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Are You Fitting, Balancing or Integrating?

The Power of the Morning Check-In:
A Simple Routine That Moves Mountains in
Human Resources

Shifting into Innovation:
Transforming Teaching for the Future

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

From the Desk of Dr. Monica Schroeder, AASPA President



It's hard to find the right words to fully express how proud and excited I am to serve as AASPA President. This organization embodies the very best in PK-12 HR professional development, advocacy and support. I'm truly honored to represent such a passionate and committed membership. Being part of AASPA has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue learning and growing alongside all of you.

With the start of the school year behind us, many of us are already shifting our focus to planning for the next one. Staffing plans, recruiting strategies and resource allocations are quickly becoming priorities as we balance these with the day-to-day challenges of the current year. At the same time, Thanksgiving offers a meaningful pause—a chance to reflect on what we're grateful for. For me, this includes the incredible network we've built within AASPA. The support, collaboration and inspiration I've gained through this community remind me daily why I'm so proud to be part of it.

Last month, we gathered in Seattle for the 86th Annual Conference, and I'm still energized by the ideas and connections shared there. With 951 attendees, it was our most well-attended conference yet. The sessions, discussions and insights were invaluable, and I've already started incorporating some of these into my district's practices. Most recently, in recognition of Native American Heritage Month, we included a land acknowledgment at a regular board meeting—an idea inspired by the one we experienced during the conference's opening ceremony, thanks to the thoughtful work of Dr. Steve Grubb. This is just one example of the meaningful takeaways I've gained and hope others also experience through our conferences. None of these transformative moments would have been possible without the exceptional leadership and dedication of the AASPA staff. Their unwavering commitment to excellence in every detail made the conference a tremendous success.

Our volunteers also play an essential role in AASPA's success. Have you thought about volunteering with us? My journey began when I presented at an Annual Conference, followed by volunteering with the Recognitions Committee

and later chairing the DEI Committee. These experiences not only helped me grow professionally, but also connected me with some of the most inspiring colleagues I've ever worked with. Whether it's joining a committee, writing an article or blog or presenting at an event, I encourage you to find ways to get involved.

I also want to recognize the outstanding individuals who make up the 2024-2025 Executive Board:

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Dr. Vincent Citarelli – Region 3 Representative
Brian Baca – Region 4 Representative
Dr. Amy Dillon – Region 5 Representative
Ramon Ray – Region 6 Representative

This exceptional group has exciting initiatives planned for the coming year, and I can't wait to see what we accomplish together.

Thank you for trusting me to lead AASPA during this pivotal time. I'm excited about the opportunities ahead as we continue to inspire and engage HR professionals across the country. I look forward to seeing you in Nashville, TN, next October for the 87th Annual Conference. If there's anything I can do to support you, don't hesitate to reach out.

Warm regards,
Dr. Monica Schroeder
AASPA President



TEACH NOW PROGRAM:

PREPARING NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATORS FOR THE CLASSROOM

By: Dr. Andrea Anthony, Assistant Superintendent of HR and Student Services, Rutherford County Schools, Murfreesboro, TN

Teacher shortages directly impact K-12 student success. To support student learning, we depend heavily on educated and inspiring educators to lead our classrooms. Due to the national teacher shortage, public school districts cannot wait for teachers to find them and apply. We must urgently act and utilize a combination of recruitment strategies and timely trainings through mentorship and support.



The decrease in the number of new teaching candidates entering the profession suggest that graduates are pursuing other career choices. We must leverage our recruitment strategies to entice potential educators to teach. This is where the strategy to use a high-volume job board specific to K-12 comes into play. The job boards can also connect with social media accounts. Also, our state required primary partnership agreements allow us to develop timely relationships with universities to speak one-on-one with soon-to-be-graduates (i.e., job fairs).

So, what would it look like to create your own Educational Preparation Program (EPP) within your district? What start-up leadership positions would you need to help new employees to obtain a license to teach in your district? What would the Primary Partnership (PP) and Quality Assurance Systems (QAS) team roles and responsibilities look like in a large district. This article outlines the conception and implementation of such a program.

GOAL STATEMENT

The primary goal of the collaborative partnership between Rutherford Teach Now (RTN - EPP) and Rutherford County Schools (RCS - LEA), herein after referred to as “the partnership,” is for the district-supported EPP to produce a high-quality pool of candidates, improving teacher recruitment and retention in the following hard-to-staff, high-need content areas: math, science, English, social studies, world languages, special education, English as a second language and Career and Technical Education. That overarching goal is supported smaller sub-goals outlined in the following plan of action.

ACTION PLAN

The first step in the successful implementation of the partnership is to identify personnel needs and the appropriate placement of key players. An EPP Head Administrator would be a member of the primary partnership and QAS team. This person would oversee all facets of the program including licensure, partnership agreements, data collection, analysis and reporting.

There would need to be Clinical Practice Supervisors which would be called the Teach Now Specialists. These specialists would be in the areas of 1) math and science, 2) career and technical, 3) humanities and 4) special populations. Members of primary partnership and QAS team, specialists report to the Teach Now Head Administrator and are main members (Teach Now faculty) that oversee the implementation of the Teach Now Program with responsibilities that include the following: plan and facilitate classes, conduct one-on-one non-evaluative observations of candidates, plan and facilitate clinical educator (supervising teacher) training, collect qualitative and quantitative feedback data for program monitoring and help report data findings to district partners.

There must be LEA Partners such as the Chief Personnel and Student Services Officer to provide a district lens regarding hiring needs and a Chief Academic Officer to provide a district lens regarding instructional needs. An Assessment and Accountability Coordinator who is a member of QAS team, provides district and control group data, supplies candidate growth and achievement data for analysis. Adjunct Education Providers which we would call our District Specialists would assist Teach Now faculty with delivering instruction on topics, observe candidates and provide a well-rounded curriculum. Clinical Educators (Supervising Teachers) who are members of QAS team would meet biweekly with candidates, provide additional insight into program effectiveness through meetings with Teach Now faculty and complete program and candidate evaluations.



How would the partnership work to provide hard to fill subject area teachers right now? First, we must recruit high-quality candidates from a broad range of backgrounds and diverse populations. Additionally, we must clarify how evidence will be collected, shared and used to increase the education pipeline.

For all approved content areas, recruitment efforts will focus on first-year teachers, RCS Teacher Fair attendees, community partners and classified staff. For the CTE clusters, focus will be given to Allied Health, Advanced Manufacturing and Information Technology as these pathways have been identified as industry areas of high need in Middle Tennessee. Other recruitment strategies include, but are not limited to, targeted social media marketing campaigns and informational open houses to attract community members interested in teaching but unaware of the available pathways to licensure.

As agreed upon by the partnership, candidates are eligible for program selection based on RCS hiring requirements for teacher certification, Rutherford Teach Now program enrollment requirements, TDOE requirements for teacher education and TDOE CTE Division's Occupational and Academic Licensure Requirements.

