



Special
Education
Instructional
Leadership
Network



Addressing the Staff Shortage: A Guidebook for Special Education Administrators

Developed by the SEILN Critical Shortage Workgroup

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Introduction

The staff shortage across the field of special education is debilitating and can only be addressed by implementing systems and strategies to attract, prepare and retain staff. This guidebook aims to provide a comprehensive list of practical strategies that Special Education Administrators may use to promote sustainable improvement to address the problem immediately, as well as adaptive strategies important for sustainable improvement. This guidebook is intended to be a living document that will continue to evolve.

For the purposes of this guidebook, practical strategies are defined as strategies that may address the problem immediately, can occur in a shorter time frame, and in a pragmatic, or technical manner. Adaptive strategies, originally coined by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, are defined as involving complex interpersonal issues that require systemic change that usually requires stakeholders to adjust their values, beliefs, habits, ways of working, and/or ways of life.

Consistent with recently published resources, the content of this guidebook is organized into categories that have been determined to be important elements associated with addressing the staff shortage.

I. Attract

- A. Alternative Routes to Certification
- B. Changing Public Perceptions
- C. Funding and Loan Forgiveness
- D. Grow Your Own Programs
- E. Other Attract Strategies

II. Prepare

- A. Micro-Credentialing
- B. Practice-based Opportunities
- C. Residencies
- D. Simulations

III. Retain

- A. Professional Leadership
- B. Induction & Mentorship Opportunities
- C. Professional Learning Opportunities
- D. Empowerment Opportunities
- E. Supportive Workplace Environments

I. Attract

A. Alternative Routes to Certification

Alternative certification routes bypass traditional preservice preparation such as 4-year undergraduate programs at institutions of higher education (Lohmann, White, & Johnson, 2019). Alternative certification routes are typically for individuals who have already obtained a bachelor's degree and are interested in pursuing early intervention, teaching, or serving as a related service provider but do not have an education or school-based background. Often, alternative routes help candidates receive provisional certification and allow them to complete requirements for full certification while working full-time in their placements (Lohmann et al., 2019).

[Alternate Routes Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Work individually with candidates to investigate alternative/accelerated programs for a faster degree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MDE Alternative Route Providers ▪ Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification/Endorsements ▪ Teachers of Tomorrow ▪ MDE List of Expedited Programs ▪ SVSU Accelerated Route Program ▪ Northern Michigan University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online Masters in LD ▪ Contact: Joe Lubig jlubig@nmu.edu
Pay for continuing education for paras and other staff who want to further their education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signing contracts that employee will stay with the organization/or within the ISD region for a agreed upon time (e.g., 3-years)
Incentive for teachers candidates to pursue their degree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scholarships ▪ Paid internships for classroom practice ▪ Stipends
Create a pipeline for paraprofessionals to become certified as Special Education Teachers through a flexible program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waiver similar to Washtenaw program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One page document describing the program ▪ Cherie Vannatter cvannatter@washtenawisd.org
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Dual certification in general education and special education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher prep programs similar to other states (New York)
Develop a teacher apprentice program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher Apprenticeship: What is it and Why Now? ▪ What Roles do Educators Play in Apprenticeship?

I. Attract

B. Changing Public Perceptions

The public perception of educators refers to (a) society's view of the role of educators within a greater societal context, (b) the perceived prestige of the profession within the field and externally, and (c) perceptions of how accessible it is to enter the field (OSEP Summit Attract Panel, 2020). Changing the public's perception to be more positive is likely to increase the attraction and retention of personnel.

