



# Recruiting and Retaining Classified Staff

# District Leadership Forum

**Becca Debus**

*Research Associate*

**Matthew McCarthy**

*Research Manager*

**Olivia Rios**

*Senior Research Manager*

## LEGAL CAVEAT

EAB Global, Inc. ("EAB") has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to members. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an "EAB Organization") is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, members should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given member's situation. Members are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of member and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Members are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. Other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

## IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

EAB has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its members. Each member acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to EAB. By accepting delivery of this Report, each member agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission, or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to, or acquired by a member. Each member is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each member shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each member shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each member may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or membership program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each member shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each member may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each member shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.
5. Each member is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a member is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such member shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1) Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Key Observations .....	4
<b>2) Recruitment</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Current Job Market .....	5
Advertising and Candidate Pipeline .....	5
Targeted Recruiting .....	10
Compensation and Benefits.....	12
<b>3) Retention</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Employee Motivations .....	15
Incentives .....	16
Feedback Mechanisms.....	17
<b>4) Research Methodology</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Project Challenge .....	20
Project Sources .....	20
Research Parameters .....	21
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Sample Job Advertisements .....	22

# 1) Executive Summary

---

## Key Observations

**In the current job market, districts must use a multi-faceted approach to recruit candidates for vacant classified positions.** Research finds that districts across the country experience difficulties recruiting and retaining classified staff. Specifically, research suggests that districts outside large urban areas struggle to recruit candidates for vacant classified positions due to the small size of the local population. Contacts at **District D** emphasize that in a difficult job market, human resources directors must use multiple types of advertisements (e.g., social media posts, yard signs) to attract applicants.

**Leverage word-of-mouth advertising to attract applicants.** Contacts at multiple profiled districts report that applicants typically learn about vacant classified positions through word-of-mouth. To encourage word-of-mouth advertising, **District E** and **District A** offer bonuses to incentivize candidate referrals. Additionally, in social media posts that advertise job descriptions, most profiled districts include a request to share or retweet the post to increase visibility of vacant positions among friends of district employees, parents, and other stakeholders.

**To increase the number of applications for classified positions, consider targeting advertisements to local subpopulations.** Contacts at **District A**, **District B**, and **District E** note that some subgroups of the local population (e.g., retirees, lawncare workers, parents) often include ideal candidates for classified positions within the district (e.g., candidates in need of part-time work, candidates in need of district benefits). Profiled districts target advertisements for classified positions to these subpopulations to increase the number of applications they receive.

**Highlight benefits during application processes to encourage successful candidates to accept offers of employment.** At profiled districts, contacts note that most employees cite benefits as the reason they remain in their jobs. Many local jobs with similar pay and work schedule (i.e., part-time) lack comprehensive benefits (e.g., health insurance), which a district can offer to classified staff. Contacts at profiled districts suggest highlighting benefits in job advertisements and candidate interviews to recruit additional classified employees.

**Solicit feedback from classified employees to improve retention.** **District C** and **District D** conduct “stay interviews” to receive feedback from classified staff regarding how the district can retain them in their current positions. Unlike traditional exit interviews, these interviews provide district administrators with the opportunity to implement changes based on feedback before employees leave. Administrators at District C used feedback collected through stay interviews to improve the orientation process for new classified staff.

## 2) Recruitment

---

### Current Job Market

#### Districts Throughout the Country Experience Difficulties Recruiting and Retaining Classified Staff

Districts throughout the country struggle to recruit candidates for vacant classified positions, especially bus driver positions. The yearly [Driver Shortage Survey](#) conducted by the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) asks transportation directors about their perception of driver retention at their district. In 2016 (the most recent year with publicly available data), 58 percent of respondents to the survey noted that they believe driver retention is either much more difficult or a little more difficult than in the past.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a 2015 survey found that up to 92 percent of districts respondents reported a shortage of bus drivers—an increase from 58 percent in 2009.<sup>2</sup>

The difficulty to recruit candidates for specific classified positions (e.g., bus drivers, paraprofessionals, custodians) varies considerably among profiled districts. However, contacts at all profiled districts report that they do not attract enough candidates to fill vacant classified positions for at least some roles.



