, systems without one will have trouble even getting people in the door in the first place.

As you consider revising your EVP, ensure 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 independently writing your own individual lessons).

Below, we offer several strategies to make the most of your system's EVP in the short term, while also focusing on the fact that the broader EVP for teaching may need to change dramatically to attract and retain highly effective, diverse educators in the years ahead (something systems will need support from leaders inside and outside education to achieve).

- *Determine your school system's (or individual school's) mission and vision* and what makes it unique and special in your community.
- *Develop your teacher/leader EVP*, aligned to your mission and vision and the unique characteristics, opportunities and reasons for working there.
  - For example, District of Columbia Public Schools' EVP articulates commitments to attracting and developing exceptional, student-focused teachers and compensating them competitively.
  - YES Prep in Houston, TX makes a case to candidates by describing their culture as collaborative, student-centered, high-performing, and committed to equity and social justice. They also note a strong compensation and benefits package.
- *Assess your current EVP's strengths and areas for improvement* (using the EVP framework above).
  - Does your EVP present a strong "why" for educators considering joining the district/network/school?
  - Does your EVP present a strong a strong "why" for educators who are already teaching, and does it match the experience they are already having?
  - Determine where your district/network/school stands out in each area of the value proposition.
  - Determine where your district/network/school is weak in each area of the value proposition. What can you do to address these weaknesses to improve immediate and long-term recruitment and retention?
  - As you create or revise your EVP, keep in mind that different aspects of the EVP will speak to different people in different ways. Success in recruitment and retention depend on your ability to build individual relationships and understand each candidate's or employee's drivers. For example, one teacher might be attracted to a school because of the compensation, while another might not care more about leadership and the work environment.
- *Use data (quantitative and qualitative, current and historical) and stakeholder engagement (such as surveys and focus groups)* to determine which areas of your EVP, if any, you should focus on addressing to meet recruitment and retention challenges.
- *Consider how your EVP is reflected* in marketing and recruitment communications (recruitment fair pitches, website, social media, one-pagers, etc.)
- *Consider how your EVP is communicated* to and experienced by current staff that you wish to retain.

Reduce barriers to entry for teachers
Teachers should earn certification based on their demonstrated skill, not just paper credentials.

Recruitment; Staffing & Instructional Delivery Model

Teacher licensure rules in some states have long kept promising teachers out of the classroom who couldn't afford the time and expense to meet "seat time" requirements in traditional education schools or navigate the maze of certification tests that don't consistently predict success in the classroom—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 find the teachers they need. While district leaders cannot directly affect the state policies creating this situation, you should understand those policies and look for opportunities to advocate for changes that could help you recruit and retain diverse, effective teachers.

A Better Approach to Licensure

Teacher certification requirements exist to ensure that all teachers have the skills they need to help students learn. But as 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 of relying so heavily on these tests, states should set clear expectations for what great teaching looks like and ground certification requirements in whether teachers are actually meeting that high bar— primarily using observations and evidence of student learning.

- In response to the pandemic, most states made significant adjustments to their licensure polices, including:
- Creating new emergency waivers or certificates to certify teacher candidates who were unable to complete all preparation requirements (including certification tests)
- Waiving clinical teaching requirements for current cohorts of teacher candidates
- Maintaining existing clinical teaching requirements but increasing the flexibility in how candidates meet them (such as through remote learning)
- Conditionally waiving or postponing assessment requirements to enter or exit a teacher preparation program, with a longer runway for fulfilling them
- Allowing preparation programs to request waivers for GPA admission requirements for incoming cohorts and individual candidates
- Hybrid bachelor's degrees

These flexibilities provide states with an unprecedented opportunity to study whether removing flawed barriers to the profession—and replacing them with a more meaningful standard tied to teaching ability— strengthens the size and diversity of the teaching force. School systems should strategically put policy waivers in place that remove barriers for candidates of color and those teaching the hardest to staff subject areas, while monitoring the impact of these adjustments. Data on the effectiveness of these teachers once in the classroom can be a powerful tool in future efforts to advocate for more permanent changes.

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Develop and expand teacher pathways
By building and investing in educator pipelines, school systems can help ensure their students have access to a strong, diverse teacher workforce for years to come.

Recruitment; Staffing & Instructional Delivery Model

Current staffing challenges have highlighted the need to fundamentally reimagine and strengthen teacher pipelines— from training to staffing to who we identify as prospective teachers in the first place.