[Changing Public Perceptions Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Social media blasts highlighting staff members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Worker Highlight
Social media blasts highlighting various career paths/ monthly recognitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ March: SSW ▪ April: OT, Paraprofessionals, Administrative Assistants, Bus Drivers ▪ May: SLPs, Teachers, Nurses ▪ Sept: Deaf Awareness ▪ Oct: PT ▪ Nov: School Psychologists, National Education Support Professionals Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Work Month ▪ Occupational Therapy Month ▪ Paraprofessional Appreciation Day ▪ School Bus Drivers' Day ▪ Speech Therapy Month ▪ Teacher Appreciation Week ▪ Nurses Appreciation Week ▪ Deaf Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ World Day of the Deaf ▪ World Hearing Day ▪ Physical Therapy Month ▪ School Psychologists Week
"What's your why videos" from staff on the reason they chose to be an educator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why Become a Teacher (YouTube) ▪ Why We Teach (YouTube)-Inspirational ▪ Why do YOU teach? (YouTube)
Sharing parent testimonials or student testimonials - we all remember "our favorite teacher".	
Work to change the perception of "why would you want to be a teacher" through stories and highlighting and elevating the field - "every doctor, lawyer, and engineer had a teacher who taught them to read" - tell us about yours!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Example: https://www.teachersoftomorrow.org/blog/insights/should-i-be-a-teacher
Provide presentations to school boards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spotlights by teachers, paraprofessionals and itinerants to the Board of Education to highlight their work
Provide regular community events to share information.	Examples: Participation in Kid's Day at the Mall, Loons Opening ballgame for inclusion day, River Days (Midland examples but can be tailored to individual community events)
Present at job fairs and other community events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent speakers at Rotary, Kiwanis, Foundation meetings to spread the word on "what ISDs/ ESAs/RESAs DO"
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Educator Careers Navigator position at each ISD to assist those interested in education careers.	

I. Attract

C. Funding and Loan Forgiveness

Funding and loan forgiveness programs reduce the fiscal burden on students. Depending on the program, personnel may qualify for grants while in school or for loan forgiveness or additional funding once they have graduated and are in-service. Student benefits may be greater in high-need locations and subjects.

[Funding and Loan Forgiveness Issue Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Innovative funding options outside of State/Federal funding and loan forgiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groups like P.E.O. and local foundations ▪ Scholarships ▪ Fellowships and Grants
Pay for expenses (full or partial) for any of the following (could be contingent upon hiring commitment): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tuition for Grow Your Own, Alternative Route, etc. ▪ Books ▪ Financial assistance for relocation 	
Provide compensation for expenses associated with accepting a new job and/or maintaining certification/licensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide funding for certification renewals and other special endorsements or licenses. ▪ Provide financial assistance for relocation (i.e., moving costs, etc.) ▪ Provide signing bonuses 	
Provide support to staff in applying for loan forgiveness.	
Provide support staff a higher pay rate for having specialized training or credentials (e.g., registered behavior technician, SerSafe trainer, CPI trainer, etc.).	
Provide a competitive compensation package: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a competitive salary across all positions ▪ Well rounded insurance packages and options 	
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
State or local funding for loan payoff for all education professionals.	Up to 10% pay down per year worked, payable each year.

I. Attract

D. Grow Your Own Programs

Grow your own (GYO) is an approach to developing a pipeline of educator candidates to meet specific workforce needs (Cushing, 2019).

[Grow Your Own Program Issue Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Co-op programs for teacher cadets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flushing High School ▪ Homegrown Teacher Cadets ▪ Teacher Cadet Students
Provide support for existing staff pursuing additional certification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide flexible work schedules for support staff earning a certification ▪ MDE, IHE, and ISDs collaborate to develop and implement innovative certification strategies to increase numbers of certified teachers working with students. 	
Partner with CTE programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partner with CTE programs to attract and train future teachers ▪ Provide dual enrollment opportunities for future teachers ▪ Utilize community daycare/preschool sites as teacher prep sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perkins Collaborative Resource Network ▪ Bernard Brown, Newaygo County RESA bbrown@ncresa.org, 231-924-8826 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NC RESA Future Educators Marketing Brochure ▪ NC RESA Future Educator Class Syllabus ▪ NC RESA Future Educator Overview
Become a practicum site for a local college or university.	
Hire bus staff to work in classrooms in between bus shifts.	
Hire partially credentialed staff to support existing staff while pursuing their full credentials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hiring BA/BS level staff and then paying for their MA via the provision of a fully certified mentor ▪ Assistants to support the work of fully certified staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Michelle Bahr, Midland ESA, mbahr@midlandesa.org, 989-859-6697 ▪ MAASE Summer Institute 2022 Presentation on School Psychology Apprentice Programs ▪ MSUs School Psychology Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Video on Hybrid Program and Paid Work Opportunities ▪ Presentation on MSU's Program ▪ District Guidance on Creating Paid Work Opportunities ▪ Renee Thelen, CCRESA, rthelen1@ccresa.org, 989-224-6831
When posting, include information about available Grow Your Own or apprentice programs.	

