

The State's Role in Addressing Teacher Shortages Today to Sustain the Profession in the Future

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Why This Brief?

Between the 2022–23 school year and the start of the 2023–24 school year, a consensus emerged that there is a national teacher shortage. Although headlines in the months leading up to the previous school year often resulted in debate about whether or to what extent a teacher shortage exists, the beginning of the 2023–24 school year has brought more united thinking around the wide array of challenges facing the teaching profession (see Figure 1). For example, according to a recent analysis, about 1 in 10 of all teaching positions across the United States either are unfilled or are filled by

individuals without certifications for their teaching positions (Franco & Patrick, 2023). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), the two most prevalent unfilled teaching positions for the 2023–24 school year are general elementary teachers (71%) and special education teachers (70%). Given the current concordance about the teacher shortage, education leaders at every level need to understand the nature of the teacher labor market, identify and address root causes where teacher shortages do exist, and strengthen teacher retention efforts.

Figure 1. Shifting Views on the Status of the Teacher Workforce

8/4/22	8/8/22	8/16/22	8/24/22
"Never seen it this bad": America faces catastrophic teacher shortage (<i>Washington Post</i> : Natanson, 2022)	Researchers say cries of teacher shortages are overblown: Schools are going on pandemic hiring sprees and overstaffing may be the new problem (<i>The Hechinger Report</i> : Barshay, 2022)	School districts across the country under the wire to hire hundreds of teachers before school year starts: "I have never seen a shortage of teachers like this," one superintendent says (<i>Fox News</i> : Colton, 2022)	There is no national teacher shortage: The narrative doesn't match the numbers (<i>The Atlantic</i> : Thompson, 2022)
12/14/22	7/27/23	8/24/23	9/1/23
There's a reason there aren't enough teachers in America. Many reasons, actually. (<i>New York Times</i> : Edsall, 2022)	From "crisis" to "catastrophe," schools scramble once again to find teachers: Teacher shortages made worse by the pandemic show no signs of easing again this year in many parts of the country (<i>NBC News</i> : Pettypiece, 2023)	Teacher shortages have gotten worse. Here's how schools are coping. (<i>Washington Post</i> : Balingit, 2023)	Back-to-school brings teacher shortages, student loans (<i>The Hill</i> : Simendinger & Karisch, 2023)

Teacher shortages are complex and nuanced; the solutions must be too. The medical field offers a sound analogy. Testing to determine underlying causes and risk factors is essential for proper diagnosis and treatment—and *adequate* treatment is typically multifaceted. Often the most immediate goal of treatment is symptom relief, but the longer term goal is sustained good health. Beyond finding stopgap measures to stop the “symptom” of empty classrooms, education decision-makers should focus on cultivating and sustaining the long-term “good health” of the teacher workforce that students need. Although many teacher workforce efforts occur at the district and school levels, states hold an imperative role in tackling this complex challenge at the systems level because states are funders, policy developers, and capacity builders for districts and schools.

This brief presents the following information to support states in addressing teacher shortages:

- a description of the state role in addressing localized teacher shortage issues
- a brief synthesis of the common challenges contributing to teacher shortages
- examples of state-level solutions—how states across the country are tackling these challenges

The State Role in Addressing Local Teacher Shortages

There is no single supply source of teachers, and the teacher labor market is highly localized; thus, some schools and districts may struggle to attract or retain teachers while others do not. Teacher shortages are often specific to a particular subject, geographic area, or demographic group.

- **Subject** shortages are most typical in high-need fields such as bilingual education, English language acquisition, mathematics, reading, science, special education, and world languages.

