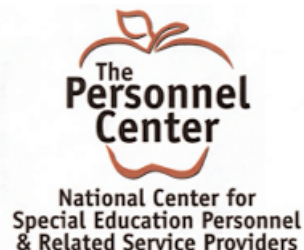
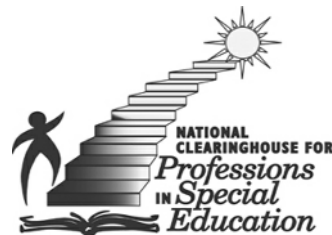




# *Keeping Quality Teachers*

## *The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers*

**A Practical Guidebook for School Leaders Held Accountable for Student Success**



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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES  
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November 2004

Dear Reader:

I am pleased to introduce, Keeping Quality Teachers: The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers. Students depend on quality teachers to enable them to meet high standards. High quality experienced teachers provide the foundation for students' success. Continued staff turnover deprives students of quality instruction and can lead to poor performance. Research indicates that teachers often leave the profession due to the climate, culture and need for administrative support. This document addresses those issues by providing recommendations and strategies for administrators and others interested in retaining high quality teachers.

Several key stakeholder groups collaborated with staff from the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) in the development of this document. Many thanks to the Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change at Syracuse University (HESC), the Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC), the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) for their committed assistance in this endeavor.

I trust you will find these very practical strategies helpful in ensuring student success.

Sincerely,

Rebecca H. Cort



# Northeast Regional Resource Center

## LearningInnovations at WestEd



To: State Directors of Special Education, Local Administrators, and Teachers:

I am pleased to introduce you to *Keeping Quality Teachers: The Art of Retaining General and Special Educators*. The conceptualization of this project originally came from the Northeast Regional Resource Center's (NERRC's) Regional CSPD/SIG Workgroup, composed of state department of education representatives from all eight states in Region 1. Knowing the needs of their states and school districts, it is they who focused our attention on the issue of retention. In support, the State Directors of Special Education across our eight states gave us the charge of creating a document that they could use at the state and local levels to assist schools in developing the conditions and supports that would keep their quality teachers in the classroom.

The writing and production of this document represents the collaborative work of a team of exceptional individuals, all deeply committed to helping to retain and support the most valuable resource for improving educational opportunities for children with disabilities: our teachers. The team that did the research and writing for this product includes:

K. Lynn Boyer, Ph.D., Project Director, National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education,  
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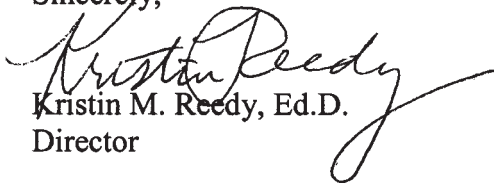
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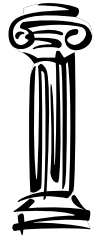
The creation and production of *Keeping Quality Teachers* would not have been possible without the generous leadership and production contributions of Fred DeMay and Matt Giugno from the New York State Education Department, Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities. Their unwavering commitment to the project, their vision, and standard of excellence were essential to the product's completion.

This document reflects several years of work and collaboration by these individuals and their organizations. The result is a product that represents diverse perspectives, the latest research, and a commitment to quality on behalf of students in schools everywhere. Our hope is that you will share our work with others and that this document will be used to build retention strategies in your state and in local school districts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Reedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Kristin M. Reedy, Ed.D.  
Director



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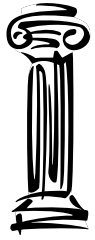
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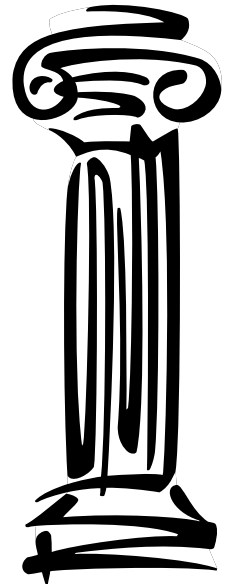
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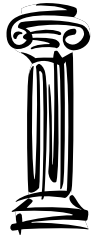
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# *Introduction*



*Keeping  
Quality  
Teachers*



## *Introduction — Meeting the Challenge*

No teacher should feel alone. Every student deserves a high quality teacher who has the confidence, the ability, and the supports necessary to fulfill the expectations in those students' eyes. Every educational administrator understands that quality teachers are critical to the academic growth and social development of our youth. In a rapidly changing society where knowledge and skills are crucial for success, students are our hope for the future. Creating new technologies, developing breakthroughs in medical research and health care, working in global economies brought together through instantaneous communications are but a few of the unlimited opportunities awaiting today's students. Students with the skills developed and honed by caring and competent teachers represent our nation's aspirations for a future where hard work and dedication are rewarded with success.