I. Attract

E. Other Attract Strategies

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Collaborate with colleges and universities to share information about openings.	Google Doc of University Programs & Contacts for SSWs, Psychs, Counselors
Collaborate with colleges and universities to support the needs of their students and programs (Ex: presentations on hot topics or expectations of the field, panel discussions with those currently working in the field, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP Development for Programs for Teachers/ Special Education Providers ▪ REED Development for School Psychologists
Share postings with boards of related organizations and also ask that it be posted to their social media accounts.	Job posting examples shared with association social media
Join professional associations for other disciplines (if eligible) to build connections with those in the field.	
Ensure that all postings are well written and attractive to future employees.	Flyer highlighting perks of a posted position and the employing district
Create a welcoming and attractive social media presence.	
Provide and advertise secretarial support to reduce paperwork demands.	Ionia County ISD Job Description for Data Assistant
Provide opportunities for high school students to job shadow or observe special education programs.	
Provide stipends/bonuses to staff for recruiting new staff.	
Hire teacher or ancillary staff apprentices to assist credentialed staff.	
Hire back retirees on a part-time or short-term basis.	

II. Prepare

A. Micro-Credentialing

Micro-credentialing, a rapidly expanding practice in the field of education, is a form of digital certification indicating an educator has demonstrated a specific competency in a very targeted area (Kerr-Vanderslice, LaTurner, & Nelson, 2020). Although micro-credentialing has not been widely adopted, systems of micro credentialing offer formalized recognition that an educator or educator candidate has developed particular skills or masteries within a larger skill set (Harvey et al., 2020) and may provide an efficient way to increase knowledge of non certified teachers or enhance additional certification efforts of current teachers.

[Micro-credentialing Issue Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Co-op programs for teacher cadets.	https://practicalfunctionalassessment.com/category/training/ Michelle Bahr, Midland ESA, mbahr@midlandesa.org 989-859-6697
Make START training opportunities available to staff.	https://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter/ Michelle Bahr, Midland ESA, mbahr@midlandesa.org 989-859-6697
Tuition reimbursements and/or additional compensation for someone to seek specialized certification/credentials (RBT, ASL, BCBA, CPR/CPI Trainer, School Social Work course, Intervener, Assistive Tech, etc.)	How to Become a BCBA in Michigan Letter of Agreement for Paraprofessional to be Trained as an Intervener Future Educators Proposal Flint Schools Katie Flynn, Ottawa Area ISD, kflynn@oaisd.org 616-894-0584 Susanne Masters, Bay Arenac ISD, masterss@baisd.net 269-719-5885
Maintain a healthy budget for staff to partake in professional learning to earn certificates.	Kim Maue, West Shore ESD, kmaue@wsesd.org 231-233-8485

II. Prepare

B. Practice-based Opportunities

Practice-based opportunities allow candidates to integrate content and pedagogy acquired through coursework into practice through strategically aligned field experiences (Benedict, Holdheide, Brownell, & Foley, 2016). They should occur throughout personnel preparation, with candidates reflecting on what they learned, coupled with regular feedback from preparation program faculty.

[Practice Based Opportunities Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
<p>Grow your own apprentice opportunity, current staff who are taking classes while working and gaining real life experience.</p>	<p>Kim Maue, West Shore ESD, kmaue@wsesd.org 231-233-8485</p>
<p>Employ/compensate those working towards credentials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intentional reach out to colleges and universities to solicit and secure practicum/ intern placements, student teaching ▪ Teachers who have credentials in one area and are seeking a secondary endorsement 	<p>31n Flexibility Guidance document Board Rationale for Paid Psych Internships</p> <p>Partnership with MSU for ABA Interns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Article on the Partnership ▪ Agreement Between MSU and CCRESA <p>Letter of Agreement for Paraprofessional to be Trained as an Intervener</p> <p>Renee Thelen, Clinton County RESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831</p> <p>School Social Work Intern Contract</p> <p>Rachel A. Kopke, Monroe County ISD rachel.kopke@monroeisd.us 734-342-8510</p> <p>Andrea Thompson, Wexford-Missaukee ISD athompson@wmisd.org 231-876-2288</p>
<p>System wide structure that is organized in a way to provide ongoing professional learning and practice opportunities (onboarding & ongoing PD):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structured book studies ▪ Collaborate across districts/across ISDs ▪ Using Google Classroom to easily store/ disseminate professional learning opportunities 	<p>Book Study ideas:</p> <p>Rachel Fuerer, Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304</p>
<p>Quality onboarding and mentoring programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include Instructional Rounds and video taping ▪ Coaching program for new staff ▪ Flexibility to fine tune professional development based on classroom team needs vs. one size fits all presentations 	<p>Livingston ESA Coaching Language</p> <p>Doug Haseley, Livingston ESA douglashaseley@livingstonesa.org</p> <p>Michelle Bahr, Midland ESA, mbahr@midlandesa.org 989-859-6697</p>