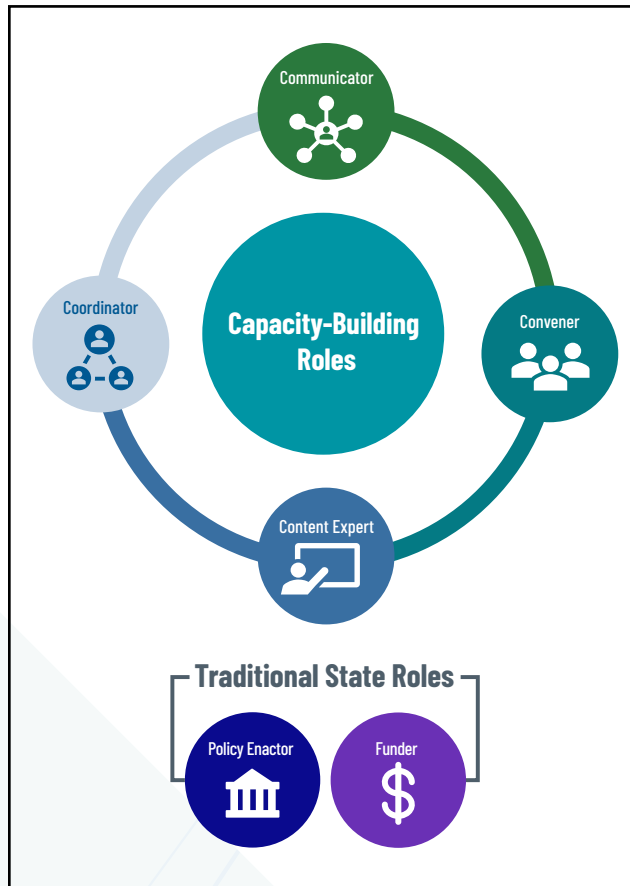
- **Geographic** shortages occur in both rural and urban locales; they are often magnified in schools with high populations of students from families with low income and students of color.
- **Demographic** shortages are disparities in the racial and ethnic (and to some extent gender and disability status) makeup of the teacher population as compared with the student population.

Experts caution against relying on national data to draw conclusions about the teacher workforce, let alone to make decisions about how best to strengthen it (Bleiberg & Kraft, 2023). Since the nature and extent of shortages are typically local, it is critical for schools and districts to develop an individualized approach for tackling their unique challenges. But state education agencies (SEAs) can also play a critical role in empowering, catalyzing, and supporting local efforts to examine and address teacher shortages.

The state role in teacher workforce issues typically involves **enacting state-level policy and regulations** or **providing state funding**. For example, a state might pass a law requiring increased teacher compensation or annual teacher observations, or a state might play a role in approving educator preparation programs or establishing teacher certification standards.

But beyond developing and financing teacher workforce policies and best practices, SEAs can also build capacity in schools and districts to *implement* these policies and practices. They can do so using the 4Cs framework (Figure 2). The framework can help SEAs organize and plan their efforts to build the capacity of local education agencies (LEAs) to support both the selection and implementation of recruitment and retention strategies. Each of the “Cs” in this framework—communicator, convener, content expert, coordinator—is a role which SEAs can fulfill to establish conditions for LEAs to address teacher shortages.

Figure 2. The 4Cs Framework



Communicator—As a central communicator, the SEA can disseminate research, evidence-based information, and best practices to help LEAs make sound decisions to meet their teacher workforce needs. The SEA can also collect and analyze district-level data to determine common trends across the state and over time. For example, a state could create a data dashboard that allows districts to examine their local needs for teaching positions and how those needs have changed over the years. These data could inform both the districts and local universities that prepare future teachers so each entity could better target their recruitment.

Convener—As a convener, the SEA can promote and facilitate partnerships among LEAs, helping them to see areas of mutual need and interest. They can also highlight successes in order to share ideas for possible replication. For example, a state might convene a task force on revising the teacher compensation system or facilitate partnerships between LEAs and educator preparation programs.

Content Expert—As a content expert, the SEA can provide or broker resources, training, and technical assistance to build capacity within and between LEAs. Many districts cannot effectively carry out this role on their own; furthermore, collecting and sharing knowledge is more efficient to do at scale. For example, given the alternative routes that many new teachers are taking into the profession, a state might develop a webinar series on novel approaches to mentoring, produce a how-to guide for establishing local teacher apprenticeship programs, or provide guidance on best practices in teacher observation and feedback.

Coordinator—As a coordinator, the SEA can connect LEAs serving similar populations and tackling similar challenges to encourage them to collaborate and share ideas. Most LEAs work in silos, but the SEA can help connect these silos throughout the state. For example, a state could connect two neighboring districts in need of advanced science teachers to encourage them to share the available teachers through a virtual partnership. Additionally, SEAs from different states could gather in professional learning communities to share recruitment and retention strategies.

