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Strong Mentor Programs Enhance Recruitment and Retention

By: *Tonya Whitehurst, Executive Director of HR, & Kristin Carroll, Instructional Administrator, HR, Putnam County School District*

Mentors never walk ahead of a teacher; they walk side by side and grow together. Every day a student has an effective teacher in the classroom is a day when learning takes place. Through our Putnam County School District's Novice Teacher Mentor Program, we are supporting novice teachers (those in their first five years) on their journey of becoming the effective teacher our students deserve.

Recruiting and Retaining

One might ask the question, "What does a successful recruitment and retention program look like?" For us, when we have an increase in retention rates, a decrease in vacancies, feedback that reflects a positive culture, and most of all, when employees have a sense of belonging and know that they are someplace they never want to leave, then we know we are on the right path! As a result, it becomes easy to recruit for the vacancies that occur from natural attrition.

So how do we do this? For the Putnam County School District, we made the decision eight years ago to begin focusing on the recruitment and retention of novice teachers. In 2016, we developed a district novice teacher mentoring program. At that time, we had two mentors and focused on four of our schools that had the highest turnover rates. After just one year, the retention rates for those four schools went from below 65% to 80%. We realized we were on to something, so we expanded the program district-wide. Since 2017, we have had four district level mentors who provide differentiated support to novice teachers based on their needs and experience levels.

Our mentors provide support for novice teachers by helping them develop classroom management procedures and plan lessons focused on student engagement. They take their mentees on peer observation walks, model best practices and even co-teach when necessary. This program has exceeded its goals in retention and provides a level of support for incoming teachers that cannot be matched. The power of this program can be captured by one of our mentors who recently stated, "My job is teacher customer service. It sounds funny to say it that way, but essentially, this is my role. I want to make sure my teachers are happy and thriving in their classrooms. If they need something, I make sure they have access to it or know the people to get it from at their school or in our district. When their basic needs are met, they are going to be ready to grow professionally and they are going to feel empowered to teach" --Kristie Meyer, PCSD Novice Teacher Mentor.

It's been said teaching isn't for the faint of heart, and while this is true, teaching is so much more enjoyable when you have support to help on the days worthy of celebration as well as the days that make you want to go home and cry! Stephanie Smith, our lead district mentor, describes her role as a mentor as being the most rewarding position she has ever had the privilege of holding. Why? Because of the difference she gets to make while working with her mentees.

One of the key components of our mentoring program is the strong relationships that are built between the mentors and the novice teacher. This relationship allows the teacher to be vulnerable while getting to the "heart" of things. Our mentors understand the struggles teachers face in the classroom and the tools needed to navigate those struggles. Sometimes our novice teachers need a safe place to express their frustrations or an encouraging hug and sometimes they need a cheerleader or a nudge in the right direction to finish a task for certification. Regardless of the need, our mentors are right there to fill it.

Supporting Non-Education Novice Teachers

Today, more than ever, education is experiencing an increase in the number of alternatively certified teachers (non-education majors) we have in the classrooms. With that, teachers come with little to no background experience with instructional practices, classroom management or relationship building.



They lack the language educators naturally speak, meaning they are not familiar with terms like differentiated instruction, MTSS, PLCs, instructional strategies, content-based vocabulary, nor do they understand the purpose or implementation of such. Most alternatively certified teachers simply do not know what they do not know. This is not a reflection on them as a person, it is simply the learning curve that happens when they step into a role that they have not been prepared for and as a result, the students' success in the classroom could be negatively impacted.

Obviously, a positive outcome is sought. Our novice teacher mentor program has proved to be an essential intervention that supports alternatively certified teachers by providing someone who will walk side by side with them on their journey. Mentors provide opportunities for the teacher to implement their learning of knowledge and skills in a non-evaluative environment, which has proven to be key to the teacher's success and the district's retention. Lynn Chastain loves seeing how the support she and the other mentors provide helps our alternatively certified teachers move from an "I don't know what I don't know," mindset into an "I NOW KNOW and I KNOW I CAN" mindset.

Mentees Express Gratitude

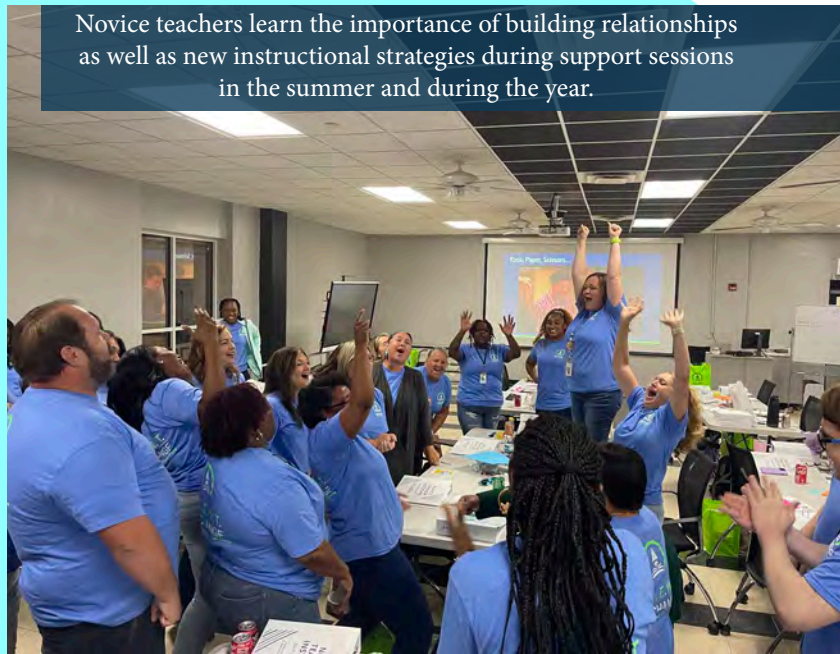
Mentees involved in this innovative Novice Teacher Mentor Program often express their gratitude for the support they receive "The mentor/mentee program has helped a lot during my first-year of teaching. In my case, many times my mentor was the only person who was available for aid when I needed it. It was always helpful knowing that I could depend on her for help in the classroom and to ask questions when I needed it most AND at a moment's notice!" -- Lloyd Parrish, First Year Teacher, Crescent City Jr./Sr. High School.

"The PCSD Mentor Program has been instrumental in my success as a teacher. They have guided me with care through my first three years. I received the warmest welcome and an abundance of valuable information at the New Teacher Institute. The stellar professional development did not stop at the New Teacher Institute. My mentor has helped me through the toughest of situations and become a beloved friend. I truly believe that I would not have had such a great teaching experience without the mentor program." -- Nicole Saullo, Third Year Teacher, James A. Long Elementary School.

"Mentoring has helped me become a successful effective teacher. When I started teaching I had no education background, only a bachelor's degree in an unrelated field, which qualified me for a temporary teaching certificate. With that temporary certification I walked into the classroom ready to change the world when suddenly I felt like a fish out of water. I realized just how lost and unprepared I was. When I started teaching, I found out there was more to just teaching and managing the students!



Novice teachers learn the importance of building relationships as well as new instructional strategies during support sessions in the summer and during the year.



There were certain requirements I had to complete in order felt overwhelmed. The stress became too much, and I remember that first year when I told my mentor I was quitting. The temporary certification work, learning standards, learning how to plan lessons, learning how to manage students, raising a newborn and living to see the next day was more than I could handle. It was stressful and I was ready to throw in the towel after two short months. But it was my mentor who responded to me saying, 'Not on my watch. I will not let you quit. You can and will do this.' Well, almost two years later, I'm still here. She didn't let me quit! I have a new perspective. I'm taking it day by day, task by task, and with her guidance, I am now close to applying for my professional certification. Without her mentorship, guidance, feedback, motivation and encouragement I would have not made it. Thank you Lynn for pushing me outside of my comfort zone and walking me through the valleys and in my darkest days." -- Debrina Wrice, Third Year Teacher, William D. Moseley Elementary School.

The Real Results: Impacting the Future of Our Students

Since 2017, we have increased our retention rates district wide to 90%, but retention isn't just a numbers game; it's a human endeavor. Bobbie Keeley, a PCSD mentor, explains: "As mentors, we understand this implicitly, which is why we invest our time and energy (both inside and outside of work hours) in building meaningful relationships with new teachers. We meet each teacher where he/she is and offer individualized support and encouragement. It is in this relationship building with our new teachers that we as mentors seek to instill confidence, provide ongoing support and create a sense of belonging to ensure their lifelong commitment to educating the students within our community and district." The impact highly effective teachers have on students cannot be stressed enough. Through this program, the Putnam County School District is reaping the benefits of not only more effective teachers, but also more successful students.



PCSD Novice Teacher Mentors and Administration
(Left to right): Stephanie Smith (Mentor), Lynn Chastain (Mentor), Kriste Meyer (Mentor), Kristin Carroll, Tonya Whitehurst, Bobbie Keely (Mentor).