Our second area of discussion would be in describing the strategies and actions in place to co-select clinical educators and collaborate to prepare, evaluate and

support high-quality clinical educators, both provider and school based, who demonstrate a positive impact on candidates' development and outcomes for PK-12 students. The following would represent the collaborative efforts from LEA and EPP representatives of the participants' support teams. Support teams will communicate regularly and meet as necessary to support participant goals and address areas of concern.

1. Teach Now Coordinator and Specialist will train clinical educators to provide resources and strategies for effective mentoring with specific attention given to program overview and requirements for math/science and CTE. Prepare clinical educator expectations guidelines. Provide clinical educator reflection forms to serve as accountability logs. Meet with clinical educators to revisit expectations and troubleshoot problems. Analyze survey data to determine clinical educator effectiveness.

2. Clinical educators will meet eligibility requirements as mutually agreed upon by the partnership (have 4-5 Level of Effectiveness score), 3+ years endorsement classroom experience. Meet regularly with teacher participant for one-on-one support. Complete monthly clinical educator meeting logs and be assessed through participant surveys.

Our third area of discussion would be to describe the design and implementation of clinical experiences, utilizing various modalities of sufficient depth, breadth,

diversity, coherence and duration to ensure candidates demonstrate their developing effectiveness and positive impact on K-12 students. Through ongoing collaboration, the partnership will ensure that participants possess the appropriate knowledge, skills and dispositions required for effective teaching and learning in the current educational environment.

The partnership will annually review coherency between district practices and the EPP's conceptual framework and program curriculum to ensure appropriate alignment to district needs. Rutherford Teach Now is an 18-month cohort job-embedded program consisting of 151 hours of teacher education coursework and full-time clinical experience as the teacher of record.

The fourth area of discussion is to describe the process partners use in the program design, evaluation and decision-making for continuous improvement. RCS and Rutherford County Schools Teach Now developed a partnership committee that meets each semester to review the program design, evaluate effectiveness and to discuss necessary decisions for improvement. These meetings bring together Teach Now faculty with RCS district representatives including Human Resources leadership, Curriculum and Instruction leadership, middle and high school principals, grade band coordinators, content specialists, instructional technology leadership and assessment leadership. This team meets once per

“Through ongoing collaboration, the partnership will ensure that participants possess the appropriate knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective teaching and learning in the current educational environment.”

semester with smaller groups or informal meetings with key staff to supplement as needed.

These partnership committee meetings are an opportunity to review updates, share data reports and discuss potential policy changes. The program's format and structure are assessed to ensure continued feasibility. Data updates are shared at each meeting to provide guidance on the program's effectiveness and identify areas of concern or successes. These meetings allow for collaborative EPP and LEA decision making and goal setting by providing all committee members the opportunity to share suggestions for continuous improvement.

The fifth area of discussion is describing how partners will collaborate and make decisions to ensure candidate preparation is inclusive of LEA curricular content and materials. The RCS and Rutherford County Schools Teach Now Partnership Committee meetings serve as an opportunity to gain experience about curriculum updates, resources, initiatives and any necessary changes that Teach Now faculty needs to be aware of to provide effective participant support specific to the content area. Additionally, Teach Now faculty is included in district

meetings and trainings when appropriate to stay informed about current curricular updates such as new textbook adoptions, software or other supplemental resources.

The teacher preparation curriculum to be used is designed specifically for the different content groups and

we supplement this by frequently inviting district leaders to present in their areas of expertise. The RCS ELA, math and science middle and high school specialists present and help co-teach lessons designed around cross-curricular integration. This provides opportunities for continual evaluation of the material presented to ensure participants are getting the most up to date information and resources available. We also utilize the expertise of special education and ESL district leaders to share proven strategies that are aligned with district goals to assist teachers in meeting their responsibilities for students in these subgroups.

Data Compliance would consist of the following: three cycles of TEAM evaluation & LOE data by subgroup; three cycles comparison of Rutherford County Schools Teach Now candidates to traditionally prepared educators of similar experience; two cycles of TVAAS cohort comparison for growth; tandem observation with instructional coaches for validity/reliability of evaluation alignment; competency rubric and tracking with GroweLab software system; three cycles of a self-efficacy disposition



survey; evidence of authentic artifacts thru portfolio assignments; three points of program and participant data; final administration approval; and mid-year and final instructional coach participant and program data.

Once implemented successfully, the utility of the Teach Now program is universally beneficial for all stakeholders involved. The district-supported EPP would improve teacher recruitment and retention in hard-to-staff, high need areas while simultaneously decreasing the associated costs for job-embedded educators advancing their license

and reduce attrition rates. In doing so, we would continue to equip students with well-trained, qualified teachers who will nurture foundational skills necessary for career and post-secondary success. In collaboration with Rutherford County Schools, our Teach Now Program would hope to expand to more approved content areas to provide increased opportunities for potential job-embedded teachers to fill district hiring needs.



Dr. Andrea Anthony began her leadership role as a high school mathematics department chair and a graduate school adjunct professor at MTSU. She has also served as a curriculum and instruction assistant principal, director of her district's K-12 summer schools, an executive principal for 12 years and her district's coordinator of secondary education. She has been recognized as Tennessee's NASSP Principal of the Year and Tennessee's Mid-Cumberland Supervisor of the Year. Currently, she serves as the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Student Services for Rutherford County Schools recently renamed as the Chief Human and Student Services Officer. She works in the fourth largest school district in TN with 48,000 students and 7,000 employees. Dr. Anthony went back to get her second doctorate in law, a doctorate of jurisprudence, citing so much of administration deals with the law and employing a world class staff. She added her SHRM HR generalist certification and pHCLE certification from AASPA. Dr. Anthony is involved with her local university's EPP team, recruitment and job fair team, the state's retention team to recruit and retain effective CTE teachers and serves as the TnASPA past-president.



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Contact Morgan Schultz (morgan@aaspa.org), Director of Membership & Engagement, with any questions.

