



Teacher Retention Strategies for Title I Schools

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Engaged principals, opportunities for collaboration, and extensive coaching and mentoring serve as three hallmarks to improve teacher retention at profiled schools. Though specific initiatives and efforts to retain and engage teachers at profiled schools vary, the efforts feature three common themes. Contacts at all profiled schools highlight the importance of the school principal for retaining teachers. School leaders incorporate opportunities for collaboration and connections between teachers into schedules and operating procedures. Administrators at profiled schools also offer intensive professional development training, provide mentors to new or struggling teachers, and employ instructional experts to coach teachers on curriculum delivery.

Principals who build relationships and support teachers lead retention efforts. As managers and leaders, school principals play a key role in setting the professional environments of their schools. When teachers feel supported by administrators, they are less likely to leave the school. At **School B**, the principal focuses on building a positive school culture by including teachers in decision-making processes, empowering experienced teachers to lead, and building a strong team dynamic among the teaching staff.

Re-evaluate and structure curricula to focus school efforts and help teachers succeed. To help teachers save time and work more efficiently, the principal at **School B** selected and focused on only curricular initiatives that had shown positive results. This focus reduced teacher workloads and improved teacher morale. To help teachers implement these changes, school leaders structure professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators around these new priorities.

Structuring schools to promote collaboration helps teachers feel supported and connected. Teachers in struggling schools are often isolated and feel disconnected from the other teachers in their buildings. Establishing a team dynamic provides struggling teachers with the resources and peer support to work through frustrations and difficulties. To promote collaboration, school leaders build time into schedules for group interaction and design teaching processes that include teamwork.

Coaching and professional development opportunities help teachers adapt to changes, continue to grow, and respond to challenging environments. Most profiled schools provide teachers with instructional coaches who offer assistance in a low-pressure, non-evaluative setting. These coaches provide a resource for teachers and help guide curriculum and instructional strategies. Profiled schools also offer ample support and guidance in the form of professional development. Schools tailor professional development around curriculum changes to help teachers adapt to new strategies and standards.

2) Teacher Retention Trends

Turnover in Title I Schools

Many Schools Face High Teacher Turnover Rates

Over the past two decades, the percentage of teachers leaving the classroom has increased substantially. A 2017 report on teacher turnover developed by the Learning Policy Institute identifies that since 2005, roughly eight percent of teachers leave the profession each year. Additionally, another eight percent of teachers change schools each year, resulting in national teacher turnover rates of approximately 16 percent.¹

While teacher turnover rates vary widely state to state and even district to district, schools with larger populations of poor students tend to experience higher rates of teacher turnover. The Learning Policy Institute's report details that the teacher turnover rate in Title I schools is nearly 50 percent greater than in non-Title I schools.²

Teacher Retention and Turnaround Success at Profiled Schools

The Title I schools profiled in this report have recently experienced turnaround success. Contacts explain that teacher retention played an important role in the revitalization efforts in these schools.

School C offers an example of the turnaround experienced by profiled schools. In 2011, School C's performance placed the school in the lowest five percent of all schools in Washington State. Eighty-seven percent of students in the school qualified for free and reduced lunches. The school's turnaround included replacing the principal, lengthening the school day, and lengthening the school year.

New leadership reduced teacher turnover in the school and fostered a stronger team mentality among school employees. The school's performance steadily improved, with the school scoring above average only four years after beginning the transformation.

Profiled Turnaround Schools

School	District	Percent Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	Score Before Turnaround	Score After Turnaround
School A	District A	98%	One star (lowest)	Three Star
School B	District B	70%	2 nd percentile	59 th percentile
School C	District C	87%	<5 th percentile	53 rd percentile
School D	District D	63%	<15 th percentile	48 th percentile
School E*	District E	74%	N/A*	N/A*

* School E is an alternative school for high-risk students

1) Desiree Darling-Hammond and Linda Carver-Thomas. "Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It," Learning Policy Institute (August 2017): https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf

2) Ibid. (pg. 14)