II. Prepare

C. Residencies

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) describes a “teacher residency program” as a school-based teacher preparation program in which a prospective teacher teaches alongside an effective teacher while receiving concurrent instruction in the content area in which the teacher will become certified or licensed (ESSA Sec. 2002). Recently, the definition of residency programs has expanded to include programs for other personnel.

[Residency Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide opportunities for new staff to observe and job shadow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prior to working independently ▪ Utilize subs to provide additional opportunities throughout the year 	Article on Job Shadowing Benefits & Tips
Partnership with CTE Educator Prep program to provide experiences in multiple fields associated with education (GE, SE, Psych, etc.)	Wexford-Missaukee ISD Program
Provide an after school mentor/mentee program for student teachers/interns, consider compensation for participants.	Future Educators Proposal Flint Schools
MDE, IHE, and ISDs collaborate to develop and implement innovative certification strategies to increase numbers of certified teachers working with students.	Waiver similar to Washtenaw program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One page document describing the program ▪ Cherie Vannatter, cvannatter@washtenawisd.org
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
ISD-led Teacher Residency Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are Teacher Residency Programs? ▪ Teacher Education Reinvented ▪ Recruiting New Teachers with Residency Programs

D. Simulations

Simulation allows candidates to have repeated trials in high-stakes situations without being placed in an actual setting. This gives them an opportunity to make mistakes that they can learn from without risking the loss of valuable resources such as money, time, and people (Dieker, Rodriguez, Lignugaris/Kraft, Hynes, & Hughes, 2014).

[Simulation Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide videos and other recorded simulations to new staff.	
IEP Facilitation training - includes simulated practice opportunities.	Key2Ed
Structured observation opportunities - watching a video and taking notes on observations, could be used to learn a new skill, to determine fidelity across implementers, as a self reflection	Article on Using Observational Learning in the Workplace

III. Retain

A. Professional Leadership

Promoting professional leadership is a strategy that involves formally or informally recognizing individuals who influence, mobilize, and guide personnel in their school or district and in the field itself (Danielson, 2006; Center on Great Teachers and Leaders [GTL Center], 2019). These leaders often take on duties in addition to their current role to improve instructional practice in schools. Formal professional leadership requires the implementation of structures and programs that recognize, incentivize, compensate, and encourage leadership roles.

[Enhancing Professional Leadership Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Build formal leadership structures within and across staff groups (e.g., grade level leader, department leader, support staff lead).	Abby Cypher, MAASE abbycypher@maase.org 517-618-1342
Develop internal “internships” with staff who are interested in advancing to another position.	Sean Waymaster, Utica Schools sean.waymaster@uticak12.org 586-797-1020
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Create an environment that promotes staff taking on leadership roles.	Hanover- Best Practices in Succession Planning
Develop the culture so that staff are empowered to solve problems, lead special projects, and make decisions.	Sean Waymaster, Utica Schools sean.waymaster@uticak12.org 586-797-1020
Train the trainer model for veteran staff to become trainers (i.e. trauma informed practices, mental health coaches).	

III. Retain

B. Induction & Mentorship Opportunities

Induction is a system of coordinated and aligned supports designed to support new educators with a systematic pathway into the profession (GTL Center, 2018). Mentoring refers to one-on-one support and feedback provided by an experienced veteran professional to novice personnel (GTL Center, 2018; Schmidt, Young, Cassidy, Wang, & Laguarda, 2017).