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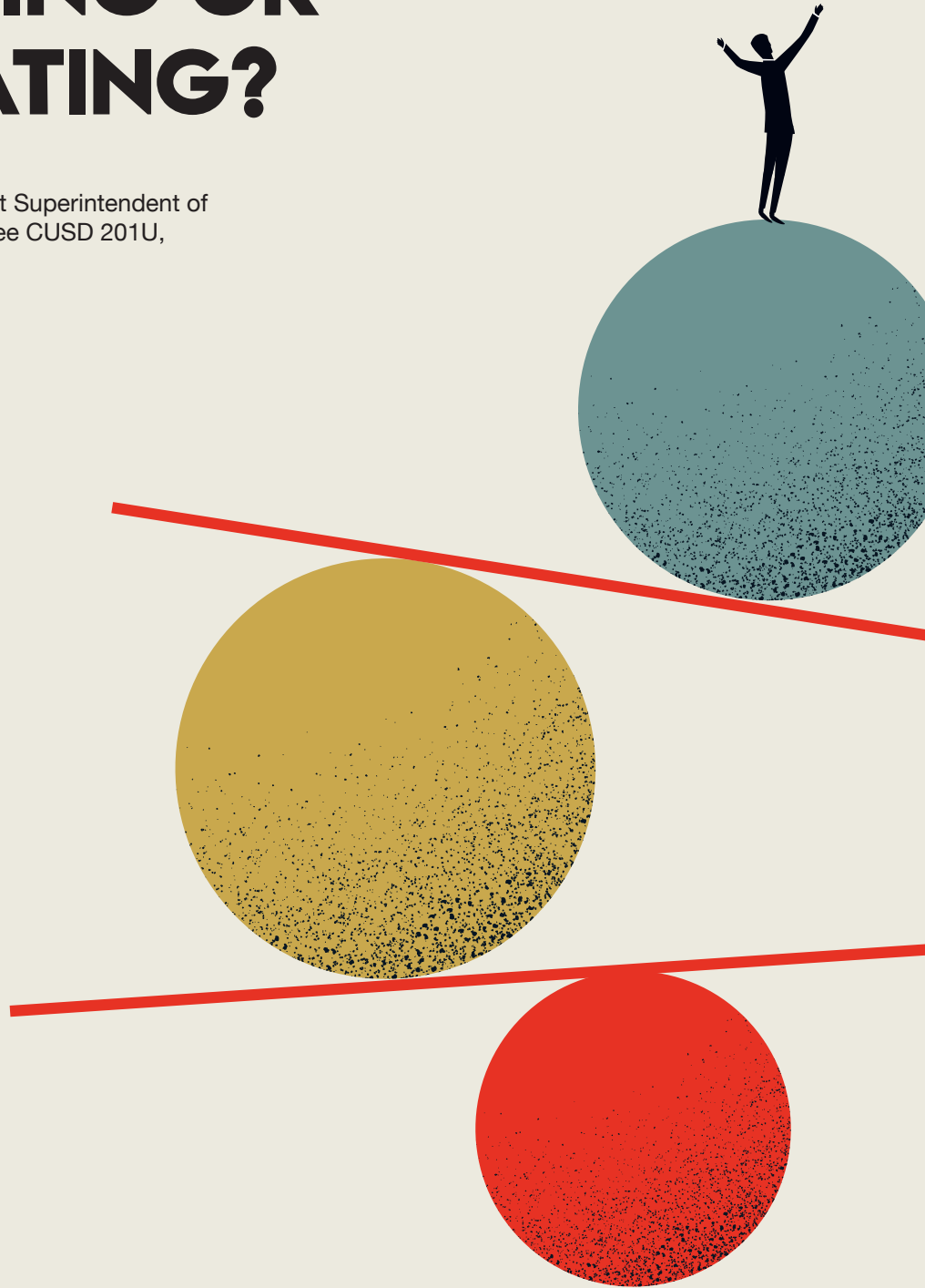
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ARE YOU FITTING, BALANCING OR INTEGRATING?

By: Dr. Eric Melnyczenko, Assistant Superintendent of
Personnel and Culture, Crete Monee CUSD 201U,
Will County, IL



Mental health concerns are ever present on society's mind, but especially for those of us in education. Oftentimes, we look to our colleagues for ideas and tips on those experiences we create to promote mental wellness for our teachers and school staff and those events and practices are absolutely wonderful and are needed. But, at the organizational level, we need to take a deeper look at our beliefs and messaging about the two worlds our employees have to navigate: work and life.

We have all heard of the concept of work-life balance. It has been a guiding principle as we help our staff maneuver between work and life, but as educational structures evolve and societal expectations shift, work-life balance just doesn't fit anymore. If work-life balance isn't it, then what is? Well, we have new standards that emerge, such as work-life fit and work-life integration. But, what is the difference between the three? Which one should your organization be mindful of when creating and delivering messaging around your district? Let's delve into the differences between these three models and how they apply to our world of education.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE: THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

In education, work-life balance requires an individual to allocate time and energy efficiently between professional and personal responsibilities. Those professional responsibilities for our staff may involve managing classroom responsibilities, lesson planning and grading. Meanwhile, they are also making time for family, personal interests and self-care. However, the traditional approach of work-life balance poses challenges because our jobs as educators can vary from one day to the next. And, on top of that, the work is demanding.

Thus, we are posed with major challenges with work-life balance. For starters, let's talk about time constraints. There are demands on an educator's time like no other from grading to submitting lesson plans to meetings to extracurricular responsibilities to conducting evaluations (yes, administrators are included in this as well). The time demands of the various roles in education make it challenging to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Next up, we have the emotional labor involved in our positions. Classroom management, addressing individual students' needs and creating a safe and positive learning environment is emotionally draining. But, we all can agree that if these things do not exist, then a classroom is not

highly functioning nor successful. That emotional drain affects a person's well-being. Finally, with the traditional calendar that most educational institutions follow, the variability and fluctuations in workload require additional time and effort.

Because of its rigid nature, work-life balance is no longer a feasible goal for educators. Trying to create this balance oftentimes means compromising one over the other. That is where and why we need to explore alternatives to this approach, like work-life fit and work-life integration, especially in our nuanced field of work.

WORK-LIFE FIT: FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY IN EDUCATION

While we may acknowledge that the perfect equilibrium between work and life is not realistic, organizations often tout work-life fit as the next alternative. However, the notion of work-life fit can be dubious when not presented in the correct manner. When presented from the perspective of an autocratic organization, work-life fit oftentimes places the focus on the organization versus the individual, i.e. the organization is rigid so your life needs to fit into how the organization is run. However, when presented from an employee-first perspective, work-life fit can emphasize flexibility and adaptability, allowing educators to tailor their work to accommodate the demands of the classroom and their lives at home.

Unfortunately, many ways of providing this flexibility are either untenable or undesired by a school district. For example, flexible scheduling would allow teachers to work alternative hours, compressed workweeks or to telecommute. While many school districts and leaders would like to accommodate such requests, two very large items come into play that prevent this from happening: our in-person students and collective bargaining agreements.