Consider Strategies beyond Compensation to Improve Teacher Retention

Despite a prevailing focus in the media about low teacher pay, most teachers report other reasons for leaving their previous jobs. A Gallup poll conducted in 2018 found that teachers left their previous careers primarily for reasons other than compensation. Out of the teachers who left their previous positions for job-related reasons (i.e., excluding departures for health or relocation), 60 percent left for better career advancement or development opportunities. Only 13 percent mentioned compensation or benefits as their reason for leaving previous teaching jobs. Workers in other professions cite compensation as a reason for leaving previous positions more frequently than teachers. One in four non-teachers voluntarily left their last jobs because of pay.³

At **School A**, **School B**, and **School C**, contacts estimate that teacher compensation is roughly comparable with other area schools. Contacts note that while higher compensation or signing bonuses may help recruit new teachers to a school, these benefits are less effective at keeping teachers there.

Teachers at School C do earn higher salaries than some of their peers, but this is primarily because the school day is 30 minutes longer and the school year is 5 days longer. While this increased instructional time results in higher overall pay, administrators argue that the larger workload actually hurts teacher retention efforts.

District and State Average Instructional Staff Salaries (2013-2014)

Combined Average Salaries of FTE Teachers and FTE Instructional Aides

District	School	State	District Average	State Average
District A	School A	NV*	\$51,756*	\$55,833*
District B	School B	MI	\$55,921	\$50,826
District C	School C	WA	\$65,019	\$59,609
District D	School D	OR	\$54,887	\$49,100
Source: National Center for Education Statistics 2013-2014 – Salary - Total Instructional Expenditures divided by Total FTE Teachers and Total FTE Instructional Aides				
*Data on Instructional Aide FTE was not available for districts in Nevada. These figures are calculated by applying the national average number of instructional aides per teacher to districts in Nevada				
**Data for School E was not available				

3) Shane McFeely. "Why Your Best Teachers Are Leaving and 4 Ways to Keep Them." *Gallup*. March 27, 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/231491/why-best-teachers-leaving-ways-keep.aspx>.

Accelerated Salary Schedules at *School D* May Complement other Teacher Retention Efforts

Contacts at **School D** argue that elements of the district's compensation package help their school retain teachers. Teachers in the district reach higher compensation levels more quickly compared to teachers in other districts. The salary schedule includes 10 steps, with each step offering a salary increase of approximately two to three percent. Teachers progress one-step up the salary schedule for each year they teach in the district. As a result, teachers reach the maximum salary tier for their level of education in only ten years.

To provide funding for higher teacher salaries that result from this accelerated salary schedule, School D offers fewer special classes (e.g., physical education, music, art, library) compared with other schools. As a result, although teachers at the school can receive higher salaries, they also teach for longer each day.

Themes of Teacher Retention

Three Themes Emerge for Effective Teacher Retention

Contacts at profiled schools describe multiple initiatives and efforts that increase teacher retention in their schools. These efforts typically feature three common themes.

Hallmarks of Teacher Retention in Profiled Schools



Engaged Principals and Administrators

Contacts at all profiled schools highlight the importance of the school principal for retaining teachers. Leaders at **School A** argue that the number one factor that teachers seek in a work environment is a supportive principal and administration. Research by the Learning Policy Institute supports this assertion. When teachers strongly disagree that their administration is supportive, they are more than twice as likely to move schools or leave teaching than when they strongly agree that their administration is supportive.⁴



Collaborative Teaching Culture

School leaders at **School B** emphasize that a collaborative teaching culture allows teachers to support each other. All profiled schools organize teachers into grade-level professional learning communities. These groups meet frequently to plan lessons and evaluate student performance. In addition to professional learning communities, school leaders also structure other opportunities for collaboration and connections between teachers.



Extensive Coaching and Mentorship

Frequent coaching and mentorship opportunities help teachers feel supported and empowered to make a difference in the classroom. Profiled schools offer intensive professional development training, provide mentors to new or struggling teachers, and employ instructional experts to coach teachers on curriculum delivery. Administrators at **District D** help connect new teachers at **School D** with experienced teachers to serve as mentors for their first three years in the school.