[Induction and Mentoring Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide well-trained mentors to new and existing staff, be mindful of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing adequate time and space for regular mentor meetings and observations. ▪ Ensuring a good match between the mentor and mentee. ▪ Providing opportunities for mentors and mentees to engage in joint professional learning. 	MDE Mentoring and Induction Standards Teacher Induction & Mentoring Brief CCRESA Mentoring Guide Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831
Provide a stipend for mentors.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD, rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304 CCRESA Contract Language on Mentoring Renee Thelen, CCRESA, rthelen1@ccresa.org 517-290-9198 Michelle Bahr, MCESA, mbahr@midlandesa.org 989-631-5892 ext. 2102 Example: Contractual for MCESA – \$600 first year, \$300 second year, \$150 final year
Provide a stipend for mentees.	
Provide job embedded mentoring and support.	
Enlist retirees to provide mentoring.	Article: How to Leverage the Power of Retirees as Mentors and Coaches Article: 5 Reasons Why Your Retiring Employees Could be the Perfect Mentor Article: The Strategic Advantage of Retirees as Mentors
Provide SCECHs to the mentor and mentee.	MDE FAQ on this topic
Host a “Back to School” event for new staff that includes specific induction activities and training.	Walled Lake Consolidated School District Human Resources Dept.

III. Retain

B. Induction & Mentorship Opportunities (cont.)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Allow flexibility in determining the criteria for a mentor.	Example: Some contracts require a mentor to have 5+ years experience in the district, but teachers with 4+ years may make an excellent mentor. Another example would be a contract requiring mentors be in a similar position (ie. CI Teacher mentoring new CI Teacher) but that new teacher may need a general education teacher as a mentor because that is a better fit.
Allow a virtual mentoring option.	Article on Virtual Mentoring
Build professional learning opportunities into mentor meetings.	
Provide communities of practice or professional learning groups for new staff as a component of mentoring.	Example: Intern/New Hire Roundtable Meetings
Provide a welcoming onboarding process that includes a thorough orientation with clear expectations, systems of support and promotional materials.	WMISD Example: All ISD Departments meet with new hires.
Adopt a new teacher – provide gas cards, a few lunches, share supplies from your classroom if you have more than you need – anything to help a starting teacher feel supported by her team.	
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Develop a school culture that encourages and protects mentor-mentee relationships the first year and beyond the first year.	
Develop collaborative relationships with nearby colleges and universities to build more mentoring options.	Article: 4 Ways Your Organization can Collaborate with Colleges and Universities
Create a safe environment where staff are willing to be vulnerable with one another in order to share with and support one another.	

III. Retain

C. Professional Learning Opportunities

Ongoing professional learning is continuous, targeted development aimed at enhancing skills and practice among teachers, interventionists, educational support personnel, and related service providers. To increase the effectiveness of personnel, ongoing professional learning must be deeply embedded in their daily work.

[Ongoing Professional Learning Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide access to professional learning opportunities using a variety of modes (e.g., virtual, in-person, etc.)	Sean Waymaster, Utica Schools sean.waymaster@uticak12.org 586-797-1020
Provide regular professional learning meetings with specific groups that also include a “round table” to discuss the concepts, followed by mentor and mentee meetings to further incorporate the new learning.	
Hold a Q & A session every week with new staff. Use the information obtained from the Q & A to provide focused “lecture bursts,” followed by feedback (e.g., “What do you think?”) surveys to encourage deeper understanding of the concepts taught.	
Provide regular, predictable professional learning opportunities for all staff, including program assistants and other support personnel.	
Ensure professional learning is of high quality, relevant, and related to long term goals and program vision.	
Ensure professional learning is accessible, and as much as possible, does not interrupt instruction or compete with other important activities.	
Provide opportunities for reflection and planning to incorporate lessons learned into practice.	Article: Learning Through Reflection
Provide pre-recorded professional learning that is available 24/7, anywhere, any time.	Article: Pros and Cons of Pre Recorded Training
Apply to be a continuing education provider for non-SCECH earning disciplines (SSW, PT, OT, etc.)	MDE Resources
Provide a certificate and stipend for completing professional learning.	
Enlist retirees to provide professional learning.	Article: How to Leverage the Power of Retirees as Mentors and Coaches
Partner with a university to provide college credits for professional learning.	