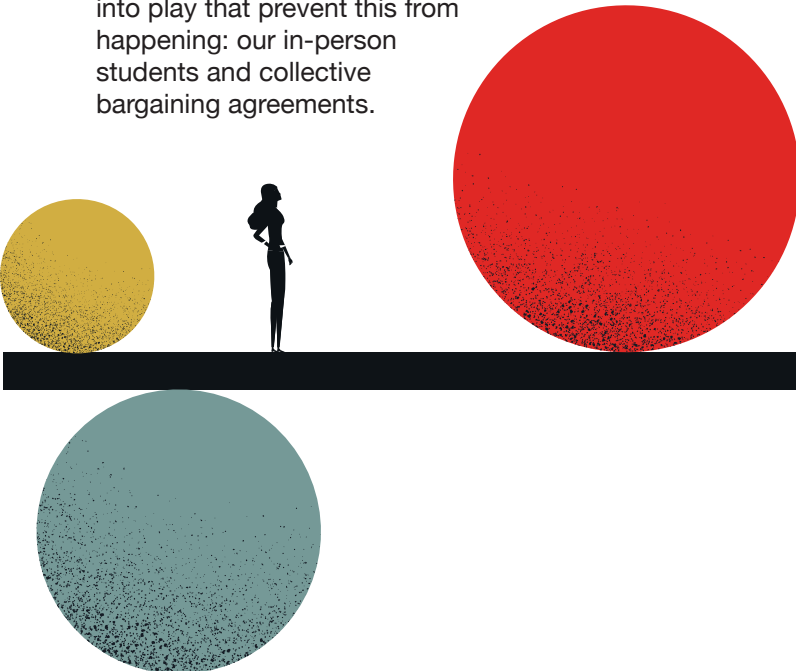
Having teachers telecommute while students are in a classroom places undue burdens on schools as the supervision of students gets called into question. While students may be able to do their work in a classroom while their teacher is in a virtual environment, a supervisor for safety and legal issues would need to be in the classroom. Where would the additional person come from: another position or taking away from another area of need? Telecommuting may be an option during professional development time while students are not in session. Teachers would be able to attend various training sessions from their desired location instead of their school. But, the overall state of telecommuting does not appear to be a viable option.

Then, the issue of alternative hours or compressed workweeks presents other hardships for schools. We have set student attendance hours that typically come with some directive from a regional or state office of education. Job sharing may provide a solution here, but with teacher pay already low as it is in some areas, could two people afford half of a teacher's salary? There may be one-off instances where job sharing could provide either alternative hours or a compressed workweek, but as a whole, this would require two licensed teachers for one position. How would this impact the nationwide teacher shortage?

WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION: BLURRING BOUNDARIES IN EDUCATION

While work-life balance and fit present difficulties in education, we need a third option. This is where work-life integration comes into play. Work-life integration views work and personal life as interconnected and interdependent facets of a unified whole. In education, think about teacher autonomy. We want teachers to be themselves for our students, and with work-life integration, we can leverage that synergy between a teacher and an individual as we recognize fulfillment in one area can enhance satisfaction and performance in the other.

Sounds great, right? So, how do we integrate work and life in education? Let's revisit the teacher autonomy piece above. In our world of increased accountability, we still need to allow for opportunities for personal interests in our curricula. I remember as a middle school math teacher I incorporated the stock market and financial literacy into my eighth grade math classes. What I had to figure out was how to tie this to standards and show that what I was teaching was relevant to the grade level. I did just that, and my students loved learning about the stock market, etc. I truly enjoyed this experience and felt happy about what I was doing (not to say when I taught fractions I wasn't). But, if educators feel supported in incorporating themselves into what they are teaching, they tend to be more effective in the classroom, which leads to improved student outcomes.



“We want teachers to be themselves for our students, and with work-life integration, we can leverage that synergy between a teacher and an individual as we recognize fulfillment in one area can enhance satisfaction and performance in the other.”



Dr. Eric Melnyczenko serves as the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Culture for Crete Monee CUSD 201U in Will County, Illinois. In previous roles, Eric has served as a middle school math teacher, elementary assistant principal, junior high assistant

principal, intermediate principal and director of human resources, all in Illinois. He received his doctorate from Purdue University in Educational Leadership. He holds a BA in Elementary Education and MA in Education Administration from Governors State University. Eric also holds the PHR Certification from the Human Resources Certification Institute and the professional in Human Capital Leaders in Education from AASPA. He is currently pursuing the Executive Human Capital Leaders in Education (eHCLE) certification from AASPA. Eric is a dedicated husband and father to one daughter that has multiple disabilities.

Another way to foster work-life integration is to encourage educators to involve their families in school events. Bring the kids and spouse to the football game! Have the kids help decorate for the upcoming talent show. Whatever the event is, having the family help out with school events can foster a sense of community and shared purpose.

Let's talk about a wellness program next. When schools prioritize educator well-being, they recognize that healthy and supported educators are better equipped to support their students. Happy teacher, happy students, right? School districts need to prioritize efforts to minimize teacher burnout and churn that leads to educators leaving the profession. Such things like mindfulness programs, wellness resources or flexible leave policies can help educators focus on being their best selves for students and their families at home. By modeling healthy behavior, it adds to the positive role models we want our teachers to be for our students.

CONCLUSION: EMBRACING WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION

As educators navigate the complexities of their professional roles and personal lives, embracing a holistic approach to work and life is essential for sustainable well-being and fulfillment. However, the traditional models of work-life fit and balance are no longer viable options. Work-life fit tends to focus more on the organization than the person. Work-life balance supports a healthy divide between the professional and personal lives. This is where work-life integration provides a superior model to living as it seeks a way for the professional and personal aspects of our lives to coexist peacefully. By promoting flexibility, adaptability and synergy between professional responsibilities and personal pursuits, schools can cultivate a culture of support and empowerment that benefits educators, students and communities alike.

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BUILDING A DIVERSE FUTURE:

HOW DREAM IS CHAMPIONING EQUITY IN MIAMI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN OHIO

By: Deron Schwieterman, pHCLE
Director of Human Resources, Beaver Creek City Schools,
Beaver Creek, OH

The American educational landscape is facing a critical challenge - a lack of diversity among educators. This disparity has a significant impact on student achievement, particularly for students of color who benefit from seeing themselves reflected in their teachers and school leadership. In the Miami Valley region of Ohio, a group of friends and colleagues recognized this need and decided to take action.

FROM SHARED VISION TO COLLECTIVE ACTION: THE BIRTH OF DREAM

The Diversity Recruitment Educators Association of Miami Valley (DREAM) is a testament to the power of collaboration. Founded in Dayton, Ohio, DREAM is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a clear mission: to recruit and retain educators of color in the Miami Valley.

The story of DREAM starts with a shared concern. A group of educators, frustrated by current social events in 2020 and the persistent shortage of diverse educators in the region, came together over lunch to brainstorm solutions. They envisioned an organization dedicated to attracting diverse talent to the Miami Valley's schools, fostering a sense of belonging and ultimately creating a more equitable learning environment for all students.

A CRUCIAL GRANT FUELS MOMENTUM

DREAM's founders understood that a well-defined strategy and resources were essential for success. Fortunately, they received a crucial grant from the Ohio Department of Education for Diversifying the Education Profession. This initial funding provided the impetus to develop a comprehensive plan and launch their recruitment efforts. Four area school districts were part of the initial grant.

FROM A SPARK TO A REGIONAL FORCE: GROWTH AND IMPACT

With a clear vision and initial funding secured, DREAM quickly gained momentum. The organization focused on building partnerships with school districts across the Miami Valley. Their efforts resonated deeply, and within a short period, DREAM secured the participation of nearly 25 school districts in its initiatives. This impressive growth is a testament to the critical need DREAM addresses and the effectiveness of its approach.

A MODEL FOR SUCCESS: DREAM'S MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

The mission of DREAM - The Diversity Recruitment Educators Association for Miami Valley - is unifying efforts to recruit, support and mentor Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) educators by coordinating recruiting, mentoring and growing professionals across the Miami Valley and Dayton region.