#### Two Profiled Districts Outsource Services to Reduce Costs and Mitigate the Administrative Burden of High Turnover

**District B** and **District C** outsource some services. District B outsources transportation, while District C outsources transportation, cleaning services, and the management of food services. Contacts at District C report that the costs to manage these services and maintain necessary equipment (e.g., regular maintenance for buses) to deliver them provided the main impetus to outsource them. Contacts add that the administrative burden of filling high-turnover classified positions (e.g., bus drivers, custodians) that complete these services also contributed to the decision to outsource them. At District C, the director of transportation oversaw outsourcing bus driver positions and the director of facilities oversaw outsourcing custodial positions. These directors contacted local agencies that provided these services and developed the necessary contracts. Contacts at District C recommend outsourcing services as a potential solution to difficulties recruiting and retaining classified staff.

For more information on outsourcing bus drivers, see the National School Boards Association's [School Transportation Outsourcing Tips](#).

### Advertising and Candidate Pipeline

#### Advertise Through Multiple Channels to Reach Additional Potential Applicants

All profiled districts advertise classified positions through multiple channels. Contacts at **District D** recommend that human resources (HR) directors use low-cost advertisements to expand the visibility of job posting. For example, when the HR director at District D advertised vacant bus driver positions on yard signs, they received additional applications for the position; contacts report that applicants noted that they learned about the job from the yard signs. These additional applications allowed the district to hire several new drivers. Because the signs cost \$50 each,

1) National Association for Pupil Transportation, "Driver Shortage Survey," Fall 2016. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.napt.org/content.asp?contentid=253>.

2) Thomas McMahon, "How school bus driver shortage is linked to unemployment," *School Bus Fleet* (blog), February 5, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.schoolbusfleet.com/blogpost/sbfblog/710528/how-driver-shortage-is-linked-to-unemployment>.

contacts report that the ability to fill even one or two vacancies recouped the costs of the advertisements.

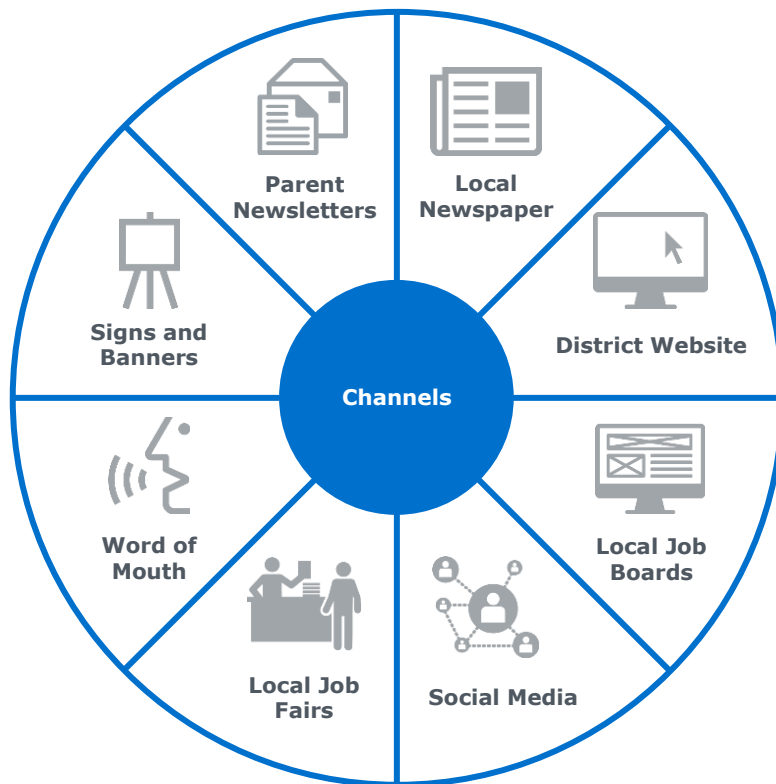
**District E** includes graphics and pictures in social media posts that advertise vacant positions to increase their visual appeal. The posts also include links to traditional job descriptions on the district's website.

Similarly, contacts at **District B** report that after they posted a vacant classified position on Facebook, the number of applications to the position increased 25 percent (i.e., from 1.6 applications per day to 2 applications per day). Though a modest increase in applications, social media platforms allow users to easily create and disseminate free advertisements to reach a wider audience.

