
National Educator Shortage Summit

Westin Alexandria Old Town, Alexandria, VA

April 9-10, 2026

Thursday, April 9

7:30 – 8:30 AM

Continental Breakfast & Registration

8:30 – 9:00 AM

Welcome & Opening Remarks

- *5 Shifts to Address the National Educator Shortage*
- *Mapping a Journey to Address the National Educator Shortage*
- *Rewriting the Retention Playbook*

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Sustaining and Retaining: Strategic Partnerships for Keeping Your Best Teachers

Ryan Saunders, Director of State Policy, Learning Policy Institute, Washington, DC

Losing teachers costs districts time, money, and negatively impacts student learning. In this session, the Learning Policy Institute draws on analysis of state workforce data and recent research of teacher residency programs in California, Texas, and Arkansas, to explore retention strategies that go beyond one-off initiatives. We'll explore how to leverage partnerships with educator prep programs and intermediaries to create sustainable systems that support new teachers and keep experienced ones in classrooms.

10:00 – 10:30 AM

Networking Break

10:30 – 11:45 AM

Interactive Session: Retention Journey

Building on the journey of an educator, participants will be placed at a table to work through the career stages of their assigned Educator Persona, with a focus on retention and engagement strategies throughout the educator lifecycle.

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Lunch

12:45 – 1:45 PM

Breakout Session 1

- **Time to Retain: A Roadmap to Engage Busy Principals in Strategic Retention** (*Shift 2 & 6*)

Phoebe Davis, Director of Talent Acquisition, KIPP DC Public Schools, Washington, DC

The greatest roadblock to teacher retention is often a principal's limited time. KIPP DC, a network of 22 schools, overcame this by providing leaders with the specific tools needed to prioritize talent. By shifting to a "strategic retention" model, they increased year-over-year teacher retention from 77% to 83%.

Join this session to gain the practical resources talent teams need to empower their principals. You will leave with a clear roadmap for:

Vision: Setting strategic retention goals.

Routine: Establishing high-impact retention meetings.

Planning: Building a year-long retention calendar.

Action: Developing a versatile bank of retention strategies

- **Gathering Employee Voice to Strengthen Retention: Facilitation Strategies That Work (*Shift 6*)**

Mellissa Braham, Associate Director, National School Public Relations Association, Rockville, MD

Many school employees nationwide feel that their input and opinions aren't valued by their leaders, which negatively impacts their morale and engagement – a fact revealed in part through focus groups conducted nationwide by researchers with the National School Public Relations Association. Focus groups are a proven and respected tool for gathering deep, qualitative insights from employees, but doing them well requires a skilled facilitator who can manage a discussion with neutrality while encouraging participation, teasing out valuable insights and making all employees feel heard. Build or strengthen your skills as a facilitator in this session, which will cover how to plan and lead a productive employee focus group discussion, how to handle different participant archetypes, and how to craft questions and statements that surface actionable insights for school leaders. Attendees will participate in a role-playing exercise and leave better equipped to plan their own focus groups to improve the employee experience and strengthen retention.

- **From Retention Rates to Retention Systems: What Districts Are Doing Differently to Sustain Educators (*Shift 1, 2, 3 & 6*)**

Dr. Alfred Dunn, Human Capital Partner, USHCA (Urban Schools Human Capital Academy), Mount Airy, MD

Retention rates across the country are stabilizing—but educator burnout, absenteeism, and disengagement remain high. This disconnect has revealed a critical gap: retention alone is no longer a sufficient measure of workforce health. In this interactive session, the Urban Schools Human Capital Academy (USHCA) will share how districts are redefining strategic retention by moving beyond headcount metrics toward a systemwide focus on employee experience, sustainability, and teaching stability. Drawing from USHCA's most recent National Human Capital Academy and ongoing work with districts and states, participants will explore how retention is shaped by daily experiences across the talent system—from hiring and onboarding to work design, career pathways, and principal leadership.