DREAM's success lies in its multi-faceted approach to educator recruitment and retention. The organization utilizes various strategies to achieve its goals. These include:

College Recruitment Fairs: DREAM facilitates targeted recruitment efforts at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other institutions with diverse student populations.

Mentorship Programs: DREAM connects aspiring and current educators of color with experienced mentors who can provide guidance and support.

Professional Development Workshops: DREAM offers workshops, training programs and book studies that address the unique challenges and experiences of educators of color.

Networking Events: DREAM creates opportunities for educators of color to connect with colleagues, share experiences and build a sense of community.

By implementing these comprehensive strategies, DREAM is fostering a more welcoming and inclusive environment for educators of color in the Miami Valley. This, in turn, fosters a more diverse teaching force that benefits all students.

THE ROAD AHEAD: BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

DREAM's story is one of hope and perseverance. From a group of concerned colleagues to a regional force for change, DREAM continues to make a significant impact on the Miami Valley's educational landscape. As the organization continues to grow and expand its reach, one thing remains certain: DREAM is making a vital contribution to building a more equitable and diverse educational future for students in the Miami Valley.

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For more information on DREAM and related initiatives in Ohio, please visit the following resources:
DREAM Website: <https://www.diversifyingeducators.org/>
The Ohio Higher Education Coordinating Board's TECAN website: <https://www.ohiohrc.org/>
The Ohio Department of Education's Diversifying Educators Brief: <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Diversifying-Education-Profession-Taskforce-Recommendations.pdf.aspx>



Deron Schwieterman

is the Director of Human Resources for Beaver Creek City Schools in Beaver Creek, Ohio. He has served BCS for more than 30 years as a teacher and then administrator. In addition, Deron is involved in the Ohio Association

of School Personnel Administrators, serving on the executive board and is the current immediate past president of OASPA. In addition to this Deron serves as Treasurer of DREAM and is committed to its mission to unify efforts to recruit, support and mentor BIPOC educators by coordinating recruiting, mentoring and growing professionals across the Miami Valley in Ohio.

USING STAFF ENGAGEMENT TOOLS WITH A FOCUS ON STAY INTERVIEWS TO SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN YOUR STRATEGIC PLANNING

By: Dr. Julia A. Wheaton, eHCLE
Associate Superintendent, Consolidated High School District 230, Orland Park, IL

Employee engagement is an important component of strategic planning for many K-12 school districts across the nation. Focusing on mechanisms for increasing employee engagement as part of a school district's strategic plan can improve areas such as employee recruitment and retention, organizational culture, community engagement and, most importantly, organizational outcomes.



Despite its importance in achieving organizational mission, vision, values and goals, the systematic measurement of employee engagement has been challenging for HR leaders as impersonal employee surveys or purchased tools are often too broad and general to gain meaningful data regarding the individual needs and perspectives of your employees. This challenge can be addressed through the use of Stay Interviews in order to develop and assess laser-focused engagement strategies and initiatives that will strengthen strategic goals and intended outcomes while also improving work culture.

Engagement Theory was initially developed and formally researched by William Kahn, considered to be the “Father of Engagement Theory”, as an organizational psychologist and professor of Management & Organizations at Boston University. Dr. Khan’s perspective is captured by his description of his theory in 1990 as, “The harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances.” Three main factors of Dr. Khan’s theory include the following:

- Meaningfulness: Purpose behind the work
- Safety: Psychologically safe in workplace
- Availability: Capacity to physically & mentally perform a role

This author’s eHCLE action research project, completed in December 2023 as part of the AASPA/EXMI certification program, focused upon the use of baseline and needs assessment data in developing an employee engagement plan aligned with a high school district’s strategic plan. The district-wide action plan targeted three critical areas of staff engagement perceptions identified as priorities based upon a ThoughtExchange™ with internal stakeholders: Curriculum & Instruction Decisions [Availability], Safety & Security Protocols [Safety] and Staff Recognition [Meaningfulness]. During action plan implementation, formative assessments were conducted using a Stay Interview protocol involving 5% of the school district staff (n = 50) between January and October, 2023 to formatively assess plan effectiveness. A random sampling procedure was used to identify 50 employees matching the employee representation percentage of each representative group (teacher n = 30, support staff n = 18, and administrator n = 2). Participation was voluntary which resulted in 34/50 invited respondents agreeing to participate in the Stay Interview.

The Stay Interview protocol contained 10 questions (1 Likert scale and 9 open-ended response questions) that were qualitatively coded by this author based upon emergent themes and employee groups. ChatGPT™, an AI tool, was used to analyze open responses provided by employees to identify three Employee Personas, by employee group, that described the most prevailing

engagement perspectives of our employees interviewed. Each Stay Interview was conducted by this author in a 1:1 and face-to-face live setting that occurred within the employee’s work location. Interviews were scheduled in thirty-minute intervals with the average length of interviews being between 15 - 20 minutes.

Stay interview results revealed a significant difference in perceptions, needs, and stay motivations between licensed and classified employee groups. Identifying these differences enabled our district to refine and differentiate our engagement strategies resulting in the achievement of annual engagement targets for 5/12 targets within six months of implementing a year-long employee engagement strategic plan coinciding with the timeframe of this eHCLE research project. Results of this research strongly suggest that differentiated engagement strategies should be developed and implemented with employee groups with fidelity based upon the specific needs within each group. Basically, employee engagement is NOT a “one size fits all” initiative. Stay interviews allow HR leaders to personalize employee engagement initiatives increasing and expanding outcomes across the organization.



Dr. Julia Wheaton currently serves Consolidated High School District 230, in Orland Park, Illinois, as the Associate Superintendent. Julia has served Illinois public school districts for thirty-three years in leadership

positions ranging from special education coordinator, student services director, junior high school principal, associate principalships in both instruction and pupil personnel services, high school principal, and, most recently, an Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources for ten years. Along with AASPA’s eHCLE certification, Julia possesses educational degrees of a Bachelor of Science in Education and Master of Science in School Psychology from Illinois State University, Master of Arts in Educational Administration from Governors State University and a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies from Loyola University Chicago. Julia also serves North Central College in Naperville, Illinois as an adjunct professor for educational leadership graduate classes in school law, special education law, special education finance and special education program supervision.



THE POWER OF THE MORNING CHECK-IN:

A SIMPLE ROUTINE THAT MOVES
MOUNTAINS IN HUMAN RESOURCES

By: Dr. Marco D. Holland, Chief Human Resources Officer,
Marietta City Schools, Marietta, GA

As the clock ticks toward 8:30 AM and the morning fog begins to lift, there I am, rolling into the office, cup of coffee in hand, ready to start my day. It's a ritual I've followed for years—one that started during my time as a school principal and has carried over into my current role as Chief Human Resources Officer. What's the secret to my morning smile? It's a little something I like to call the morning check-in.



Now, some may see the morning check-in as just another form of small talk or a brief pause in the busy grind of HR work. But, for me, it's so much more than that. It's a strategy.