III. Retain

C. Professional Learning Opportunities (cont.)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Create professional learning communities of practice specific to staff role or area of interest.	MITTIN PLC- MITTIN.ORG Kristine Gullen, KristineGullen@maase.org State-wide PLC for teachers of transition aged youth relative to MITTIN online lessons. Statewide PLC for School Based BCBA's Renee Thelen, CCRESA, rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831 Example: BCBA PLC
Implement “choose your own PD” to ensure the content is related to staff needs.	Walled Lake Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual staff professional learning offers break-out sessions to self-select relevant offerings. Article: How to Transform and Personalize PD Within Your Own District
Provide interactive or hands-on professional learning (vs. lecture-based instruction).	Article: How Hands on PD Helps Educators Learn to Teach Project Based Learning Article: Professional Development for Teachers Article: Effective Teacher Professional Development
Establish a well represented committee to determine professional learning needs. Utilize staff voice.	
Provide structured follow up and follow through on professional learning.	
Provide opportunities to learn “best practices” on a regular and revolving basis (vs. one-time opportunity).	Kim Maue, West Shore ESD, kmaue@wsesd.org 231-233-8485 Examples: Cognitive Coaching and Adaptive Schools
Provide micro- or mini- professional learning opportunities on a regular basis.	
Ensure that administration is well trained and seeking new learning, especially in areas that will benefit staff (e.g., adaptive leadership, organizational behavior management, etc.).	Chief Motivating Officers: Performance Management Basics Online Program Book: Deliberate Coaching: A Toolbox for Accelerating Teacher Performance Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831

III. Retain

C. Professional Learning Opportunities (cont.)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide small group professional learning tailored to the needs of subgroups, versus the same learning for all staff.	
Encourage all staff to pursue areas of professional interest and support that development of unique expertise through access to professional learning.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304
Have staff share what they have learned from professional learning through small groups or larger venues based on personal readiness.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Promote a culture of inquisition and curiosity about the work.	
Incorporate multiple opportunities for staff to digest, reflect and incorporate new learning.	

III. Retain

D. Empowerment Opportunities

Professional empowerment occurs when personnel perceive that their input and contributions positively impact organizational goals and outcomes and that they have the freedom to exercise agency over their own development by collaborating with colleagues and employing ownership over their individual professional growth (Harper, 2017; Imants & Van der Wal, 2019; OSEP Summit Retain Panel, 2020).

[Professional Empowerment Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide regular and frequent surveys to gather staff input.	Kim Maue, West Shore ESD kmaue@wsesd.org 231-233-8485
Ensure staff have a voice in selecting and implementing new initiatives (e.g., new curriculum, new procedures, etc.)	
Implement an organization health committee that analyzes staff perception data and plans improvements.	Kim Maue, West Shore ESD kmaue@wsesd.org 231-233-8485
Provide professional learning communities for each discipline (e.g., teaching, school social work, school psychology, etc.).	
Provide opportunities for staff to connect with professionals outside of the district (e.g., statewide PLCs, national conferences, etc.).	
Solicit staff feedback in any area of the organization where input could be considered and truly implemented.	Example: 1:1 meetings with all staff in a department Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831
Ensure staff have a voice in goal development and planning. Ask them what they are passionate about, areas they want to grow and how you can support them. Regularly check in on their progress to be sure they have what they need to be successful.	Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831
As much as possible, honor staff preference when designing assignments	Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831 Abby Cypher, MAASE abbycypher@maase.org 517-618-1342

III. Retain

D. Empowerment Opportunities (cont.)

Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Create a culture that allows for frequent and meaningful methods for staff members to voice concerns and share ideas for improvement.	Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831
Create a structure that promotes and recognizes leaders among staff members.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304
Partner with outside agencies to fund initiatives developed by staff members, one example is an outside agency providing free yoga one day a week after school for educators (a staff request).	
Create a culture of open dialogue with staff with regard to their short- and long-term professional goals, including action planning to support their achievement.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304 Kathleen Barker, Oakland Schools (retired) barkerkat630@gmail.com

III. Retain

E. Supportive Workplace Environments

Educators are more likely to continue in the field when they experience positive working conditions (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). A supportive work environment is characterized by positive school climate, manageable demands placed on teachers, administrative social supports (e.g., clear role definitions, collaborative workplace culture), and administrative logistical benefits (e.g., planning time, curricular and professional development resources).

