# *Transforming* THE TEACHER ROLE:

How Innovative Designs Can Improve Satisfaction, Retention, and Student Experiences

ABOUT TRANSCEND
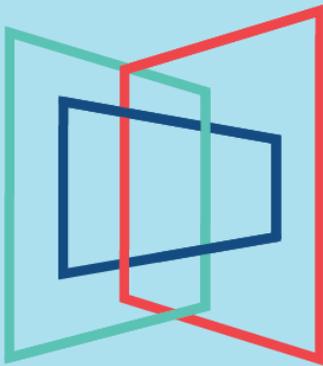
Transcend is a national nonprofit that *supports school communities to create and spread* extraordinary, *equitable learning environments*. The organization was founded on a belief that we must reimagine schooling, using a community-driven approach, so *all* children can realize their infinite potential.

Transcend pursues its mission by partnering directly with schools on design journeys while also sharing powerful models, tools, and insights across the sector. To date, Transcend has worked directly with hundreds of schools and systems in over 30 states, and has influenced thousands more. Ultimately, Transcend strives to fuel significant leaps in education so *all* young people can thrive in and transform the world

If you're interested in learning more about Transcend or joining in conversation, here are a few ways to stay connected:

- ⊘ Join our Transcend Community. A free, vibrant network of leaders, educators, and designers of innovative schools and learning environments.

- ⊘ Attend upcoming events. We hold a variety of events in our community including workshops, communities of practice, webinars, and more.

- ⊘ Explore the Innovative Models Exchange. The Innovative Models Exchange is a source for inspiring learning models as well as the resources and supports to help you implement them.

For more information, visit our website or follow us on LinkedIn or Twitter.

Acknowledgements

Help Us Continue to Improve This Resource

One of our [core values](#) at Transcend is Perpetual Beta—we are always looking to learn, grow, and improve. If you have comments or suggestions for our next iteration, please contact andrea.wistuba@transcendeducation.org.

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INTRODUCTION

> "The ultimate hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make and we could just as easily make differently."
> - David Graeber

Image courtesy of Valor Collegiate Academy.

In order to dramatically transform the experiences of all students and the outcomes they achieve, we must also tend to our teachers. Change to one cannot occur without change to the other. However, our teachers are struggling and, while teacher shortages and a dwindling pipeline are not new phenomena, recent dissatisfaction and resignation trends are shedding more light on the need for change.

This resource is designed to help leaders undertake that change. It seeks to answer the question *How can we redesign schools not just for greater student learning and happiness, but*

also for great teacher satisfaction? By exploring its content, leaders can build conviction around the need to transform the teacher role, gain clarity on what influences teacher satisfaction, and be inspired by examples and strategies they could try in their own communities.

The ideas in it reflect our belief that, while there is no single solution to this challenge, there are insights from research, as well as examples from the field that can provide the ideas communities need to develop solutions for their context. These ideas fall along a continuum. On one end, **"triage strategies"** are do-tomorrow stopgaps to alleviate urgent teacher shortages and the impacts they are having on staff morale. These strategies can be found at the end of this introduction, and while they are not the primary focus of this resource, we recognize the immediate and tangible need for them On the other end of the continuum, **"transformational strategies"** are long-term strategies that seek to alleviate teacher shortages long term by increasing teacher satisfaction and, in turn, retention. In the middle are the **"tinkering strategies,"** which reflect smaller scale ways to pilot practices related to each transformation strategy in order to build the conditions needed for change as well as fine tune a strategy and the implementation of that strategy.

This resource is organized into four parts, which are described in the table below. These parts build on each other, yet could also be used separately. To support the use of each part we crafted a set of reflection questions, which are also included below. We hope the information that follows will help schools and districts rise to the challenges of this moment and make meaningful changes to the profession in ways that support existing talent and attract a new generation of educators to the profession while also fueling student learning.

Part Descriptions and Questions

Part 1: Why Now is the Time	This section describes national trends around teacher satisfaction. The data in this section is pulled from both nationally representative surveys and "pulse checks" from the field. The purpose of this section is to illuminate national trends that are grounded in evidence.	• What are the current teacher satisfaction trends in our community? How do we know? • Which trends are most impacting learning, operations, and adult culture in our school or system? How do we know? • How might we collect context-specific data to support our understanding of teacher satisfaction in our community?
Part 2: Drivers of Teacher Satisfaction	This section outlines school characteristics that most attract individuals to teaching, ensure they thrive once there, and encourage their long-term commitment to the profession. School and district leaders can use these drivers to reflect on their school's likelihood of attracting and retaining teachers and brainstorm ways to improve.	• How can we bring in teachers' voices when evaluating our school(s) against these drivers? • Which drivers are contributing most to the trends in satisfaction and retention we're seeing in our school or system? How do we know this? • Which driver, or drivers, do we have the least information on? Why is this the case? How can we gather more information on it? • What are 1–2 sub drivers we can focus on improving in the next year? Why have we chosen these?
Part 3: Transformative Strategies	This section identifies seven strategies that schools and districts can use as inspiration for their own transformation, as well as ways to tinker toward each strategy. The strategies seek to strike the critical balance between being supportive of teachers and fostering student learning while building long-term solutions.	• Which 2–3 strategies might be highest-leverage in our community? • Which set of 1–2 mini-pilots from each of these strategies might have the highest impact—as defined by and for your unique context? • What supporting structures will need to change to make these strategies work?
Part 4: Examples in Action	This section spotlights outstanding learning environments that have creatively transformed the roles and responsibilities of teachers by leveraging multiple strategies in different configurations.	• Based on our priority drivers and selected strategies, which examples offer the most inspiration? • Where do our contexts and communities differ, and how might we alter their structures to better fit our context and needs? • How might we try the ideas in the examples in our context?

Triage Strategies

Operating Schools in the Face of Teacher Shortages

We recognize that every learning environment faces challenges related to staffing, and for many, there is an immediate need to identify ways to successfully operate in spite of current or predicted teacher shortages. Depending on the immediate needs of your learning environment, you might find that the long-term transformations described in this resource are not immediate enough.

To triage the acute challenges many schools and systems are feeling *now*, we've compiled strategies to help your school run (as well as possible) with fewer adults and to alleviate teacher burnout.

Though these strategies can help in this challenging time, they are not long-term solutions and should be just one part of a larger strategy to transform the profession. Allow them to sow the seeds for larger and more long-term innovations like those we describe later in this resource. Doing so will help you both respond to the immediate needs and begin to address long-term satisfaction and retention. For more information on current national efforts to address the teacher shortage, read how the U.S. Department of Education is answering Education Secretary Cordona's call to action.

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Triage strategies to make it work with fewer adults.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES
Ask parents, community members, or high schoolers to volunteer time to fulfill non-instructional roles.	» Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' (NC) volunteering process. » School volunteers receive paid leave in New Jersey, North Carolina, and Oklahoma. » High school students assist as custodians, cafeteria workers in several districts.
Leverage emergency-credentialing to hire more adults, such as substitutes.	» States take legislative action to increase the substitute pools.
Rehire retirees.	» New Jersey's plan to rehire retirees. » States take legislative action to rehire retirees.
Leverage temporary, additional funding streams.	» The Lansing School District in Michigan and at Spokane Public Schools in Washington increase pay. » Leverage federal funding. » Secretary Cardona's call to action and funding suggestions.
Leverage national service programs.	» AmeriCorps and City Year can supplement staff.
Restructure the school day or week to account for vacancies and mitigate burnout.	» Rowland Academy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, compresses school day to account for vacancies. » Schedule to free up time: virtual learning days, blended learning, interdisciplinary projects, late start or early dismissal.
Leverage blended, hybrid, and/or remote learning modalities where possible.	» Oklahoma's plan builds in remote learning days to their school calendar. » Tech tools to drive engagement in hybrid or remote learning environments. » Dallas ISD's personalized and blended learning toolbox and more suggestions.

Triage strategies to mitigate the effects of teacher burnout when you're short on staff.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES
Ask teachers what they want and need—and act on what they say.	» Consistent structures for feedback. » CASEL's staff shared agreements tool gathers staff input on the school environment and culture. » TNTP's 30-second teacher survey does a pulse check on what teachers want.
Hire counselors and school psychologists to better support students while offsetting the responsibilities placed on teachers.	» Shocking statistics about states' inadequate student-to-psychologist ratios. » Districts leverage federal relief funds to increase their school counselors, among other suggestions. » NYC's wellness ambassador program that gets parents involved.
Provide stipends and bonuses for health and wellness.	» State policies that are leading the efforts around teacher wellness. » Read Mississippi's School Employee Wellness guide.
Reward and praise teachers for their accomplishments—and recognize when praise is not a substitute for pay.	» Systems that can help build a school culture of appreciation. » A NYC example of a city-level award for great teaching.
Compensate teachers for providing coverage or taking on additional responsibilities.	» Memphis-Shelby Public Schools' supplemental pay schedules. » States' approaches to different pay incentives.
Do away with non-essential daily responsibilities to free up time.	» Advice from experts and research on how to de-prioritize or streamline instructional strategies. Reducing the least productive tasks from teachers' daily schedules.

Transforming the Teaching Profession:
Why Now is the Time

This section describes national trends around teacher satisfaction. The data in this section is pulled from both nationally representative surveys and "pulse checks" from the field. The purpose of this section is to illuminate national trends that are grounded in evidence.

As you read this section consider:

» What are the current teacher satisfaction trends in our community? How do we know?

» Which trends are most impacting learning, operations, and adult culture in our school or system? How do we know?

» How might we collect context-specific data to support our understanding of teacher satisfaction in our community?

Image courtesy of Concourse Village Elementary School.

Why Now is the Time

Effective teachers are a critical influence on student learning (Opper, 2019), yet teachers are suffering and often dissatisfied. Many teachers experience burnout and demoralization, feel pressure to overwork, suffer from inflexible working environments, are paid poorly, or feel stagnant in their career trajectories from limited development opportunities. These factors are contributing to teacher shortages and a dwindling pipeline. A closer look at teacher satisfaction also uncovers a severe equity issue: teachers of color experience higher rates of dissatisfaction and leave the profession at higher rates than white teachers. These trends are further illuminated in the pages that follow and are visualized in detail here 🔗.

Satisfaction during COVID-19

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools had to close their doors to in-person instruction. Schools that could pivoted to remote learning, which dramatically shifted the role and responsibilities of its teachers. But how teachers fared in the face of this change and the stress of a pandemic varied. Some reported feeling very supported by their leaders and schools, while others, a seeming majority, reported increasing dissatisfaction.

This dissatisfaction led to what would be called the "Great Teacher Resignation," where reports of vacancies and teacher turnover meant teachers were leaving the classroom in large numbers. According to The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022) reported a 3% drop in the

teaching workforce between 2020 and 2022, accounting for over 300,000 teacher vacancies. And though some reports challenge the acuteness and newness of recent shortages, it was—and still is—a reality for many districts.

Between 2020 and 2022,

about 300,000 teachers left the profession...

an estimated 3% drop in the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022 as cited in Dill, 2022).

Recruiting teachers was also a challenge during the onset of the pandemic. Almost-daily reports and blogs detailed why teachers wanted to leave the profession: being overworked, overburdened, poorly paid, and micromanaged were just a few. Excellence for Educators' national survey (2021) reported that teachers and principals experienced higher turnovers and increased stress during the pandemic. Personal and professional concerns elevated during the pandemic—87% of teachers reported

The percentage of 'very satisfied' teachers dropped from 62% in 2008 to 12% in 2022 (Merrimack College, 2022).

Percentage of Teachers Report Being 'Very Satisfied' with the Profession

2008 — 62%
2022 — 12%
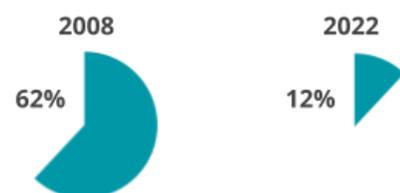
social-emotional health concerns, and 80% reported heightened concerns over balancing personal and work-based responsibilities (E4E, 2021). School and system leaders believe that the teaching profession must change. They stated various ways to begin making it more attractive to prospective teachers (E4E, 2021).

And while teachers expressed dissatisfaction and left the classroom, schools and districts struggled to fill vacancies. In a TNTP (2022) report, 100% of principals surveyed in 2021 said that it was harder to hire substitute teachers, and 86% said that it was harder to hire classroom teachers.

Satisfaction over Time

Though teacher dissatisfaction is not particularly surprising—the profession has not changed since its inception—the trends and teacher responses are staggering.

Between 2008 and 2022, the percentage of "very satisfied" teachers has dropped from 62% to 12% (Merrimack College, 2022). In 2012–13, dissatisfaction was the leading reason teachers left the classroom (Steiner &

Woo, 2021). Teachers were dissatisfied with strict accountability measures, few growth or learning opportunities, and poor working conditions.

More recently, the leading causes of teachers leaving the classroom include not enough pay, stress and burnout, and not feeling valued (PDK, 2019). One in four teachers expressed a desire to leave the profession after the 2020–21 school year (Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Turnover and Shortages over Time

44% of new hires leave the profession within their first 5 years (Ingersoll et al., 2021).

44%

2015-16
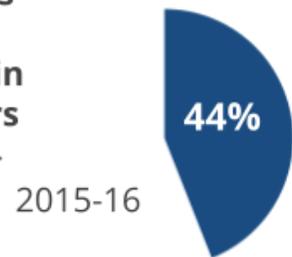
Trends show us that the teaching force is younger and less experienced than in the 1980s (Ingersoll et al., 2018; 2021). In 1988, the median age of teachers was 41. In 2016, only 19% of the teaching force was above 40 years of age. And almost half of teachers leave within their first five years in the profession (Ingersoll et al., 2021).