Most districts rely overwhelmingly on traditional education schools to provide new teachers, but these pathways present barriers that derail too many capable people along the path to certification. Schools of education have also seen record low enrollment in recent years, with average yearly enrollment down nearly 33% since 2012—meaning that universities alone cannot meet the growing need for diverse, effective educators (a point we detail in our recent report, A Broken Pipeline). Below, we describe three possible teacher certification programs districts can create, focused on two groups of potential teachers often excluded from traditional teacher 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 for younger candidates.

While dedicating time and energy to a long-term teacher pipeline may feel challenging in the current moment, we encourage 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.

Non-Traditional Pipeline Models
Alternate pathways to teacher licensure are not a recent innovation, but they've gained popularity in many regions as state policy has changed to accommodate accelerated routes to the classroom for candidates outside the traditional university system. Some alternate route models focus on growing local talent through school-based residency or apprenticeship programs, while others quickly certify career-changing content experts through virtual or asynchronous coursework. Some programs are run by school districts or LEAs, but many of the largest programs are operated by national nonprofit or for-profit organizations approved by states to help solve critical teacher shortages. While the feasibility of alternate routes to certification will depend on the rules and regulations in your state, we encourage leaders to consider how alternate route pathways might fit the particular needs of their school system.

Regardless of which pipeline model you explore, any high-quality, sustainable alternate route program should mitigate several common barriers to entry for non-traditional teacher candidates:

- *Cost.* Traditional university programs are often prohibitively expensive, particularly for uncertified school- based staff, so any new program should support candidates in accessing federal financial aid where applicable (loans and grants) or keep tuition reasonably low ($5,000-$7,000—preferably recouped through payroll deduction).
- *Time*. Candidates working in full-time roles will require flexibility in how they complete required certification coursework. Flexibility may mean evening/weekend courses, more virtual and asynchronous content delivery, or even a fully competency-based delivery model (see the description for Hybrid Colleges below).
- *Geography*. Particularly in rural areas, candidates may lack access to a local training program and be unable to travel out of town to complete certification requirements. Using virtual delivery or opening local satellite programs could help increase access for these candidates.

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- *Certification exams.* Research shows that certification exams like Praxis are not strongly predictive of classroom performance and disproportionately keep candidates of color out of the classroom. However, they are still required in over 40 US states and territories for teachers to earn certification—which means that programs need to adequately preparing and supporting candidates to pass these exams. Financial support for test prep materials, coursework, and tutoring should be key features of any new teacher pathway.

Guiding Questions for Choosing a Pipeline Program

Which candidate pool is the most viable for your district (school-based staff or career-changing candidates)?

- Do you have a large number of uncertified school-based staff willing to move into a certification pathway? If so, start with a grow-your-own program.
- Do you have access to a large non-education labor market from which to entice career changers? If so, start with an alternate route program for career changers.
- How much geographic mobility does your region see? Would you be able to successfully recruit candidates from outside the local area who would want to permanently relocate to your region?
- Does your region support local industry from which you could recruit content area experts for hard-to-staff subjects like upper-level math or science?

Do you have the capacity to support a teacher certification program internally, or will you need to identify a partner for this work?

- What content expertise do you possess to develop and execute a program that will meet state certification requirements?
- How will you recruit and select candidates?
- What staff would you have available to dedicate to teacher training and development?
- What preservice and inservice training experiences would you be equipped to deliver? (High-dosage coaching? PLCs? Mentorship?)
- Which of the elements described here would be best supported by an outside partner?

Which entities can become certifying agencies in your state? (In some states, only universities can certify; in other states, districts, LEAs, or any third-party provider that meets the state bar can certify educators.)

- What is the policy landscape in your area for alternate route teacher certification providers?
- Can a third-party entity or district/LEA become a certification provider, or is a university partnership required? (If the latter, you'll need to identify a partner early in this process.)
- What are the requirements for becoming an approved alternate-route provider in your state? What is the timeline for this approval?

What funding opportunities are available to support this work?

- What state grant programs are available to support grow-your-own initiatives or other alternate route initiatives?
- Can you allocate COVID relief funding to support certification programming?
- Are local funders willing to support teacher training and certification, either generally or for a specific subject area?
- Can you work within your existing budget to free up sufficient funding for a certification program?
- Which of these funding opportunities could support a new program over the long run, and which opportunities could be leveraged for startup financing?
- What other community partners may be interested in supporting this work?

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Pipeline Model: Grow-Your-Own Certification Program (For Current Uncertified School-Based Staff)

Paraprofessionals, teacher's aides, substitute teachers, and other school-based classified staff represent a large pool of potential teachers who have demonstrated a commitment to students, often serve in high-need areas, and frequently reflect the diversity of the community more closely than certified staff. These uncertified educators tend to serve in the communities they grew up in or live in—meaning they stay longer and reflect the composition of the student body. They should be an important source of new teacher candidates—and a grow-your-own program can provide a pathway for them to earn certification while still working in schools.

