



Addressing the Teacher Shortage: What Districts Can Do

Providing excellent educators for all students is one of the most important drivers of a well-functioning education system, one that must prepare diverse students to participate in today's knowledge-driven economy. However, many districts face teacher shortages that threaten their ability to deliver a quality education to all children. Although it can be tempting for districts to turn to short-term solutions to a teacher shortage, often by lowering the standards to qualify as a teacher, such solutions can exacerbate the problem over the long term. For example, if teachers are hired without being fully prepared, the resulting much higher turnover rates (from two to three times as high as for fully prepared teachers¹) can cost districts up to \$20,000 per teacher in replacement costs² and hurt student achievement.³

The Learning Policy Institute's report *Solving the Teacher Shortage: How to Attract and Retain Excellent Educators* provides a comprehensive review of the research on teacher recruitment and retention policies. Based on this review, the authors identified sustainable district policies that can ease shortages while also prioritizing student learning and a strong teacher workforce. To build a sustainable and high-quality teacher workforce, districts can achieve the goals listed below through a variety of actions:

Improve teacher preparation and reduce costs to enter the profession.

1. Develop **teacher residencies**, which have been successful in recruiting talented candidates into high-need fields to work as paid apprentices to skilled expert teachers. In partnership with local institutions of higher education, districts could develop teacher residencies by investing a portion of the funds they receive under Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as well as accessing funds under Higher Education Act (HEA) Title II and AmeriCorps.
2. Create **local pipelines into the profession**, such as **high school career pathways** and "**Grow Your Own**" **models**, which recruit talented individuals from the community and support them in training to become teachers.

Strengthen hiring practices and personnel management.

1. Ensure **hiring decisions are made as early as possible**—with the best candidate pool and based on the best information possible. A productive process should allow school staff and candidates to assess their fit based on high-quality information, including teaching demonstration lessons and school visits in which candidates meet other teachers and staff.
2. **Revise timelines for voluntary transfers or resignations** so that hiring processes can take place as early as possible, ideally in the spring of the prior school year. Districts can implement incentives for teachers to submit their intent to resign or retire earlier in the school year and also require that the voluntary transfer process be completed earlier.
3. Develop **strong partnerships with local teacher preparation programs** that create pipelines to hiring.
4. **Reduce unnecessary barriers to entry for veteran teachers moving from other districts** by offering salaries commensurate with experience so that veteran teachers who want to transfer into the district do not lose salary credit.

Provide quality mentoring and induction for beginning teachers.

1. **Invest in high-quality induction and mentoring programs** that increase beginning teacher competence and effectiveness and also reduce attrition, leveraging ESSA Title II dollars.

Improve teachers' working conditions.

1. **Invest in the development of high-quality principals** who learn to create the productive, collaborative work settings that are important to retaining teachers by investing in professional learning and training for principals. This might be done by using funds from ESSA's School Leader Recruitment and Support Program, which authorizes competitive grants to recruit and train principals for high-need schools.
2. **Survey teachers** to assess the quality of the teaching and learning environment and to guide improvements.
3. Incentivize professional development strategies and the redesign of schools to **foster greater collaboration**. Districts should consider updating school design, the allocation of resources, and scheduling in order to provide teachers with the time necessary for productive collaboration.

Increase teacher compensation.

1. **Increase teacher salaries** in schools and communities where salaries are not able to support a middle-class lifestyle. Districts can negotiate salary structures that incentivize retention and can make compensation packages more competitive in the local labor market.
2. **Use federal levers in ESSA** to provide low-income schools with additional resources to attract and retain high-quality teachers. Districts can **leverage the weighted student funding pilot program** under ESSA to help **equalize access to experienced, in-field, and expert teachers** by using this funding flexibility on initiatives to attract and retain high-quality teachers in low-income schools and in programs serving English learners and special education students.
3. Increase teachers' overall compensation by offering **housing incentives**, such as money for rent, relocation, and down payment assistance as well as discounted homes and subsidized teacher housing. Districts should evaluate how these types of creative compensation structures impact teacher recruitment and retention.

Conclusion

Recruiting and retaining excellent teachers is critically important for the success of future generations, especially for those living in underserved communities. Fortunately, decades of research on the factors that contribute to attracting and keeping teachers in the classroom can guide district strategies to meet this challenge. Local contexts will determine what set of research-based policies are most appropriate for a given district to ensure its teachers lead rather than leave the profession. A comprehensive set of policies is needed to address our emerging teacher shortage and to make certain every child is taught by a competent, committed teacher.

The full report can be found at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/solving-teacher-shortage>.

Endnotes

1. Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & May, H. (2014). *What are the effects of teacher education and preparation on beginning teacher attrition?* Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania, CPRE Report (#RR-82).
2. Carroll, T. G. (2007). *The high cost of teacher turnover*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (Cost adjusted for inflation using the Bureau for Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator.)
3. Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4-36.