Tonya Whitehurst

Tonya Whitehurst received her degree in Math Education from the University of North Florida in 1993. She started working for Putnam County School District that year. In 2002, she completed her Master's Degree in Integrated Learning and Educational Technology from Jacksonville University and in 2005 she got her Florida Educational Leadership Certification. Tonya was a teacher for 11 years, a literacy coach for two years and an administrator for 11 years at the school level. In 2015, she became the Director of Secondary Education at the district level, and since 2017, she has been the Executive Director of Human Resources. Her main goal is to make sure the district hires good people who understand how their work affects students' success. Tonya has taken part in many trainings and has been a facilitator over the years.

Kristin Carroll

Kristin Carroll received her degree in Rehabilitative Counseling in 1993. She then went back to school and became a teacher, getting a degree in Educational Leadership in 2003. She has worked as an educator for the Putnam County School District for 25 years, teaching elementary school, being a Guidance Counselor/Teacher and working as a Content/Literacy Coach K-12. In 2018 she joined the Human Resources Department as an Administrator for Recruitment and Certification. Kristin's career has always been focused on education and she plans to continue working in this field.

Note: Retention rate is based on the number of employees who start with you at the beginning of the year and who are still employed at the end of the year. When Considering retention rates, the focus is on employees who want to stay. Therefore, typically when calculating retention rates retirees are not included nor are employees who go out for medical reasons or other situations out of their control as this is not about being dissatisfied with their job or a specific job-related factor.

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RETHINKING THE STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN SAN BERNARDINO CITY USD 'MAKING HOPE HAPPEN' FOR STUDENT-TEACHERS

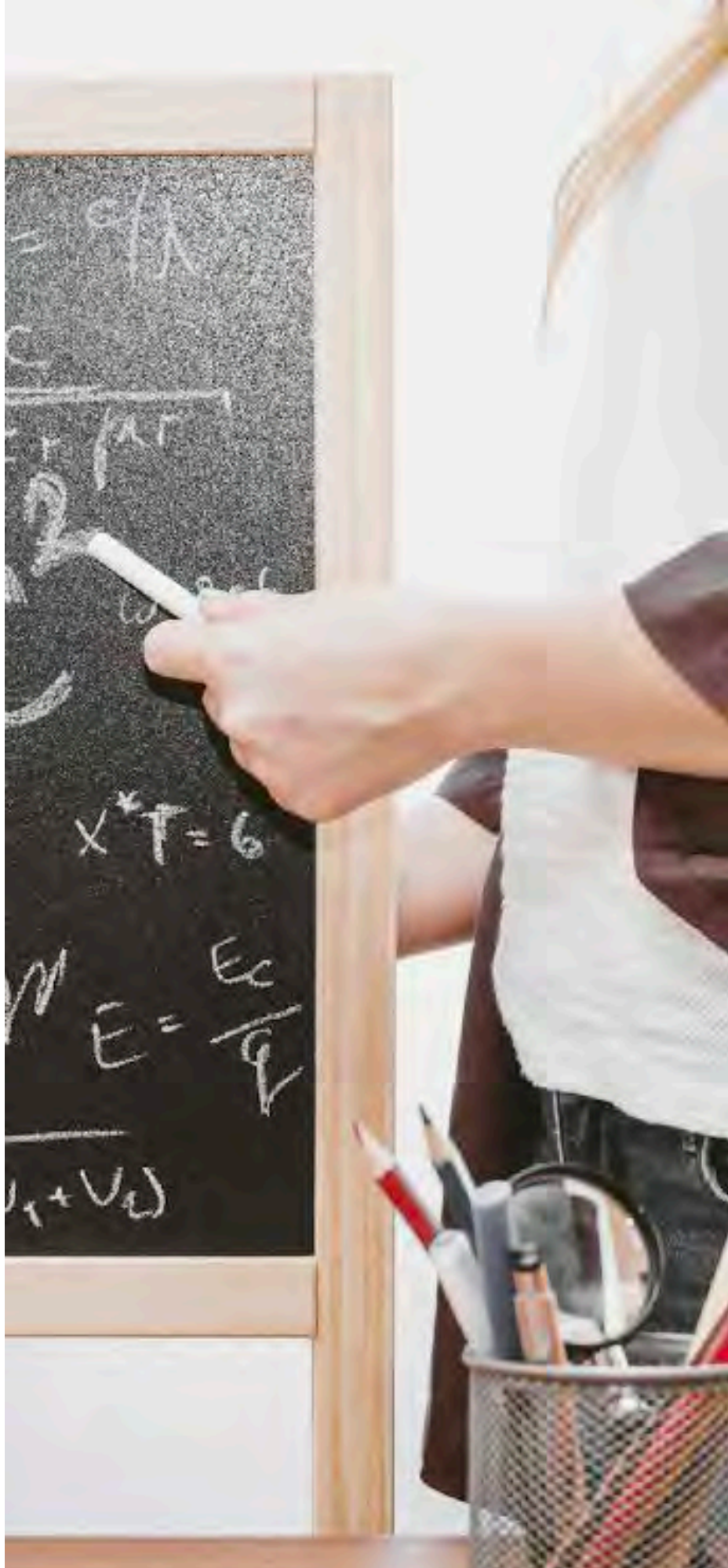
*By: Dr. Marcus Funchess, Assistant Superintendent, HR,
SBCUSD & Dr. Morgan Pellettera, teacher, NBCT*



For a school district, there is nothing more important than having high-quality classroom teachers for all students. But equally important is the intentional development of systems designed to attract, hire and retain the high-quality teachers that all students need. Our diverse student population, with regard to socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender identification and academic ability, requires teachers who understand and value this diversity and have a desire to meet the diverse educational needs of their students. These are additional characteristics of high-quality teachers. Subsequently, leaders in K-12 education settings must spend significant time planning, implementing, evaluating and revising teacher recruitment systems to arrive at a place where student need drives the hiring process. In San Bernardino City Unified School District, we are constantly working through the process of continuous improvement so that our teacher recruitment systems align with the needs of our diverse student population. Through this approach, we have established a robust student-teacher placement system to grow and develop the high-quality teachers our students need.

A future educator's student-teaching experience is one of the most vital of their entire career. This 14, 16 or 18-week program can set teachers up for success or ensure they never want to stand in front of a classroom again. The lessons learned through student teaching are invaluable and benefit both the new teacher, the mentor teacher and their students. How do school districts determine proper placement for student teachers? How do they choose mentor teachers with whom they place them? How do the mentors provide quality experiences to student-teachers? These questions have been studied in qualitative research for many years and the answer is always the same: more research needs to be done on the district's process and protocols regarding student-teacher placement and mentor teacher choice.

In the San Bernardino City Unified School District, we know our 'why,' which helps to create our 'what' and our 'how.' My teaching experience has guided my thought process behind this important piece of the education puzzle. As a former high school English teacher of 15 years, I knew the impact an excellent mentor teacher could have on a future teacher's life. Over the years, I watched many veteran English, history and science mentor teachers support student-teachers at Arroyo Valley High School in San Bernardino. I even had the opportunity to support a student-teacher myself. When I took over student-teacher placements a few years out of the classroom, I knew it needed to be treated with care, fidelity and intention.



Our SBCUSD Student-Teacher Program is a direct pathway from which we hire new teachers. Through the student teaching experience, we want these future educators to develop purpose, commitment and a service-minded disposition for our school community. We need to ensure they have an excellent placement with a highly qualified mentor teacher and a purposeful and meaningful student teaching experience.

First, we ensure that all teachers in our district understand the placement process, know who to contact for questions and most importantly, have the opportunity for this teacher leadership role. Research shows that only 3% of teachers serve as a mentor teacher to a future teacher. Why are there so few mentors? Opportunity, time, effort, skill and money - it could be any of those reasons as well as many more. However, with 3,000+ teachers in SBCUSD, we have excellent, highly qualified mentor teachers who want to pay it forward.

We begin by sending a survey to every teacher in the district, asking them to fill it out if they are interested in supporting a student-teacher. Filling out the survey does not guarantee that a student-teacher will be placed with them; it simply creates a database of potential mentor teachers' information should we call upon them. Within days of sending the survey out, we have more potential mentor teachers than we can possibly use. Our district has teachers from all walks of life, from Transitional Kindergarten to SDC Moderate/Severe, from high school PE to Visual and Performing Arts and everyone in between. Generating this much interest allows for equity in our approach as we work to ensure diversity among our mentor teachers.

The next step is to match potential mentor teachers with incoming student-teachers. With over 30 university partnerships, our actual placement process is intentional and purposeful. We look for educators who are teacher leaders on their sites, such as Demonstration Teachers, Induction Mentors, Onboarding Coaches, Site-Tech Coaches, Culture & Climate Coaches, Department Chairs and Pathway Leads. Many teachers in the district have not had the opportunity to serve in those or other leadership roles, however, and may be waiting for a teacher leadership opportunity they are passionate about. A teacher who shows great interest and passion in serving a future teacher is someone we want to have mentor our student-teachers.