The pool of candidates is also dwindling. Not enough pre-service teachers are being certified or seeking alternative

Dissatisfaction	55%
Family or Personal Reasons	43%
Retirement	31%
Pursue Another Job	31%
Financial Reasons	18%
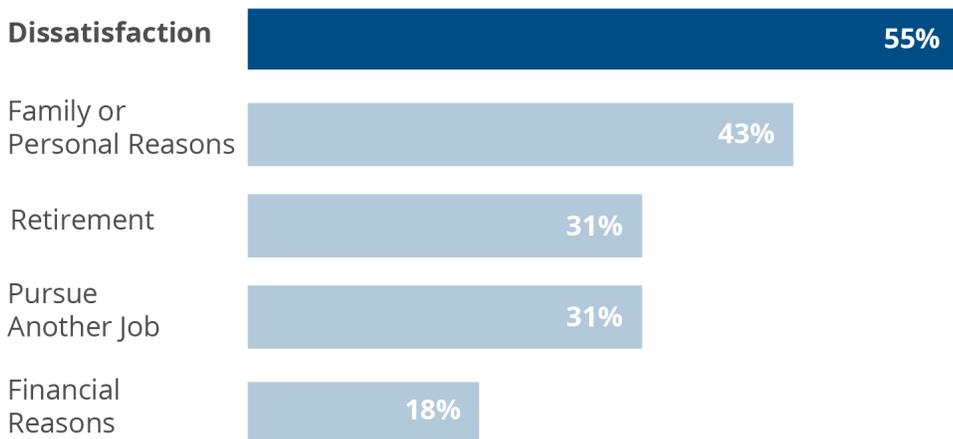
Bar graph adapted from Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017.

certification pathways, as shown by a steady decline in graduation numbers in both bachelor's and master's degrees in the field of education (AACTE, 2018). Since at least 2010, teacher preparation programs are steadily enrolling fewer candidates and certifying fewer teachers.

Trends in turnover also show an equity gap in teacher satisfaction. Black teachers report wanting to leave the profession at almost double the rate of their white counterparts (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Black and Latinx teachers leave the profession at 4% points higher than white teachers (Master et al., 2018). Teachers of color name feeling micromanaged, having little agency over personal dress and academic decisions, as well as poor salary and benefits as a few of the main reasons for their dissatisfaction (Dixon et al., 2019). Teachers are also not hired in hard-to-fill positions, leaving students without science, math, and bilingual education offerings. These data suggest that the profession is not an attractive career for younger generations.

What Teachers Want

So what do teachers want? Teachers express most satisfaction when they are invested in their role as a teacher and have appropriate resources to develop and do their job well. Proper working conditions such as having adequate resources, flexibility in their schedule, and autonomy are also essential (Collie et al., 2012; Johnson, 2006; Warner-Griffin et al., 2018). In addition, to stay in the profession long term, teachers want rigorous learning opportunities that target skills directly related to their work, as well as other skills such as leadership development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Finally, a fair and equitable salary is paramount to recruiting and retaining teachers, as are proper and authentic recognition and rewards for excellence. At least a third of teachers who leave the profession do so because they do not feel adequately compensated (Lindsay et al., 2021). These factors are further discussed in the next section.

The number of education degrees conferred has been steadily decreasing over the past decade
(AACTE, 2018).
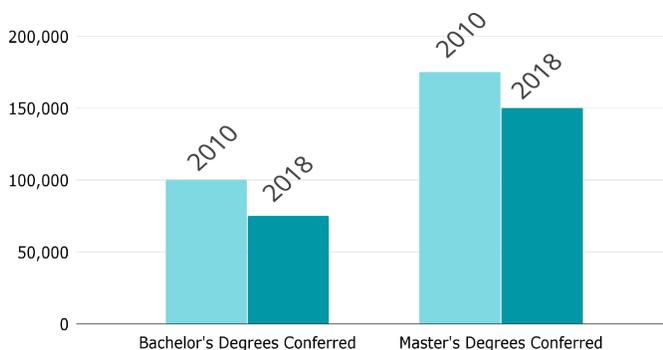
Drivers of Satisfaction:
What Attracts Teachers and Keeps Them Around

This section outlines school characteristics that most attract individuals to teaching, ensure they thrive once there, and encourage their long-term commitment to the profession. School and district leaders can use these drivers to reflect on their school's likelihood of attracting and retaining teachers and brainstorm ways to improve.

As you read this section, consider:

» How can we bring in teachers' voices when evaluating our school(s) against these drivers?
» Which drivers are contributing most to the trends in satisfaction and retention we're seeing in our school or system? How do we know this?
» Which driver, or drivers, do we have the least information on? Why is this the case? How can we gather more information on it?
» Which sub drivers can we focus on improving in the next year? Why have we chosen these?

Image courtesy of Concourse Village Elementary School

What is teacher job satisfaction, and why does it matter?

Job satisfaction refers to the gratification and fulfillment that results from working in a chosen occupation. For educators, this refers to the degree to which job-related needs and desires are met by a school (Evans, 1997). Teacher satisfaction is important because it is related to teacher well-being and retention as well as instructional quality. Deeply understanding and addressing teacher satisfaction in a school community can illuminate ways to support both educators, and, in turn, the students they work with.

Teachers who are satisfied with their workplace:

Are **less likely to leave** the profession (Blömeke et al., 2017; Klassen & Chiu, 2011).

Offer **higher instructional quality** and **stronger support for their students** (Klusmann et al., 2008).

Are **less prone to stress and burnout** (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2015; Zee and Koomen, 2016).

What impacts teacher job satisfaction?

As shown by the trend in the previous section, the teaching profession has experienced a decline in teacher satisfaction over time (Ingersoll, 2001; Steiner & Woo, 2021). But what is behind this trend? Some researchers point to added demands coupled with low pay, inadequate autonomy, and little support (Ingersoll, 2001; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Others note the role of teachers' personal motivations (Ryan &d Deci, 2000).

Addressing teacher satisfaction will **require communities to deeply understand their context and the individual educators** working within it.

In reality, there is no *single* answer to this question. Instead, the answer may be different for each school community and each individual educator within it. This is because, like many workplaces, the school workplace is a unique environment that serves multiple functions—it is a formal organization, an employer, and a social and psychological setting. It is where teachers develop their practice and a sense of professional efficacy, as well as a learning community (McLaughlin, 1992). Individual teachers bring their personal motivations, desires, needs, and backgrounds into these environments. Both of these components—the school context and the individual educators within it—are connected to teacher satisfaction (McLaughlin, 1992; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

How can we begin to improve teacher satisfaction?

As a result, addressing teacher satisfaction will require communities to deeply understand their context and the individual educators working within it. In order to help communities build this understanding, we consolidated research on teacher job satisfaction and organizational social theory to describe what teachers value most from the profession and, in turn, what can *drive* satisfaction. This was inspired by the concept of Employee Value Propositions (EVP) but was customized with concepts and language related to education, schools, and teaching.

Through this work we identified four key drivers of teacher satisfaction:

Driver 1: Role and Fit
This driver defines the ways that a teacher's role, responsibilities, and a personal sense of belonging contribute to teacher satisfaction.

Driver 2: Working Conditions
This driver defines the ways that a school's structure and systems support teachers and contribute to teacher satisfaction.

Driver 3: Career Development
This driver defines the types of opportunities and resources around career progression that contribute to teacher satisfaction.

Driver 4: Compensation, Rewards, and Recognition
This driver defines how increased salary, fair compensation, and positive recognition contribute to teacher satisfaction.

Within each of these primary drivers are secondary drivers that more specifically define what schools must offer teachers for them to thrive and remain in the profession. The primary and secondary drivers are laid out in the visual below and are discussed more deeply in the pages that follow.

Drivers of Teacher Satisfaction

Over time, it will be essential to operationalize each of these four drivers in order to transform the profession into one that is sustainable and attractive to all teachers. To get started, we propose reviewing the research on each driver and reflecting on the extent to which they appear in your school community.

ROLE & FIT

The school mission is compelling and clear.

Teachers' roles and responsibilities align to their interests, areas of expertise, and skill sets.

Teachers' personal sense of purpose and values are aligned with a schools' overall design and daily practices.

Staff feel a sense of belonging, like they "fit," into authentic parts of the school community.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Teachers have appropriate autonomy over school-based academic and culture practices as well as share decision-making power over design decisions.

Teachers experience a work/life balance that prioritizes their wellness and provides radical flexibility.

Schools have an appropriate amount of space, adequate and working facilities, and necessary resources for teachers to do their job well.

Teacher culture is characterized by shared respect and trust, and plenty of opportunities for collaboration.

COMPENSATION, REWARDS, & RECOGNITION

Salary, benefits, and bonuses or stipends are competitive and fair.

Rewards offer appropriate compensation and recognition and make people feel valued.

Excellence and growth are equally celebrated.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Trainings and professional development directly support daily work and personal growth.

Professional pathways offer opportunities to increase responsibility and autonomy.

Adult feedback and evaluation systems are equitable and clear.

Teachers are supported in making and achieving their goals.

Adapted from related employee value proposition frameworks from Gartner (2022), TNTP (2022), ERS (2021), and Ed Ops (accessed 2022)

DRIVER 1
Role & Fit

Image courtesy of Van Ness Elementary School.

Educators often choose the profession because they believe schools are a place where "moral work" happens (Osguthorpe & Sanger, 2013). A shared sense of purpose and alignment with the culture and practices of a school connects an educator to their environment, as well as the profession at large, and promotes satisfaction. Organizational-level characteristics like role assignment, alignment between staff sense of purpose and school missions, and key practices and designs all contribute to a teacher's level of fulfillment with their job.

Role and Fit is best fostered when:

The school mission is compelling and clear.

A mission articulates an organization's reason for existing and a vision sets long-term goals. Organizational missions connect people to a shared sense of purpose through common language and clarity (Weiss & Piderit, 1999). This connection is often one of the main reasons employees stay at their jobs (Glassdoor Inc., 2019). Schools and school systems can leverage missions to better communicate their values to their staff, increase the opportunity for alignment to a shared purpose, showcase unique goals, and attract like-minded talent (SHRM, 2016; Stemler et al., 2011).

Teachers' roles and responsibilities align to their interests, areas of expertise, and skill sets.

Employees are more likely to remain in the profession when they believe they are skilled at their job—teachers are no exception. Teaching assignments matter greatly to teachers (Gunter, 2019), and should match teachers' fields of expertise and interests (Johnson, 2006). Leaders can support this by ensuring alignment between hiring and assignment practices. Additionally, school practices and leadership should ensure equal treatment of all teachers and not show favorability in roles and responsibilities (Konu et al., 2010).

Teachers' personal sense of purpose and values are aligned with a school's overall design and daily practices.

When employees believe that missions and visions are properly carried out by organizations, the employees show higher rates of commitment to the work and build trust and loyalty to the organization (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Teachers and staff should see that what a school has set out to achieve aligns with what actually happens day to day. This increases trust and buy-in and lowers the potential for turnover due to misalignment. Teachers also show increased satisfaction with their school communities when their sense of purpose is well aligned to the school design (Ellis, et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2020).

Staff feel a sense of belonging, like they "fit" into authentic parts of the school community.

Employees consider the meaningfulness of their jobs to be the biggest contributor to job satisfaction (SHRM, 2016). Teachers must feel that a school's mission is well aligned with their personal values (Ellis, et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2020). Workplaces that do not meet employees' needs or align with their expectations can cause staff to feel a "misfit" with their working environments (Edwards & Shipp, 2007)—this "misfit" can lead teachers to leave the profession or move to other schools that they find a better "fit."

Questions for reflection: Role and fit

The questions below can help school and district leaders consider how they are leveraging the Role and Fit driver to attract and retain talent:

1. To what extent does our school or school system promote this driver?
2. In what ways is our mission compelling, unique, and powerful?
3. How does our mission live out daily, weekly, monthly, in our learning environment?
4. To what extent is everyone in the community brought into a collective sense of purpose? Is our mission and purpose inspiring the work of our teachers and students?
5. What systems do we have in place to evaluate our mission and gather community input around our collective goals?
6. How might we support every staff member in feeling a sense of mutual trust and a sense of being respected, honored, and celebrated?
7. To what extent are our teachers satisfied with their roles and responsibilities? How do we know?
8. To what extent do our teachers feel connected to one another, as well as to the overall school community? How do we know?

DRIVER 2
Working Conditions

Image courtesy of Ednovate.

A school's working conditions and resources combined with individuals' sense of self-efficacy, proper staffing assignments, and sense of autonomy all influence levels of job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Olsen & Huang, 2019; Toropova et al., 2019). Overall, in order to remain in the profession, teachers must feel like they can do their job well, have access to adequate resources, and have an appropriate level of control over their experiences (Collie et al., 2012; Johnson, 2006; Warner-Griffin et al., 2018).

Working Conditions are enhanced when:

Teachers have appropriate autonomy over school-based academic and culture practices as well as share decision-making power over design decisions.

Teacher autonomy refers to the level of control teachers have over classroom and school-based decisions. Autonomy is essential to one's personal motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For teachers, autonomy increases when they are treated like capable professionals (Ingersoll, 2015). When teachers are micromanaged or told they must follow scripted procedures without providing input, they feel a loss of autonomy and more often consider leaving their jobs (NFER, 2020). And while structured support is essential for early-career teachers, more experienced teachers feel little control over their daily work such as in curricular choices, assessment or evaluation plans, and their professional development goals (NFER, 2020). Teachers are more satisfied when they have appropriate control over content and instructional strategies that are matched to their level of experience, as well as ways to evaluate student progress and methods for discipline and other school culture practices (Ingersoll & May, 2012; Warner-Griffin, 2018).

Teachers experience a work/life balance that prioritizes their wellness and provides radical flexibility.

Unsurprisingly, teachers who report having a work-life balance and support tend to avoid burnout and emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). A positive work-life balance often means that an employee has the time, the energy, and their employer's support to attend to their duties or interests outside of work (Kelliher et al., 2018). As organizations and businesses aim to increase productivity while more actively supporting and motivating their employees, work-life balance is an essential component of making a job attractive and increasing satisfaction (Gragano et al., 2020). In school settings, work-life balance is connected to manageable workloads with responsibilities that can be accomplished during the work day as well as working hours that allow teachers to fulfill other responsibilities or interests (Sorensen and McKim, 2014). More dissatisfied teachers report feeling that their teaching load is too heavy, that their classes are too large, and that their schedule does not provide enough prep time (Ingersoll & Perda, 2009).

Schools have an appropriate amount of space, adequate and working facilities, and necessary resources for teachers to do their job well.

School facilities—space, resources—have a profound impact on teacher satisfaction (Kamarulzaman et al., 2011; Shell, 2015), student outcomes (Bailey, 2009), and health for students and teachers (EPA, 2000; Mendell and Heath, 2005; Okcu et al., 2011; Tanner, 2000). Teachers expect their working facilities to be safe and provide a healthy environment for learning and working. Concerns like too much noise, poor air quality and lighting, unregulated temperatures, and little classroom sizes or inflexible spaces can all directly impact teachers'

ability to do their job well, lowering satisfaction ([Buckley et al., 2004](); [Haverinen-Shaughnessy et al., 2010]()).