4) Desiree Darling-Hammond and Linda Carver-Thomas. "Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It," Learning Policy Institute (August 2017) page 29: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf

3) Principals' Role in Teacher Retention

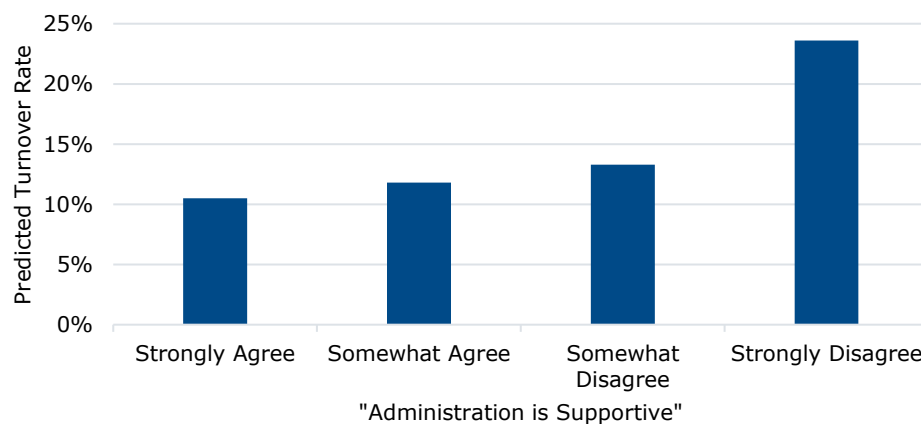
Setting School Culture

Principals Establish an Environment and Culture for Teachers to Succeed

Contacts at all profiled schools emphasize that school principals play a crucial role in teacher retention efforts. Contacts at **School A** explain that contrary to misconceptions, many teachers are willing to work with more challenging student populations and may even prefer to work with children who need greater academic and behavioral assistance. When weighing work opportunities, teachers focus more on the work environment and school culture. School principals play a key role in setting the professional environments of their schools. Teachers who feel supported by their administrators are less likely to leave their schools or the profession.

Research by the Learning Policy Institute indicates that teacher perceptions of administrative support have a strong impact on teacher retention after controlling for student and teacher characteristics. When teachers strongly disagree that their administration is supportive, they are more than twice as likely to move schools or leave teaching than when they strongly agree that their administration is supportive.

Teacher Turnover Rate and Reports of Administrative Support⁵



Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey, 2011–12 and Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2012–13.

The principal at **School B** focuses on building a positive school culture as a main priority. To establish this culture, the principal began by including teachers in decision-making processes, empowering experienced teachers to lead, and building a strong team dynamic among the teaching staff. School leaders at School B encourage experienced teachers to lead professional development meetings to share their insights and help other teachers learn useful instructional strategies.

Principals hold responsibility not only for supporting and developing teachers but also for aligning this support with a coherent vision for their school. The principal at **School C** explains that principals need to serve not only as people managers, but also as leaders. Principals should share a clear vision for how their school will operate and improve, and then work with teachers and staff to build that vision.

5) Desiree Darling-Hammond and Linda Carver-Thomas. "Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It," Learning Policy Institute (August 2017) page 29: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf

Principals Who Build Relationships and Establish Trust with Teachers Reduce Turnover

Administrators in **District D** note that some principals in the district excel at making personal connections and building trust with teachers, while other principals rely more heavily on their position as an authority. In the district, schools where teachers view the principal as a mentor and feel comfortable reaching out for help experience better performance and greater teacher retention.

The principal at **School A** prioritizes connecting with employees and listening to their needs above other tasks or duties. The principal invites teachers and staff to approach him any time if they would like to share their thoughts or concerns. By taking time to listen, principals demonstrate that they respect and value teachers' opinions.

Tactics for Principals to Help Establish a Positive School Culture



Celebrate and Recognize Teacher's Hard Work

Principals at **School A** and **School B** take time to celebrate teacher efforts and recognize the successes of school employees. During daily announcements, the principal at School A frequently takes time to highlight a teacher's recent efforts or accomplishments.



Fund Classroom Supplies

The school principal at **School A** provides teachers with a budget for classroom supplies. This reduces the need for teachers to spend their own money on supplies and materials each year.



Provide Communal Meals

Principals at **School A** and **School E** host staff luncheons and breakfasts to help build community and demonstrate appreciation for the hard work of the teachers. On the last Friday of each month, students and staff members at School E enjoy a lunch together hosted by the school principal.