After the mentor teacher is selected from the database, an email is then sent to the mentor teacher for confirmation and then finally to the site administrator for approval. Overwhelmingly, our administrators approve the placements. This is much different from our past placement process when administrators were asked to find a potential mentor teacher on the campus; now, since we have already done that, they are just being asked to approve. It is much easier for an administrator to say yes or no in an email than to have another task laid upon them.





Once all student-teachers have been placed, ensuring the mentor teacher has as much information as possible is the next step. In the official email sent to the mentor teacher, information such as the University handbook, a calendar of activities over the course of the fieldwork and any other pertinent information from the University program that the mentor teacher would find helpful is included. If the mentor teacher would like their student-teacher to substitute teach for them, there is information on that as well. Finally, there is information about the university/district stipend that the mentor teacher can expect to receive. As our former superintendent was fond of saying, “Information is like oxygen; without it, people hallucinate.”

This placement process has been worth the time, energy and effort we have spent creating, maintaining and improving it. During the 2020-2021 school year, we served over 400 student-teachers with mentor teachers in our district, which is much more than double what we would have placed in an in-person school year. Our commitment to student-teachers during our virtual school year was captured by the San Bernardino Sun in November of 2020 in an article called ‘San Bernardino City USD helping student teachers during the pandemic.’

Because of our improved placement processes, we ensured over 400 future teachers could complete their student-teaching fieldwork and be ready to apply for teaching positions in 2021-2022. In 2022, the CTA Educator Magazine highlighted our student-teacher program in an article entitled Set Up for Success. We are proud of our work around the student-teacher experience and are excited to share that work with other school districts.

Once the initial placement process is completed, the student teaching experience in SBCUSD really begins. The student and mentor teacher begin to work together, building a relationship

and rapport that will be vital over the weeks and months of their time together. From the district office’s perspective, we want to ensure the fieldwork is successful and the mentor and student teacher are well prepared. We have added many opportunities through the semester-long fieldwork process to ensure everyone has the support they need to be successful:

1. Our department consistently checks in with our mentor teachers, answering any questions they may have about their work supporting their student teachers.
2. We have created a Mentor Teacher Google Site for our teachers, ensuring all the information they might need would be available on the site.
3. We have developed and delivered various professional development workshops for our mentor teachers to bring them together to collaborate on best practices.
4. We offer our mentor teachers a \$1,000 stipend for each student teacher they host (university and district stipends are combined to reach \$1000) to ensure they are compensated for their hard work and efforts to train our future teachers.
5. Feedback surveys are sent to the student and mentor teachers, asking for feedback on the entire experience. Feedback is vital to this process, as this is how we will learn what is working and what needs to be adjusted moving forward.
6. Finally, student teachers are guaranteed an interview after a successful fieldwork experience, ensuring they are not lost to other districts. This has proved very successful in the last few years, as we have hired 50-60% of the student teachers we have trained (the national average is 30-40%).



Lawrence Winzenread, Regional Clinical Practice Coordinator at National University, said about San Bernardino City USD's student-teacher placement program: "Our relationship with the San Bernardino City USD goes way back; the District has always helped us with student-teacher placements. Last year, when the pandemic forced us to go to virtual placements, Dr. Pellettera not only placed all my candidates from districts that refused to place them, but she also provided placements for many candidates from other regions of National University. She has been a real lifesaver for our program. Surveys of our candidates report extreme satisfaction with their experiences within SBCUSD. We are lucky to have the program in our physical area."

Our system works, and we are proud of it. As a purposeful and intentional student-teacher program, we have worked hard to ensure that our student-teachers and their mentor teachers have excellent placements and experiences. We know what important work we are doing: training the next generation of San Bernardino City USD educators.



Dr Marcus Funchess

Dr. Marcus Funchess is the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources in SBCUSD. Starting his career as an elementary teacher 26 years ago at Vermont Elementary School, he served as a Vice-Principal, Principal and Director for the district. Funchess was recently awarded the Distinguished Service Award for San Bernardino County and served on Tony Thurmond's collaborative for Teacher Shortages in California.



Dr. Morgan Pellettera

Dr. Morgan Pellettera is a National Board Certified Teacher in the San Bernardino City Unified School District. She taught high school English at Arroyo Valley High School in SBCUSD for 15 years before moving to the Employee Development Department to lead the CSBA Golden Bell-winning Demonstration Teacher Program and take over student-teacher placements. Her dissertation was written about the experiences of student-teachers in SBCUSD.

The Complicated Relationship between Student Absenteeism and Teacher Burnout in K12 Education

By: Neena Kovuru, Vice President HR Strategy & Technologies, UKG

Setting foot into the world of K12, I was taken aback by the realization of an ongoing staffing crisis that I observed about three years ago. This reality hit when my daughter's beloved Math teacher announced he was leaving the profession early due to disillusionment with the education system. My concerned mind was stirred further when, in her 11th grade, my daughter's favorite biology teacher confessed to her that he was transferring to a stem school due to feeling unappreciated and unsupported at the public school he had served for years.

His words resonated with a deep sadness and sense of disappointment that puzzled me greatly. As an experienced teacher, his lack of attachment to the school where he had dedicated his life's work was startling. I could clearly glean that there was a chasm of employee disengagement in our school district that needed addressing urgently.

Intrigued by this apparent systemic failure, I sought to understand more and soon found myself in a conversation with the assistant principal of my daughter's school. My background as an HCM strategist spurred me to ask about the systems they employed and how they managed the all-important components of employees and student information.

I soon discovered that our school system's challenges mirrored those prevalent in all K12 districts:

- Fractured trust between teachers and administrative body
- Regular student absences
- Disruptive student behavior
- Rising mental health issues among teachers
- Staffing shortages
- Unintegrated systems
- Tedious student record navigation
- Outdated recruitment strategies
- Insufficient mentorship for new educators
- Inadequate professional development opportunities
- Limited access to professional learning events
- Unfair compensation for after-school activities
- A staff that lacked diversity
- Limited collaboration for skill improvement
- Few opportunities for teachers to join study groups.

Neena is an expert in Human Capital Management at UKG, helping organizations improve with her skills. She has a background in Computer Science and knows how to use data and technology to make HR better. Neena is also good at speaking and encourages innovation and diversity. She has been published in important places and has 15+ years of experience in consulting.



Reflecting on this conversation, I knew the real change would need a nurturing environment, collaboration and trust between teachers and the administrative body. Teachers need to be satisfied and comfortable to dedicate their complete efforts to nourishing young minds. Rather than making independent decisions, the administration must include teachers, parents and even students in drawing conclusions. Sharing this power of decision-making ensures accountability and invites constructive ideas. Engagement and value realization in students can often lead to increased transparency with teachers, allowing them to voice any challenges that could be affecting their presence at school. Furthermore, fostering this trust-based relationship can inspire students to consider teaching as a career path after graduation to support future generations of students.

One potent solution to address staffing shortages lies in investing in empowering high school students to recognize the societal significance and transformative power of a teaching career. Schools could establish internship programs where students partner with existing

teachers to gain practical insights into the profession and potentially serve as a pipeline to fill future teaching roles.

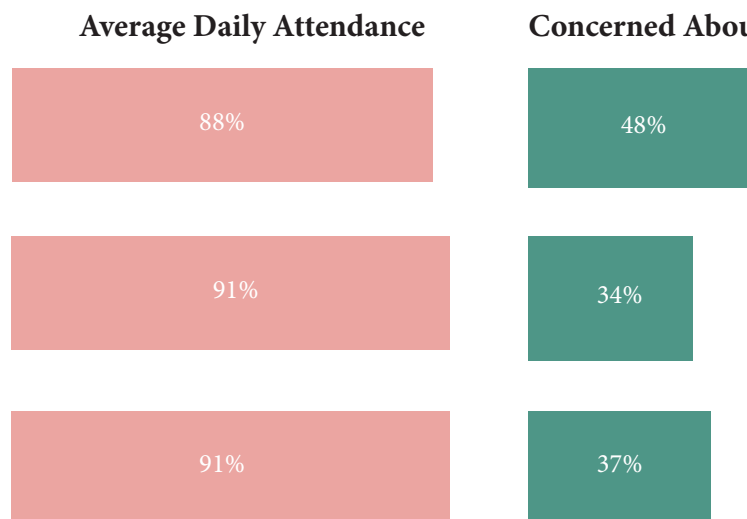
Addressing the pressing issue of student absenteeism requires deep introspection. Is it just due to a lack of engaging teachers or is there a deeper issue of teachers being unable to connect with students due to their own challenges? It is undeniable that to enhance student engagement and mitigate absenteeism, a holistic approach focusing on fulfilling teachers' intrinsic needs and improving their work-life balance is warranted.

Another poignant issue plaguing the K12 sector is the use of outdated systems for data management, which only adds to the stress and frustration of an already demanding job. Teachers need modern, efficient systems that ease their workload rather than amplifying it, thereby preventing professional burnout. Outdated systems often make simple tasks like accessing student records or lesson plans needlessly complicated and time-consuming. This not only hampers productivity, but also detracts from valuable time that could be spent on teaching and preparing the classes. Efforts to modernize the software can greatly alleviate this problem.