Factors Contributing to Teacher Shortages and State-Level Strategies for Addressing Them

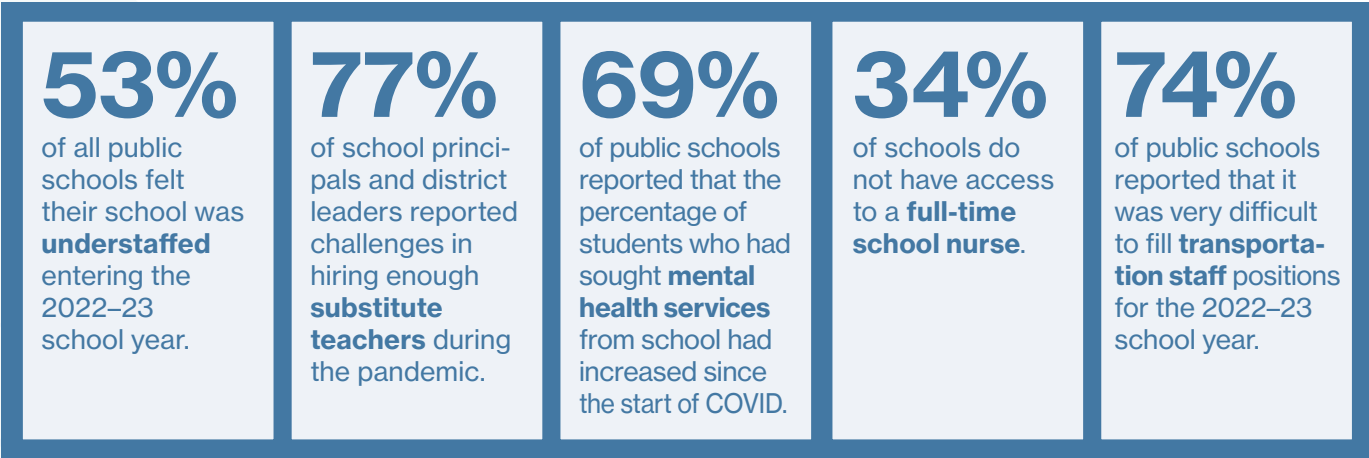
“After 30 years of doing such work, I have concluded that classroom teaching ... is perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species has ever invented. The only time a physician could possibly encounter a situation of comparable complexity would be in the emergency room of a hospital during or after a natural disaster.”

– Lee Shulman, *The Wisdom of Practice* (2004)

Teaching is broadly recognized as one of the most challenging professions and one that is not granted the professional recognition it deserves. Much of the current narrative around teacher shortages focuses on the broad issue of not

enough teachers filling the positions, not enough teachers coming through the supply line, and not enough young people wanting to become teachers (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. School Staffing Shortage Statistics



(Irwin et al., 2023; National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.; Willgerodt et al., 2023)















A recent 2022 PDK/Gallup poll found that 62 percent of parents (an all-time high) do not want their children to become teachers. Low salaries are the number one reason why; the second reason is the stress and high demands of the job; and the third reason is the lack of respect and the notion of teaching being a thankless job (PDK Poll, n.d.).









Unsurprisingly, the most common factors contributing to teacher shortages include the challenges of teacher preparation, compensation and financial barriers, school climate and working conditions, and school leadership (Mehrotra et al., 2021). Table 1 highlights some of the key challenges contributing to the teacher shortage: declining enrollment in teacher


















preparation programs; affordability and compensation barriers; challenging school climates and working conditions; and access to high-quality, data-driven professional learning. The table also outlines potential strategies to address these challenges,

emphasizes the state’s role in supporting their implementation, and showcases specific examples that illustrate how these strategies are being employed in states across the country. The Appendix provides more detail on each of these points.