### Advertise positions on social media to increase applications

**25%** increase in applications for vacant classified positions at **District B** following free social media posts that advertise roles

## Channels to Advertise Vacant Classified Positions at Profiled Districts





## Avoid National Job Boards Due to Ineffectiveness Attracting Additional Applicants

While contacts at profiled districts suggest advertising through multiple channels, they note that posting vacancies on national job boards rarely generate additional applications. Contacts at all profiled districts except for **District A** and **District D** state that they do not use any form of national job board. District A pays to post vacancies on the national job board Monster, and District D posts vacancies for free on Indeed. While District A advertises classified positions via Monster, contacts at the district note that these postings do not result in additional applications. Contacts at all profiled districts state that national job boards do not increase the number of applications for vacant classified positions because these positions do not adequate compensation to attract non-local candidates to move to the area for the role.

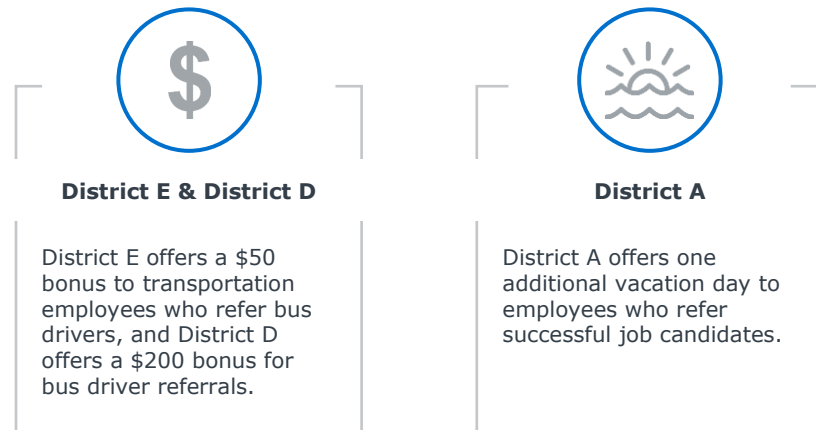
## Reserve Expensive Newspaper Ads to Recruit Candidates for the Most Challenging Classified Positions to Fill

In areas where local newspapers maintain a large readership, contacts report that newspaper advertising is an effective method to recruit candidates for classified positions. Contacts at **District A** state that apart from word-of-mouth advertising, they attract most applicants through local and regional newspaper advertainments. Additionally, contacts at **District C** note that placing small newspaper advertisements for vacant classified positions generates additional applications for them. However, contacts at both districts emphasize that even small line advertisements cost the district a large amount (e.g., up to \$1,500 for a line advertisement for a few days). Due to their high cost, contacts report that the HR director at District C deliberately reserves newspaper advertisements for difficult-to-fill positions each year. Contacts note that the HR director places only a few newspaper advertisements per year. Because the HR director only places advertisements for vacant classified positions that would otherwise remain unfilled, they maximize the return-on-investment of newspaper advertisements.

## Leverage Personal Connections to Advertise Vacant Positions via Word-of-Mouth

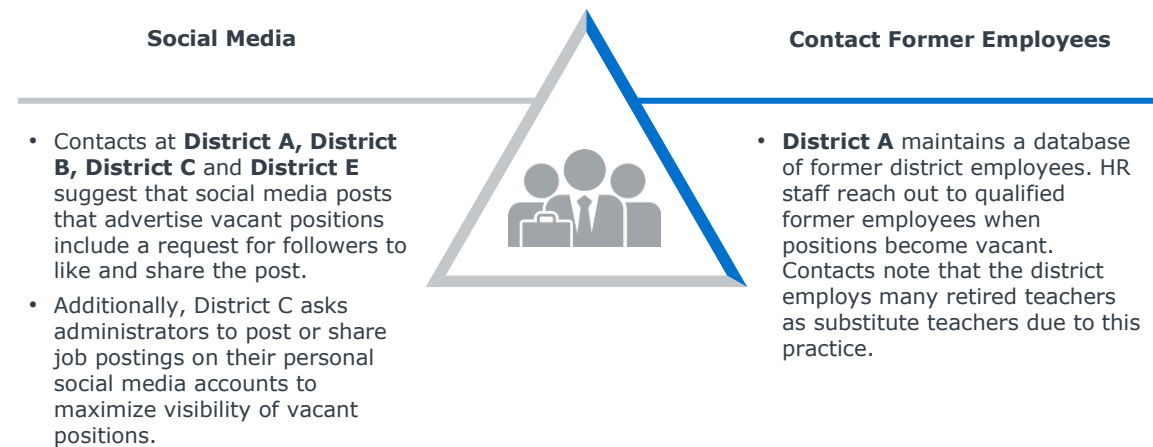
Contacts at **District A**, **District C**, and **District D** note that most applicants learn about vacant positions through word-of-mouth. The organic nature of word-of-mouth advertising puts it outside the direct control of HR departments. However, District D and **District E** offer referral bonuses to incentivize staff to refer candidates for vacant classified positions. These bonuses apply only to successful applicants who accept job offers at the district.