It's an opportunity to foster connections, engage with my team and set the tone for a productive day. And it all started many years ago in the hallways of a 2,800-student school. Let me share a little story about how this humble routine has not only impacted my work, but also serves as a cornerstone of effective HR practices.

A PRINCIPAL'S MORNING WALK: SETTING THE STAGE FOR CONNECTION

When I was a principal, I adopted a morning check-in routine that involved literally walking the halls of my building—checking in on students, teachers and staff alike. It wasn't just a ritual but part of my leadership strategy. I would circulate, tell a joke, offer a quick hello and, most importantly, listen.

The goal wasn't just to get a read on the vibe of the building (though that was certainly important). It was about being present. Whether I was walking through the teacher's lounge or stopping by the front office, I made it a point to engage in brief conversations—always keeping my ear to the ground for any issues that might need attention. I wanted my staff to know I was there for them and, in turn, they would feel comfortable coming to me with concerns or ideas. By the time the first bell rang, I had already walked about 7,000 steps and connected with nearly 70% of my team. And those early conversations always set the tone for a productive day.

Fast forward to today, where my office is much smaller, my team is more focused on HR policies and operations and my walks are considerably shorter. But the check-in remains. I still make it a priority to visit every person on my team every day. And just like when I was a principal, I've come to realize that those small interactions are integral to building a solid HR strategy.

WHY MORNING CHECK-INS MATTER IN HR: THREE KEY REASONS

1. Aligning HR Strategy: Thermometer vs. Thermostat

As HR professionals, we often find ourselves in the role of a “thermometer” in the workplace. We gauge the temperature, taking the pulse of the organization through feedback, surveys and other data points. But our true

power lies in being a thermostat—someone who can use that data to create better conditions.

The morning check-in is the perfect example of this. When I visit my team in the morning, I'm not just asking how they're doing. I'm observing, listening and gathering information that will help me make adjustments where necessary. If there's tension in the air or if there are unspoken concerns, these check-ins give me the chance to address them early. By engaging my team in a relaxed, informal setting, I can make quick decisions about how best to support them, whether that's with resources, guidance or a listening ear.

Just as a thermostat adjusts the temperature of a room, the morning check-in helps me adjust the dynamics of my team, fostering an environment where productivity and morale can thrive.

2. Employee Relations: The Power of Human Connection

One of the key tenets of Human Resources is employee relations. In HR, it's crucial to build and maintain strong relationships with employees so they feel valued, heard and understood. That's where the morning check-in becomes incredibly valuable.

Human connection is at the core of effective employee relations. When I greet my team in the morning with a smile, a joke or a simple “good morning,” I'm not just checking in on their work performance—I'm acknowledging their humanity. This seemingly small act helps establish a sense of trust and belonging, which is crucial for building a cohesive and motivated team.

As HR professionals, we spend a lot of time on formal interactions—meetings, reviews and strategic discussions. But it's the informal, personal moments that create deeper connections and help cultivate a positive workplace culture. After all, it was Mary—one of my team members—who pointed out that the mornings I checked in with a smile and whistling or humming a song set the tone for the whole office (I can not sing!). She felt the warmth of my presence, and that energy trickled down to the rest of the team. When employees feel that their leaders are invested in them on a personal level, they're more likely to engage, collaborate and contribute to the overall success of the organization.

3. Modeling Positive Behavior and Leadership

The morning check-in also serves as a model for leadership behavior. As an HR professional, I am in a unique position to set an example for my team. The way I conduct myself—how I communicate, how I approach



challenges and how I interact with others—can have a profound impact on the workplace culture.

By actively engaging with my team every morning, I'm modeling behaviors of openness, accessibility and emotional intelligence. I'm showing my team that I value communication and collaboration and that their well-being matters to me. This helps create a workplace where employees feel empowered to lead with the same enthusiasm and commitment.

Furthermore, the morning check-in is an opportunity for me to practice and demonstrate what I expect from others. By taking the time to make these personal connections, I encourage my team to do the same with their colleagues and the people they serve. As HR professionals, we can't expect our teams to embrace communication and connection if we're not willing to lead by example.

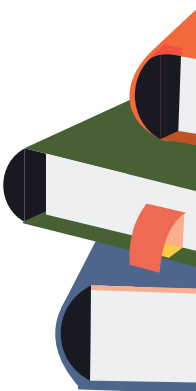
REFLECTION: A SIMPLE HABIT WITH BIG IMPACT

The simple act of checking in with my team each morning may seem trivial, but as I've learned over the years, it's a powerful strategy for creating positive, productive work environments. It's not just about the walk or the casual conversation—it's about fostering trust, building connections and being present for those who rely on us.

“The morning check-in is the perfect example of this. When I visit my team in the morning, I'm not just asking how they're doing. I'm observing, listening and gathering information that will help me make adjustments where necessary.”

This morning, when I missed my check-in and Mary noticed my absence, it hit me like a ton of bricks. Not only had I failed to engage with my team, but I had also disrupted the energy that sets the tone for the day. Her reaction was a powerful reminder of the influence I have as a leader, and how a simple, consistent habit like the morning check-in can have a lasting impact on the workplace culture.

I encourage HR professionals and leaders in all fields to consider incorporating morning check-ins into their routines. It doesn't matter if you're running a small team or leading an entire organization. Taking just a few minutes each morning to connect with your people can make a world of difference. So, why not get started today? Walk the halls or office space,





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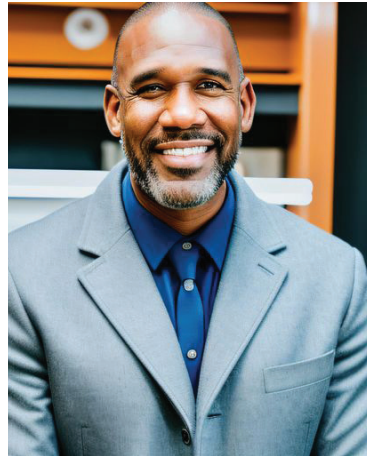
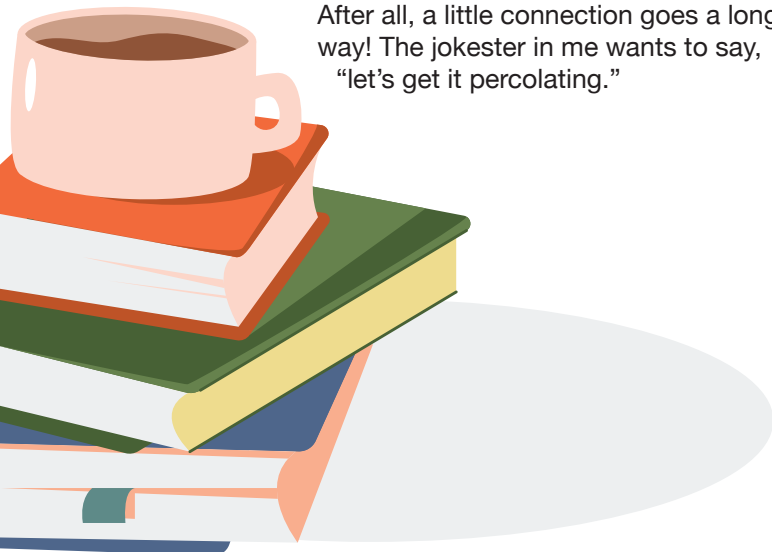
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say hello and let your team know you're there for them. Who knows? You might just find that the most impactful HR strategy is the one that's the most personal.