Table 1. Examples of State Roles in Addressing Teacher Workforce Challenges

Teacher workforce challenge	Potential strategies	Places to watch	State roles
Declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs	Modernize certification regulations and policies	Connecticut and Nevada revised certification policies related to reciprocity and exam requirements, respectively.	Policy enactor  Convener 
	Establish grow your own (GYO) programs	Washington State supports GYO programs through state policy and funding at the state and district levels for high school students, paraeducators, and bilingual educators.	Policy enactor  Funder  Convener  Communicator 
	Expand pathway access and affordability	Tennessee registered the nation’s first apprenticeship program for teachers by coordinating with LEAs and EPPs.	Policy enactor  Funder  Convener  Coordinator  Content expert 
	Collect and analyze educator workforce data	Georgia’s K–12 Teacher and Leader Workforce Report provides a comprehensive overview of the state’s educational workforce, including trends in teacher and leader production, retention, and retirement.	Policy enactor  Communicator  Content expert 

Teacher workforce challenge	Potential strategies	Places to watch	State roles
Affordability and compensation barriers	Increase compensation	Delaware facilitated the Public Education Compensation Committee (PECC) to review and offer recommendations on the state's educator compensation structure.	Policy enactor  Funder  Convener 
	Improve preparation affordability	The California State Educator Workforce Collaborative brings state agencies and educator preparation institutions together to improve access to and affordability of high-quality, clinically rich preparation pathways.	Policy enactor  Funder  Convener  Content expert 
	Remove barriers for retirees to reenter the profession	In response to the pandemic-induced teacher shortage, states such as Michigan and New Jersey are employing retired teachers, allowing them to maintain their pensions while returning to work.	Policy enactor 

Teacher workforce challenge	Potential strategies	Places to watch	State roles
Challenging school climates and working conditions	Supplement instructional support	Arkansas's LEARNS Act allocates \$8.5 million for supplemental education such as tutoring and \$20 million toward high-impact tutoring. Remaining funds support literacy coaches.	Policy enactor  Funder  Content expert  Communicator  Coordinator 
	Provide or disseminate working conditions surveys	The Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force is working to develop and deploy a statewide teacher exit and educator working conditions survey.	Communicator  Convener 
	Support differentiated staffing models	Arizona State University Teachers College collaborates with schools through its Next Education Workforce to create tailored staffing models.	Policy enactor  Funder  Content expert  Convener  Communicator 
Access to high-quality, data-driven professional development	Provide high-quality, data-driven professional learning to teachers	The Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education created and piloted a new Educator Effectiveness System that aims to grow and support effective educators with a new standards and evaluation process.	Policy enactor  Content expert 
	Support administrator learning	Colorado formed a working group with state agencies and higher education to diversify teacher and principal pathways by identifying barriers in preparation, retention, and recruitment of a diverse workforce.	Policy enactor  Content expert  Convener 

Conclusion

The current teacher shortages constitute a multifaceted challenge that demands a comprehensive understanding of its complexities and contextual nuances. Addressing this challenge effectively requires tailored and differentiated strategies that align with the intricate nature of the issue. By analyzing the common factors contributing to teacher shortages and exploring diverse approaches for alleviating these challenges, districts can gain fresh perspectives on their unique recruitment and retention obstacles. States have an integral role in the strategies that are chosen and employed to combat shortages. In addition to

functioning in their critical roles of enacting state policy or providing state funding, they function as communicators, conveners, content experts, and coordinators. In these roles, they wield the power to shape and implement tailored strategies and build school and district capacity to combat their specific shortage issues. Collaborative efforts involving educators, administrators, policymakers, and communities are essential to creating an environment in which teachers not only survive but also thrive, ensuring a stable and highly qualified workforce for the future of all schools.

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Appendix

Challenge: Declining Enrollment in Teacher Preparation Programs

There is a general decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs—roughly a 30 percent decrease over the past 10 years (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2022; Will, 2022a). There are also challenges with prospective teachers completing their preparation programs and getting licensed (Mitrano, 2021). One challenge is that prospective teachers face financial barriers to pursuing educator preparation programs, including student loans, testing fees, certification application fees, and tuition costs.

Potential Strategies

Modernize certification regulations and policies:

- **Overview of strategy.** States can update certification policies by expanding certification reciprocity for teachers coming from other states. Alternate Routes to Certification (ARTC) programs are also on the rise. Emergency certifications, especially for ARTC participants, are increasing, and several states are extending their time limits (Heubeck, 2022; Will, 2022b). However, SEAs should approach ARTC and emergency certifications cautiously. Implementing strategies that compromise the quality of the teaching force is not recommended as a long-term solution.
- **State role in strategy.** SEAs can propose legislation to update certification requirements for educators as policy enactors. One effective measure involves expanding reciprocity, enabling educators with valid out-of-state licenses to obtain a license in a new state without imposing additional requirements or penalties, such as requiring exams or coursework or taking

away benefits. A state may also serve as a convener by creating partnerships across LEAs, SEAs, and other education organizations and institutions to build networks and share best practices for updating certification policies.