## Candidate Referral Bonuses at Profiled Districts



These districts also use additional methods to advertise positions via word-of mouth.

## Example Methods to Leverage Personal Connections





## Establish Partnerships with Local Organizations to Build Recruiting Pipelines

In addition to personal connections, profiled districts also leverage community partnerships to yield additional applicants for classified positions.

### Recruiting Partnerships at Profiled Districts



---

#### Staffing Agencies

**District E** partners with a local staffing agency to obtain temporary employees for classified positions. The district operates a work-to-hire program; staff from the agency begin as temporary employees until a full-time position opens, at which time the district hires them (assuming they meet performance expectations). This system creates a pipeline of vetted and trained employees for some high-turnover positions (e.g., custodians).



---

#### Government Entities

Both District E and **District B** collaborate with local chambers of commerce to advertise vacant classified positions. Contacts at District E note that the Chamber of Commerce is especially useful in reach potential applicants among retired municipal employees (police officers, firefighters) due to their close association with the local government.



---

#### Educational Institutions

**District C** partners with a local university through the job application site Handshake to recruit students for classified positions, especially for vacant paraprofessional positions. The district also recruits candidates for paraprofessional professions from alternative certification programs at a local community college.

## Tailor Advertisements for Classified Positions to Local Subpopulations to Increase the Number of Applications

**District E** targets specific subgroups of the local population through their advertisements for vacant classified positions. Contacts at District E note that social media sites (e.g., Facebook) allow hiring directors to easily target advertisements to specific subgroups. Less high-tech options to target subgroups of the population include placing signs or banners that advertise vacant positions in strategic locations (e.g., yard signs within a retirement community to target retirees) or placing advertisements for vacant positions in publications that already target subgroups (e.g., job postings in a school newsletter to target parents, job postings on a college job board to target college students). Targeted advertisement also allows districts to tailor job postings to highlight the most relevant benefits of positions to subpopulations.

## Examples of Local Subpopulations to Target Advertisements for Classified Positions

### Retirees

- ✓ Bus Driver
- ✓ Paraprofessional
- ✓ Other Classified Position



#### Why Target?

- Often need or want a small supplemental income.
- Often possess prior experience or qualifications (e.g., retired teachers easily become qualified substitutes and maintain a high level of classroom instruction).

#### How to Target?

- Place advertisements in local newspapers.
- Ask professional organizations (e.g., groups for veterans, groups for retired police officers) to advertise vacant positions to constituents.
- Collaborate with local Chamber of Commerce to network with local businesses and organizations to create pipelines of retirees.

### Workers with Flexible Schedules and without Benefits

- ✓ Bus Driver
- ✗ Paraprofessional
- ✗ Other Classified Position



#### Why Target?

- Workers such as youth pastors and lawncare professionals work flexible schedules, but their primary jobs often lack benefits such as health insurance.

#### How to Target?

- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to identify local employers whose workers may fit this profile.
- Contact community partners to locate potential candidates in need of part-time positions.
- Place signs or posters in strategic locations.

### College Students

- ✗ Bus Driver
- ✓ Paraprofessional
- ✓ Other Classified Position



#### Why Target?

- Students often need or want supplemental income.
- New graduates may be open to low pay and/or part-time work while they plan their career and apply for other jobs.