> **Teacher culture is characterized by shared respect and trust, and plenty of opportunities for collaboration.**

Teachers who feel supported and affirmed by their colleagues and who have opportunities to collaborate tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy and choose to stay in the profession longer ([Aldridge & Fraser, 2016](); [Collie et al., 2012](); [Johnson & Birkeland, 2003]()). School leaders are also influential in teachers' job satisfaction and can have a long-lasting effect on their organizational commitment. In fact, leaders who are aware of their concerns and focus on improving staff morale and sustaining trust retain staff at higher rates ([Brown & Wynn, 2009](); [Eyal & Roth, 2011](); [Stewart-Banks et al., 2015]()).

Questions for reflection: Working conditions

The questions below can help school and district leaders consider how they are leveraging the Working Conditions driver to attract and retain talent:

1. To what extent does our school or school system promote this driver?
2. How valued do school staff—teachers, APs, deans, and/or instructional coaches— feel at our school? How do we know?
3. To what extent do teachers feel that they have a voice and opportunities to provide feedback or share in decision-making? How do other non-instructional staff members feel about their sense of ownership over school-based decisions?
4. What systems and routines are in place to support communication and an appropriate work-life balance?
5. How does staff's day-to-day work support their interests and needs?

DRIVER 3
Career Development

Image courtesy of Brooklyn STEAM.

Career development that expands reach, supports student learning, and targets professional skills directly impacts teachers' satisfaction with their job. Teachers expect to experience rigorous and purposeful learning opportunities that target skills directly related to their work, as well as others like leadership development, if they are to stay in the profession (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011).

Teachers often participate in a range of activities to support these, from professional development sessions, mentorship programs, feedback and observation systems to clear pathways for advancement within and across school leadership positions. Each of these uniquely impacts teachers' satisfaction.

Career Development is fostered when:

Training and professional development directly support daily work and personal growth.

Teachers, especially those who are new, benefit from mentorship from veteran teachers, sustained support from leadership, and successful induction programs (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson et al., 2003; Liu, 2005). Teachers who participate in well-designed professional development programs that are relevant to their needs and curriculum improve student outcomes and show increased satisfaction and lower turnover (Nir & Bogler, 2007; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Yoon et al., 2007).

Professional growth opportunities with pathways toward leadership or that increase impact and reach are available.

Teachers want more career growth opportunities (Lindsay et al., 2021). School leaders must provide ways for teachers to advance their skills and reach more students, as well as offer clear growth opportunities to lower turnover and improve satisfaction (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Margolis, 2008).

Adult feedback and evaluation systems are equitable and clear.

Teachers tend to be more satisfied when feedback leads to positive improvements in their practice (Ford et al., 2018). Teachers often perceive that feedback and observation systems are fair and value feedback from mentors and peers (Ford et al., 2018; Tuma et al., 2018). To achieve this, teachers must deeply understand the purpose of evaluation systems and have appropriate access to resources for improvement—time, instructional support, and material resources (Tuma et al., 2018).

Teachers are supported in making and achieving their goals.

Teachers who set goals and work toward them are more likely to seek help in the face of challenges (Butler, 2007), to create classroom environments that encourage task mastery and completion by their students (Shim, Cho, & Cassady, 2013), and to promote positive perceptions of abilities in their students (Butler, 2012). Teachers who set goals are also less likely to burn out (Retelsdorf et al., 2011) and often demonstrate stronger work-based performance and motivation to complete tasks (Locke 1968). And though individual variables such as self-efficacy and ability can impact the effects of goal setting (Lunenburg, 2011), seeing progress and identifying goals still improves self-image. As such, teachers must be supported in their goals—both at the onset of setting them and in how to achieve them—to feel successful in the job.

Questions for reflection: Career development

The questions below can help school and district leaders consider how they are leveraging the Career Development driver to attract and retain talent:

1. To what extent does our school or school system promote what is in this driver?
2. How supported do our teachers feel around their instruction, lesson planning, and daily responsibilities? How do we know?
3. To what extent are our professional development offerings—such as coaching, feedback, evaluations, and other supports—working? How do we know? What are our areas of improvement?
4. Are our career development sessions equitable and transparent? How do we know?
5. How do we communicate growth opportunities, career pathways, and/or other career development related-opportunities to *all* teachers?
6. How effective are professional development sessions? To what extent should they be more tailored to the different needs of staff members?
7. To what extent do we support teachers in developing short- and long-term professional goals?

DRIVER 4

Compensation, Rewards, and Recognition

Image courtesy of Valor Collegiate Academies.

At least a third of teachers who leave the profession do so because they are not adequately compensated (Lindsay et al., 2021). A fair and equitable salary is paramount to recruiting and retaining teachers, as are proper and authentic recognition and rewards for excellence. Higher salary is also an important factor in a teacher's decision to enter the profession or stay in teaching (Lindsay et al., 2021).

Though teachers' perceptions of what an adequate salary is have changed over time, research suggests that teachers still experience higher satisfaction in their jobs when they are paid what they believe is fair based on their changing roles and responsibilities (Albert &Levine 1988; Klassen & Anderson, 2009).

Compensation, Rewards, and Recognition is fostered when:

Salary, benefits, and bonuses or stipends are competitive and fair.

Data from 2016 and 2021 suggests that more than half of teachers are unsatisfied with their salary (IES, 2018; Merrimack College, 2022). Teachers who are satisfied with their compensation are less likely to leave the profession for a higher-paying job (IES, 2018). Though salary is one of a few compounding factors, teachers who are satisfied with their salaries also perceive their school climate and adult culture more positively and report being able to cope with the stress of the job well when compared to teachers who are unsatisfied with their salaries (IES, 2018). School systems should consider the competitiveness of their compensations as compared to nearby districts *and* to other highly attractive professions in their areas.

Rewards offer appropriate compensation and recognition and make people feel valued.

Boosting teacher morale should be a priority that starts with listening to teachers' ideas and needs. Teachers who receive appropriate recognition from their leaders and peers tend to feel higher levels of engagement in their work and more validated in their ideas (Roffey, 2012; TNTP, 2012). It is worth noting that equitable compensation and recognition for additional work also helps teachers accept new responsibilities more easily—especially for those who aspire to develop leadership skills—which improves overall satisfaction (Natale et al., 2016).

Excellence and growth are equally celebrated.

Teachers contribute positively to school environments in countless ways, even in ways not shown in their students' outcomes. Teachers prefer adult school cultures that place an equal value on the *quality* and on the *effort* of their work (Senechal et al., 2016). Schools that rely solely on accountability measures to recognize or reprimand teachers tend to also have lower teacher morale and job satisfaction, which can lead to higher turnover rates (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2018; Von der Embse et al., 2015). Instead, schools can expand the definition of teacher *effectiveness* to include out-of-classroom contributions, growth as defined by the school community and student outcomes, or others that are most relevant to their school environments (Little, 2009).

Questions for reflection: Compensation, rewards, and recognition

The questions below can help school and district leaders consider how they are leveraging the Compensation, Rewards, & Recognition driver to attract and retain talent:

- To what extent does our school or school system promote what is in this driver?
- How competitive are teachers' salaries compared to similar workplaces in our area?
- Are our compensation and salary bands equitable? How do we know?

- Do our teachers believe they are being paid fairly? How do we know?
- How are we communicating salary and benefits to our staff? Are these systems transparent, easily accessible, and equitable?
- What reward and recognition systems do we have in place to honor staff's hard work and dedication?
- To what extent do we leverage funding to equitably and transparently offer bonuses, stipends, and/or additional benefits? And how do we ensure that additional responsibility is commensurate with additional pay?

Innovating on the Role of the Teacher:
Transformational Strategies

This section offers seven strategies for transforming teaching to honor the drivers in the previous section, along with notes on how the design of school would need to shift for each, their connection to student learning and development, links to examples, and ways to "tinker" toward them.

As you read this section consider:
  » Which 2–3 strategies might have the highest leverage in our community? Be sure to consider why these make most sense for your environment and community members.
  » Which set of 1–2 mini-pilots from each of these strategies might have the highest impact—as defined uniquely by and for your context—in your community?
  » What supporting structures will you need to change, add, and/or remove to make these strategies work? Consider the system implications.

Image courtesy of Valor Collegiate Academies

The previous section described four drivers that research suggests influence teacher satisfaction, and, in turn, retention. These drivers can help explain why teachers in your community may be more or less satisfied. However, understanding why is only the first step. Next, a community must act on these drivers. This section highlights seven strategies to help.

Seven Strategies for Transforming the Teacher Role	Role & Fit	Working Conditions	Career Development	Compensation & Recognition
Implement Collaborative Team Teaching	♦	♦		
Leverage Nontraditional Professionals to Supplement Staff		♦		
Extend the Reach of High-Quality Educators			♦	♦
Activate Student Ownership and Self-Direction	♦	♦	♦	
Think Flexibly about Scheduling	♦	♦	♦	
Inspire Teacher Autonomy and Leadership		♦	♦	♦
Support Positive Adult Mindsets and Well-Being	♦	♦		

These strategies are based on the work of organizations and school communities, as well as research on the teacher role. For each strategy, we offer a description of what the strategy involves, the reasons it has the potential to improve teacher satisfaction, its connection to student learning, links to examples, and some suggestions for getting started in smaller ways in order to "*tinker" toward transformation*.

Finally, we also include information on what is needed to support the strategy. This is especially important because these strategies call for communities to rethink the core design of school, including the role of teachers within that design as well as other supporting resources and structures like space, scheduling, budget, and more.

Below is a full list of the types of supporting resources and structures that may need to be considered as a community works to transform the teacher role.

BUDGET & OPERATIONS

How budgets are allocated, as well as operational dimensions such as transportation, nutrition, and meal systems.

SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

How learners and adults move through time—when they arrive and leave, how long they spend engaged in different experiences, and how this varies by individuals.

ADULT ROLES, HIRING & LEARNING

The roles adults play; the knowledge, skill, mindset, and experience profiles those roles demand; and resources that support how adults communicate, interact, and develop.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY & CULTURE

The makeup, rituals, and community practices of the entire learning environment.

SPACE & FACILITIES

The design and organization of the physical space where learning occurs.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT

The content young people learn and how they learn it, as well as how they demonstrate their learning and progress toward new goals.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

How learners and staff interact with families and the broader world outside the immediate learning community.

TECHNOLOGY & TECH INFASTRUCTURE

The hardware, software, and connective infrastructure used to support communication and learning.

General Practices when Tinkering toward Transformation

Keep these practices in mind as you consider implementing any given strategy.

Form teacher-led focus groups and committees. Teachers know best what they need and can help you determine which of the strategies and "ways to tinker" toward them are most compelling and suitable for your local context. Gather a group of teachers and routinely survey and interview them on their experiences, and rely on their expertise when making school design decisions.

Have critical conversations with kids and families. Students and parents alike can provide critical perspectives on school design decisions and needs. Ensure that a representative group is active in conversations around school progress and changes and constantly inform learning from the tinker strategies below.

Start small and within your locus of control. Don't rush. Transformation will take time and require constant learning—practices do not have to be implemented across an entire school, nor immediately and all at once. Instead, find ways to *tinker*—implement an idea for a short time, in just one or two classrooms, or among a small team of teachers.

Learn from the process. When tinkering toward transformation, create a plan to gather data, evaluate progress, identify what works well, and tweak what does not. Ask for feedback from teachers, students, and families. Learn why implementation went the way it did and respond as needed.

Share your learnings often and with everyone. To continue to build trust and community, communicate with your teachers, staff, students, and families. Create a plan to share implementation progress and findings with your community, so that everyone feels and is involved in the transformative process.

Implement Collaborative Team Teaching

Description

Team teaching refers to any configuration of two or more teachers assigned to a consistent group of students. In most collaborative teaching structures, teachers are grouped into teams or pairs with differentiated roles within the learning environment based on certifications, content expertise, and other strengths. For example, within a team of three, one teacher might lead small group instruction, another might push in to support specific students, and another might check in on students' progress. Often, teams of teachers lead instruction for larger groups of students than an individual teacher would. Additional support staff can also rotate through learning spaces. This strategy distributes roles and responsibilities across more adults, which can unburden the responsibilities of core teachers while supporting more students.

Image borrowed from Next Education Workforce.

Role & Fit

This strategy supports teachers working in pairs or teams, and encourages the development of professional, supportive relationships.

Working Conditions

This strategy offers teachers time, space, and resources to co-plan and co-teach, which are essential to their overall satisfaction.

How This Strategy Supports Student Learning

- Schools that leverage collaborative teaching practices often show stronger academic outcomes than schools that are less collaborative (Public Agenda, 2017).
- When teachers collaborate in teams, students may have more opportunity to leverage their autonomy and to self-direct their learning (Public Agenda, 2017).
- Group models can improve teacher and student relationship-building as well as formal and informal peer-to-peer learning, which leads to long-lasting learning (McCarthy et al., 2005; Unzueta et al., 2008).
- Having multiple teachers in a classroom can increase students' exposure and access to more diverse social capital and targeted interventions (Public Agenda, 2017).

Implications for Supporting Structures and Resources

Budget & Operations	Salary adjustments are typically required, based on new teaching roles and responsibilities.
Space & Facilities	Space for students must accommodate large cohorts of students and should be flexible enough to accommodate students doing a variety of learning activities at once.
Scheduling	Adults benefit from dedicated co-planning and co-teaching time embedded into the work day.
Hiring & Training	Requires an investment in professional development around collaborative teaching strategies, as well as collaborative mindsets.

Learning Environments Implementing This Strategy

➔ AVID
➔ Bronx International HS
➔ CART
➔ Design39
➔ Digital Pioneers Academy
➔ Intrinsic Schools
➔ Next Education Workforce
➔ Opportunity Culture
➔ Rocketship Public Schools
➔ Tulsa Public Schools + Coursemojo

Additional Resources

● Understood Models for Co-teaching
● Financially Sustainable Staffing Models
● Leverage ESSR Funds
● The Case for a Corps for Student Success
● Schedule Implications for Adult Teaming Structures
● High-Quality Curricula and Team-Based Professional Learning: A Perfect Partnership for Equity
● Innovative Staffing Models to Sustain Teacher Residencies: Leveraging Additional Staff

A Few Ways to Tinker Toward This Transformative Strategy

Below are some ways to move toward **Collaborative Teaching Practices and Student Cohorts** in small ways. Pilot these ideas before jumping in head first!