Our internal research shows that many classified staff choose not to pursue certification for a few key reasons: degree attainment, time constraints, and cost. Successful paraprofessional pathway programs include features to mitigate these barriers, including:

- Job-embedded training via a residency model (allowing candidates to maintain income while certifying)
- Flexible certification coursework (virtual, asynchronous, evening/weekends, etc.)
- Praxis test prep support
- Credit for work experience
- Reduced price point
- Degree attainment support (see BA to Certification Programs below)

The best paraprofessional residency programs are tailored to the specific needs of the schools and districts they serve. For example, the Clarksville-Montgomery school district in Tennessee has partnered with Austin Peay State University to create two pathways to certification—one for college seniors and one for current paraprofessionals with a BA. Similarly, Denver Public Schools offers two pathways for paraprofessionals to earn a BA while working through partnerships with the University of Colorado Denver or and Western Governor's University.

Pipeline Model: Comprehensive BA to Certification Programs (for Teacher Candidates Without a Bachelor's Degree)

Comprehensive BA to certification programs are designed to support teacher candidates without a BA/BS degree in earning their degree through an accelerated, flexible, cost-effective program that connects to or integrates seamlessly with a certification pathway. Partners for these degree-conferring programs may be traditional universities, community colleges, or hybrid colleges (see below). Candidates may be current school-based classified staff (see the GYO programs section above) or other career-changers—but the most critical component of this model is including an accessible, affordable degree pathway for candidates.

Hybrid Colleges

Hybrid colleges have reimagined the college experience for non-traditional higher ed candidates by offering flexible, competency-based degree programs through partnerships with accredited online universities like Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and Western Governors University (WGU). In the hybrid college model, candidates are enrolled as students at an online, competency-based university like SNHU or WGU, where each class takes the form of a hands-on project that students can access entirely digitally and tackle on a schedule that works for them. Each project equals a college credit; there are no tests or lectures. Students can submit projects for revision, review, and improvement as many times as needed until they master the material. The content is digital, but hybrid colleges then provide a strong in-person support system featuring financial counseling, one-on-one coaching, tutoring, and wrap- around services delivered either virtually or at a centrally located campus.

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Hybrid colleges operate across the country: some focus on smaller local markets (like Duet in Boston or College Together in Philadelphia), while others operate nationally by supporting students virtually (like Rivet School). To learn more, explore the hybrid colleges linked below:

- AdvanceEDU (CO)
- College Together (Philadelphia, PA)
- Duet (MA)
- IdeaU (TX)
- PelotonU (TX)
- Rivet School (CA)
- Trellis (New Orleans, LA)

While some hybrid colleges currently offer a "warm handoff" for students by referring them directly to a post- graduate teacher certification program, no hybrid college currently offers an integrated degree and certification experience built around the needs of a specific community. TNTP is currently working with College Together, Rivet School, and PelotonU to develop and pilot a program in partnership with one or more willing districts.

Pipeline Model: Accelerated Alternate Route Certification Programs (for Career-Changing Candidates)

Accelerated alternate route certification programs are designed for career-changing candidates with a BA/BS degree who seek an accelerated pathway into the classroom without significant income loss or extensive coursework—but with the quality preparation needed to support student learning. Compared to candidates in other pipelines, career- changing candidates are typically slightly older, may enter with critical subject area expertise (e.g., former engineers choosing to teach higher-level math or science), and may be recruited either from local labor markets or from outside the local area.

The design and execution of alternate route programs varies dramatically based on state regulations, which dictate who can become an alternate route certification provider and whether an advanced degree is required for permanent certification Additionally, candidates must meet certain prerequisites before being granted the intern/temporary license to start teaching. These typically include:

- Holding BA/BS degree from an accredited university
- Passing all required Praxis exams
- Graduating with a minimum college GPA (generally 2.75 or higher)
- Passing a background check to be hired by a school
- Seeking certification in a high-need subject area (some states limit alternate route programs to areas with demonstrated teacher shortages)

Most alternate route programs begin with Praxis test preparation or an intensive initial training experience, often conducted over the summer prior to the first year of teaching to minimize candidates' time without income. Once candidates have completed summer training, they begin teaching as a "teacher of record" (meaning that they are solely responsible for their classroom, compared to working under a mentor teacher in a residency model) and earning a full salary. During this time, they must also complete additional certification coursework and job-embedded training to fulfill certification requirements and earn a recommendation for certification.