#### How to Target?

- Work with university career centers to increase awareness among students of the district as a potential employer.
- Post vacant positions on job boards (e.g., Handshake) that target current students and alumni of local universities.

### Parents

- ✓ Bus Driver
- ✓ Paraprofessional
- ✓ Other Classified Position



#### Why Target?

- Parents want to work during hours that align with their children's school schedules.
- Parents do not want to work when their children are not in school during the summer, to eliminate or reduce the need for childcare.
- Parents express interest in the educational mission of the district.

#### How to Target?

- Ask students to take newsletters home with them.
- Prominently advertise vacant positions on the district's website (e.g., home page).

### Highlight Benefits to Increase Applications for Classified Positions

Contacts at all profiled districts report that they experience difficulty attracting qualified applicants for some classified positions. Contacts note that they struggle to recruit for part-time positions because the number of hours and pay do not meet the needs of many potential applicants. However, contacts at **District A** and **District E** state that the full benefits they offer to part-time employees attract applicants to classified positions.

Contacts note that employees at District E emphasize to administrators that health insurance is an important benefit of working for the district. Contacts add that staff note that this benefit makes the district an attractive part-time employer for people whose primary jobs do not offer health insurance. While all profiled districts provide classified staff with health insurance, District E emphasizes this benefit in job postings and interview processes to attract applicants and increase the number of successful candidates who accept job offers.

Contacts at District A report that their retirement benefit attracts many applicants. In New Mexico, the Education Retirement Board provides lifetime retirement policies to all district staff. Unlike many retirement policies, which dispense funds only for a set amount of years, a lifetime retirement policy guarantees the beneficiary receives retirement benefits until their death, regardless of how long they live. This benefit provides more financial security for retirees and may attract mid-life and elderly individuals to classified positions.

Contacts at **District A** note that job postings emphasize the dependability of employment with the district (i.e., many employees remain with the district for decades).

While this retirement benefit is unique to New Mexico, contacts suggest that HR directors evaluate their benefit and compensation packages for similar unique benefits and highlight them in job postings and interview processes for classified positions. For example, District A offers benefits to all bus drivers even though many drivers do not meet the requirements necessary for the district to classify them as full-time employees. Some advertisements for vacant classified positions at the district note this benefit. Interviewers also highlight the benefit to candidates during interview processes.

## Compensation and Benefits for Classified Employees at Profiled Districts

For more information on CDL assistance, see **page 11** of the report.

District	Bus Driver Salary	Para-professional Salary	Health Insurance	Signing Bonus	Other
<b>District A</b>	\$14.20 per hour	\$11.00 per hour	Yes	-	Employee Assistance Program Flexibility to obtain a GED Assistance to obtain CDL
<b>District B</b>	N/A The district outsources transportation	\$10.00 per hour	Yes	-	Flexibility to obtain a GED
<b>District C</b>	N/A The district outsources transportation	\$12.50 per hour	Yes	-	-
<b>District D</b>	\$12.80 per hour	\$11.90 per hour	Yes	\$200 signing bonus; paid after 6 months of work	Assistance to obtain CDL
<b>District E</b>	\$15,000-\$15,500 starting salary range	\$16,000-\$17,500 starting salary range	Yes	\$1,000 signing bonus; half paid after 3 months of work, half paid after 6 months.	Assistance to obtain CDL

### To Increase Acceptances of Job Offers, Inform Candidates of Benefits During the Interview Process

No profiled districts report implementing changes to interview processes for classified positions to improve the acceptance rates of offers of employment. However, contacts at **District C** report that HR representatives ensure they thoroughly explain benefits to candidates during the interview process, especially benefits that operate differently than applicants may expect if they previously worked in the private sector (i.e., a different pay schedule, different systems for raises and bonuses).

At District C, the district distributes pay across 12 months, even though employees only work ten months of the year. Therefore, although the district calculates pay based on the number of hours worked, the district diverts some money from the employee's monthly pay to compensate them during the summer. Contacts note that this policy benefits employees because it ensures they receive income during the summer. The policy also allows the district to reframe summer break as a time without work but with pay, which contacts note HR representatives use to encourage candidates to accept a classified position at the district.