- **Places to watch.** States such as [Connecticut](#) and [Nevada](#) have served as state conveners in restructuring their certification policies. Both states have experienced a surge in the number of fully certified teachers joining the profession due to policy updates. The Connecticut State Department of Education has approved approximately 1,000 out-of-state teachers' certification applications since its recent policy revisions earlier this year (Beatson & Wylen, 2022).

Establish grow your own (GYO) programs:

- **Overview of strategy.** GYO programs represent a focused approach to teacher preparation, emphasizing the cultivation and retention of educators from the local community. This strategy is frequently employed to address teacher shortages and promote diversity within the teacher workforce. Many states are creating licensure pathways for existing paraprofessionals and substitutes, which enables schools and districts to tap into their existing workforce. This approach can boost staff capacity and ensure confidence in hiring decisions, as candidates are familiar with the school culture and students.
- **State role in strategy.** States play a pivotal role in GYO initiatives by shaping policies, allocating funding, fostering partnerships, and collecting program data.

They incentivize local supply lines, fund scholarships, and ensure comprehensive training. Data collection informs decisions, enhancing the GYO's impact on addressing teacher shortages. Through these roles, a state may operate as a policy enactor, funder, convener, and communicator.

- **Places to watch.** [Washington State](#) creates opportunities for GYO programming within state policy and state funding. Furthermore, the state provides GYO programs for high school students, paraeducators, and bilingual educators at the state and district levels (Garcia, 2022).

Expand pathways access and affordability:

- **Overview of strategy.** It is imperative that states expand access to and affordability of high-quality, clinically rich pathways into the teaching profession. Teacher residencies, like medical clinical training, establish university partnerships, offer financial support, and provide yearlong clinical experiences (Azar et al., 2021; Guha et al., 2017; Long, 2022). Lasting 1 or 2 years, these efforts prepare candidates for classrooms, ensuring retention and enhancing teacher diversity (Guha et al., 2016; Learning Policy Institute, 2021). Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs, driven by industry, address recruitment challenges and create a skilled talent pool for teachers and education staff (ApprenticeshipUSA, n.d.). Ensuring the accessibility and affordability of these clinically rich pathways is essential in strengthening the teacher supply line.
- **State role in strategy.** A state can work as a policy enactor, convener, coordinator, and funder by providing essential funding and grants, approving and incentivizing innovative programs and partnerships

between educational institutions, and facilitating collaboration between programs for mutual learning around best practices. Additionally, states can engage as content experts in research that helps programs align with evolving educational needs, provides guidance for graduates to have clear pathways for entering the workforce, and helps educators have continuous support.

- **Places to watch.** In 2022, [Tennessee](#) played a coordinator role in instituting the first [Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program](#) in the United States. In partnership with the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System and Austin Peay State University's Teacher Residency Program, this initiative pioneered a permanent GYO model. Approved by the U.S. Department of Labor, Tennessee became the inaugural state to sponsor Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship Programs, fostering collaboration between school districts and educator preparation programs.

Collect and analyze educator workforce data:

- **Overview of strategy.** Data on preparation program quality support prospective teachers in becoming informed consumers and selecting programs that will provide them training aligned with their needs so that they are ready to teach upon graduation. Publishing program quality data on completion rates, hiring, and the effectiveness and retention of their graduates can drive preparation program quality improvements.
- **State role in strategy.** States facilitate informed decision-making by collecting comprehensive data, making the data accessible through user-friendly dashboards, and disseminating guidance and FAQs to support local-level data use.

Every decision aimed at improving the educator workforce's short- and long-term health should be driven by specific district and school data, ensuring tailored strategies and interventions for individual contexts. States thus serve as content experts, policy enactors, and communicators, ensuring data accessibility and fostering meaningful conversations to help districts understand and address local shortages.