Modern tools and resources are necessary to ensure the well-being and overall job satisfaction of the teachers who are juggling their personal and professional lives. Schools are often seen struggling with data analytics. One solution could be integrating a data warehouse to bring coherence. However, this method could be time-consuming and expensive. Hence, a thorough ROI analysis should be conducted to ensure alignment with the organization's business strategy.

Alternatively, school districts could explore other technologies to replace their existing systems. Adopting a people-centric Human Capital Management software could potentially solve various issues such as recruitment strategies, engagement and professional development. These advanced HCM systems offer robust analytics that provide actionable insights and incorporate innovative technologies like AI. By incorporating cutting-edge solutions, districts can reinforce their commitment towards strengthening the educational fraternity and propelling student achievement.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics' January 2024 report, Absenteeism among students continues to be concern.





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The New Lens of Teacher Recruitment: Total Rewards From Student Teaching to the Collective Bargaining Agreement

*By: James Robinette, Ed.D., pHCLE, CSBO
CFO/HR Director, Will County Regional Office of Education*





The national teacher shortage has been one of the most talked-about topics in education. The pandemic brought the teacher educator shortage to the forefront. According to Nikki Churchill from the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development in the U.S. Department of Education, “From February to May of 2020, the economy lost an estimated 730,000 local public education jobs with 9% of these being teaching jobs.”

Districts have been struggling to get back to pre-pandemic numbers and have needed to become creative in their teacher recruitment efforts. Recruitment is key to filling the open teaching positions, but since the pandemic, it is evident that the old recruitment methods are not good enough anymore. The following are just a few ideas that can be incorporated into a district’s recruitment philosophy.

Where the Recruitment Starts

Recruitment can actually begin as early as a student’s freshman year in high school. Creating a high school program where students are able to be introduced to the teaching profession can be a major

recruitment coup. Districts can develop education foundational classes that can be utilized for dual credit with local colleges to speed up the process of students becoming teachers. Through this type of program, high school districts can offer their students a “golden ticket” which would guarantee the students that go through the program an interview with the district once their student teaching is completed.

Once students reach college, the recruitment of teachers needs to begin when they are in their foundational educational classes. A connection has to be made with the universities colleges of education to develop a pipeline back to the schools. Districts can speak to the students about the profession before and during clinicals while helping to not only promote their school district, but also the overall benefits of the profession. The positive relationships built by being connected can lead to the students potentially student teaching in your district, which could potentially begin the total rewards mindset of recruitment. Student teachers are one of, if not the only, clinical hours spent working without being paid. Paying

student teachers has become somewhat of a hot topic, as some districts are doing it and many others are considering how to make it happen. It has even become part of state legislative discussions. Many student teachers who do not get paid need to have another job to make ends meet. Paying student teachers would allow them to focus on honing their practice and becoming the best teacher that they can be with the worry of paying the bills.

This concept is great for the student teacher, but it is also beneficial to the district. It allows the district to identify the areas of strengths of the student teacher as well as the areas of needed support so that they can begin to support them earlier, knowing that they will be in the district the following year. It also supports the district’s staffing plan, as the district can look two or three years down the road to its retirements and get the positions filled before the retirement even happens. If a student teacher gets paid to teach, one option for the district is to have the student teacher sign a contract to teach in the district for one or two years, or they will need to refund the district for the amount paid out.

Recruitment with an Eye on Total Rewards

Shifting focus into a total rewards recruitment mindset can definitely benefit the district in the long run. One way to look through the recruitment lens is to utilize the teacher's collective bargaining agreement as a tool to attract not only potential student teachers but also qualified, certified staff. Negotiations are never an easy thing to go through, but the total rewards in the collective bargaining agreement need to be at the forefront as a way to recruit and keep staff. The new saying is retention is the new recruitment, which is a very accurate statement, and most teachers stay if they feel they are being compensated competitively through the collective bargaining agreement. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the average teacher salary was \$66,745 in the 2021-2022 school year. This may be true for some states, but not all states are at this average and need to think creatively when recruiting teachers.

Some ways to attract quality, experienced staff are to review the number of years given when transferring to the district. I have worked in districts that will give five total years no matter how many years of experience the incoming teacher has, five total years for up to ten years of teaching experience accumulated and one that would give up to twelve years of experience. There was even a district that gave a teacher twenty years of experience because it was a hard-to-fill position. I do not believe that there are many districts that can start a teacher on the salary schedule with twenty years, no matter how difficult the position is to fill. Working with the teacher's union during negotiations on allowing exceptions to give new teachers different levels of incoming experience based on need is a great way to help staff all positions.

Other potential selling points that can be introduced in the collective bargaining agreement are the amount of sick and personal time given to new teachers and when they begin to accrue it. Some CBA's allow for anywhere from 12-20 sick days with 2-4 personal days, but these districts may have stipulations on when the amount of sick time or personal time increases based on time in the district. This is probably one of the easiest wins for both the district and the teacher's union if the amount of sick time either starts out higher or is able to be increased sooner. The same goes for personal days, but a compromise may be that one of either sick or personal time increases sooner than the other.

Focusing on Well-Being in Recruitment

Everybody is dealing with something, and things come up out of the blue. Giving the teachers a peace of mind knowing that they have more paid time will help with their mental well-being. Staying on the idea of mental well-being, part of collective bargaining is to negotiate insurance premiums and insurance options. Most insurance providers offer some type of EAP program. The district can work with the insurance provider to make sure that the EAP program offers the most up-to-date options as well as making it as easy as possible for the staff member to utilize. In today's stressful world, having as many options for mental health support as possible is extremely important and can be a key selling point when recruiting potential staff members. The obvious selling point of insurance is its cost to the employee. It is the district's responsibility to negotiate the best possible deal along with the best premiums for its employees.

One major selling point of insurance is how much the district will pick up on behalf of the teacher. I have worked in a district where the district picked up half of the insurance costs for the staff and also in a district where they paid 100% of single coverage and up to 50% of family coverage. A lot of this depends on the financial stability of the district, as the district's contribution to insurance could actually go in the opposite direction, where the staff need to pay more than the previous CBA. One downside to this in regards to recruiting newer teachers is that many of them may not care about insurance as they are still young enough to be on their parents insurance. On the other hand, having good insurance could be a huge recruiting point.

Putting it all together

Recruiting efforts used to be solely going to job fairs and posting the open position online. Nowadays, the competition to fill the open positions cannot solely be done by these ancient techniques. Recruiting actually needs to begin in high school and at the moment the students begin their journey in their college of education. The recruitment must continue through student teaching and up to signing their contract while working inside of a collective bargaining agreement. As mentioned before, retention is the new recruitment, but districts need to look through the lens of creating a total rewards system to recruit and retain staff. Without a total rewards lens, districts will continuously be recruiting and not retaining good teachers and staff.



Dr. James Robinette

Dr. Robinette is currently the Chief Financial Officer/Human Resource Director for the Will County Regional Office of Education. He has previously served as a Director of Personnel and Recruitment, Human Resource and Public Relations Director as well as a building principal for seven years. He just completed his CSBO and is currently completing his eHCLE. Dr. Robinette was awarded the IASPA New Member of the Year for 2024. He is currently a school board member for Lombard School District 44 in Illinois.

Retention of New Teachers: A Solution to School Staffing Challenges

*By: Sandy Stefczak SPHR, Director of Human Capital, CESA #1
Dr. Barbara Van Haren, Educational Consultant/Induction Program Grant Director,
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*





The Need

Amidst the backdrop of nationwide staffing dilemmas, Wisconsin also finds itself grappling with unprecedented challenges in securing and retaining educators, as highlighted by the 2022 Education Preparation Program and Workforce Analysis Report released by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This report identified a critical trend: the state faces significant attrition rates among educators, particularly during the crucial junctures of program completion and the early years in the profession.

Shockingly, only 60.6% of first-year teachers remain employed in the state after six years, shedding light on the urgent need for sustainable retention strategies. According to the 2022 Education Preparation Program and Workforce Analysis Report, the subject areas in which the most districts (74%) reported vacancies were special education. In addition, on average, districts reported the lowest applicant quality for special education and speech-language pathologists.

Wisconsin has therefore dedicated

www.aaspa.org

resources to the retention of special education teachers. When inexperienced special educators do not have the necessary tools to be successful in their first years, they leave the profession only to be replaced by another inexperienced teacher, creating a revolving door.