Our youth need quality teachers to develop their capabilities. That need, however, does not match the realities of what is happening in schools across the nation. In spite of the best efforts of educational leaders at all levels of education, American education faces a crisis in attracting and retaining quality teachers. While the root causes of the problem are due to a variety of factors, the inescapable conclusion is that students suffer when quality teachers are not available to teach them the skills they need to be successful in school and in life. We can and we should do better. Together, we can.

*Keeping Quality Teachers — The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers* is a powerful tool that provides school leaders with resources to increase the awareness of the need to address retention of all teachers, especially in areas of persistent shortages of teachers including mathematics, science and special education. It contains a framework for action that includes tools that are known to support retention of quality teachers. The framework for action can be used to create a plan for retaining quality teachers or it can be used to strengthen existing plans. School leaders at all levels of education can use the resources and strategies in this document to strengthen their efforts to ensure that students learn with quality teachers. Stakeholders can better understand how their efforts and partnerships with educational institutions can support recruitment and retention of quality teachers to promote high levels of educational performance for all students.

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*"There I was, the very first day of school. I closed the classroom door, and turned around. There were 20 pairs of eyes looking at me. I was excited, nervous and scared — and I felt so alone."*

First Year Teacher

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*"All students deserve competent and caring teachers, all beginning teachers deserve competent and caring mentors, and all teachers deserve competent and caring administrators."*

Ellen Moir and  
Garry Blum  
University of California-  
Santa Cruz

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*“More can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor.”*

Fredric Cohen  
Nassau BOCES-  
Long Island

## *Addressing the Teacher Retention Issue*

Recognition of the teacher retention issue and the need for school leadership to support retention initiatives are major concerns emerging across the nation to ensure a quality education for all students. The need for more effective strategies to recruit and retain quality teachers has never been higher, and new and innovative approaches to teacher retention are taking hold in diverse school settings involving a broad range of stakeholders.

A number of collaborating partners in states in the Northeast recognized that their schools are losing teachers and in particular, special education teachers, at an alarming rate. These partners have joined together to address the teacher retention issue within their respective states.

This collaborative effort is designed to provide materials to assist school leaders and a broad range of stakeholders in developing and implementing support for teacher retention initiatives in local school buildings and districts. It responds to education research that has consistently demonstrated that quality teachers are instrumental to high academic achievement. It addresses the growing concern about attracting and keeping quality teachers in urban schools where the educational needs of students are the greatest and where the working conditions often present considerable challenges.

---

*“Although policymakers can mandate and fund recruitment and induction programs, only school leaders can foster the full range of supports that teachers need.”*

Susan Moore Johnson  
Harvard Graduate School  
of Education

*Keeping Quality Teachers – The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers* is a user-friendly product that was developed with the collaborating partners that can be used flexibly with a variety of audiences. It includes a series of technical assistance resource materials that can assist any school building principal, school district administrator or larger educational administrative unit in developing effective retention plans for teachers in general, with an emphasis on special education teachers. It can support local school leaders in integrating retention planning into existing or developing improvement plans, and encouraging partnerships with institutions of higher education. The following sections are designed to provide resources for educational leaders to support teacher retention initiatives at the state and local levels.

- *Section One: Making the Case for Teacher Retention* helps school districts understand why retention is such a compelling issue. It includes documentation of special education as a shortage area and research on reasons for attrition in both general and special education. It links quality teaching with high levels of student achievement and provides a rationale for why retaining quality teachers is less expensive than recruiting and training new teachers. Three strategies for building a framework for retaining quality teachers are introduced including: *Improving Working Conditions; The Role of the Administrator in Teacher Retention; and Induction and Mentoring Programs that Work*. The section concludes with a description and discussion about the importance of using appropriate data for any teacher retention initiative.