1:45 – 2:00 PM

Networking Break

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Breakout Session 2

- ❖ Project Thrive: A Data-Driven Approach to Teacher Retention (*Shift 6*)

Dr. Rebecca Savage, Director, Organizational Development and Retention, The School District of Lee County, Fort Myers, FL

Retaining high-quality educators is essential for student success and organizational stability. This session explores "Project Thrive," a strategic initiative by The School District of Lee County designed to achieve a 95% teacher retention rate by July 2026. Using the "Four Disciplines of Execution" framework, Project Thrive focuses on a Wildly Important Goal (WIG) supported by rigorous lead measures, a compelling data dashboard, and a weekly cadence of accountability.

Attendees will learn how the district utilizes a multi-faceted approach to support its 5,500+ teachers, including:

- ❖ **Targeted Support:** Monthly strategy meetings with Tier 2 and Tier 3 schools to provide tailored assistance.

- ❖ **Key Retention Pillars:** Implementing structured onboarding, supportive leadership, growth opportunities, and healthy organizational culture.

- ❖ **Actionable Data:** Using pre-, mid-year, and post-assessments along with stay and exit interviews to inform ongoing strategy.
- ❖ **Collaborative Accountability:** Maintaining a "Retention Response" through cross-departmental collaboration between HR, regional leadership, and school-based teams.

- **Using Data to Redesign Educator Compensation for Retention (*Shift 4 & 6*)**

Jessica Nadzam, Research & Policy Analyst Associate and Megan Boren, Program Director, Educator Workforce, Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, GA

While teacher pay plays a major role in recruitment and retention of teachers, it only tells one part of the story – and pay alone isn't a "silver bullet" to a sustainable educator workforce. This session highlights recent updates to the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Educator Compensation Dashboard, which provides state-by-state, role-based and career-state statistics and insights into four categories of compensation: pay, healthcare coverage, retirement benefits, and take-home pay. Participants will explore how comprehensive teacher compensation packages can be built to attract and retain educators (including salary, benefits and other incentives), and presenters will demonstrate how transparency and creativity in compensation can help districts make compensation plans that sustain a quality teacher workforce. At the end, the audience will be invited to participate in an interactive exercise to review compensation strategies and package elements.

- **Team-Based Staffing as a Retention Strategy: Evidence, ROI, and Career Pathways (*Shift 6*)**

Lennon Audrain, Research Assistant Professor/Head of Innovation & Policy Initiatives, Next Education Workforce Initiative, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

An innovative staffing approach for addressing educator shortages is the use of team-based staffing models that move beyond traditional one-teacher, one-classroom structures. This session examines how team-based staffing, as advanced through the Next Education Workforce initiative, reorganizes schools around teams of educators who share instructional responsibility through differentiated roles and career pathways. Drawing on research conducted by Richard Ingersoll and colleagues, the session highlights evidence related to educator retention, return on investment, and educator experience. The discussion is informed by implementation across more than 125 schools in over 45 school systems spanning 16 states, offering participants insight into how team-based staffing operates at scale across varied policy and district contexts.

3:00 – 3:15 PM

Networking Break

3:15 – 4:15 PM

Breakout Session 3

- **Building a Resilient Teaching Workforce: Recruitment Partnerships, Development and Retention (*Shift 1 & 6*)**

Kimberly Wood, Assistant Director, Talent Acquisition & HR Programs and Bonnie Toffoli, Senior Director, Talent Acquisition & HR Programs, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, FL

Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) has pioneered innovative recruitment pathways, strategic partnerships, and engaging employee experiences to transform the teaching workforce. Programs such as paid internships, para-to-professional initiatives, and associate teacher roles reduce barriers and expand access to teaching careers. Internal retention supports—including the OCPS induction program, clinical educators, and professional growth opportunities—help sustain teachers during their early years and beyond. This session will provide actionable strategies to design flexible pathways that strengthen recruitment, development, and long-term retention of next-generation educators. Attendees will leave with practical tools to build a sustainable teacher pipeline.

Objectives:

- Identify recruitment strategies that remove barriers and broaden access to teaching careers.
- Develop a plan that integrates flexible pathways and internal retention supports.