A Solution

For many years, research has pointed to induction as a solution to retention. In 2004, Strong & Ingersoll identified that first-year educators who participated in a comprehensive set of induction activities were half as likely to leave the field as those who did not participate. In September 2023, Wisconsin launched the Special Educator Induction Program, which was developed by the DPI in partnership with the state's 12 Cooperative Education Service Agencies (CESAs) and is funded with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Discretionary Funds. Drawing inspiration from the successful Georgia Department of Education Induction model and the IRIS Center, the program prioritized the following components:

- Ongoing professional learning
- A high-quality coaching program

- A support network with other beginning educators

Each region in Wisconsin offered a structured program with a foundation of a Train-the-Trainer model to ensure consistent delivery of training and coaching across the state. The program includes:

- Six sessions of professional learning based on the Council for Exceptional Children's High Leverage Practices (HLPs) and special education requirements
- Six coaching sessions based on Wisconsin coaching competencies
- Six support network sessions on Adult Social and Emotional Learning and Problems of Practice Protocol.

While many districts offer mentorship for new teachers with more experienced teachers assisting in day-to-day navigation of their new role, Wisconsin's induction program offered coaching to build the capacity of new teachers and support the application of their professional learning in the classroom. Coaching and mentoring can be complementary, yet separate, strategies for attracting and retaining novice educators.

As many new teachers report feelings of loneliness and isolation in their profession, it was important that the Induction Program address this. Participants reported network sessions lessened the struggles and confusion of their first year. In the sessions, participants shared their common, lived experiences, which not only reduced feelings of isolation, but also built their sense of resilience. Additionally, the group often used problems of practice protocols to collaboratively review real challenges faced by someone in the group.

To be eligible for participation, teachers must be in their first or second year of teaching. In its inaugural year, 25 teachers from each CESA region of the state participated for a total of 268 participants from 130 school districts.

The program's inaugural implementation in 2023-24 has promising outcomes. Of the 268 participants, 253 successfully completed the program. With approximately half of the responses in thus far, an impressive 98% of respondents report that they are education and 93%

responded that they are likely to remain in special education (less than 2% indicated they were leaving education).

Participant testimonials underscore the transformative impact of the induction program, including the following:

“I would absolutely love to participate in a program like this in the future, if not for the confidence boosting [and] learning opportunities provided, but for the major reduction of my feelings of burnout and exhaustion. Thank you so very much for allowing me to participate.”

Preliminary data from participating school districts is also promising, with 82% indicating that the induction program is very beneficial and 91% indicating that they would participate in the program again.

One Director of Special Education shared, “As a director, I do make it a priority to meet with all of my new teachers every other week. This has been greatly beneficial to see first hand their progress. There are SO many processes and procedures in the world of special education, so having an additional person to check in with and meet with my staff has been igrnificant.”

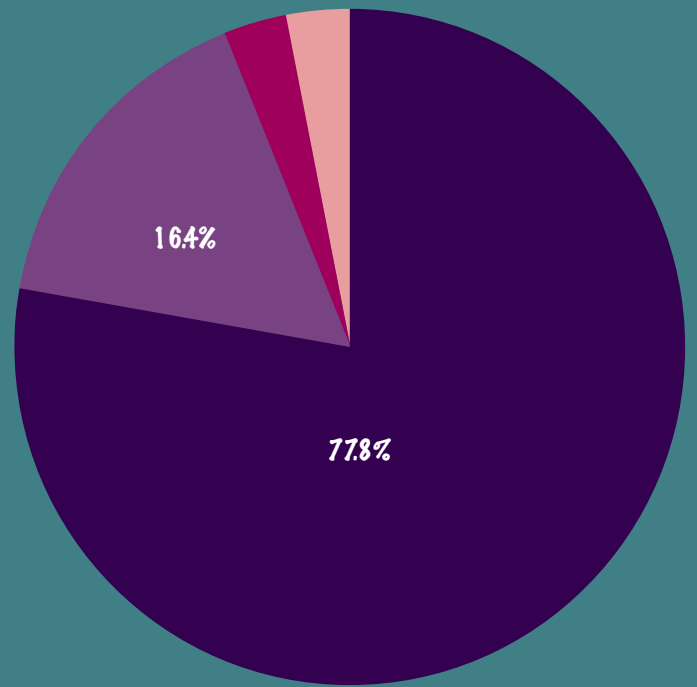
As we march forward into the 2024-2025 academic year, Wisconsin remains steadfast in its commitment to nurturing and retaining its special education workforce. The program continues with its second cohort, accompanied by continued support for the inaugural cohort, thus ensuring that the revolving door of inexperienced educators is halted, paving the way for a stable and thriving educational landscape.

HR's Role

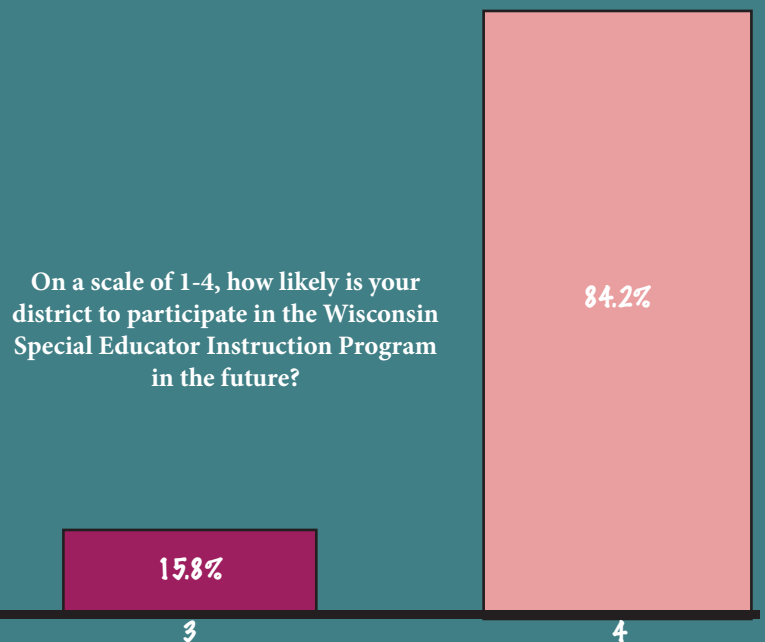
To stop the revolving door of educators and to retain new teachers, school Human Resources leaders play a critical role in the development and implementation of a comprehensive induction program. School districts may want to consider the following in the development of their own introduction program.

Program Development:

- Identify if your state or region is engaged in local induction efforts. If possible, join those efforts rather than developing your own.
- Promote the benefits of and advocate for induction with your school teams and school boards, as it is not only a retention tool, but also a recruitment tool.
- Wisconsin’s induction program was made possible through an IDEA discretionary grant. Districts can leverage their own IDEA entitlement funds to address staffing challenges, including the development and implementation of an induction program.
- Attract substitute teachers to allow new teachers the ability to participate in induction program activities.



- Continue in your current speical education position
- Continue in the field of special education, but not current position
- Continue in the field of special education, but not special education
- Leave the field of special education



Coaching:

- Coaches could be existing talent within the organization or retired educators. Or, you may be able to partner with your regional educational service agency to secure coaches.
- Find a coaching model to guide the training of the coaches to help ensure the consistent messaging and support of the new teachers.
- Consider the number of coaching sessions to provide to new teachers. Wisconsin had a minimum of six coaching sessions throughout a school year that were aligned with professional learning.
- Gather feedback from participants and coaches to inform the effectiveness of the program.

Professional Learning and Networking:

- Collaborate with district or regional experts to determine and/or develop just-in-time professional learning content needed by the novice educator to be successful.
- Identify resources to build emotional resilience and problem solving skills for the new educators' support network.
- Gather feedback from participants and trainers to inform the effectiveness of the professional learning.

Every child deserves a high quality education, and that begins with a high quality educator workforce. This is particularly true for students with the greatest needs. A comprehensive induction program can assist in attracting and retaining special educators and Human Resources is central to its implementation.



Barbara Van Haren

Barbara Van Haren used to work at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as the Assistant State Superintendent for Special Education. After retiring, she became an education consultant and is in charge of a project for new special education teachers. She has a lot of experience in education, including working with students who are deaf or blind. She has also worked at a school district and for a regional educational agency in Milwaukee.



Sandy Stefczak

Sandy Stefczak's work in Human Resources has spanned over 25 years, including in her current role as the Director of Human Capital for Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #1 in Wisconsin. Sandy serves the state as the President-Elect of the Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators. She holds Senior Professional in Human Resources certification from the Human Resource Standards Institute (HRCI) and a Master's Degree in Organizational Development and Instructional Design. Sandy's work in employee retention has not only reduced turnover, but also contributed to CESA #1's multiple top workplace awards.

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**Year-round Strategies:
Professional Growth
Retains Educators**



**Be the Change: Strategies
to Make Year-Round
Hiring Happen**

District-Prep Program Partnerships Lay the Foundation for a More Diverse, Effective and Robust Teacher Workforce

By Hannah Putman, Managing Director of Research, National Council on Teacher Quality.

Strong partnerships between teacher prep programs and school districts can benefit both. Yet it can be a challenge for leaders to know where to begin. Dean Laura Saylor from Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati, Ohio collaboratively built a robust partnership with a nearby school district based on a conversation with a few of that district's educators and leaders at a conference. The partnership blossomed into an amazing opportunity for her teacher candidates to be embedded in a school. In Dean Saylor's view, her experience highlights the importance of breaking down the silos in which K-12 and higher education exist. She encourages other school leaders to reach out to prep programs, since many are eager to make similar connections but may refrain due to time limitations and uncertainty about the process.