Combined classes. For a month or so, try combining two or three classes once a week in a larger, more open space. Classes, lessons, and/or activities should be facilitated by groups or co-teaching pairs. Teachers can use this time to increase self-directed learning opportunities through technology or projects, and rely on support staff to further personalize learning.

Consistent common planning periods. For a few weeks, dedicate 30–45 minutes a day for teachers who teach the same content to plan, collaborate, and work through lessons and learning objectives for the week. Create regular meeting protocols that are consistent, and assign routine pre-work and intellectual preparation materials. Over time, planning sessions must occur on a regular cadence and be valued and protected time.

Grade, content, or interdisciplinary planning teams. Try out planning teams by bringing together 4–6 teachers who teach the same or similar grades, content areas, or cohorts of students once a week for 45 minutes to discuss student performance, intervention supports, students' social-emotional health, and/or advising needs. If this cannot happen once a week, try for twice a month.

Co- and/or team-teaching. Choose one grade level where STEM and Humanities teachers can most readily work together. Pair content-related teachers together to share classroom responsibilities and divide instructional tasks in one classroom. Understood summarizes six common co- and team-teaching arrangements that you can pilot in these classrooms, each with its own set of benefits, challenges, and uses.

Leverage Nontraditional Professionals to Supplement Staff

Description

Leveraging nontraditional professionals means that schools or systems hire non-education professionals to act as teachers, mentors, or additional staff. This strategy might look like hiring more specialized staff, partnering with community-based organizations, or leveraging community members to support instructional and non-instructional work. Most often, schools or systems use their community ties to expand their applicant pool and reach more qualified candidates. In some states, this is a policy-driven strategy where states have adjusted their teacher certification requirements to, for example, rehire retired teachers to act as mentors and co-teachers to newer hires. Other approaches rely on tapping into community-based organizations or local non-profits with industry expertise. Local colleges and universities provide support directly from their graduate pool, or through pre-service teachers. Elementary and middle schools can get support even through high schoolers.

Image borrowed from Next Education Workforce.

Working Conditions

This strategy prioritizes adding highly qualified staff to support instructional and non-instructional duties. This relieves teachers of extra responsibilities—or more evenly distributes them—while also better supporting student learning.

How This Strategy Supports Student Learning

- Additional person power can not only provide greatly needed, effective, direct support to students and teachers, but can also create career development opportunities for young adults and community residents at a time when they are desperately needed (John Hopkins, 2021).
- Community voice in a community-based project has an impact on student cultural understanding and can shape their experiential and ethical learning (Brandy, 2022).
- Studies find that optimized student support and interventions from expert and community-based adults can improve student outcomes *and* support teachers with

workload and classroom management in the classroom ([Moore et al., 2014](#); [Sibley et al., 2017](#)).

Implications for Supporting Structures and Resources

Budget & Operations	Schools or districts must adjust salary and budgets based on new teaching roles and responsibilities.
Family & Community Partnerships	Nearby colleges and community organizations must have interest in forging partnerships with local schools and districts.
School Community & Culture	Schools must purposefully integrate new staff into the school community as well as provide training and support.

Learning Communities that Adopt This Strategy

➔ [Bronx International HS](#)
➔ [CART](#)
➔ [Cristo Rey High School](#)
➔ [Design39](#)
➔ [Next Education Workforce](#)
➔ [Urban Teachers Academy Program](#)

Additional Resources to Explore

- [Using American Rescue Plan Funds and Other Federal Resources to Address Teacher Shortages](#)
- [New Support Roles for Schooling](#)
- [Strengthening School Partnerships to Increase Adult Capacity in Schools](#)
- [Partnering with Higher Education Programs](#)
- [Learning Tools for Community Educators](#)
- [How High-Impact Tutoring Can Strengthen Teacher Pipelines](#)
- [Building a Corps for Student Success](#)

A Few Ways to Tinker Toward This Strategy

Below are some ways to move toward **Leveraging Nontraditional Professionals to Supplement Staff** in small ways. Pilot these ideas before jumping in head first!

Gauge family interest. A few times a year, send a survey to parents to gauge interest in coming to volunteer at school. Offer a routine, schedule, and clarity around types of roles: hall monitor, lunch monitor, study hall support, and before- or after-school safety monitor, to name a few.

Community member volunteering. Try designating one day a month where parents and families can come in and fulfill non-instructional support; move to twice a month or weekly if interest is consistent and parents can commit to routinely participating. Provide training and open lines of communication. Ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for volunteers and that you are following proper guidelines according to your district and state regulations. Where possible, offer stipends or meals in exchange for time.

Locally run elective course. Ask your students about the electives they are most interested in. Then do a quick survey of your community or tap into your knowledge networks to find local organizations that could provide relevant enrichment opportunities. Start by identifying one organization that can commit to offering one elective or enrichment course to a class or cohort of students once a week.

Tutoring by high schoolers. Could high schoolers provide additional tutoring services to meet your students' academic and social-emotional needs? If yes, invest in a long-term partnership with your nearby high school! Try out informal 30-minute before- or after-school sessions once or twice a week. Start small: identify 5 qualified high schoolers and pair them with 1–2 students each to start. Provide relevant training and proper supervision.

Extend the Reach of High-Quality Teachers

Description

Excellent teachers are those with expert-levels of content knowledge, effective instructional practices, and the ability to adapt and respond to students' affective needs. Extending the reach of high-quality teachers refers to restructuring the roles and responsibilities of current staff to better fit the needs of students and the skill sets of educators. Some approaches mobilize a few expert teachers across classrooms, schools, or even across districts. Other approaches introduce teacher-to-teacher mentorship, where veteran teachers share practical and experience-based learning to a larger group of novice teachers. This strategy elevates the impact of your teachers' expertise while also providing commensurate pay and recognition.
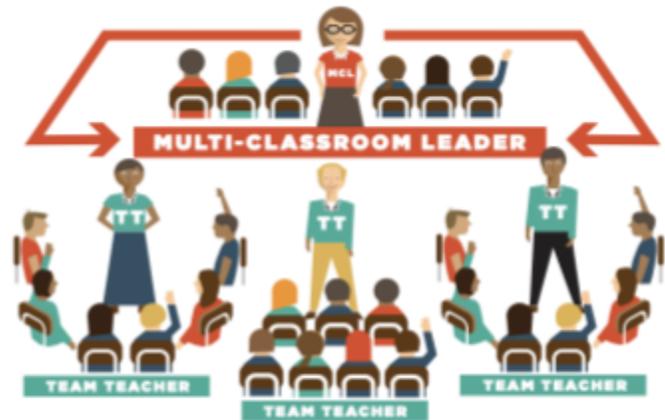
Image borrowed from Opportunity Culture.

Career Development

This strategy provides opportunities for excellent teachers to gain more formal leadership skills while also targeting professional development for other more novice teachers.

Compensation Rewards, & Recognition

This strategy offers fair commensurate pay and recognition for the different responsibilities that teachers can take on when they extend their reach.

How This Strategy Supports Student Learning

- Approaches that extend the reach of exceptional teachers can result in improved student learning and better peer-to-peer mentorship (Hattie, 2003).
- Student performance increases when exceptional teachers lead professional learning communities and can systematically share their best practices with regularity (Barrett & Han, 2013).
- Teachers who have access to role-similar mentors and opportunities to develop professionally alongside peers are more likely to inspire greater student outcomes in the classroom (Billingsley et a l., 2009).

Implications for Supporting Structures and Resources

Budget & Operations	Salary and budget adjustments required based on new teaching roles and responsibilities.
School Community & Culture	Leadership and teacher leaders must be aligned on school missions, vision, and learning priorities.
Scheduling	Schedules must accommodate more professional development time for shared planning, coordination of teacher spread, and mentorship.
Adult Roles, Hiring, & Learning	Adults must be willing and open to collaborate and receive support from one another.

Learning Communities That Adopt This Strategy

➔ Lockhart ISD
➔ National Summer School Initiative
➔ Opportunity Culture
➔ Tulsa Public Schools + Coursemojo

Additional Resources

- Teachers Coaching Paraprofessionals
- Mentor Practice Standards from the New Teacher Center
- Why Mentorship Falls Shorts & How to Fix It
- State Policies for Non-Classroom Based Instructors
- Financially Sustainable Staffing Models

A Few Ways to Tinker Toward This Strategy

Below are some ways to move toward **Extending the Reach of High-Quality Teachers** in small ways. Pilot these ideas before jumping in head first!

Peer-to-peer feedback. Get to know your teachers and identify each of their strengths. Consider whose skills could be most transferable to others and align best with your adult learning and professional development priorities. Assign one expert teacher per priority to conduct informal peer-to-peer observations and provide feedback to the two teachers who would most benefit. Try doing this bi-weekly or once a month for the year.

Teacher-led professional development sessions. Reflect on your professional development sessions from last year and consider which sessions might have been more impactful and purposeful if teachers were more involved in the process of planning and execution. Based on your reflections, choose 1 or 2 sessions a semester that teachers can fully plan and execute. Provide time to plan, guidance, and feedback where necessary.

Team Leads position. Survey your most experienced teachers to learn about their desire for increased responsibilities and leadership skills. If there's a strong desire to increase collaboration and work with peers, open an internal application process that measures ability to lead, communicate with others, and provide thoughtful and purposeful feedback to teammates. Team Leads should receive leadership training as well as timely feedback on their performance, and begin by leading no more than a couple of teachers at one time.

Teacher-to-teacher mentoring program. Pair your incoming new teachers with veteran teachers who opt-in to volunteer their time and participate. Start by dedicating 15 minutes of professional development a week to discussions around workload, questions, sharing of best practices, review of lesson plans, and other professional development supports. Begin by providing discussion prompts for the first semester, and then allow the conversations and relationships to organically take shape.

Activate Student Ownership and Self-Direction

Description

Activating ownership and self-direction refers to equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and learning activities that will inspire them to continuously learn. Self-directed learning opportunities are experiences that allow students to take ownership over many parts of their learning.

These can look like students making decisions about the way they learn as well as students engaging in projects where they design, lead, and monitor their academic experiences while gaining the practical skills that interest them. In older grades, these are often work-based learning programs, career and technical pathways, or independent studies powered by technology. In younger grades, these are often independent flex time during class, working on digital software through blended instruction, or engaging in project-based learning. At all grade levels, teachers act as facilitators or mentors who support students as needed, monitor their academic progress, and encourage transferrable connections across experiences.

Role & Fit

This strategy frees up teachers' time during class, enabling them to better provide critical interventions, gather class data in real-time, check in with students 1:1, and even send quick reports to parents as needed. All of this can improve teachers' sense of efficacy.

Working Conditions

This strategy promotes more engaged student learning by tapping into their interests and motivation. Teachers can more readily plan for bigger themes and broader learning while feeling like their workload is manageable during class time.

Career Development

This strategy propels teachers to gain new skills around instruction and student motivation, as well as design innovative projects or programming that can inspire students to learn.

How This Strategy Supports Student Learning

- Students who have the opportunity to experiment and discover increase their capabilities to communicate, make decisions, problem solve, and make connections expand as well (Adair, 2014).
- People who are able to enact their agency and take ownership over their own learning are equipped to gain mastery over challenging academic content, overcome roadblocks,

redesign their environments to achieve desired goals, and persist while learning ([Martinez & McGrath, 2013](#); [Zimmerman, 1990](#))

- When people feel in control of their behaviors, decisions, and goals, they are more motivated ([Deci & Flaste, 1995](#); [Hattie, 2009](#); Transcend, 2020).
- Digital learning software is often leveraged to personalize learning because it can adapt, predict, and vary learning objectives flexibly and in ways that best fit learners' needs ([Zhang et al., 2020](#)).

Implications for Supporting Structures and Resources

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessments	- Requires rigorous self-directed curriculum or programming with complementary assessments or benchmarks (i.e., projects and work-based systems). - Schools must carefully consider the alignment between self-directed curriculum and district or state learning objectives. - Teacher and community mindsets must shift toward mastery-based or portfolio grading.
Adult Roles, Hiring, & Learning	- Requires professional development around student-centered facilitation and mentoring. - Any support or additional staff must be trained on each relevant tech program, hardware, and software.
Scheduling	Benefits from longer, uninterrupted learning blocks.

Learning Communities That Adopt This Strategy

- ➔ [Bronx International HS](#)
- ➔ [CART](#)
- ➔ [Chicago Public Schools](#)
- ➔ [Cristo Rey High School](#)
- ➔ [Design39](#)
- ➔ [Intrinsic Schools](#)
- ➔ [Kairos Academies](#)

Additional Resources

- [Preparing Teachers for Project-Based Learning](#)
- [Competency-Based Learning in Missouri to Address Teacher Shortage](#)
- [Successfully introducing Self-Assessments into Your Classroom](#)
- [Leveraging ESSR Funds for New Projects](#)
- [Transcend's Blended Learning Primer](#)
- [Staffing Models and Practices for Blended Learning by the Learning Accelerator](#)
- [How New Teaching Roles and Blended Learning Help Students Succeed](#)

Some Ways to Tinker Toward This Strategy

Below are some ways to move toward **Activating Student Ownership and Self-Direction** in small ways. Pilot ideas before jumping in head first!

Independent learning time sessions. Choose two classrooms to open class time for one hour a week, when students can make decisions about the what and how of their learning. Offer a range of choices to start. Students can choose to complete pending class work or projects, start a long-term personal project, get ahead on assignments, work in small groups, or conference with their teachers.

Self-directed learning days. Choose one grade level where teachers can open their classrooms up to an entire day of student self-directed learning. Once a month, students can freely move about their classrooms working flexibly on their classwork, catching up on missed content, taking mastery assessments, engaging in office hours with teachers, or working on group or personal projects related to their interests.

Short-term projects. Choose one content area in one grade to take ownership of their class time and work flow. Start by identifying a curated, project-based learning experience to use. Dedicate at least 20 minutes per class period for time to work on this project.

Blend learning and technology. In elementary and middle school, try spending 20 minutes per class period twice a week where students can work on their online learning platforms.

Externships and internships. In middle and high school, leverage community organizations that offer enrichment and work-based learning opportunities. These can be workplace tours, internships, or information sessions. Students can attend these for credit up to once a week for half a school day.