- Apply relationship-building techniques to enhance educator engagement and long-term commitment.
- **Teach in the Peach: Georgia's Statewide Strategy to Recruit, Recognize & Retain Excellent Educators (Shift 6)**
Selena Blankenship, Recruitment & Retention Coordinator and Dustin Allen, Program Manager, Georgia Department of Education, Atlanta, GA
Georgia is confronting the teacher shortage head-on through its statewide recruitment and retention initiative, Teach in the Peach—a comprehensive, research-informed effort launched by the Georgia Department of Education in February 2025. Designed to make Georgia the #1 State for Teachers to Teach, Teach in the Peach streamlines pathways into the profession, elevates teacher voice, and connects aspiring educators with opportunities across all 180 Georgia school districts. This session will unpack Georgia's systemwide approach and provide HR leaders with actionable strategies to adapt and replicate these components within their own states or districts. Additionally, the session will highlight how Teach in the Peach directly responds to insights from more than 53,000 Georgia teachers, addressing concerns such as burnout, certification barriers, and unclear entry pathways.

- **Designing Team-Based School Structures: Lessons from Farmington Public Schools (Shift 1 & 3)**

Amanda Dahm, Director of Programs and Rhonda Henry, Assistant Superintendent of Innovation & Strategic Initiatives, Michigan Educator Workforce Initiative, Ypsilanti, MI

This session will showcase how Farmington Public Schools, a diverse suburban district in Michigan, is redesigning school structures to reduce educator workload, isolation, and turnover while improving instructional quality. In partnership with the Michigan Inspired Teaching Teams Educator Network (MITTEN) and ASU Next Education Workforce, the district is reimagining staffing, schedules, and collaboration across four elementary schools and one high school. Educators work in intentional teams with protected time to plan and reflect together, leveraging shared responsibility and distributed expertise to tackle the day-to-day work of teaching collaboratively. This team-based model also creates the opportunity for differentiated roles that allow educators to deepen expertise and grow leadership without leaving the classroom.

Participants will explore concrete examples of how these structural changes improve educator experience, deepen implementation of high-quality instructional materials, and strengthen retention by aligning instructional coherence with sustainable working conditions. The session highlights design principles and team structures that other districts can adapt to support well-being and build collaborative, high-performing teaching teams.

4:30 – 6:00 PM
Networking Reception

Friday, April 10

7:30 – 8:00 AM
Continental Breakfast

8:00 – 8:15 AM
Welcome Back & Recap

8:15 – 9:15 AM
Educators Live!
Get it from the source. Hear from current educators on why they became teachers and what keeps them in the field of education. Learn what they prioritize and what they are looking for from their districts and educational organizations.

9:15 – 10:15 AM

Breakout Session 4

- **Owning the Employee Experience: How District Leadership Has Partnered with Principals in Prince William County Schools to Elevate Employee Engagement and Retention (Shift 2 & 3)**

Dr. Matthew Wyal, Employee Relations Supervisor, Prince William County Public Schools, Manassas, VA

In the last three years, Prince William County has committed itself to employee well-being initiatives to strengthen retention in the district. Learn today how Prince William County has been able to scale their support of principals and data processes to improve retention and foster a positive employee experience across the board.

- **Teacher Retention (Shift 1, 5 & 6)**

Tara Totten, Recruitment & Retention Unit Analyst and Dante Watson, Recruitment & Retention Unit Manager, Office of Educator Excellence, Michigan Department of Education, Lansing, MI

During this time of a national teacher shortage, the Michigan Department of Education is prioritizing strategies for the retention of educators. This presentation focuses on the significance of staff retention by way of the National Board Certification (NBC) program, which is designed to promote the professional development, retention, and recognition of educators. We will outline the benefits of NBC, present data from the initial rounds of Michigan grants aimed at supporting educators, and highlight key lessons learned. If your state or district has not yet allocated funds for this respected program, we will explore alternative funding sources.