In the end, if you're not whistling down the halls or spreading good vibes from the get-go, you might just be missing out on the opportunity to make a big impact with a small gesture. Get your steps in, your heart pumping and your team engaged—one check-in at a time. It is also an amazing way for you to feel even better about the work that you do to support others.

Let's all get our morning routine right. After all, a little connection goes a long way! The jokester in me wants to say, "let's get it percolating."



Marco D. Holland is an accomplished educational leader with over two decades of experience in the field. Currently serving as the Chief Human Resources Officer at Marietta City Schools, he has developed expertise in Human Capital Management,

focusing on areas such as recruitment, talent acquisition, performance management and strategic HR initiatives. In this role, he has made significant contributions to improving organizational culture, enhancing staff quality and aligning HR strategies with educational goals. His career also includes a history of transformative leadership positions in various school districts, where he has consistently improved organizational outcomes.


SHIFTING INTO INNOVATION:

TRANSFORMING TEACHING FOR THE FUTURE

By: Michael Sheehy, Senior Policy Analyst, National Council on Teacher Quality, Washington, DC

When the Ford Model T hit the market over 100 years ago, it changed the world, providing reliable and affordable transportation for many. Yet the same innovation wouldn't meet today's transportation needs. So, transportation evolved.





Similarly, our traditional one-teacher model no longer meets the needs of many of today's students and teachers. States and districts are challenging the status quo by reimagining teaching with teams of teachers instructing large, 100+ student classrooms leveraging teacher residents and aspiring teachers to fill critical staffing gaps and creating leadership roles that allow teachers to take on more responsibility without leaving the classroom. These changes, often referred to as strategic staffing, foster a more supportive, collaborative and opportunity-rich environment for teachers to more effectively teach their students.

But before district leaders make big changes and knock down walls to build bigger classrooms, it's important to understand the research behind this growing trend.

1. TEACHER LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES BENEFIT EDUCATORS—AND STUDENTS.

Several national strategic staffing models are gaining popularity. Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce uses a core team of teachers to manage groups of 50-150 students, while Public Impact's Opportunity Culture employs "multi-classroom leaders" who coach and support teacher teams. Both emphasize highly effective teachers leading their peers.

Research shows teachers and students benefit from teacher leadership opportunities. A 2020 meta-analysis found modest student achievement improvements in schools with strong teacher leadership and a 2017 analysis showed higher student performance in schools with strong teacher leadership. Districts also see improved retention from investing in leadership opportunities. Teacher leaders in NYC's Teacher Career Pathways program, which empowers teachers to coach colleagues, were almost twice as likely to stay at their school than other similar teachers.

2. MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS CAN ENHANCE TEACHER RETENTION AND IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (WITH TIME)

Providing aspiring and novice teachers with effective mentors is key in several strategic staffing initiatives. In general, novice teachers mentored by experienced educators have higher retention rates, with one study showing 86% were still teaching after a year, compared to 71% without a mentor.

Traditionally, mentorship is an additional responsibility for the mentor teacher, often occurring after school. However, with reimagined roles, this mentorship is often integrated into the regular school day. As such, districts shifting to more innovative staffing models need to set reasonable expectations. Reimagined teaching roles will take time, not only to design and implement new staffing structures, but also to see results.

3. TEACHERS WHO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES MAY MAKE FOR GREAT TEACHER LEADERS—AND SHOULD BE PAID MORE.

Introducing new leadership roles into schools requires compensating teachers for taking on leadership responsibilities. Limited research exists on the outcomes of paying teachers more for these leadership roles, but evidence shows that strategic pay for highly effective teachers or those in hard-to-staff areas can improve retention and student outcomes.

Although it's vital that teacher leaders have a track record of improving student outcomes, effectiveness with students doesn't guarantee effectiveness with peers. This distinction is why some districts require rigorous standards for teacher leaders. For instance, in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, designated teacher leaders must achieve 100% proficiency scores on leadership and instructional facilitation standards across multiple evaluations, provide a leadership statement and have at least one year of student growth data, among other requirements.



4. HAPPY TEACHERS LEAD TO THRIVING STUDENTS.

Just like a high-performance engine needs the right fuel and maintenance, teachers and students need supportive environments to thrive. Reimagining the teaching role focuses on improving daily working conditions: workload, relationships with leadership and peers, and school culture. Research shows teachers are more satisfied and likely to stay in schools with positive working environments, which also predicts higher student growth.

5. COLLABORATION HAS ITS BENEFITS, BUT ONLY IF TEACHERS HAVE TIME TO DO IT.

When teachers collaborate on instruction, both they and their students benefit. A 2007 analysis found that frequent teacher collaboration predicted better math and reading achievement. Another study of over 9,000 teachers showed that more collaboration time was associated with higher student achievement and faster teacher improvement.

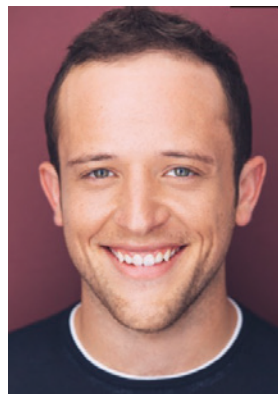
However, current school schedules often lack sufficient collaboration time. In fact, a 2009 analysis found wide variance in collaboration time, from less than 30 minutes per week to over three hours. Teachers also report different types of collaboration opportunities. In that same analysis, only 22% reported observing colleagues to provide feedback. This is particularly noteworthy since teacher leaders working in these models are often asked to observe and lead others, meaning district leaders must be prepared to provide these educators with ongoing support, training and time to actually observe and provide feedback to their peers.

6. SOMETIMES BIGGER CLASSES CAN BE BETTER!

The impact of class size on student learning has been debated for decades. While the 1980s STAR study found that small class sizes improved achievement, recent research shows that reducing class size often has a negligible impact and can worsen teacher shortages.

One viable solution that has emerged is assigning more students to highly effective teachers' classrooms and compensating those teachers accordingly. One simulation predicted that this approach would improve academic performance for all students by increasing students' access to effective teachers while decreasing class loads for other teachers.

Just as the Ford Model T ushered in a new era of transportation and access, reimagined teaching roles could revolutionize our educational system. By embracing strategies like collaborative teams and teacher leadership roles, we can create a more supportive and effective learning environment for students and teachers.



Michael Sheehy is a Senior Policy Analyst with the National Council on Teacher Quality. Prior to joining the team at NCTQ, Michael worked for a variety of education policy organizations nationwide, providing policy support and technical assistance to legislators, state education agencies, advocates and more. Michael holds a Master's of Public Policy from Duke University.