Think Flexibly About Scheduling

Description

Thinking flexibly about scheduling means thinking about how to craft schedules around learners' needs in ways that also give teachers more flexibility. A school's daily schedule dictates how long students can spend in class and how long teachers have to prepare, plan, and collaborate with one another. Having enough time in the day to plan and get work done is essential for teachers. Some adult-facing examples of flexible schedules include alternating arrival and dismissal duties, a four-day in-person work week when

Image borrowed from The CPS Fund.

students work and study asynchronously on the fifth learning day, and whole-day flex days when students can catch up on work, and teachers on grading, planning, and conferencing.
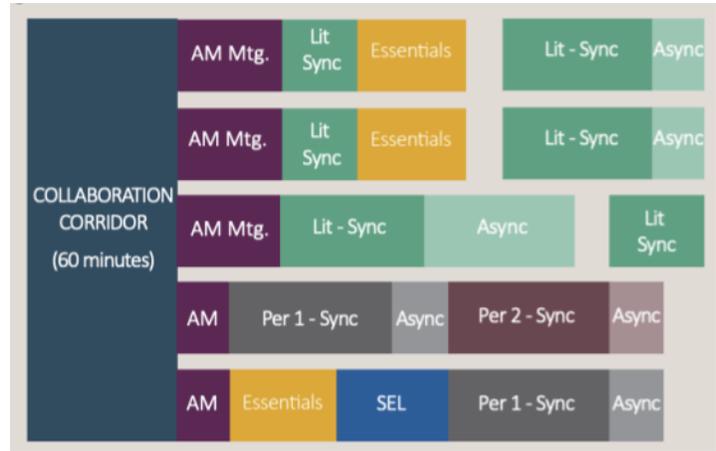
Role & Fit

This strategy shows teachers that schools are responsive to their personal needs. Teachers might be more compelled to work at a school that offers incentives like flexible schedules to their staff.

Working Conditions

This strategy tackles the work-life balance problem that plagues teachers and results in burnout. More consideration and time to be in and out of the building at different, responsive times helps mitigate teacher dissatisfaction.

Career Development

This strategy provides more consideration for personalizable professional learning opportunities that teachers take on demand, in small groups, or in a self-paced manner.

How This Strategy Supports Student Learning

- Students benefit from less fragmented time that encourages deeper engagement in learning activities—these can increase skill application and collaboration (NMSA, 2007).
- Students on a block schedule can make significantly greater gains in self-efficacy due to

increased collaboration and time with peers and more consistent instructors (Biesinger, Crippen, & Muis, 2008).

- Flexible scheduling allows schools to make context-specific decisions to best support their students. They can optimize time, space, staff, and facilities and to add variety to their curriculum offerings and teaching strategies (NMSA, 2007).

Implications for Supporting Structures and Resources

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment	• Students can get the most of longer class periods with mastery-based assessment and curriculum designed around self-directed learning activities.
Schedule & Use of Time	• The schedule must account for shared professional planning time for teachers during working hours. • Schedules should facilitate multi-tied supports, especially when there are multiple teachers assigned to a class.

Learning Communities That Adopt This Strategy

➔ Clear Creek School District RE-1
➔ Chicago Public Schools
➔ Kairos Academies
➔ Lockhart ISD

Additional Resources

- The Power of Innovative Schedules
- Unlocking Time Strategies | Schedule Library
- Different Types of Flexible Schedules
- Innovative Schedules + Team Teaching
- Innovative Approaches to High School Schedule

Some Ways to Tinker Toward This Strategy

Below are some ways to move toward **Thinking Flexibly About Scheduling** in small ways. Pilot ideas before jumping in head first!

Office hours period. Try repurposing open blocks of time for student interest projects and/or additional support. If you have a homeroom block or a study hall where grade-levels are sitting in classrooms, try opening up the learning environment for one day a week to encourage students to work together across classrooms.

Flexible Friday (or any weekday). For one day a month, try freeing up the schedule, so that students and teachers can dictate their day. Students can lead their own learning activities, catch up on work, or get ahead. Teachers can collaborate, conference 1:1 with students, or or offer additional support.

Shift work scheduling. Could your teachers start early or leave later? If schedules allow, teachers who only teach in the morning can leave earlier, while those who teach in the afternoon can arrive later.

STEM and Humanities blocks. Consider if you can combine your STEM courses and your Humanities courses into 90-minute blocks each. Teachers of these subjects become co-teachers and offer two-content expertise!

Block scheduling. Would your students benefit from longer content blocks? Consider extending every class period to 90-minute blocks and offering fewer periods per day with alternating A and B days.

Year-round learning modules. Imagine 8-week learning cycles with 2-week breaks in between, *year round*! During on-cycles, students work to master content; on off-weeks, students spend 2 weeks participating in enrichment activities outside of school while teachers spend one of those weeks reviewing on-cycle data and preparing for the next one.

Inspire Teacher Autonomy and Leadership

Description

Teachers experience a sense of autonomy when they feel they can make decisions about what impacts their day-to-day work. This includes having a sense of control over curricular choices and having a voice in daily school culture and operation decisions. *Inspiring* autonomy and leadership refers to the structures schools can put in place to empower teachers and bring them into the decision-making processes around school design. This often involves providing proper support to every teacher, offering adequate resources, and personalizing professional development as much as possible.
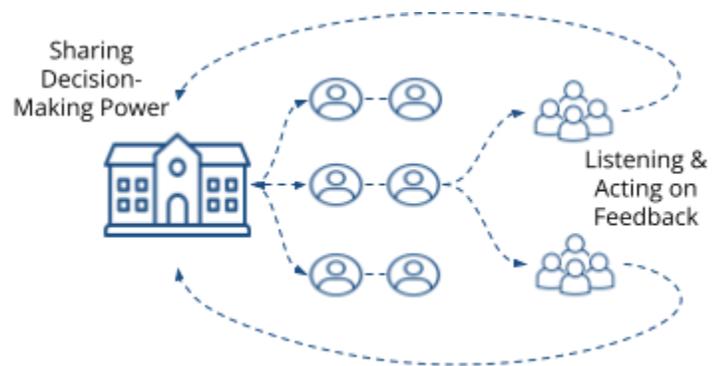
Role & Fit

This strategy promotes systems and routines that let teachers know that they are members of a caring and respectful community that values their feedback and perspectives.

Working Conditions

This strategy promotes teacher autonomy and decision-making, both of which are critical to teacher satisfaction.

Career Development

This strategy helps teachers hone their decision-making skills, thinking about systems-level perspectives and considering the entire community

How This Strategy Supports Student Learning

- Teachers' work engagement not only affects their own professional development, but also influences students' physical and mental growth, as well as academic performance (Ruzek, 2012).
- School culture improves when teachers are engaged in school decisions and collaborate with administrators and each other, which improves the learning environment for students and raises achievement (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2015).
- Teachers who report higher levels of autonomy (i.e., who feel that they can influence

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students' learning environments or have some control over their daily work) also support perceptions of autonomy in their students which is related to an increase in student achievement and positive perceptions of ability ([Marshik et al., 2017](#)).

Implications for Supporting Structures and Resources

Adult Roles, Hiring, & Learning	● Professional development includes choice and opt-in to account for differentiation across teachers' needs and development. Consider virtual professional development days. ● Ensure planning meetings are productive and advance lesson planning and student data analysis, as well as provide dedicated time to do work.
Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment	● If purchasing or creating curricula, ensure lessons have built-in choice points and that provide teachers and students various ways of engaging with content and sharing and evaluating learning.
Schedule & Use of Time	● Build in time, structures, and routines into the school day for teachers to reflect and provide feedback on a range of practices and design choices.

Learning Communities That Adopt This Strategy

➔ [AVID](#)
➔ [Chicago Public Schools](#)
➔ [Design39](#)
➔ [Kairos Academies](#)
➔ [Lockhart ISD](#)
➔ [National Summer School Initiative](#)

Additional Resources

● [Voice and Choice Makes a Difference for Teachers](#)
● [Question-Driven Feedback: How to Ensure Teacher Metacognition](#)
● [Educators for Educators' Teacher Survey Results, 2021](#)

Some Ways to Tinker Toward This Strategy

Below are some ways to move toward **Inspiring Teacher Autonomy and Leadership** in small ways. Pilot ideas before jumping in head first!

Teacher, staff, and student surveys. Once a month, send an optional survey to teachers, staff, and students on learning and school priorities. Twice a semester, send a required survey. Share the results of the required survey as a "state of the school," and make plans for addressing concerns and feedback; ask teachers and students for solutions; seek additional rounds of feedback on potential solutions; and report back changes and solution results. Celebrate wins.

Offer curricular options with teacher choice. Instead of a one-size-fits-all perspective on curricular offerings, consider providing teachers with a range of options from which to choose. Teachers should make the nuanced decisions of what books to analyze, how and when to engage in projects, and more.

Protected prep. Begin by protecting at least two prep periods a week where staff can work independently, but rely on your teachers' perspectives on the amount of prep time they need each day.

Offer opt-in PD options. Consider which PDs are not required for all staff, especially more veteran teachers. Allow certain staff to opt-in to one PD a month. Always provide rationale and ensure that PDs are productive; provide choice where possible, and listen to the needs of your staff.

Audit workloads and distribute leadership. At least once a semester, consider shadowing one of your teachers and taking notes on their daily tasks. Ensure these tasks are equitably distributed and reasonable. If they are not, support your teachers in reprioritizing or removing responsibilities.

Role-fit and goals conversations. Once a semester, have informal conversations with your teachers to chat about their placements and sense of fit and long-term goals. Checking in on their satisfaction and progress over time can ensure better fits in the future around content areas as well as courses and grade levels taught.

Support Positive Adult Mindsets and Well-Being

Description

Positive mindsets and well-being in teachers refers to having a productive orientation to the work, being welcoming of challenges, and feeling capable in one's abilities and skill sets. Supporting these orientations means implementing systems and routines that will enable teachers to prosper in their work and feel safe and comfortable with the daily challenges of the job. To best promote well-being, teachers must feel that they have realistic demands placed on them, feel respected as professionals, and that they can do the work. Support in these areas can look like providing professional development around managing stress, hiring organizations that specialize in teacher well-being, increasing access to affordable therapy and coaching, making resources accessible, and more.
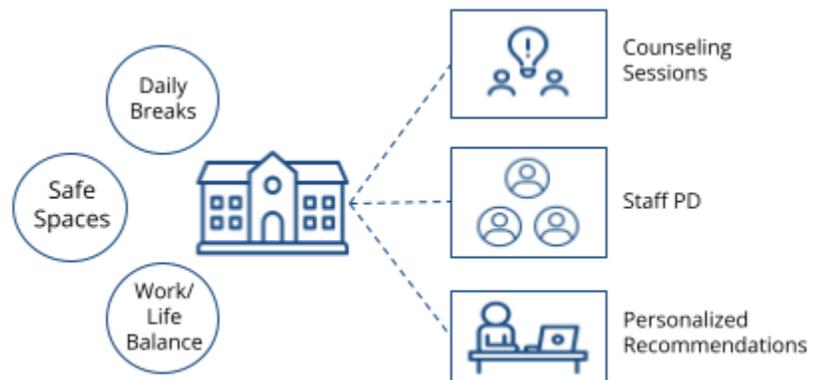
Role & Fit

This strategy helps teachers feel more connected to their school community, like they are respected and valued, and like they are capable of doing their jobs well.

Career Development

This strategy promotes a focus on developing coping and stress-management skills, as well as setting and meeting personal and professional goals.

How This Strategy Supports Student Learning

- When teachers feel supported, students experience more positive teacher-student relationships, which lay the foundation for social and emotional learning (REI-Pacific, 2020).
- Teachers who develop mindfulness and manage stress improve their own well-being and better support the social, emotional and academic development of their students (Greenberg et al., 2016).
- When teachers are highly stressed, children show lower levels of both social adjustment and academic performance (McLean & McDonald Connor, 2015).
- When teachers are out of the classroom for more than ten days a year, students experience significant reductions in achievement (Miller et al., 2007).

Implications for Supporting Structures and Resources

Schedule & Use of Time	• Schedule offers opportunities for relationship-building and advisory during the day as well as protected time for adults to care for their well-being.
School Culture & Community	• School traditions, systems, and rituals foster a culture around health and safety for adults and students alike.
Budget & Operations	• Schools and district budgets set aside funds to promote and offer adult wellness stipends, bonuses, and benefits for affordable access to holistic health care.
Space & Facilities	• School facilities are properly maintained, and building spaces and design promote physical and emotional health.

Learning Communities That Adopt This Strategy

➔ Clear Creek School District RE-1
➔ Digital Pioneers Academy
➔ Rocketship Public Schools

Additional Resources

- Course from Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence: Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty & Stress
- Burn-In Mindset
- Fostering Teacher Wellbeing to Support Student Learning
- How to Grow Teacher Wellbeing in Your Schools
- Overview of Mindful Reflection Process
- Educators for Educators' Teacher Survey Results, 2021

Some Ways to Tinker Toward This Strategy

Below are some ways to move toward **Making Investments in Adult Mental Health and Supports** in small ways. Pilot ideas before jumping in head first!

Staff circle. Once a month during professional development sessions or all-staff meetings, gather your staff to discuss pressing issues, feedback, points of celebration and challenges. Be clear about what follow-up conversations and resolutions might look like following the space.

Optional wellness awareness days. Bring in mental health experts routinely every month to share and train your staff on productive techniques for setting work-life boundaries to achieve balance, breathing exercises, and how to care for oneself in the face of students' needs.

Positive praise. As a leader, prioritize externalizing positivity around accomplishments and areas of growth of your staff. Ask your staff what their preferred way of receiving praise is, and stick to it—send personal emails, do weekly shout-outs during all-staff meetings, verbalize what teachers are doing right in the moment, to name a few.

Staff rewards and incentives. Give your teachers free lunch, snacks, the *good* coffee, free subscriptions, and school spirit swag. All of this really does boost morale! But be careful to not do it in lieu of listening to teachers.

Traditions of recognition. Create a tradition around recognizing the hard work of your staff. This can look like peer-selected teacher of the month, where teachers choose one person to recognize and reward every month and pass it on to another staff member.

Teacher-buddies. Offer a fun activity for teachers to recognize and support one another. At the beginning of the year, pair teachers who want to participate with a celebration buddy: someone who is in charge of supporting, celebrating, and generally brightening up one another.