- **Section Two: Building a Framework — Improving Working Conditions** draws on considerable research regarding why teachers leave schools to go to other teaching positions or leave the teaching profession altogether. Important working conditions for teachers including appropriate work assignments, sufficient curriculum guidelines, efficient discipline systems, sharing ideas and resources with colleagues and other conditions are identified and discussed. A companion self-assessment tool is provided to help school leaders and leadership teams determine the working conditions present in their schools that support teacher retention, as well as those factors that could be improved for ensuring higher retention of teachers over time.
- **Section Three: Building a Framework — The Role of the Administrator in Teacher Retention** provides potential strategies for administrative support at the district and building levels to enhance retention of all teachers and special education professionals. It highlights the crucial role of the principal and school leaders in providing instructional leadership and fostering collegiality and collaborative relationships that cultivate a positive school climate where teachers are valued and feel supported in their work. Professional development resources that support effective teaching and learning are discussed to promote continued development of instructional leadership skills for school administrators.
- **Section Four: Building a Framework — Induction and Mentoring Programs that Work** provides a series of model programs and practices that have proven helpful in supporting teachers in diverse school settings. Induction programs for new teachers are described for welcoming new professionals to their schools and helping them build their teaching skills through reflection and continued emphasis on improving their teaching practices. Mentoring programs for both new and veteran teachers are identified as ways to foster discussion among teachers about effective teaching practices, to enable teachers to share ideas among colleagues in a collaborative setting, and to learn from other teachers. Data highlighting the positive impact of induction and mentoring programs on teacher retention is included.
- **Section Five: Promoting Linkages — Partnerships Between Schools and Higher Education** articulates the key role played by institutions of higher education in supporting recruitment and retention of quality teachers in local school districts. Information is presented about partnerships of teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities with school districts to support teacher retention. Models for partnerships and real-life examples of existing partnerships including Professional Development Schools highlight the types of efforts that can be reviewed for potential application within specific local school building and district settings. In addition, practical implications for the types of coursework that postsecondary school students need to be successful as teachers in today’s schools are identified and discussed.
- **Section Six: Bringing It Together** provides potential strategies for states to use for statewide training to implement teacher retention

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*"We should have been focusing on improving working conditions in the school, having greater career opportunities for teachers, having the right pay for them, showing the right kind of appreciation."*

Jim Hunt  
National Commission on  
Teaching and America's  
Future

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*"A stronger partnership between higher education institutions and school districts is essential for recruiting and retaining teachers."*

NYS Education  
Department  
A Call To Teaching

initiatives in local school districts. Schools simply cannot do it alone. This section addresses key components within the three strategies proposed for recruitment and retention of quality teachers introduced in Section One. This section, developed in collaboration with a broad-based group of diverse stakeholders including state and local education agencies and institutions of higher education recommends ways to pilot teacher retention strategies at the local level; proposes potential partnerships that will support implementation of teacher retention strategies; and offers a design of a model evaluation that includes components that can be used by states and local school districts.

Each section has a series of resources and a list of references to support teacher retention efforts in states and local school districts.

### *Using the Teacher Retention Product*

New higher learning standards; the changing needs of today's students who need greater knowledge and skills to function effectively in a more complex society; and the future success of our nation in a global economy dictate that all school leaders and the greater school community need to be concerned about recruiting and retaining quality teachers. The teacher retention product is designed to provide the resources and strategies to assist educational administrators to meet that goal in the following ways.

- State education agencies can use the document to focus attention and resources on the need to ensure a cadre of quality teachers to help all students achieve new higher learning standards.
- Local school districts can use the strategies and tools in their schools and local communities to gain awareness and public support for comprehensive teacher retention initiatives designed to keep the best teachers in the classrooms.
- Principals and school leaders can use the resources to develop school-based efforts designed to address the major issues affecting teacher retention in their schools.
- Institutions of higher education can encourage and promote partnerships with schools to support new teachers in their initial, critical years of teaching, as well as providing resources and expertise to foster continuous professional development for strengthening teachers' skills.
- The greater educational community can use the document to gain awareness and a better understanding of how the teacher retention issue affects student academic achievement, and how public support can promote high quality schools with quality teachers.

Quality teacher preparation followed by strong, consistent support for teachers when they pursue their careers in schools can create an environment for enhanced student achievement and reduce high teacher turnover rates that impose heavy costs on students, schools and the community.