Professional Human Capital Leader in Education (pHCLE) Learning Opportunities

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.



VIRTUAL CLASS SCHEDULES/TIMES FOR 2025:

January 23-March 6, 2025 (Thurs. 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm ET)
July 10-August 21, 2025 (Thurs. 11:00 am - 12:30 pm ET)
September 23-November 11, 2025 (Tues. 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm ET)

2025 TESTING WINDOWS

- * January 10-31, 2025 (Registration Deadline: January 6)
- * March 10-31, 2025 (Registration Deadline: March 6)
- * June 10-30, 2025 (Registration Deadline: June 6)
- * October 20-November 21, 2025
(Registration Deadline: October 15)

For more info
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2025 eHCLE PROGRAM

The Executive Human Capital Leaders in Education (eHCLE) certification program is a professional development opportunity for accomplished human capital leaders serving in education organizations. Through a ten-month cohort model, participants will receive intensive support from their peers, as well as from subject-matter experts in multiple areas of human capital management. Applications are due by December 16, 2024 to be considered for the 2025 eHCLE cohort.

For Timeline/
Schedule and
more Info
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APPLICANTS MUST MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE eHCLE PROGRAM:

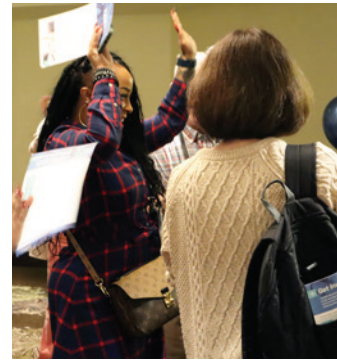
- Has a current, unexpired pHCLE certification. Preference will be given to individuals who have been pHCLE certified for at least one year
- Has a current AASPA membership

Experience:

- A minimum of seven years in building, district and/or organization leadership positions that involve leading a project, program, department and/or staff
- Demonstrated success impacting systems-wide change

2024 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

In October of 2024, we gathered for a week of quality professional development, networking opportunities and entertainment. What resulted was the AASPA 86th Annual Conference in Seattle, WA - a four-day event that attracted school personnel administrators from all around the country. The conference was a huge success, drawing 951 attendees with more than 90 exhibit booths, 12 pre-conference sessions and 90 clinic/ignite sessions.





AASPA VIDEOS

Catch all the excitement from the AASPA 86th Annual Conference in our daily highlight reels on AASPA-TV, featuring key moments from sessions, networking events and more! Don't miss out on the best recaps of each day's festivities, keeping you connected and inspired throughout the conference!

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2024 AWARDS

Congratulations to these award winners! We appreciate all that you do for the advancement of PK-12 human capital leadership and your dedication to AASPA.




2024 - 2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

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Rockdale County Public Schools, Conyers, GA

2024 Herb Salinger Personnel Administrator of the Year Award

Josh Chambers, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources,
Glenbard District 87, Glen Ellyn, IL

2024 Human Resources Digital Branding Development Award

Hillsboro School District, Hillsboro, OR

2024 Human Resources Specialist/Support Staff Award

Region 2: Crissy Cooper, Grayslake Community High School District
#127, Grayslake, IL

Region 3: Erin Barraza, East Windsor Public Schools, East Windsor, CT

2024 Newsletter Award

District: Propel Charter Schools, Pittsburgh, PA

Affiliate: TASP (Texas)

2024 Raymond E. Curry Impactful Research Award

Angelica Romano, Executive Director of Human Resources, Glenbrook
High School District 225, Glenview, IL

2024 William L. Hunter Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Award

Toledo Public Schools, Toledo, OH

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NATIONAL EDUCATOR SHORTAGE SUMMIT

**March 6 - 7, 2025
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The National Educator Shortage Summit is an interactive event that convenes focused groups of P-20 stakeholders to address the challenges of the national shortage of educators and the educator pipeline and share ways to replicate practices via a national strategy. Central to this conversation will be the use of data and collaboration in sharing promising practices. Above all we hope this Summit will start comprehensive conversations among the P-20 education community and serve as a place where different groups can pool different perspectives.

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EQUITY IN ACTION SUMMIT

AASPA's 2025 Equity in Action Summit is a two-day event developed for school leaders who are seeking to increase their knowledge of leadership, recruitment, selection and retention of under-represented individuals in PK-12. This event joins colleagues from across the country to share diverse perspectives and embrace change. An equitable workforce plays a significant role in making the work environment more peaceful and inspiring.

Where can your district go with diversity, equity and inclusion?

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

What information should we be sharing with our boards of education and communities around a diverse workforce and retention?

What are some new and best practices for recruitment?

Learn more here!



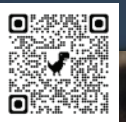
2025 WINTER PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR BOOT CAMP

Jan 30 - 31, 2025
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*before December 14th





2024 LEON BRADLEY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Ellen Chu is a senior at SUNY Geneseo, pursuing a B.S. in Early Childhood and Childhood Education (birth-grade 6). Initially an accounting major, her volunteer teaching experience in Poland inspired her career change. Ellen consistently

made the President’s and Dean’s lists and earned multiple scholarships and awards for her campus contributions. She served as secretary and a member of Kappa Delta Pi, the International Honor Society in Education and was an active volunteer and pledge team member of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity. Her diverse work experience in banking, retail and tech support fuels her creativity and perseverance. During her placements in prekindergarten, first, second and fourth grades, she collaborated with classmates to design engaging lessons tailored to students’ needs. Known for her hardworking and humble personality, Ellen is well-trusted by peers, mentors and co-workers. She plans to pursue a master’s degree in literacy and special education after student teaching.

My name is **Matthew Pernell**, and I am currently a graduate student enrolled in Cleveland State’s Master of Urban Secondary Teaching program. I was born in Cincinnati, OH but I graduated from Case Western Reserve University in 2011. I chose education but, in many ways, it also chose me. I had majored in business management with a focus in marketing, but my experience tutoring high school students at Esperanza, Inc ultimately led me to a career in education. I’ve worked with many grade levels, from a health and science lab teacher at an elementary school in Atlanta to a mathematics



instructor for Esperanza, Inc in Cleveland, Ohio. I am now student teaching at Cleveland High School for Digital arts as a math teacher and plan to research the impact of journaling on conceptual algebra skills. It is my goal to reshape mathematics learning in urban schools across the country.



THE LEON BRADLEY SCHOLARSHIP AWARD is intended for minority college students pursuing a degree in the teaching profession and/or school leadership. The scholarship is named in honor of the late Leon Bradley, the first African American president of AASPA (1983 - 1984). Announcement of the award occurs at the Annual Conference in October each year. This award is a one-time, non-renewable scholarship. The first award was given in 2004.



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LEON BRADLEY SCHOLARSHIP & WATCH THE RECIPIENTS ACCEPTANCE VIDEOS HERE!

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