See Strategies in Action
Examples from the Field

This section spotlights schools, school systems, and other organizations around the country that are making meaningful changes to shift the role of educators through descriptions, graphics, and links to additional resources.

As you read this section consider:

» Based on our priority drivers and selected strategies, which examples offer the most inspiration?
» Where do our contexts and communities differ, and how might we alter their structures to better fit our context and needs?
» How might we try the ideas in the examples in our context?

School, District, and Organization Spotlights

The strategies explained in the previous section can be used in many different configurations in order to support teacher satisfaction as well as student learning and development. This is illustrated by the short overviews of schools, school systems, and organizations on the following pages. Some examples reflect changing schedules to better fit the needs of teachers, students and families. Others highlight investing in staff mental health and elevating teacher voices or leveraging technology to improve students' ability to self-direct their learning.

To best describe these schools and organizations, we've provided both high-level overviews and deep dives into how the examples configure multiple strategies together. We hope that these schools serve as inspiration and support a reimagining around what it means—and takes—to tinker toward a transformation of the teacher role.

Opportunity Culture
Extended Reach Teachers
K–12
Nationwide

NSSI
Mentor Teachers
K–12
Nationwide

AVID
Site Teams
Grades K–12
Nationwide

C.A.R.T.
Industry Experts
High Schools
Fresno, CA

Design39
Team Teaching
Elementary
San Diego, CA

Next Education Workforce
Team Teaching
K–12
Phoenix, AZ

Cristo Rey Jesuit
Work Study
High School
Minneapolis, MN

Intrinsic Schools
Team Teaching
Grades 7 – 12
Chicago, IL

Clear Creek
4-day Week
K–12 District
Idaho Springs, CO

Kairos Academies
Year-Round Calendar
Elementary
St. Louis, MO

Tulsa Public Schools
Stepmojo Partnership
Grades K–12
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Lockhart ISD
Lever Leaders
Grades K–12
Lockhart, TX

U.T.A.P
High School Tutoring
K–12 Districts
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Chicago Public Schools
Hybrid & Remote Scheduling
Elementary Schools
Chicago, IL

BXIHS
Academic Teams
High School
Bronx, NY

Rocketship
Educator Wellness
PK–5
Washington, D.C.

Digital Pioneers
Educator Wellness
Grades 6 – 9
Washington, D.C.

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School, District, and Organization Spotlights by Transformational Strategy

Explore the school examples below to learn more about how each learning environment implements various transformational strategies in their unique contexts.

Collaborative Teaching Practices

➔ AVID
➔ Bronx International HS
➔ C.A.R.T.
➔ Design39
➔ Digital Pioneers Academy
➔ Intrinsic Schools
➔ Next Education Workforce
➔ Opportunity Culture
➔ Rocketship Public Schools
➔ Tulsa Public Schools + Coursemojo

Leverage Nontraditional Staff

➔ Bronx International HS
➔ C.A.R.T.
➔ Cristo Rey High School
➔ Design39
➔ Next Education Workforce
➔ Urban Teachers Academy Program

Extend Reach of High-Quality Teachers

➔ National Summer School Initiative
➔ Lockhart ISD
➔ Opportunity Culture
➔ Tulsa Public Schools + Coursemojo

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

➔ Bronx International HS
➔ C.A.R.T.
➔ Chicago Public Schools
➔ Cristo Rey High School
➔ Design39
➔ Intrinsic Schools
➔ Kairos Academies

Think Flexibly About Scheduling

➔ Clear Creek School District RE-1
➔ Chicago Public Schools
➔ Kairos Academies
➔ Lockhart ISD

Inspire Teacher Autonomy & Voice

➔ AVID
➔ Chicago Public Schools
➔ Design39
➔ Kairos Academies
➔ Lockhart ISD
➔ National Summer School Initiative

Support Mindsets & Well-Being

➔ Clear Creek School District RE-1
➔ Digital Pioneers Academy
➔ Rocketship Public Schools

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AVID

Grades K–12 | District | Nationwide

The AVID Site Team is a systems-based approach to school transformation that fosters collective educator agency—or the ability to take intentional actions based on shared beliefs and trust—and supports AVID's larger Tier 2 evidence based model. In working with more than 8,000 schools in 47 states, AVID has learned that collective educator agency helps educators believe in their ability to act *and* that their action will bring about the desired outcome, making them even more efficient and effective.

Description

A Site Team is a core component to implementing AVID. This site-based leadership team is made up of around four to eight teachers, counselors, administrators, an AVID Site Coordinator, and a District Director. Site Teams are developed intentionally and by the school, ensuring that Teams are representative of their faculty.

Site Teams experience AVID's instructional approach by engaging in strategies and instructional practices during curated professional learning sessions over the summer. Throughout the school year, the Site Team then plans and delivers actionable professional learning to their schools aligned to AVID strategies. AVID's student-centered approach accelerates learning while ensuring educators find joy in teaching as part of a team.
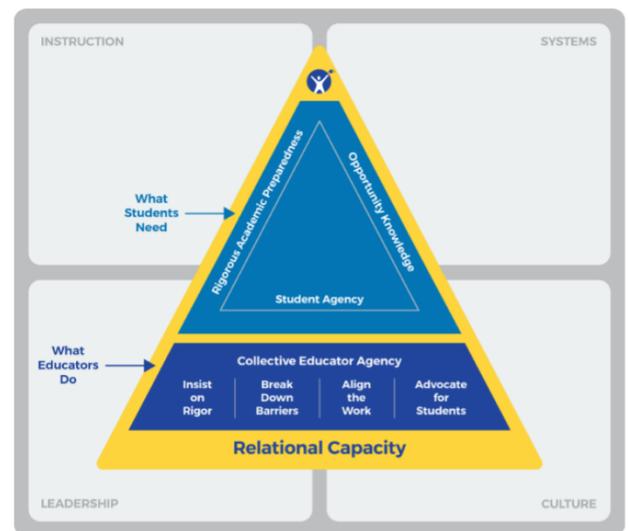
System Specifications

- A minimum of 4-8 teachers, counselors, and school-based leaders make up the Site Teams.
- Site Teams are supported by two leadership roles: a District Director and an AVID Site Coordinators.
- Site Team members attend professional learning and work with site leaders to design their implementation plans for incorporating AVID strategies throughout the school.
- Schedule includes protected time for Site Team staff to collaborate, plan, and receive additional training.

Explore AVID Resources

- Site Teams - Months at a Glance
- Site Team Responsibilities
- AVID Professional Learning
- Study on Impact of AVID PL
- AVID Reduces Teacher Turnover
- AVID Summer Institute

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Inspire Teacher Autonomy & Voice

BRONX INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL (BXIHS)

Grades 9-12 | District | New York, NY

BXIHS's interdisciplinary academic teams leverage specialized teachers to support the learning of large collaborative learning cohorts. BXIHS also partners with community-based organizations or local experts to offer more student-selected electives around dance, visual arts, music, and photography, among others.

Description

Located in the South Bronx, BXIHS serves about 400 students, most of whom are first-generation immigrants and English Language Learners. To best support students and build a strong sense of community, grade bands are merged into "Institutes" of students who take courses together—grades 9 and 10 comprise the Junior Institute, and grades 11 and 12 the Senior Institute. Academic Teams of about five teachers support each cohort.

Junior Institute - Grade 9 and 10 | Senior Institute - Grade 11 and 12

150 - 200 students | 5 Core Teachers | 150 - 200 students | 5 Core Teachers

6 Part-Time Talent and Specials Staff
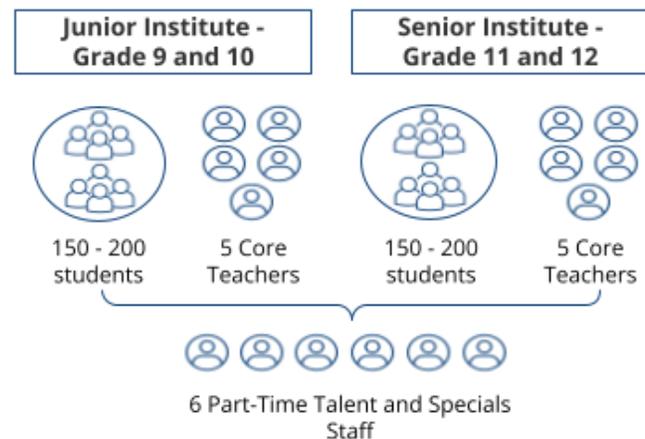
Students are heterogeneously grouped into their classes by language and academic needs. Core courses are taught through interdisciplinary study. Students learn through experiential learning activities and complete a year-long internship program, which are both supported through local partnerships. BXIHS also partners with local artists and creative studios nearby to offer enrichment courses that leverage local talent as part-time, supplemental staff.

System Specifications

- Strong partnerships with local organizations are essential in order to offer local and relevant enrichment courses.
- Teachers must receive support in the form of professional development to implement effective collaboration strategies.
- Dedicated operational staff helps centralize internship and coordination efforts.

Explore BXIHS

- Mission Statement and Profile
- Pedagogical Beliefs
- Bell Schedule

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Leverage Nontraditional Staff

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

# CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY (C.A.R.T.)

Grades 11 & 12 | District | Fresno, CA

Clovis and Fresno Unified School Districts outsource portions of their career and technical education and postsecondary planning to an off-campus learning center. CART students attend courses for part of their school day to learn from experts through project-based learning.

Description

The Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART) is an education partner organization that leverages off-campus work-based learning opportunities. CART staff are mostly district teachers "on loan" to the program and some additional industry experts.

Clovis USD High School

Fresno USD HIgh Schools

60-student cohort

3 Expert Staff per Cohort

Center for Advanced Research and Technology

CART offers an off-campus, high-tech facility with learning laboratories where students get to experience career and professional education from business and agricultural industry leaders and firms. CART offers morning and afternoon sessions where students in grades 11 and 12 attend alternating 3-hour courses called "labs" in their chosen fields of study. CART independently manages expert staff, coordinates transportation for students to and from the center, and upholds district-aligned standards of conduct and academic rigor for every course offering.
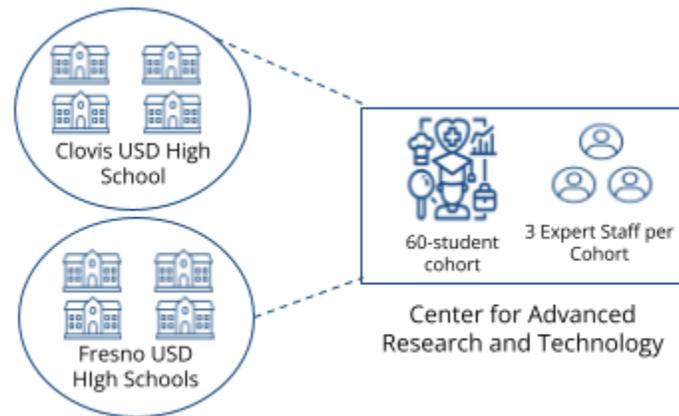
System Specifications

- Requires industry and educational experts to provide leadership, fiscal support, and consultations on instructional design.
- Communication is essential between industry and districts to align on learning objectives and expectations around behavior, attendance, and performance.
- There must be management and accountability around transportation to and from partner facilities to ensure student safety.

Explore the CART

- CART Facilities – Virtual Tour
- CART Course Offerings
- CART Bus Schedule
- Clovis Unified School Districts
- Fresno Unified School Districts

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Leverage Nontraditional Staff

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Elementary Schools | District | Chicago, IL

In an effort to bring people closer together as safely as possible for remote and hybrid learning, Chicago Public Schools leveraged a schedule change that would bring together educators for shared professional development, boost student engagement, and set aside dedicated time to support families and parents.

Description

A Collaboration Corridor provides a dedicated one-hour work block either at the beginning or the end of the day, when teachers can flexibly collaborate on non-instructional activities with or without students. Some of these activities can be wellness sessions akin to morning advisory, Strong Start, or Finish Strong; others include differentiated professional development sessions for specific staff. This hour can also be used for tutoring, providing extra support, or as a study hall for participating students—all of these can be done synchronously or asynchronously.
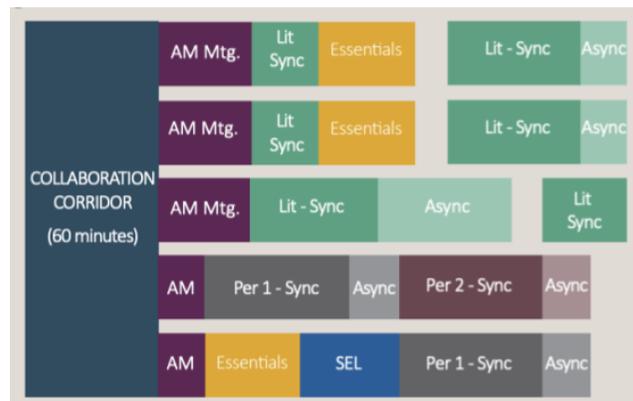
Image borrowed from The CPS Fund.

Lunch-At-Once aligns lunch time for everyone—this means that for 30–45 minutes a day, the school day pauses and everyone can spend time on their own. This practice is intended for remote or hybrid days when there are no space concerns. Lunch-At-Once breaks up the day in a consistent manner, which supports families at home and teachers at school.

System Specifications

- Teachers and school-based staff have input into all schedule changes.
- Lunch-At-Once requires schools to have hybrid or remote days in their schedule.
- Collaboration Corridor requires that academic and social-emotional resources are available before lunch and that teachers can prepare.
- Staffing assignments for these must be fair and equitable.

Explore CPS Resources:

- [Programs Overviews](#)
- [Lunch-At-Once Schedule](#)
- [Collaboration Corridor Schedule](#)
- [Collaboration Corridor: Prep for New Roles & Responsibilities](#)

Strategies Used

Think Flexibly About Scheduling

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

Inspire Teacher Autonomy & Voice

CLEAR CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1

Grades K–12 | District | Idaho Springs, CO

The Colorado Department of Education operated over 100 schools on a 4-day school week during the 2020–2021 school year. Clear Creek School District (CCSD), excited by this innovation, explored how a 4-day week with a 5th day for enrichment—Compass Day—would benefit student learning, strengthen community ties, and support their three core priorities: Best Educators, Empowered Learners, and Visionary District.