- **Listening to Learn: Using Culture Data and Stay Interviews to Drive Action (Shift 6)**

Lindsey Tanner, Supervisor of Certified Personnel, Ogden School District, Ogden, UT

This presentation will highlight how Ogden School District uses the data from our culture surveys that our employees and families complete. This data is intentionally gathered and used to drive improvement through two connected processes: the Culture Survey with focus groups and Stay Interviews. I will share how survey results are deepened through stakeholder focus groups and how that feedback is used to co-design solutions alongside educators, ensuring voices are not only heard but acted upon. In addition, I will outline how Stay Interviews provide more immediate, site-level insight and how instructional coaches support principals in translating findings into quick, meaningful actions. Together, these processes create shared responsibility for addressing concerns, reduce the burden on principals alone, and establish a continuous feedback loop that informs decision-making, supports staff retention, and provides grounded context for negotiations.

10:15 – 10:30 AM

Networking Break

10:30 – 11:30 AM

Breakout Session 5

- **Taskforce Conversations Improve Retention (Shift 4 & 6)**

Susanne Goodin, Assistant superintendent of Human Resources, Elmore County Schools, Wetumpka, AL

Our school system created a Teacher Retention Taskforce in 2022. Each school faculty selects one representative to be a part of the teacher retention taskforce. Once the team has been selected we begin meeting once per month starting in October annually. At our meetings we discuss the obstacles facing teachers and discuss solutions to those obstacles. The teachers have open dialogue with central office leadership, school leadership and board members. Each year they find a way to survey the other teachers in their school to collect information about how the teachers in their school feel, and then they determine what they will ask for each year. They always present to the board in June and ask for changes to be made to benefit the teachers. One year they asked for a stipend for department heads/grade level chairs. One other

year they asked for a half day of school at the end of each 9 weeks so they could finalize grades. Just two examples of changes we have made as a result of the taskforce.

- **From Insight to Action: Utilizing Stay Interviews to Improve Staff Retention (*Shift 6*)**

Will Ambos, Director of Educator Recruitment & Retention, Arizona Department of Education, Phoenix, AZ

This session is an investigation into the power of Stay Interviews. Stay Interviews are a proactive retention tool used to discover what is working and what may need refinement. These brief one-on-one interviews are designed to collect valuable information that contributes to why employees keep returning. The session will provide an overview of the Stay Interview, examples of Stay Interviews, and assist participants in creating Stay Interviews that can be put into action immediately. It will also introduce the Arizona Department of Education's Stay Interview Guidebook.

- **A 30-60-90 Day Retention Onboarding Blueprint (*Shift 6*)**

Kofi Kinney, Learning & Development Coach, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA

What if the first 60 days are the real retention strategy—and most systems simply haven't designed them? Weeks 2–8 are where retention is won or lost. The welcome energy fades, the workload multiplies, and "support" becomes luck-of-the-draw—depending on who a teacher happens to know. Most districts already have pieces in place (mentors, coaches, induction, admin check-ins). The problem is that those supports aren't mapped, timed, and owned as one plan. The good news: this is a design problem, which means it's solvable.

In this highly interactive working session, participants will engage in action planning to create a one-page 0–30 and 31–60 Retention Onboarding Blueprint that makes support visible and shared across school administration, instructional coaches, mentor teachers, and district/induction teams. Participants will identify their top early-career breakdown points, lock in non-negotiable touchpoints, assign clear owners (so support is shared—not dumped on one role), and build two simple pulse checks (Day 30 + Day 60) with quick response moves—so leaders catch struggle early instead of finding out through resignations. Participants will leave with a blueprint they can implement immediately—plus a guided 61–90 extension page to complete with their team—so onboarding becomes a coordinated retention strategy, not a binder on a shelf.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

A Call to Action:

Federal Support for Systemic Approaches to Educator Workforce Development & Design

Michael Yudin, Raben, Washington, DC

As we continue to advocate on behalf of existing federal programs, we know that a more ambitious agenda is needed to advance the diverse, effective, and sustainable educator workforce our children, families and communities need and deserve. In consultation with partners in K-12 and higher education, AACTE has outlined a coherent set of federal policies for educator workforce development and design in *A Call to Action*. At this session, learn about this exciting new federal policy agenda, plans for its ultimate enactment, and how you can participate.