Strong partnerships between teacher prep programs and school districts are foundational to high-quality clinical practice experiences and offer important benefits:

- While new teachers are likely to take their first job near their home, they're 10 times more likely to take a first job near where they student taught and districts who host student teachers are less likely to have teacher shortages.
- Being paired with a highly effective cooperating teacher can make a new teacher as effective in her first year as a second- or third-year teacher.
- When the characteristics of a student teacher's clinical practice classroom aligns with their first teaching job (considering factors like students' socioeconomic status), novice teachers are more effective and often stay in the classroom longer.

These intentional placements with districts, classrooms and cooperating teachers do not happen automatically—they require communication and coordination between districts and prep programs.





Recently, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a research and policy nonprofit, released a Clinical Practice Framework detailing the six areas, backed by research and supported by the field, that lead to a strong clinical practice experience. The first among these, which enables all the others, is strong district-prep program partnerships. These partnerships require a governance structure, shared and independent goals with metrics for success and frequent check-ins. Districts and prep programs that have begun building these partnerships shared some advice with NCTQ:

- Clarify the priorities for your district and identify prep program partners who share those priorities: If your district is focused on improving reading instruction, identify a prep program partner who is adequately teaching the science of reading. If your district's priority is building a more diverse teacher workforce, look for nearby minority serving institutions with strong prep programs.
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding: Detail the roles, responsibilities, goals, metrics and leaders who will be a part of the partnership.
- Create a feedback cycle: Empower both prep programs and districts to share successes and concerns. US Prep, a nonprofit that offers technical assistance to teacher prep programs, recommends quarterly check-ins with standardized agendas. These governance meetings include a component where both the districts and prep programs share data at each meeting on topics like mentor feedback, student achievement and observations.
- Dedicate a district staff member to oversee clinical practice: In Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (NC), prep programs used to find placements with individual schools, inundating principals

with emails and leading to the selection of weaker cooperating teachers. The district dedicated a staff person, the Student Teacher Recruiter, to oversee all placements: establishing consistent criteria for cooperating teachers (including a measure of their effectiveness); coordinating placements; providing onboarding materials for student teachers, principals and cooperating teachers; and maintaining regular communication between the schools, district and prep programs. The result was a more coordinated system that benefitted schools and student teachers and resulted in better prepared teachers in the hiring pool.

- Centralize and streamline clinical practice placements: Overseeing student teaching placements used to be managed by two people in Spokane Public Schools. The Human Resources Director and HR assistant each dedicated about 50% of their time to this process. Spokane Public Schools (WA) worked with researchers from University of Washington to build an online portal that brought together all placement information and acted as a hub to facilitate placements with both prep programs and schools. The new system is easier for principals, cooperating teachers and prep programs and takes much less of the HR director's time. Prep programs found this system so much more efficient that they now encourage other districts to replicate this approach.
- Build data collection systems: Working with prep programs to share data



offers a powerful tool to both improve the preparation they offer candidates and inform your district's teacher recruitment strategy. The broader the scale, the better, so consider partnering with neighboring districts or seeking state support to expand the data system's reach.

Once you've built your partnerships, what comes next?

The goal of the partnership is to build the foundation for a stronger clinical experience so that new teachers enter your schools ready to be effective and to stay in the classroom for years to come. Other important elements include selecting effective cooperating teachers, identifying schools that are likely to be good placement sites (considering both hiring needs as well as school climate), providing ongoing observation and feedback to candidates and collecting data to measure and strengthen outcomes. NCTQ will release a clinical practice action guide this summer sharing more examples of how districts, prep programs and states are building strong clinical experiences.



Hannah Putman

Hannah Putman is the National Council on Teacher Quality's Managing Director of Research. She ensures that NCTQ's analysis is grounded in strong research and methodology and her work includes analyzing the teacher pipeline and licensure tests, highlighting state and district policies on topics such as clinical practice and reading, and evaluating teacher preparation in areas including content knowledge and classroom management. Hannah comes to NCTQ after conducting education research with Westat. Previously, Hannah taught seventh and ninth grade English for three years in New York as a Teach For America corps member.

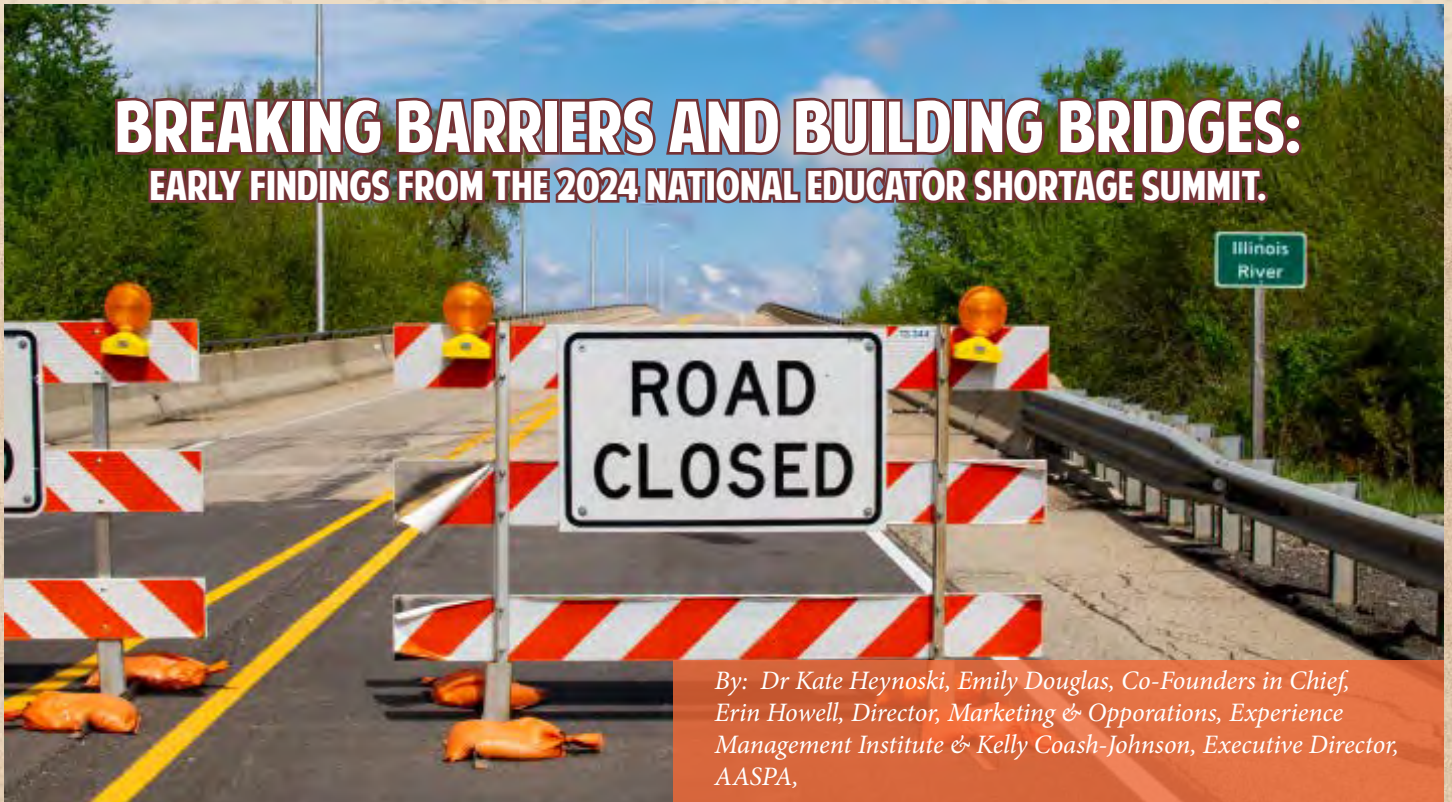
We want to promote conversations across traditional silos to discuss educator workforce and pipeline shortages and we continue to look for ways that partnerships can be formed to create best practices in addressing the educator shortage. "Shift 1" in the 5 Shifts to Address the Educator Shortage calls for reducing barriers to careers in education while preserving standards of excellence. One key recommendation invites preparation programs to ensure that they adequately prepare candidates for job requirements. The NCTQ Clinical Practice Framework highlights Strong District-Prep Program Partnerships as a focus area. We are excited to hear about the partnerships being formed between prep programs and districts to provide opportunities to define needs and areas of concern. To learn about the 5 Shifts to Address the Educator Shortage and see current best practices go to:

<https://www.edshortage.org/>

- **Kelly Coash-Johnson,**
Executive Director, AASPA



BREAKING BARRIERS AND BUILDING BRIDGES: EARLY FINDINGS FROM THE 2024 NATIONAL EDUCATOR SHORTAGE SUMMIT.