Description

COMPASS stands for Choice in Outdoor education, Metro and mountain expeditions, Passion projects, Academic achievement, Student internships/jobs, and Special family time. Every Friday during Compass Day, students choose between academic activities, outdoor experiences, and STEM opportunities that are sponsored and run by expert, local organizations. Teachers spend one Friday every month honing their skills and participating in targeted professional development or planning. The other Fridays are non-teacher work days.
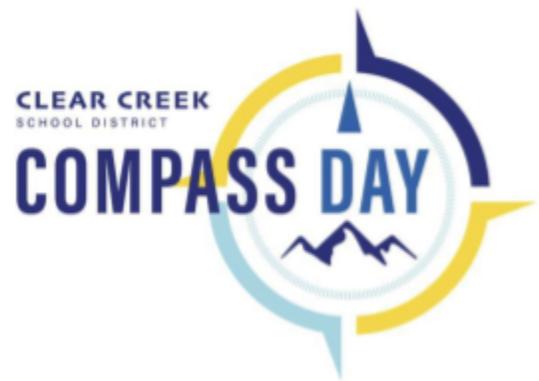
Post-pademic, CCSD found that families and educators highly value a different way to think about time. Compass Day came from a desire to engage educators in deeper, more cohesive professional learning, to use time together more effectively, and to attract and retain educators. In elementary school, students participate in chosen clubs or activities related to their interests from 8:00am–12:00pm, then attend afternoon programming offered by local partners through Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District and Rocky Mountain Kids. In middle school and high school, students choose to participate in all-day activities led by partners: Mountain Youth Network takes students on energizing outdoor activities, and Resilience 1220 provides activities specific to social emotional learning and support.

System Specifications

- Requires strong community partners and organizations to offer enrichment programming.
- Extended school day Monday–Thursday and longer in the summer. School is also in session for two of the four major Monday holidays.
- Requires additional staff to manage and fulfill programming.
- Compass Day is independently funded by grants.
- Requires transparent communications with families as well as scheduled transportation to and from activities, as required.

Explore Clear Creek Resources:

- Student Testimonials Video
- Explore the Schedule
- The Why (video)
- The When (video)
- The What (video)
- What Else? (video)
- Clear Creek School District RE-1 FAQs

Strategies Used

Support Mindsets & Well-Being

Think Flexibly About Scheduling

CRISTO REY JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL

Grades 9 - 12 | Independent Network | Minneapolis, MN

Cristo Rey leverages employer and industry partnerships to ensure that every student holds an off-campus job that they attend five times a month. This schedule can provide school-based teachers with additional time to complete their duties, plan engaging lessons, and collaborate with program staff to align on transferable skills.

Description

All students at Cristo Rey participate in a team work study program, where groups of five students share one job and provide full-day coverage Monday–Friday. The Work Study Program at Cristo Rey funds half of a student's tuition and helps them gain relevant and meaningful career and skill training in IT, legal work, construction, and technology, among others.
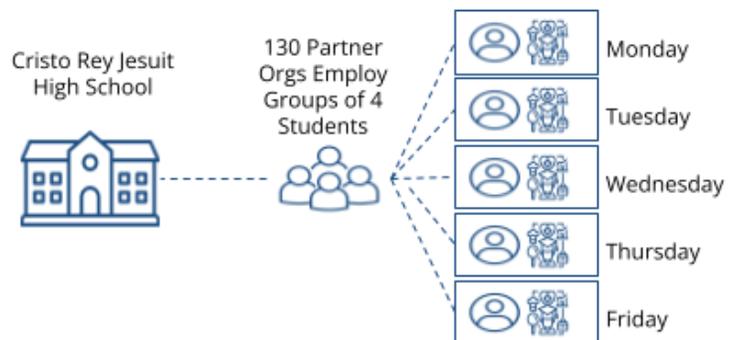
Students staff entry-level positions in order to acquire desirable job experience and gain exposure to a wide variety of careers. Cristo Rey aims to support a diverse pipeline of talent for future employers, especially those from historically under-supported backgrounds—98% of Cristo Rey students are students of color. Dedicated school-based program staff support students with interpersonal and professional skills required on the job. These include lessons on time management, email management, and requesting and operationalizing feedback.

System Specifications

- Communication between program staff, teachers, and employers is essential.
- Employers and program managers require training around mentorship for young people.
- Anyone who also works as Work Study support or aid in schools receives salary stipends.
- Requires students to take courses relating to job skills.

Explore the Cristo Rey HS Resources

- Work Study Program Description
- Work Study Snapshot
- Facilities – Tech Lab
- Student Schedule

Strategies Used

Leverage Nontraditional Staff

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

DESIGN39CAMPUS

Grades TK–8 | Charter | San Diego, CA

Students at Design39Campus learn through experiential activities supported by technology. During learning sessions, students move flexibly through their learning environment, where a team of 5-6 teachers guides learning. This team structure, aided sometimes by high school volunteers, more evenly distributes adult responsibilities across space and across larger cohorts of students.

Description

Everything about Design39Campus is designed around collaboration. Classrooms are open spaces with modular furniture, and students learn through hands-on projects. Teachers, who are called *Learning Experience Designers* (LEDs), guide students through learning. Students self-direct their learning.
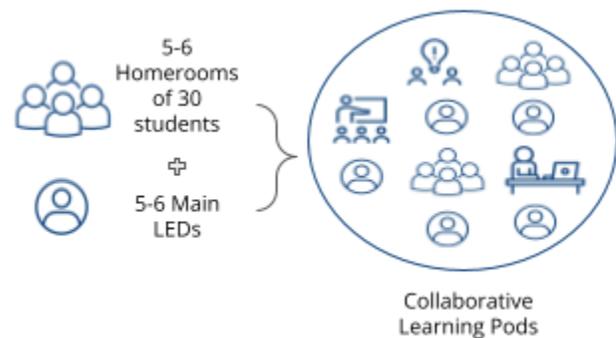
Students move through spaces in large cohorts of similar-aged children, called pods. One cohort is led by one main LED and a team of 5–6 support LEDs. This team collaborates to plan integration of curriculum and learning experiences. Design39Campus also hires part-time high school students from the Poway Unified School District to support students' reading and math skills before and after school.

System Specifications

- LEDs have a one-hour collaborative planning block before school.
- Students are explicitly taught interpersonal and time-management skills to support self-direction and collaboration.
- Students have access to technology, materials, and staff with content expertise.
- Classrooms are large, open spaces that fit a large pod of students working on various types of modalities all at once.

Explore Design39Campus Resources

- Daily Schedule
- Learning Spaces
- Designing Experiences
- BRIDGES High School Volunteer Program

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

Leverage Nontraditional Staff

Inspire Teacher Autonomy & Voice

DIGITAL PIONEERS ACADEMY

Grades 6 – 10 | Charter| Washington, D.C.

Digital Pioneers is a college preparatory middle and high school in D.C. that focuses on computer science skills and prioritizes social-emotional wellness of students and teachers alike. Teachers co-teach their core classes, engage in frequent check-ins with their students, and are deeply supported by a caring and respectful culture.

Description

Digital Pioneers Academy began their 2020–2021 school year with a purpose: to build wellness and well-being techniques into the ethos of the school. In partnership with The Teaching Well, students and staff set personal goals, participated in mindfulness and meditation techniques, and learned to adapt to stressors. Teachers received additional mentorship through virtual coaching sessions.
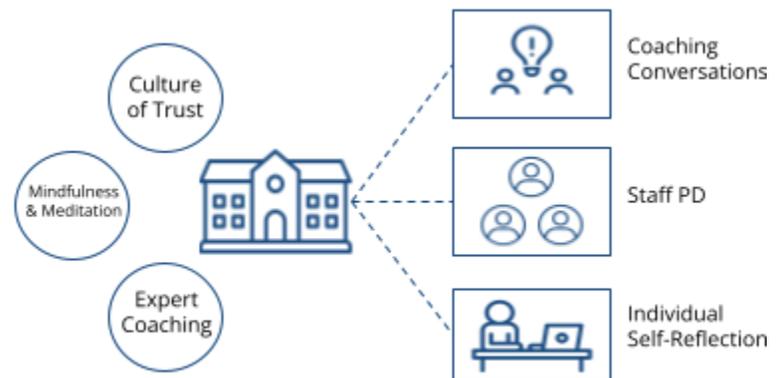
Over the course of the year, a team of "Known, Loved, and Respected" teachers and social workers collaborate on rich lessons around empathy, healthy relationships, and conflict resolutions. In 30-minute advisory periods, each member of the adult team spends time in one partner classroom, which helps build trust and consistency. Daily conversations, authentic check-ins, and real techniques that can be transferred in and out of the classroom better support students while increasing teacher satisfaction, which rose from 80% to 95% by the end of the school year.

System Specifications

- Schedule must allow for daily advisory or wellness sessions.
- Having additional staff to support student wellness—beyond core teachers—is key to developing a trusting community of supportive adults for teachers and students.
- Partnering with a reputable and recognized organization increases trust and investment in the process.

Explore DPA

- Making Mindfulness a Part of the School Day
- A Day in the Life of a DPA Teacher
- DP Academic Model
- Mental Health Resources

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Support Mindsets & Well-Being

INTRINSIC SCHOOLS

Grades 7–12 | Charter | Chicago, IL

Intrinsic's team teaching places one lead teacher and two support teachers with a large cohort of about 60 students. This staffing approach leverages the diverse skill set of multiple adults and specialized skill sets. Because students self-direct most of their learning by making decisions around pace and the ways they learn, teachers have more time to facilitate small groups or targeted interventions.

Description

Intrinsic's learning model prioritizes student autonomy and ownership. Two or three "pod teachers" facilitate the learning of 60+ students in large, flexible learning spaces that can be reorganized to fit lessons' needs.

Students learn through *blended* modalities, but learn primarily through group projects. Students normally spend about 90 minutes a day on a single content area. Teachers implement small-group or whole-group instruction as needed and act as mentors and learning facilitators. Teachers leverage their strengths to differentiate instruction and decide on roles and responsibilities during collaborative planning time.
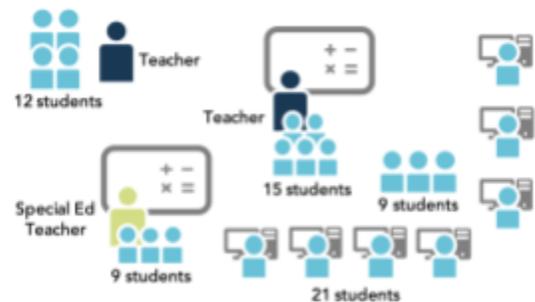
System Specifications

- Adults require space and time to plan collaboratively, assign appropriate tasks and roles, and review student data and progress for small groups and interventions.

- Requires 1:1 devices and digital softwares that support high-quality curriculum.

- Benefits from large, open and flexible learning environments with modular furniture.

Explore Intrinsic Schools

- Intrinsic POD Model
- Team Teaching Video
- School Profile on Personalized Learning
- Space and Facilities Video
- Student-Facing Academic Planning Guide
- Summit Learning at Intrinsic

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

KAIROS ACADEMIES

Grades 5–12 | Charter | St. Louis, MO

Kairos is reinventing how students learn by leveraging choice and self-direction in a nurturing and supportive learning environment. Kairos's model upholds rigorous learning standards rooted in growth and improvement. To live into their philosophy of incremental growth, Kairos teaches students year-round on eight-week "build–measure–learn" cycles.

Description

Kairos Academies offers personalized learning experiences throughout the year: instead of following a 14-week semester and 12 weeks of summer break, Kairos educates students all year round. In eight-week cycles, students work hard for six and recharge for two. During those two off-weeks, families leverage free programming with Kairos's community partners. Faculty use one of the weeks for professional development where they deeply analyze student data and create growth plans for the following cycle.
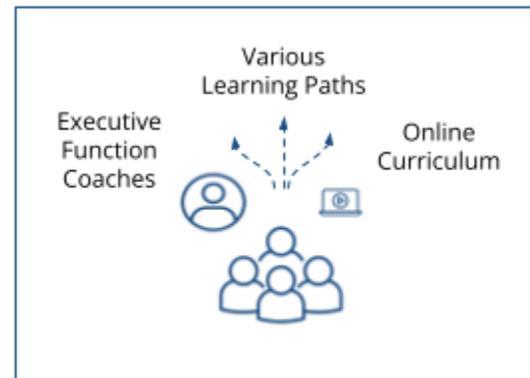
Year-Round, 8-Week Learning Cycles

During each cycle, students begin by setting ambitious learning plans. With the support of an "executive function coach," students make strategic decisions about when, where, how, with whom, and what they will learn in each 6-week "on" period. During the learning cycles, they receive custom supports and engage in project-based learning powered by Summit Learning. When the cycle ends, students reflect on their performance and evaluate their growth against their goals.

System Specifications

- Teachers must be trained in providing executive function skills and habits, and developing positive mindsets.
- Students have access to 1:1 devices and rich content through Summit Learning.
- Year-round calendar must be responsive to family and community programing availability.

Explore Kairos Academy

- Virtual Tour
- How it Works (video)
- Kairos and Summit Learning
- Flex Mod Schedules (samples)

Strategies Used

Activate Ownership & Self-Direction

Think Flexibly About Scheduling

Inspire Teacher Autonomy & Voice

LOCKHART ISD

Grades K–12 | District | Lockhart, TX

Lockhart Independent School District's (LISD) teacher leadership pathway—Lever Leaders—is intentionally designed to distribute leadership across school staff. Lever Leaders are teachers who are compensated to take on leadership roles that align with their career aspirations while modeling teaching that achieves excellent and equitable student outcomes.

Description

Lockhart ISD, in partnership with the Holdsworth Center, has piloted Lever Leaders (LLs) for three years across three elementary schools and one secondary school. Due to increased retention and teacher satisfaction, the LL program will expand this teacher leadership pathway to all nine district schools over the next two years. LISD developed a thorough LL identification and selection process based on specific core competencies. This process is highly collaborative and is rooted in aspiring-LL's self-reflections and professional goals as well as school leadership input and progress monitoring over time.
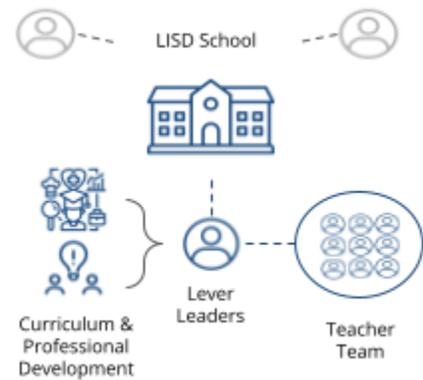
Once selected, LLs are teacher leaders in their schools. LLs spend half of their time developing and adapting curriculum as well as leading planning meetings and professional development for a team of teachers, and the other half as co-teachers in classrooms across their school. They receive a stipend to account for these additional responsibilities and work with their school teams to decide what their schedule looks like. Collaboration between LLs and school leadership is essential, as is intentional training sessions that aim to fully develop LLs into the leaders they aspire to become.