## Example Options to Reframe Summer Break as a Benefit of Classified Positions

### Two Months Paid Vacation



### Time to Work a Another Job and Earn Two Paychecks



## To Increase the Applicant Pool for Bus Drivers, Do Not Require a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Upon Hire

Contacts at **District E** note that because CDL holders can earn more money as trucker drivers than they can as bus drivers, they struggle to attract applicants who maintain a current CDL for vacant bus driver positions. To increase the pool of potential applicants for bus driver positions, **District A**, **District D** and **District E** allow candidates without a current CDL to apply for positions as bus drivers and then provide successful applicants who lack a license assistance to obtain one.

United States law requires drivers to maintain a CDL to operate large vehicles (e.g., school buses, long-haul trucks). To obtain a CDL, drivers must pass written tests and road tests, as well as disclose medical information, provide driving records, and pay an application fee. While the federal government does not require any specific training to receive a CDL, drivers typically attend a truck driver training program to hone the skills necessary to pass the required road test. District A provides free driver training sessions and reimburses new drivers for the costs of their CDL. District D provides free driver trainings, and District E reimburses drivers for the cost of their CDL.

Contacts did not report any instances of successful applicants receiving a CDL through the assistance program and leaving the district shortly thereafter.

## Provide Childcare to Improve Recruitment and Retention of Classified Staff


Contacts at **District C** note that the onsite daycare the district provides contributes to the recruitment and retention of classified employees. Any full-time employee can enroll their children in the daycare at the school site where they work. The daycare costs less than other childcare options in the area and the school deducts payments automatically from the employees' paychecks. Parents of slightly older children can pay for preschool at the district through a similar system. Additionally, all employees can enroll their children in district schools, even if they live outside the district's school zones. Because few other local jobs offer the same amount of support to parents of young children, contacts at District C report that these benefits increase the value of the district as an employer to applicants and current staff.

# 3) Retention

## Employee Motivations

### Employees Tend to Remain in Classified Positions Due to Benefits, Flexibility, and Mission, and Tend to Leave Because of Limited Hours and Low Pay

All profiled districts struggle to retain classified staff, though the difficulty of hiring for specific positions varies by district. Most profiled districts do not track turnover rates for classified positions. However, contacts at **District A** estimate a 60 percent turnover rate for all classified positions in the previous year, and contacts at **District D** estimate a 20 to 30 percent turnover rate for all classified positions annually.



#### Economic Conditions Influence Employees' Priorities

Most contacts did not note any changes in the rationale for employees remaining or leaving classified positions over time. However, contacts at **District D** report that employees cite different reasons for staying or leaving their positions depending on the economy. For example, contacts report that during the recession employees cited compensation as the primary reason they remained in their positions. During the current economic upturn, contacts note that employees more commonly cite job flexibility as a reason to remain in their positions.

### Reasons Cited by Classified Employees for Staying/Leaving Their Position

*Reported by Contacts at Profiled Districts*



### Offer Bonuses to Incentivize Retention and Improve Performance

**District E** and **District B** offer bonuses to incentivize both retention and high performance.

#### ***Incentives for Bus Drivers***

District E offers multiple opportunities for bus drivers to receive bonuses during their tenure with the district. If bus drivers maintain a clean driving record for three years, with no at-fault accidents or moving violations (either when driving for the district or when driving for personal reasons), they receive an additional \$250 per semester. The district also gives drivers and other employees within the transportation department the opportunity to earn an attendance bonus; if drivers miss no more than three routes within a nine-week period, they receive a \$250 bonus. These bonuses incentivize retention and encourage behaviors that benefit the district. Contacts note that these bonuses improve overall driver retention and slow the rate of turnover, though profiled districts struggle to keep every bus driver position filled.

#### ***Incentives for Paraprofessionals***

District B offers small raises to paraprofessionals who complete Classified Education Units (CEUs) outside working hours. Employees complete CEUs at their own pace. When they reach 100 CEUs, the district raises them one level on the district's salary matrix (limited to no more than one move per three-year period). This results in an approximately \$600 annual increase in the employee's salary. Because paraprofessionals complete a certain number of state-mandated trainings annually during working hours as part of their job requirements, only CEUs that the state does not require count under this incentive policy. While contacts note that the dedication required to earn 100 CEUs outside working hours means that only a few employees take advantage of this benefit, they believe it serves as a reward for long-time employees because it acknowledges their commitment to the district.



