

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.



Triage strategies to make it work with fewer adults.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES
<p>Ask parents, community members, or high schoolers to volunteer time to fulfill non-instructional roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 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.
<p>Leverage emergency-credentialing to hire more adults, such as substitutes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » States take legislative action to increase the substitute pools.
<p>Rehire retirees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » New Jersey's plan to rehire retirees. » States take legislative action to rehire retirees.
<p>Leverage temporary, additional funding streams.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 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.
<p>Leverage national service programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » AmeriCorps and City Year can supplement staff.
<p>Restructure the school day or week to account for vacancies and mitigate burnout.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 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.
<p>Leverage blended, hybrid, and/or remote learning modalities where possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 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
<p>Ask teachers what they want and need—and act on what they say.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 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.
<p>Hire counselors and school psychologists to better support students while offsetting the responsibilities placed on teachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 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.
<p>Provide stipends and bonuses for health and wellness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » State policies that are leading the efforts around teacher wellness. » Read Mississippi's School Employee Wellness guide.
<p>Reward and praise teachers for their accomplishments—and recognize when praise is not a substitute for pay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Systems that can help build a school culture of appreciation. » A NYC example of a city-level award for great teaching.
<p>Compensate teachers for providing coverage or taking on additional responsibilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Memphis-Shelby Public Schools' supplemental pay schedules. » States' approaches to different pay incentives.
<p>Do away with non-essential daily responsibilities to free up time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Advice from experts and research on how to de-prioritize or streamline instructional strategies. » Reducing the least productive tasks from teachers' daily schedules.