System Specifications

- Budget allocation of $10K for each LL.
- Daily or weekly planning schedule accommodates routine planning time for LL teams.
- Scheduling accommodates LLs' 50/50 schedule and ensures LLs can co-teach with school-based teachers.
- Benefits from school leaders receiving training around distributed leadership models to ensure mindsets support LLs.

Explore LISD Resources

- Lever Leaders Identification and Development Resources presentation
- Planning for Developing Future Leaders presentation

Strategies Suggested

Extend Reach of High-Quality Teachers

Inspire Teacher Autonomy & Voice

Think Flexibly About Scheduling

NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL INITIATIVE

Grades K-12 | Support Provider | Nationwide

This approach extends the reach of mentor teachers by leveraging their lesson planning and execution to more novice teachers. Mentor teachers provide videos of curated lessons to their partner teachers, who can then directly use these as part of their own instruction. Leveraging technology to pre-record lessons expands the impact of your best instructors and exposes partner teachers to expert lesson planning, delivery, and questioning, as well as strong curriculum development.

Description

This virtual or in-person instructional and professional learning approach heightens support for novice teachers and student learning by making excellent teaching readily available to more teachers.

Mentor teachers, who are expert instructors hired for their ability to build engaging and purposeful lessons, lead professional development sessions to 30–40 same-grade partner teachers all around the country. Partner teachers use their mentor teachers' lessons to execute their own, often playing back portions of the lesson to their own students and minimizing the need for planning from scratch. This program is traditionally offered as a summer school curriculum alternative. It has been shown to improve students' achievement and accelerate adult instructional practice.

Mentor Teachers

Partner Teachers & Their Classrooms
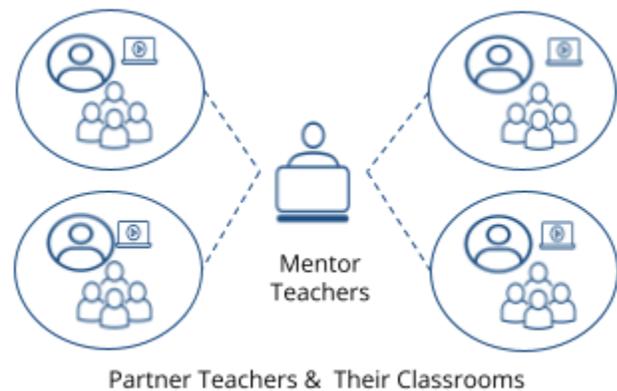
System Specifications

- Mentor teachers have time to record their sessions and partner teachers have time to internalize lessons and turnkey to students.
- Students must have access to devices and Wi-Fi or to in-person learning environments enhanced by technology.
- Partner teachers must carefully consider their students' needs and their learning context when delivering turnkey lessons.

Explore NSSI

- Concept Paper
- Experience ELA
- Experience Math
- Teaching Tools
- Role of Mentor Teachers

Strategies Used

Extend Reach of High-Quality Teachers

NEXT EDUCATION WORKFORCE

Grades K-12 | Support Provider | Phoenix, AZ

The Next Education Workforce team-teaching model groups students into large cohorts and leverages more part-time instructors who specialize in interventions and supports full-time content experts. Many models also adopt project-based learning or exploratory-based learning approaches to increase student autonomy and decrease the need for direct teacher-led instruction.

Description

Arizona State University's school of education developed Next Education Workforce, a learning hub to innovate around teacher roles and responsibilities. Their mission is to expand the teacher pipeline, leverage new learning spaces, and personalize education.

Image borrowed from Next Education Workforce.

Their team teaching model has been adapted in schools across Arizona. In this model type, a group of teachers with distributed expertise facilitate the learning of a large cohort of students, often consisting of 100 or more students. Nontraditional staff are hired as additional instructors—paraprofessionals, Title I interventionists, special education instructors, volunteers, or teachers-in-training, among others—who rotate through cohorts supporting students across the entire school.
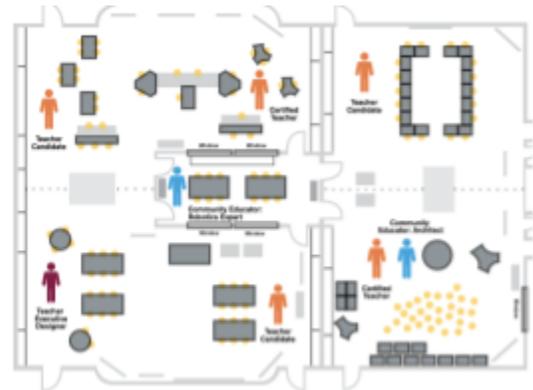
System Specifications

- Supplemental staff are trained and participate in whole-school professional development.
- Students learn through project-based or exploratory projects.
- Teachers have protected planning time with their teams.
- Schedule benefits from learning blocks, as adults and students spend more time learning and less time transitioning.
- Learning environments are often large to encourage groupings and collaboration.

Explore Next Education Workforce

- All 8 School Spotlights
- SPARK Extended Tour
- Classroom Design
- Adult Roles and Responsibilities watch video
- Schedule

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Leverage Nontraditional Staff

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE

Grades K-12 | Support Provider | Nationwide

The multi-classroom leader doubles their experience and reach by providing targeted professional development and instructional coaching to a group of teachers from the school. Together, one MCL doubles their reach through their collaborative teaching with multiple other teachers. Explore how team reach teachers (TRTs) can collaborate with MCLs here.

Description

Public Impact's Opportunity Culture aims to expand the impact of excellent teachers across more classrooms and schools. In this model, one multi-classroom leader (MCL) leads a grade or subject team of team reach teachers (TRTs) in co-planning, coaching, co-teaching, modeling instruction, and data analysis.

Image borrowed from Opportunity Culture.

MCLs continue to teach part of the time. MCLs and their team teachers are held accountable for student achievement and growth and receive pay increases to account for the additional roles and time co-planning. Most classrooms implementing this approach share paraprofessionals or other specialized interventionists and leverage small group instruction as the primary learning modality.

System Specifications

- Schools can reallocate existing fundings to support pay supplements required to sustain MCLs and TRTs.
- Schedules must change to allow MCL and team planning time and individual coaching time during school hours.
- Typically, schools with MCLs use substantial amounts of small-group learning time so professional development is focused on improving just-right interventions and real-time feedback.

Explore Opportunity Culture

- Adult Roles and Responsibilities
- Schedule – Elementary
- Schedule – Secondary
- Baltimore Public School – District Professional Pathways
- Baltimore Public School – District Salaries Supplements

Strategies Used

ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOL

Grades PK–5 | Charter | Washington, D.C.

COVID-19 exacerbated the need for adult wellness and mental health support at Rocketship Public Schools. Working in partnership with MedStar WISE, Rocketship is seeking to improve their staff culture *and* well-being by adding time back into the day for mindfulness, creating a good work-life balance, and providing skills and techniques to manage daily stressors for their staff.

Description

Rocketship teachers strive to unleash the potential of every child, which proved difficult when teachers were burned out and lacked the necessary support to care for their own mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Rocketship made concerted investments in these areas through the support of an expert organization. So while the COVID-19 return to school exacerbated the adult crisis, they had help.
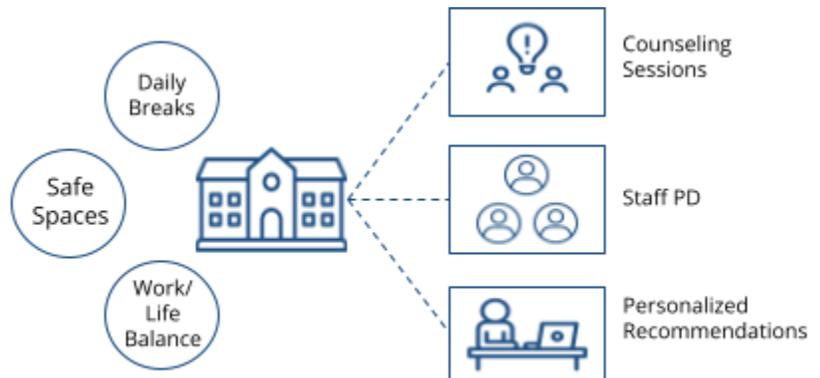
The employee wellness program at Rocketship leverages professional developments, individual counseling sessions, multiple breaks throughout the day, safe spaces to discuss difficult topics, and strategies to set work-life balance and boundaries with colleagues. Their partners at the Wise Center would conduct walkthroughs, lead training and sessions, and make recommendations to best fit Rocketship's staff, mission, and goals for the year.

System Specifications

- Schedule must allow for protected mental breaks for adults and students throughout the day.
- Partnering with a reputable and recognized organization increases trust and investment in the process.

Explore Rocketship Resources

- An Educator's View on Wellness
- Teacher Wellness Curriculum
- MedWise Center for Wellness in Schools

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Support Mindsets & Well-Being

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TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS + COURSEMOJO

Grades PK–12 | District | Tulsa, OK

Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) partnered with Coursemojo to address two main goals: to expand equitable access to a wide variety of high-quality, high-interest courses and to address increasingly difficult-to-fill teacher vacancies. Through a blended and hybrid model, Coursemojo at TPS enables students to choose both elective and required courses from an expansive catalog.

Description

TPS has partnered with Coursemojo for two years, beginning as one of the pilot sites. Over that time, offerings expanded from one to four high schools serving ~500 students. Students choose from a variety of Coursemojo classes, including Cybersecurity, Intro to Law, Animation, ASL, and a variety of dual-credit courses. TPS also uses Coursemojo for persistent shortage area courses like Spanish. Through this partnership, TPS has learned that this is an excellent way to offer more choice, agency, and access to rigorous and interesting classes.

The Tulsa Public Schools Partnership
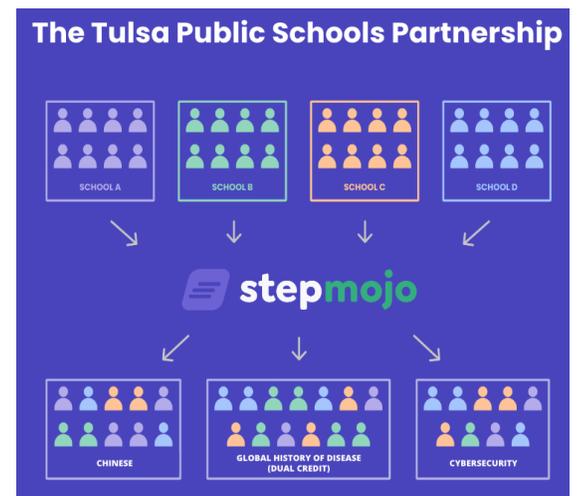
There are two main models of Coursemojo instruction offered at TPS: one-to-one and one-to-many. The one-to-one model consists of a synchronous, in-person course offered to an entire class. In this model, a virtual Coursemojo teacher leads the course and a school-based staff member (who does not need certification or content expertise) supports students as a learning coach. In the one-to-many model, students take different courses in the same physical space with students from other schools who are logged in at the same time from their campuses. Each student has access to a virtual teacher and a school-based staff that monitors and supports students while they engage in the course.

System Specifications

- Coursemojo classes are offered during the school day, scheduled like a regular class.
- A designated space is available for Coursemojo class time.
- Students have access to 1:1 technology and WiFi during class time.
- A school-based staff member monitors the Coursemojo learning space to support learning. School-based staff receive training to become student experts who work alongside online content experts.

Explore TPS Resources

- TPS + Coursemojo Overview
- Coursemojo Overview for Schools
- Learning Coach Roles and Responsibilities

Strategies Used

Collaborative Teaching Practices

Think Flexibly About Scheduling

URBAN TEACHER ACADEMY PROGRAM (UTAP)

Grades K-12 | District | Fort Lauderdale, FL

UTAP is a work-study program that trains interested high schoolers to tutor at local elementary and middle schools. This approach adds adult capacity and tutoring programming to schools, especially during early mornings and after-school hours. High schoolers receive graduation credits, great experiential and work-based learning opportunities, and real-world learning to invest the next generation in teaching.

Description

This 4-year magnet program at Deerfield Beach High School in Florida offers high school students hands-on experience teaching in local middle and elementary schools. The program provides high schoolers with a rigorous curriculum and extensive field experience to prepare them to enter the teaching profession. Acceptance into this program is based on academic performance.
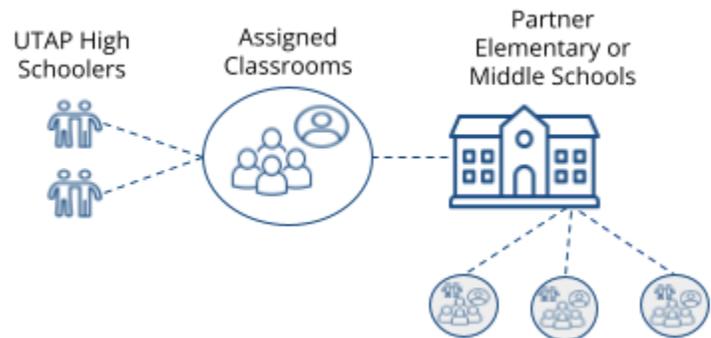
Once accepted, high schoolers teach primary or secondary school students under the leadership of experienced teachers. The program ensures high schoolers are trained on best instructional practices in math and ELA at various grade levels. High schoolers most often run before- and after-school programming, but sometimes visit their partner schools during the school day to provide classroom support.

System Specifications

- A program coordinator must liaise between participating schools and high schoolers.
- Requires the establishment of requisites, application requirements, and credit awards for the high schoolers who want to participate.
- Best when combined with a curated curriculum for high schoolers on peer-to-peer support or focused on tutoring best practices.

Explore UTAP Resources

- Teen Trendsetters Curriculum for ELA Mentorship
- UTAP at Deerfield Beach Prezi
- Application Process

Also read about a similar program from KIPP New Orleans called the Alumni Teaching Force.

Strategies Used

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