[Supportive Workplace Environments Leverage Brief](#)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide flexible work environments (access to multiple locations, work from home, virtual options to reduce travel, etc.).	
Ensure working order of all necessary resources (e.g., copiers, internet, etc.).	
Increase secretarial or administrative support for paperwork demands of professional staff.	Ionia County ISD Job Description for Data Assistant
Provide regular and supportive systems of feedback between the supervisor and each staff member.	
Implement systems to encourage staff-to-staff recognition and appreciation.	
Provide retention bonuses.	
Provide funding to replace personal items that get damaged at work (e.g., glasses get broken while working with a student).	
Provide lunches to staff as a thank you for all the extra work.	
Establish a wellbeing committee who help work on the culture of the organization.	
Purchase logo brand clothing with your district name and logo so general education staff understand your role in their buildings and it also helps, particularly paraprofessionals, with clothing that gets ruined as part of their job.	
Implement a family-first philosophy across the organization.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304
Ensure that staff are encouraged to engage in self-care.	
Provide a wellness program for staff.	Kirsten Myers, Kent ISD kirstenmyers@kentisd.org Walled Lake Schools 248-956-2000

III. Retain

E. Supportive Workplace Environments (cont.)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Provide regular opportunities for staff to recognize one another (e.g., pass the orange frog, Jamboard shout outs, etc.).	Kim Maue, West Shore ESD kmaue@wsesd.org 231-233-8485 Example: Orange Frog- positive psychology
Provide regular opportunities for staff to provide feedback on the level of support and safety they feel at work.	
Provide exit interviews to gather information about improvements that may be needed.	Kim Maue, West Shore ESD kmaue@wsesd.org 231-233-8485
Provide childcare to staff.	
Ensure that administration is accessible and available.	Examples: Share cell phone number with all staff, make sure office is in a high visibility location so that you see staff regularly and they have easy access to you.
Provide authentic and regular feedback to staff and ensure that all Administrators have the skills needed to do the same.	Example: Book study with Administrative Team on Deliberate Coaching: A Toolbox for Accelerating Teacher Performance . Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831
Avoid too many new initiatives and ensure that initiatives focus on key areas that have a big impact on student achievement.	
Ensure that classrooms are well staffed and supported.	Examples: Interns as an added support for high needs students/classrooms (specific to their role, not as subs), create consistent schedule for additional support with existing staff that already support the classrooms, floating staff to cover unfilled vacancies. Renee Thelen, CCRESA rthelen1@ccresa.org 989-224-6831
Improve benefits packages or maintain benefits packages to ensure stability.	
Analyze the responsibilities and focus on the one's that impact students and create a more manageable workload for staff.	

III. Retain

E. Supportive Workplace Environments (cont.)

Practical Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Implement wellness initiatives.	Examples: Provide employees with discounted gym memberships in partnership with a local gym or community center to assist with wellbeing, allow access to facilities for after school wellness activities.
Utilize local funding sources to ensure equity when distributing special compensation that has come from Federal or State sources but may not be available to all groups under the legislated parameters.	Cherie Vannatter, Washtenaw ISD cvannatter@washtenawisd.org 734 994 8100
Provide an anonymous survey to collect questions new employees are too embarrassed to ask.	
Streamline and improve the staff evaluation process, preserving assessing for quality with the need to retain and support staff in improving practice.	
Develop friendly competitions to fund special projects and initiatives.	
Honor staff leadership roles with funding (e.g., stipend) and recognition.	
Pay special education staff more than general ed staff, based on needs.	Detroit Public Schools Community District Example: \$15,000 annual bonus for special education teachers
Acknowledge and pay support staff at a higher rate when the lead teacher is absent.	Article 17.21 Substitute as a Teacher
Provide relief time for staff – take over their classroom for an hour for paperwork or a real lunch hour.	
Adaptive Strategies	Examples & Tangibles
Ensure that the culture and climate of each working environment is safe, predictable, and supportive.	
Make supportive work environments a focus of your district MICIP work.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304
Have an avenue where people are allowed to share good ideas that might be considered by leadership to increase morale.	Rachel Fuerer, EUP ISD rfuerer@eupschools.org 906-440-7304

References & Resources

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