By: Dr Kate Heynoski, Emily Douglas, Co-Founders in Chief, Erin Howell, Director, Marketing & Opporations, Experience Management Institute & Kelly Coash-Johnson, Executive Director, AASPA,

This year, we hosted the third annual National Educator Shortage Summit in Phoenix, AZ. More than 300 attendees from PK12 school districts, Education Preparation Programs (EPPs), state departments, state legislatures, professional associations and the US Department of Education gathered to collaborate on solutions to shortages and barriers.

This summit would not be possible if it were not for our planning partners, Jimmy Adams, Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), Dr. Jacqueline King, Consultant for Research, Policy and Advocacy of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), Dr. Sara Skretta, Senior Director and Certification Officer from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, and the Experience Management Institute (EXMI).

While we promised a deliverable this summer, we are excited to share a first look at high-level findings related to educator preparation and recruitment persona exercises.

Facilitated Collaboration Process National Educator Shortage Summit (NESS) participants were strategically placed at tables to insure diverse representation across organization types for the purposes of better brainstorming. Each table was given a fictional “Educator Persona” representing an individual who had entered the educator pipeline. Persona’s were inclusive across background, preparation path and individual personal characteristics.

Tables were asked to address the different barriers and challenges as well as document opportunities and options for their fictional persona as they navigate the preparation, licensure and the process of gaining a position in a school.



Data Analysis Process:

Using qualitative data from NESS participants, EXMI performed a thematic analysis. While the first review was done by EXMI staff, the second review was completed using two different generative AI tools (Gemini Advanced and ChatGPT4). EXMI has found that this type of review allows for a comparison of human work to computer work, resulting in extremely high quality outputs. Overall, from the two different analyses completed, we can confidently say that participants felt as if there are three major roadblocks that educators face when it comes to entering the workforce in education as well as very clear promising practices and lessons.

Below you will find the three roadblocks that prevent potential educators from even starting their journeys as well as three aligned promising practices:

Roadblock One:

The road to a career in education is complex and hard to navigate. Becoming an educator involves more than just taking courses and passing tests. Aspiring educators face a labyrinth of requirements that can include difficult-to-navigate licensure rules. With a lack of unified support, many are left feeling isolated and overwhelmed. NESS participants noted that aspiring educators often receive piecemeal advice and support, which can be confusing and inadequate. The result is that people quit before they ever begin.

Promising Practice:

Attendees noted that state departments, education preparation programs and PK12 school districts need to collaborate to share information on the various pathways to education and available financial support. It is the responsibility of all of us to serve as a resource for information. A website could serve as an online information hub and should include step-by-step guides, requirement checklists and FAQs all written for people who are currently not in the field of education. Additionally, information needs to be written in a way that better markets the profession by highlighting intrinsic rewards and clearly communicating tangible benefits such as reliable compensation and benefits. If done effectively, this



Roadblock Two:

Obtaining education licensure is expensive and an obstacle for many individuals face significant financial barriers when pursuing educational or professional opportunities. Insufficient financial incentives, such as scholarships, grants and stipends, can deter talented individuals from pursuing certain careers or educational paths. Economic barriers can disproportionately affect underrepresented and minority groups, leading to less diversity in professional fields and higher education. Further, inadequate support for costs associated with training, such as tuition fees, books and living expenses, can limit access for those from lower-income backgrounds, reinforcing socioeconomic disparities. Others noted that states and districts have expanded their financial support offerings, but (again) the issue is access. Information on how to apply to receive funding is often not widely known or shared in a way or place that aspiring educators are aware of the opportunity.

Promising Practice:

Many groups noted that investments in funding for scholarships and grants need to be increased. Yet, they also shared that information on these opportunities needs to be more widely shared to ensure equal access. By collaborating, NESS participants believe we can reach and support more aspiring educators earlier in their journey, ensuring they're aware of and taking advantage of scholarships, grants and programs that pay for educators to obtain licensure.

Roadblock Three:

Pathways to education are not always flexible or inclusive. The lack of accessible pathways into careers in education can act as a significant barrier. When preparation programs only offer daytime courses or rigid routes, they can exclude talented individuals and perpetuate inequities. These limitations can be especially challenging for non-traditional students, those with disabilities, working adults, people with young children or aging parents, international students, individuals who are not near to an EPP or individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds who might require alternative approaches to education and training.

Promising Practice:

To overcome this barrier, attendees noted that flexible learning models, inclusive curriculum design and recognizing alternative credentialing systems, like badges, registered apprenticeships or certificates, to validate the skills and knowledge gained outside traditional degree programs could make a big difference in supporting people who pursue education as a career.

Overall, these three roadblocks not only reduce the number of individuals entering the educator pipeline, but also affect the quality and diversity of those who persevere. Ultimately these roadblocks impact the effectiveness of educational organizations and the students they serve. Addressing the educator shortage

requires more than isolated efforts; it demands a unified approach from EPPs, PK12 school districts, state departments, state legislatures, professional associations and other stakeholders.

The path forward requires all education organizations to review and possibly rethink how we operate and collaborate. We have to be better at building bridges and ensuring seamless transitions from the moment someone considers education as a career until they exit the profession. It is clear that participants believed we need to do a better job communicating opportunities, funding and support to a wider (noneducator) audience in ways they can easily understand.



Further, we must align policies and practices to create flexible pathways into the profession.

By working together, we can dismantle the complex labyrinth of barriers that aspiring educators face. We have the ability to transform the challenging road to becoming an educator into a navigable journey, ensuring that more diverse and talented individuals can enter and thrive in the field. Through joint efforts, we have the power to enrich the educational landscape for all. We must

remember that when we collaborate, educators will be successful and, ultimately, so will students.

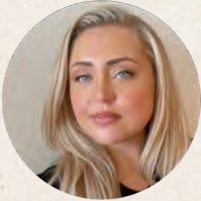
This is an early look at the analysis, and we look forward to sharing more data and resources. Until then, find more promising practices or submit your own at edshortage.org.

Dr. Kate Heynoski



Kate is a data-driven consultant with more than ten years of experience working with K-12 public schools, higher education, state departments, professional associations and nonprofits. She is highly skilled at translating research and data into a clear plan for action with 20 years of experience leading change initiatives. Kate has worked with the Ohio Department of Education over the past three years to build and manage the Human Capital Resource Center (www.OhioHCRC.org). She has extensive experience designing and facilitating synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid models of professional learning, including leading the development of professional learning for the Human Capital Leaders in Education Certification Program.

Emily Douglas



Emily has more than 20 years of experience working with PK-12 public schools, institutes of higher education, regional education organizations, Head Start programs, state departments, professional associations, nonprofits and businesses on topics related to strategy, human resources, organizational development and marketing and communications. Emily writes, speaks, consults and teaches nationally on topics related to strategy, human resources, workforce development and the future of education.

Kelly Coash-Johnson



Kelly Coash-Johnson is the Executive Director for the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA). As the Executive Director, Kelly works with multiple state K12 HR Administrators learning and sharing best practices and strategic leadership. Kelly has been with AASPA for 10 years. She holds a Professional Human Capital Leader in Education certification and is currently working on her doctorate, where she is studying retention of veteran teachers.

Erin Howell



Erin is a dynamic marketing and communications professional with more than a decade of experience spanning across multiple industries. Currently, as director of marketing & operations at Experience Management Institute, she collaborates with PK12 education partners to create exceptional employee and customer experiences through a focus on strategic alignment, process improvement and modern marketing. Erin also writes and speaks nationally on topics related to social media, employer brand, recruitment marketing and creating exceptional experiences.



Winning the Talent War: How Public Schools Can Leverage Instagram

By: Kim Bayer, EdD, Talent Recruitment and Retention TOSA, Secondary Technology TOSA, Jessica Niles, Hillsboro School District & Erin Howell, Director, Marketing & Operations, Experience Management Institute

The education landscape is facing a fierce competition for qualified educators. Teacher burnout, stagnant salaries and the allure of alternative careers have created a challenging recruitment environment for public schools. While traditional methods of attracting talent still hold value, human capital leaders must adapt and explore new ways to connect with job seekers.

Social media, with its vast user base and potential for targeted engagement, offers a powerful tool for talent acquisition. Among these platforms, Instagram stands out as a unique channel with a huge opportunity to showcase your district's culture and connect directly with potential educators, particularly those in younger demographics who are highly active on the platform.

Why Instagram?

So, why should public schools consider Instagram for their recruitment strategy? Unlike text-heavy platforms, Instagram thrives on visuals—photos and videos—making it ideal for showcasing the heart and soul of a school. Imagine potential educators scrolling through their Instagram feed and encountering captivating photos of engaged students in modern learning environments, behind-the-scenes reels of staff collaborating or alumni showing support at a retirement banquet. This visual storytelling paints a far more compelling picture than a stagnant webpage or a traditional job posting.