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While teachers in many states can be certified by low-cost, low-touch, independent third-party programs like Teachers of Tomorrow or American Board (which focus almost exclusively on Praxis test prep and outsource job- embedded training to district-identified mentors), we believe districts can best leverage the alternate route-model by first identifying a certifying partner and then co-designing an accelerated pathway that:

- Targets specific regional talent pools, and
- Provides sustainable, high-quality training and development to maximize teacher effectiveness and retention

In states where districts and LEAs can become certifying agencies, the "certifying partner" may simply be the district— but given the capacity required to execute a high-quality teacher training program, many districts choose to partner with an outside agency to provide elements like operational capacity, coursework, or instructional coaching. TNTP has partnered with districts to operate alt-route programs based on our research-backed Teaching Fellows model since 2000, certifying over 37,000 teachers across the country. While the core Fellows training model is based on principles of culturally responsive, highly-effective instructional practice, each of our regional programs features unique components designed to meet the needs of their specific community.

Pipeline Model: Grow-Your-Own Certification Programs for High School Students

Another variation of grow-your-own programs focuses on recruiting high school students into teacher certification programs (traditional or alternative route) through a combination of internship/apprenticeship experiences, scholarships or grants, and job placement in the district upon graduation. Some lower-touch models offer grants or scholarships for students to attend local universities with the promise that they return to teach in the district (with the scholarships reverting to loans that must be paid back if they fail to complete their teaching commitment). Other programs offer more extensive cultivation—even offering college credit for coursework and field experience in high school. While a high school GYO program will not solve an immediate teacher shortage, it can lay critical groundwork to attract, invest, train, and retain young talent, creating a sustainable pipeline of local teacher candidates that are committed to and reflect the diversity of the local community.

According to recent data from New America, 47 states plus the District of Columbia offer programs aimed at exposing high school students to careers in education, frequently with a chance to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. While these programs often generate significant local interest and good will, they generally suffer from low conversion rates: many high school students change course in college and never complete a certification program, leading to a low return on investment. Some examples of well-established models or initiatives include:

- Denver Pathways 2 Teaching
- Teacher Cadets
- Educators Rising
- State-Wide Scholarship Programs (e.g., North Carolina Teaching Fellows)

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Reimagine the teacher role
The model of one teacher in front of 30 students doesn't work at scale—and we should build on promising ideas to reimagine it.

Staffing & Instructional Delivery

School systems should spend time considering how they might change the responsibilities of classroom teachers over the long run to make the job more sustainable for more people. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown 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 innovations.

Current staffing challenges—and the high likelihood of future staffing challenges due to weak teacher pipelines— have increased the urgency to find new approaches. If they don't already, most systems will, in at least some subjects, not have as many strong teachers as they would like. Thinking beyond the traditional staffing model can help to solve that problem—and the availability of ESSER funding makes now a perfect time to start that planning process and pilot new approaches.

- *Systems should examine each aspect of their vision for student experience and identify the necessary talent supports*—the specific supports, not the employees. For instance, systems will need staff who can design and tailor curriculum and lesson plans, staff to deliver these lessons, staff to support and reinforce student learning, staff to attend to the mental health and wellbeing of students, staff to engage families and caregivers, etc.

- Systems should think creatively about how they can efficiently distribute those supports 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 primarily deliver lessons—supported by a larger team of support staff and teachers who play less instructionally focused roles across multiple grade bands. Systems should also consider the roles technology, community members, and non-certified staff can fill. For instance, it may be possible to outsource tutoring or instructional practice activities to online platforms or community organizations or assign non-instructional staff a small group of students to advise (to reduce the amount of individual follow up teachers have to do with students).

  Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce offers a model and resources for efficiently 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. These roles leverage each group's expertise and skills and offer various career and leadership pathways. For example, instead of each elementary classroom being assigned to one lead teacher, an entire elementary grade may share a lead teacher responsible for the major instructional planning duties and a few novice or student teachers who teach lessons and reinforce key concepts. This grade team would be supported by a shared school team of paraprofessionals, specials teachers, and special education teachers, as well as community educators who volunteer to support light instructional roles as well as duties and special events. See here for more information on the Next Education Workforce, including sample schedules and educator training guides.

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It may also be helpful to revise 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.

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 provide their perspectives and offer feedback. Union leaders should be a top priority for investing and engaging in these shifts, as system leaders will need their partnership in designing and implementing new teacher roles.

Changes to the teacher role should be accompanied by shifts to the compensation model. As a baseline, 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 starting salary commensurate with the demands of their role, and as they advance into lead teacher roles, their pay should increase to account for these additional responsibilities. A compensation system that takes performance into account, coupled with innovative teaching roles that offer more flexibility and leadership pathways, should help districts attract and keep more top talent. (See "Improve and enhance your teacher value proposition" above for more ideas here.)

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