#### **Consider the Reaction of Tenured Employees When Implementing New Retention or Recruitment Incentives to Avoid Workplace Tension**

Contacts at **District B** report that they considered implementing more traditional retention and recruitment bonuses in addition to the raises obtained through CEUs. However, when administrators discussed these potential bonuses with staff they received critical feedback from tenured classified employees. Contacts explain that new incentives that do not acknowledge the seniority or dedication of tenured employees may create friction between new hires and tenured staff, as well as dissatisfaction with administrators among both groups. Contacts at District B recommend districts plan to address these potential problems before they implement any new monetary incentives.

### Consider Using Low- and No-Cost Incentives to Improve Morale Among Classified Employees

While **District C** does not use monetary bonuses to incentivize retention, the district uses several low- and no-cost strategies to reward classified staff. For example, if



employees maintain perfect attendance for a semester, they receive “jean coupons,” which allow them to wear denim outside normal casual Fridays. This small prize does not cost the district anything and acknowledges employees’ efforts.

Additionally, district leaders at District C also highlight employee accomplishments in the district newsletter. This practice both highlights examples of employee excellence to the entire district and directly shows employees appreciation from supervisors. While District C has not tracked how these incentives impact retention, contacts suggest that other districts may find these practices useful to improve the morale and retention of classified staff.

## Feedback Mechanisms

### Use Climate Surveys and Interviews to Obtain Actionable Information to Improve Retention of Classified Staff

All profiled districts use some form of survey to receive feedback from classified employees, either through exit interviews, climate surveys, or “stay interviews.”

Though **District A**, **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** all request that employees complete an exit interview upon leaving the district, contacts at District C and District D both note that exit surveys do not typically provide actionable information to improve classified roles. Contacts at District B add that while they previously conducted exit interviews, they no longer require them because the interviews did not provide the district with new or actionable feedback. Instead, the HR department at District B uses regular school climate and other staff surveys to receive information about employees’ engagement before they leave the district.

Both District C and District D use “stay interviews” to measure employee engagement. Modeled after performance reviews and employee engagement surveys in the private sector, these interviews include surveys of current employees. The results of these surveys provide administrators feedback from employees on their engagement and how the district could improve the experience of classified roles. Notably, these interviews provide districts with feedback from employees before they decide to leave their role, which offers the district an opportunity to implement changes to retain them. At District C, the stay interview occurs when the employee reaches approximately three months tenure.

To conduct stay interviews, HR administrators at District D email surveys to random groups of employees at consistent intervals so they receive feedback that spans roles and tenure. While District C’s stay interviews focus on feedback in the early stages of roles, District D’s system provides HR administrators with a greater breadth of information about employee engagement.

#### Stay Interview Feedback Process at *District C*





### **District Administrators at *District C* Adjusted Orientation Processes Based on Feedback Obtained through Stay Interviews**

Initially, the district spent one full day to onboard new staff to every aspect of their employment with the district. Based on feedback received through from stay interviews, the district adapted orientation to separate job-specific information from general employment information (e.g., how to enroll in benefits). Further, the district now delivers orientation trainings across multiple days to avoid overburdening new employees with information. Contacts report that feedback received through more recent stay interviews indicates that employees respond positively to the new orientation process.

## **Offer Staff Opportunities to Deliver Direct Feedback to Obtain Information on Employee Engagement**

In addition to surveys, **District A** and **District E** both provide opportunities for classified employees to deliver feedback to district administrators directly. The HR department at District A maintains a system through which any employee can call the HR department to deliver feedback. When an employee calls the department, they speak immediately with an HR representative. Contacts report that the district often receives feedback through this system, which they believe allows them to understand and address employee concerns immediately and effectively.

To provide opportunities for in-person feedback, District E holds Workplace Environment Sessions. The district began to hold these sessions with teachers in 2018 but plans to hold these sessions with classified staff in late spring of 2019.

## Workplace Environment Sessions at *District E*



### Retired Employees

The district hires retired employees to conduct Workplace Environment Sessions.

### Questions to Guide Discussion

- ▶ 1. What is the district doing well?
- ▶ 2. What needs to be improved?
- ▶ 3. What should the district prioritize in the next year?