- **Places to watch.** Georgia legislation OCGA § 20-14-27(a)(4) created the [Georgia K-12 Teacher and Leader Workforce Report](#). This report focuses on teachers and school-level leaders, a holistic and comprehensive overview of Georgia's educational workforce. The report utilizes multiple sources of data and examines the current state of the K-12 workforce, including trends in teacher and leader production, retention, and retirement (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, n.d.).

Challenge: Affordability and Compensation Barriers

Teachers experience the “teacher wage penalty,” making about 26.4 percent less than other college-educated workers. Even with benefits factored in, the gap remains (Allegretto, 2023). When calculating inflation adjustments, over the past 33 years the average weekly wages of public school teachers have only increased \$83 (Coggins, 2023). Inadequate salaries strain teachers, especially teachers who are the main earners for their families. Additionally, teachers, particularly those of color, often carry significant student debt, exacerbating financial barriers to entering the profession (Hershcopf et al., 2021).

Potential Strategies

Increase compensation:

- **Overview of strategy.** Offering more competitive compensation has been a very popular strategy among states, and there have been various approaches to increasing pay. Some states have begun implementing various types of pay increases while others have convened committees or commissions to look into the issue of teacher pay.
- **State role in strategy.** States play a critical role in attracting and retaining qualified educators by funding competitive salaries. States can initiate comprehensive salary reform by allocating sufficient funds from their education budgets to raise teacher salaries and regularly adjust salaries based on the cost of living. Furthermore, states can establish clear policies and guidelines to ensure equitable distribution of salary increases, addressing disparities across districts and schools. By actively investing in teachers' salaries, states acknowledge the value of educators and enhance the overall quality of education. In this way, a state may serve as funder, policy enactor, and convener.
- **Places to watch.** Delaware's SB 100 established the [Public Education Compensation Committee \(PECC\)](#) to review Delaware's educator compensation structure. Chaired by Secretary of Education Mark Holodick and facilitated by WestEd, PECC met monthly from August 2022 to October 2023, addressing compensation for employee groups outlined in Title 14. In November 2023, the Delaware Department of Education submitted PECC's recommendations to the governor,

potentially influencing the fiscal year 2025 budget. A second phase, focusing on the teacher career ladder, teacher leader roles, and additional compensation strategies, began in August 2023. The Teacher Career Ladder Working Group will meet monthly until May 2024, delivering recommendations to PECC. This initiative exemplifies the state's role as a convener, shaping policies collaboratively.

Improve preparation affordability:

- **Overview of strategy.** Financial compensation incentives, including loan forgiveness and scholarships, are encouraging more students to join educator preparation programs. In 2022, 39 states offered some sort of incentive program for hard-to-fill positions (Saenz-Armstrong, 2022). Additionally, states may provide statewide programs such as scholarships, grants, or loan forgiveness. Districts have encouraged state policymakers to provide income tax credits, housing subsidies, and statewide recruitment initiatives. Efforts also focus on enhancing higher education institutions' capacity in high-demand fields through grants and programs (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022).
- **State role in strategy.** States can create policies or statewide programs that address student loan debt or offer housing credits, scholarships and grants, or tax credits. They can also serve as content experts for districts on how to best allocate funds to create incentives for educators, and as funders by providing grants or other monetary resources. Additionally, a state may function as a convener through developing collaboration opportunities between various local agencies and other education institutions.

- **Places to watch.** [The California State Educator Workforce Collaborative](#), led by WestEd, brings together key groups, including state agencies, higher education institutions, and educational bodies like the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, State Board of Education, and Department of Education. This collaboration addresses the challenge of affordable, high-quality teacher preparation. Currently, the Collaborative is developing a financial aid "Playbook" and strategic communications to assist teacher candidates and educational staff in creating sustainable, living wage packages. These efforts, focused on candidates of color and those serving early childhood and multilingual learners, aim to improve affordability and remove barriers in pursuing high-quality, clinically rich pathways. This is an example of a state working as both a convener and a content expert.