Beyond engaging storytelling, Instagram fosters two-way communication, facilitating a dialogue between districts and job seekers. Unlike one-way communication channels like job boards or your district website, Instagram allows human capital leaders to connect directly with interested candidates. You can encourage comments on posts and answer questions promptly. By fostering this interaction, schools can develop a sense of community and transparency, making them more attractive to potential hires who may be researching the district and open employment opportunities.

Further, recent data shows us that Instagram users are among the most diverse audience of social media platforms. If your district wants to reach younger, more diverse audiences, it may be the platform for you!

Crafting a Winning Instagram Strategy

While Instagram presents a powerful opportunity, success hinges on a well-defined strategy. The first step is to identify your target audience. Are you looking to attract bus drivers, special education specialists or bilingual educators? Tailoring your content and messaging to resonate with their specific interests and career goals is crucial. For instance, seeking STEM teachers might involve highlighting the school's robotics club or showcasing innovative science fairs. This targeted approach ensures your content reaches the educators you need most.

Once you understand your audience, focus on creating engaging content. There's a wealth of stories waiting to be told within your school district. Highlight student success stories, like a student's groundbreaking science project or a winning essay competition. Profile passionate teachers who inspire their students and personalize the learning experience. Share positive quotes or testimonials from current educators about their rewarding experiences at the school. Offer glimpses into extracurricular activities, sports teams or special events that make your school unique. By showcasing these diverse aspects of your school community, you paint a comprehensive picture of a vibrant and enriching educational environment.

Remember, visuals matter. High-quality photos and videos are essential for capturing the essence of your district, staff, students and community. You don't have to invest in professional equipment, but Instagram users want quality looking shots that can showcase your facilities, classrooms and engaged students. Grainy photos simply won't cut it. Authenticity is equally important. Don't shy away from incorporating user-generated content from current staff and students. User-generated content is gold! What it means is asking staff and students directly and using their words. Many times, they can say it best. Candid photos of teachers leading class discussions, HR staff welcoming new hires or students collaborating on projects can bring authenticity and relatability to your feed.

Engagement is key. Don't just post content and walk away. Respond to comments and messages thoughtfully and participate in conversations. This fosters a sense of community and shows that your district values open communication. Nowadays, job seekers researching your school district online will likely visit your social media pages, so this is your chance to show that it's a great place to live and work! A welcoming and interactive online presence can significantly influence their decision to apply.

Finally, track your results and adapt your strategy accordingly. Instagram analytics provide valuable insights into your audience's engagement. Track metrics such as likes, comments, follower growth and click-through rates to gauge the effectiveness of your content and identify what resonates most with your target audience. Use this data to refine your strategy and ensure you're producing content that attracts the educators you seek. Data will also help prove the effectiveness of your recruitment strategy to district leadership, board and any skeptics.



A Real-World Example

The power of Instagram for recruitment isn't just theoretical. Consider our success story at Hillsboro School District. Facing shortages, like most of the county, we started with a recruitment audit. The result? We made some updates to our job postings, worked on our web presence and we needed more creative ways to recruit. After reviewing the data and our goals, we knew Instagram was a great fit for our needs. To really tackle a new channel, Instagram, we want to highlight five keys to success:

1.Support: Before getting started, we gained leadership and board support. At HSD, we have support from our CHRO and school board and report metrics regularly. Additionally, we work with our administrators to see what staff could be good to work with. We want to make sure individuals we feature on Instagram are in good standing with the district (i.e., not on a plan of assistance).

2.People: A big part of our early success with Instagram is the core team. We leveraged different roles with crucial skill sets. Our recruiting team owns this work and fortunately we were able to bring in Jessie Nies, Secondary Tech, Teacher on Special Assignment. She has some background in graphic design but ultimately just loves doing this work—and it shows! Finding someone in the district with the knowledge, ability, skills and some capacity makes a world of difference in being able to sustain this work.

3.Process and Planning: We create a monthly planning map that includes all our social media channels, audience and content. This ensures that we feature all departments and special recognition days. We have formal planning meetings at least once a month, but also communicate on specific content throughout the week.

4.Spredding the Word: Creating a Linktree and adding that to our “Join Our Team” business card has been huge. We promote our social media any chance we get! We always share that interested folks can learn more about our culture and all the amazing things HSD is doing by following us on social media.

5.Push and Pause: Our plan has not been without hiccups. There have been points of tension about ownership and strategy. It is important for HR leaders to know when to push and when to pause with internal partners. This work also comes with a lot of teaching! We constantly share with our leaders more about social media, how it works, as well as having numerous conversations about content and why some “silliness” is important to engage with this younger generation. Especially as we have noticed some of our trendier reels have gotten much more engagement from folks!

Conclusion

In today's competitive landscape, attracting top talent requires a new approach. While HSD is unique, our story and recruiting approach isn't special. You can follow our strategy and steps to begin experimenting with using Instagram for recruiting. And be sure to follow our journey at @HSDJobs!



Dr. Kim Bayer is currently the Talent Recruitment and Retention TOSA in Hillsboro School District. Her educational journey began over 20 years ago as an after-school programs instructor in Hawaii. Prior to her current role, she was a preschool teacher in Omaha, Nebraska and was an elementary school teacher at Imlay Elementary for over a decade. Dr. Bayer also serves as an adjunct professor for Oregon State University. In her free time, she enjoys camping and hiking with her husband, who is also an educator in HSD and their two dogs.



Jessie Nies is currently serving the Hillsboro School District as a Secondary Technology TOSA and also works in HR creating and producing their digital and social media content. Here in Hillsboro School District, Jessie began her career teaching humanities, broadcasting, and digital media. Before moving to Oregon, Jessie co-founded Heritage Academy schools in the greater Bay Area, with her 20+ years of experience, serving as both principal and teacher. In her leisure, she enjoys hiking, paddle boarding, camping and spending time with her friends and family.



Erin is a dynamic marketing and communications professional with more than a decade experience spanning across multiple industries. Currently, as director of marketing & operations at Experience Management Institute, she collaborates with PK12 education partners to create exceptional employee and customer experiences through a focus on strategic alignment, process improvement and modern marketing. Erin also writes and speaks nationally on topics related to social media, employer brand, recruitment.

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- Mollie Dunn, Coordinator of Retention and Recruitment, St. Lucie Public Schools (FL)



“Recruiting is no longer a ‘one and done’ event, relegated to a single month or season. Recruiting is a year-round activity involving more than one office or employee. Our data showed that most of our applications were coming from employee referrals. Providing tools to our employees, such as our simplified website URL, tps.org/eo, helps us get the word out that we are constantly recruiting new employees to our district.”

Dr. Lori Reffert, pHCLE, Senior Director, Talent Acquisition and Management,
Toledo Public Schools (OH)

“Online job fairs have been a game changer for us the past few recruiting seasons. We are able to reach beyond our state lines to get our district brand and name out to potential candidates for hard to fill positions.”

Marci Conlin, Chief Human Resources and Administrative Services Officer,
St. Charles CUSD 303 (IL)

“We held our first high school job fair with our Principals. Juniors and Seniors within the CTE pathways to teaching program and/or concurrent enrollment courses regarding education, were invited. The event was a meet and greet between the students and principals (district-wide) to learn about being hired to work in our schools after high school graduation. We have scholarship opportunities for our education support professionals, so we targeted our Juniors and Seniors so that they can work in our schools and gain access to scholarships and internships. We also pay for the students’ ParaPro exam so they can meet minimum requirements to be hired. We are a minority majority district, so this strategy is huge in diversifying our Grow Your Own teaching pipeline!”

Jessica Bennington, Executive Director of Human Resources,
Ogden City School District (UT)

“We are prioritizing use of effective software to efficiently sift through resumes and identify top candidates. Virtual interviews have become increasingly popular, offering a convenient platform for candidates to engage with our hiring team and principals remotely. Video interviews are now commonplace, allowing for initial assessments without the need for in-person meetings. Social media recruiting continues to grow, with platforms like LinkedIn being utilized for targeted candidate searches and engagement. Additionally, diversity and inclusion initiatives are being emphasized more than ever, with our district actively working to attract a diverse pool of talent through targeted outreach and inclusive hiring practices.”

Michele Thomas, HR Supervisor,
Cobb County School District (GA)

Professional Human Capital Leader in Education (pHCLE) Learning Opportunities

2024 pHCLE Virtual Class Schedules/Times:

July 9 - August 20, 2024 (Tuesday, 11:00am - 12:20pm ET)
September 24 - November 12, 2024 (Tuesday, 1:00pm - 2:30pm ET)
Class time: 90 Minutes

2024 pHCLE Blended Class Schedules/Times:

June 11 - 12, 2024
Cincinnati, OH

Trainings prepare participants to become a Certified Professional Human Capital Leader in Education (pHCLE). All learning aligns to the updated HCLE Professional Standards/Body of Knowledge. The professional-level standards outline the competencies that leaders in PK-12 and related organizations need to strategically manage human capital processes at the department, team or individual level.

For more information contact kelly@aspa.org

Upcoming pHCLE testing windows:

June 20 - July 10, 2024
November 15 - December 5, 2024

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