### Facilitated Discussion

The retired employees meet with current staff at each school. They facilitate a discussion to obtain feedback on employee engagement and workplace environment at the district.



### Presentation of Findings

The retired employees deliver findings of the discussions to district leaders. District leaders create action steps based on the findings.

The district hires retired staff to facilitate discussions to ensure that facilitators understand employees' roles and to mitigate biased findings (the outcome does not directly affect retired staff).

## 4) Research Methodology

---

### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What strategies do contract districts use to recruit candidates for classified positions?
- How do contact districts advertise classified positions?
- Specifically, where do they post job opportunities for classified positions?
- Which aspects of classified roles and their compensation packages do contact districts highlight in job postings?
- How do contact districts tailor recruiting for classified positions to specific subpopulations?
- Have contact districts reduced or eliminated certain requirements from job descriptions to increase recruitment for classified positions?
- How do contact districts conduct candidate interview processes for classified positions to increase the number of accepted offers?
- How do contact districts retain classified employees?
- What benefits do contact districts offer that increase retention among classified employees?
- What feedback mechanisms do contact districts use to assess employee satisfaction?
- What reasons do classified employees at contract districts cite for remaining in their jobs?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries ([eab.com](http://eab.com))
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- National Association for Pupil Transportation. "Driver Shortage Surveys," Fall 2016. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.napt.org/content.asp?contentid=253>.
- McMahon, Thomas. "How school bus driver shortage is linked to unemployment." *School Bus Fleet* (blog), February 5, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.schoolbusfleet.com/blogpost/sbfblog/710528/how-driver-shortage-is-linked-to-unemployment>.

## Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed district-level Human Resources administrators who oversee classified staff at suburban and rural districts that enroll between 3,000 and 11,000 students.

### A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

District	Location	Approximate Number of Students
District A	Mountain West	3,000
District B	Midwest	4,500
District C	South	5,500
District D	Mountain West	6,500
District E	South	10,500

## Sample Job Advertisements

### Bus Driver Advertisement

**Do you want a dependable job with flexible hours and great benefits? Come drive for \_\_\_\_\_ School District!**

Help \_\_\_\_\_ School District get all kids to school on time and ensure they arrive home safely- become a bus driver! We are looking for hardworking and personable individuals to transport our students. **Click here to apply!** [*link to application*]

**Why work with \_\_\_\_\_ School District?**

- Full health care and retirement benefits to make sure you and your family are covered.
- Flexible hours, with weekends and holidays off. We're a great second job!
- Receive bonuses for your clean driving record and regular attendance. We'll always thank you for doing your job well.
- **\$500 Dollar Signing Bonus for New Drivers!**
- Want to apply but don't have a Commercial Driver's License? Don't worry! If we hire you, we'll pay for you to get one- it's our \$250 gift to you!

**Have Questions?**

Contact [*Hiring Manager's name*] at [*phone number*] or [*email address*]

### Paraprofessional Advertisement

**Make a Difference in a Child's Life- Become an Educational Aide Today**

Do you believe that education is right for every child? Do you have a passion for helping others? Do you want a job that lets you do what you love while still allowing you to spend time with your family? If so, **apply to become an Educational Aide with \_\_\_\_\_ School District.** [*link to application*]

As an Educational Aide, you'll work in the classroom alongside teachers to support students and ensure an orderly, calm, learning environment. With your help, \_\_\_\_\_ School District can meet the educational needs of our students.

**What do you need to succeed as an Educational Aide?**

- A GED or high school diploma
- Experience working with kids
- Patience and persistence when solving problems

We'll provide the rest of the training! And if you continue to take advantage of our professional development opportunities, we'll give you a raise to reflect your expertise.

**We're a Great Job for Parents!**

We provide health insurance and retirement benefits to our employees. But more than that, we'll ensure you always have enough time to spend with your kids. As an Educational Aide, you'll work hours that match the school day and when your kids have the day off, so do you- including summer vacation! We also set up our compensation system so you receive a paycheck year-round, even when school is out and you're not working.

**Interested? Apply today at** *[link to district website]*

Any Questions? Please contact *[Hiring Manager's name]* at *[phone number]* or *[email address]*