Remove barriers for retirees to reenter the profession:

- **Overview of strategy.** Some states and districts incentivize educators to return to the classroom or remove barriers to their return through efforts such as offering financial bonuses and removing penalties from their retirement plans—ensuring that experienced candidates reenter the classroom without hindrance. Although not a long-term solution, this policy change could assist some schools and districts in finding qualified teachers for their empty classrooms (Will, 2022c).
- **State role in strategy.** States can serve as policy enactors by passing legislation to allow retired teachers to return to the classroom without incurring a pension penalty and allow them to continue to draw from their retirement benefits on top of a salary, suspending income

caps or without suspending or canceling their retirement benefits (Will, 2022a).

- **Places to watch.** Many states reemployed retired teachers as a strategic measure to address their teacher shortage crisis during and immediately following the pandemic

(Will, 2022c). This approach continues to be pursued by states such as [Michigan](#) and [New Jersey](#) that have enacted legislation enabling retired teachers to return to work while maintaining their pensions (Biryukov, 2023; Dellinger, 2023).

Challenge: Challenging School Climate and Working Conditions

As in any workplace, climate and working conditions have a significant impact on workplace satisfaction and employee retention. For decades, teachers have cited working conditions as one of the top reasons for leaving their positions or the profession (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Poor working conditions include many school-based factors, such as lack of resources, ineffective professional development, and lack of career growth opportunities. More recently, working condition challenges have included a lack of other professional staff (e.g., nurses, counselors, social workers). A lack of full staff affects the teachers who are currently working in schools and can lead to burning out more quickly.

Potential Strategies

Supplement instructional support:

- **Overview of strategy.** Some states and districts are addressing their teacher shortages by supplementing instruction and support with tutors and having other support staff work with students who need it most. Although this approach may not fill the vacancy of a teacher, hiring tutors or paraprofessionals to fill the gaps may work in the short term. It also alleviates the pressure placed on teachers to meet the needs of their struggling students by offering individualized instruction. Proper training and ongoing support are required for these personnel; therefore, schools and districts

must find ways to take on this responsibility so it does not fall in the laps of classroom teachers who may already be overwhelmed.

- **State role in strategy.** States play a crucial role in enhancing student support through various programs and services. This role includes providing funding for tutoring, after-school programs, and professional development for educators. Moreover, states contribute by developing high-quality instructional materials and establishing policies that encourage schools to use supplemental instruction effectively. By providing resources and guidance, states empower schools to implement and evaluate programs that are tailored to their students' needs. In these ways, states play the roles of policy enactors, funders, content experts, coordinators, and communicators.
- **Places to watch.** In **Arkansas**, legislation was passed in May 2023 to allocate \$34.7 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to support [Literacy, Empowerment, Accountability, Readiness, Networking, and School Safety \(LEARNs\) Act initiatives](#), including \$8.5 million for supplemental education (such as tutoring) and \$20 million for high-impact tutoring. The remaining funds will go to literary coaches (National Student Support Accelerator, n.d.).

Provide or disseminate working conditions surveys:

- **Overview of strategy.** Working conditions surveys in education assess teachers' experiences, focusing on resources, support, safety, and school culture. These surveys empower educators to provide feedback, enabling schools and districts to provide targeted improvements. By addressing concerns, schools enhance teacher satisfaction, creating a positive learning environment and fostering collaboration.
- **State role in strategy.** All efforts focused on enhancing the short- and long-term well-being of the educator workforce should be guided by data tailored to the unique contexts of individual districts and schools. States can work as communicators by systematically collecting feedback from educators to identify specific issues and implementing targeted improvements. Additionally, as conveners, states can share educator workforce data through a user-friendly dashboard and can disseminate guidance and FAQs to support data use at the local level. This data-driven approach can empower schools to enhance teacher satisfaction, create positive learning environments, and foster collaboration among staff.
- **Places to watch.** Nevada works in communicator and convener roles with the [Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force](#). Facilitated by the Nevada Department of Education and with the support of WestEd's Region 15 Comprehensive Center, the state is working on developing and deploying a statewide teacher exit and educator working conditions survey to build the state's capacity in addressing its teacher shortage issue (WestEd, 2023).

Support differentiated staffing models:

- **Overview of strategy.** Differentiated staffing models reimagine traditional education by assigning specialized roles to experts such as lead teachers, apprentice teachers, social workers, and technology specialists. These specialists collaborate to provide diverse support for students, enhancing learning outcomes. Implementing this model requires rethinking classroom structures, providing extensive professional development, and addressing evaluation and financial challenges. It offers a promising strategy for meeting the complex demands of modern education and improving student learning experiences (Wright & Weber, 2023).
- **State role in strategy.** To help districts and schools implement these models effectively, states can provide policy guidance and resources to help rethink classroom structures, disseminate research and evidence-based information through data collection as communicators and content experts, address challenges related to evaluation and funding, and, as conveners, facilitate and promote partnerships with higher education institutions that are completing this work with other LEAs.
- **Places to watch.** Arizona State University Teachers College collaborates with schools through its Next Education Workforce, creating tailored staffing models. These models offer diverse educator roles with multiple entries into the profession, competitive pay, collaborative teams with shared rosters, and flexible groupings. These models, involving educational leaders, community educators, professional educators, and paraeducators, reduce individual workloads and foster teamwork. This differentiation

and shifts in staffing enable cost control and enhance collaborative efforts across grade-level or subject-specific teams (Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, n.d.). As an SEA, Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has played an active role in ASU's Next Education Workforce. On the policy level, they are working with ASU to develop

a new Teacher Leader Endorsement, and they play a communicator role through their participation in data collection with the higher education institution. Furthermore, ADE also plays a convener role as they are integrating the Next Education Workforce as a content topic within their new Educator Recruitment and Retention task force.

Challenge: Access to High-Quality, Data-Driven Professional Development

Researchers have long explored the importance of leadership support for teachers, particularly as it relates to time for planning, professional learning, and instructional resources (Hirsch, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Wong, 2004). In exit interviews and surveys, teachers (especially novices) often cite their principals as a major factor in deciding whether to stay at their schools, move to other schools within their districts, or leave the profession altogether (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

Potential Strategies

Provide high-quality, data-driven professional learning for teachers:

- **Overview of strategy.** A long-term strategy for addressing teacher workforce challenges entails providing high-quality professional learning opportunities tailored to meet the specific needs of educators. In support of this strategy, it is necessary to restructure school schedules, allowing ample time for professional development and planning, especially for new teachers. This approach calls for a thorough review of existing policies governing classroom observation, feedback mechanisms, and professional development cycles. Despite a decline in policy focus on these aspects in recent years, it is crucial to redirect significant attention and resources toward enhancing these vital teacher support systems.
- **State role in strategy.** States have a large role in providing feedback and observation guidance and requirements. SEAs can work as content experts and policy enactors by implementing new forms of evaluation guidance and requirements that emphasize the importance of regular, constructive feedback for educators. By mandating effective feedback processes and linking them directly to targeted professional development opportunities, the state can support continuous growth and skill enhancement among teachers. These requirements can act as a cornerstone in fostering a supportive environment for educators, enhancing their teaching methods, and ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and skilled teacher workforce.
- **Places to watch. The Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education,** with support from the Region 19 Comprehensive Center, created and piloted a new [Educator Effectiveness System](#) that aims to grow and support effective educators with a new standards and evaluation process. The newly introduced system and tools are flexible and more aligned with the daily tasks of teachers and school leaders.

Support administrator learning:

- **Overview of strategy.** Extending high-quality professional learning for school leaders and administrators is just as crucial as offering it for teachers, if not more crucial. This approach ensures that school leaders are equipped with effective strategies to enhance staff capacity and provide supplementary instruction and support for the school community in efficient and impactful ways.
- **State role in strategy.** States can establish clear mandates for regular observation and feedback cycles as policy enactors and content experts, ensuring continuous growth and effectiveness among school leaders. Requiring principals to engage in systematic feedback processes and tying these evaluations directly to targeted professional development initiatives can

enhance their leadership skills and overall effectiveness. Furthermore, a state may function as a convener by providing opportunities for partnerships between different LEAs to collaborate on initiatives and share successful efforts.

- **Places to watch.** **Colorado** has acted as a state convener in that Colorado H.B. 21-1010 formed a [working group](#) led by the Departments of Higher Education and Education. The group aimed to diversify the educator workforce and school leader supply lines by identifying barriers in preparation, retention, and recruitment of a diverse workforce. The bill mandated that the group write a report with findings and recommendations for the education committees of the general assembly.

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