Assist Teachers with Small Tasks

At **School A**, the principal occasionally helps teachers complete small tasks to save them time. In one instance, when the school began using a new software program, the principal helped generate student log-in information for the program. Contacts explain that these tasks help build connections and demonstrate that school leaders value teachers and their time.

Principals at Profiled Schools Provide Instructional Guidance and Coaching

School principals at profiled schools frequently visit classrooms to observe teachers. The principal at **School B** visits each classroom teacher to observe instruction at least once a month. As part of these observations, the principal takes notes on the lesson and the teacher's delivery and offers suggestions for improvement. Providing this feedback in a collaborative and helpful manner is important. The principal of **School A** notes that feedback based on observations should not consist of only negative points. Instead, school leaders aim to offer feedback in a cooperative mindset. This includes highlighting a teacher's strengths and talking through strategies to help teachers improve where needed.

To help school principals in **District D** improve their skills as mentors and coaches, district administrators meet with principals for three hours each month for professional development. These three hours include time in a classroom setting for discussion of coaching tactics and mentorship strategies. Principals also spend time in smaller groups implementing new approaches and receiving feedback from peers and facilitators.

Professional Development for School Principals in *District D*



As a group, principals at District D discuss strategies for teacher evaluation and calibrate standards of good teaching. District administrators may introduce new strategies or evaluation models for the principals to study and implement. The group also discusses protocols for entering classrooms and providing effective feedback for teachers.

To implement lessons from professional development, smaller groups of principals will visit classrooms, observe instruction, and then compare approaches for providing feedback and advice to those teachers.

Focus Curriculum and Instructional Efforts on a Few Effective Practices to Simplify Teacher Workloads

Successive failed attempts to improve school performance can lead teachers to implement many different, independent initiatives to address deficiencies. However, without coordination, these disjointed efforts increase already overstretched teachers' workloads but often fail to show results. This can frustrate teachers and exacerbate teacher turnover.

As part of school turnaround and related teacher retention efforts, the principal at **School B** refocused the school's curriculum. Teachers and administrators conducted an inventory of all the initiatives each teacher was attempting in the classroom to improve student success. To help teachers save time and work more efficiently, the principal selected and focused on only the initiatives that had shown positive results. Refocusing teacher efforts on strategies that work helped reduce teacher workloads and improved teacher morale.

Leaders at **School D** took a similar approach to address chronic underperformance and low teacher morale. Leaders focused first on improving the school's low scores in reading comprehension rather than confronting all of the schools' performance issues at once. To begin this initiative, the principal worked with teachers and district administrators to re-develop the reading curriculum. The group first identified key standards of instructional practice in reading for teachers to prioritize.

To help teachers implement these changes, school leaders structured professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators around these new priorities. Teachers received instruction on these standards as well as tactics for teaching and evaluating students on each standard. The principal and other school administrators received training on methods to help support teachers as they implemented new practices. By focusing efforts and supporting teachers through these changes, student scores improved and teachers gained confidence in their ability to inflect change.

Provide Teachers with Social-Emotional Learning Strategies and Behavior Management Support

To help connect school curricula with school culture in **School D** and other schools in **District D**, administrators provided all school employees with training on a social-emotional learning model. This training helps teachers build an understanding of children's mental development and provides them with strategies to manage student behavior issues. Administrators credit this social-emotional training with higher teacher retention in School D because teachers with this training feel more capable and prepared to handle classroom disruptions.

To support teachers with managing student discipline, the principal of **School A** hired a behavior mentor to help address difficult student discipline cases. This mentor works with students inside and outside of classrooms to resolve behavioral issues once a teacher has exhausted their standard classroom behavior management steps.

4) Collaborative Culture

Collaboration Benefits

Collaborative Teams Help Teachers Feel Supported and Connected

School leaders at **School B** explain that teachers in struggling schools are often isolated. Teachers spend almost all of their time alone in their classrooms and can feel unsupported and disconnected from other teachers in their buildings. Many of these teachers already work long hours to plan lessons. Even if many of these teachers recognize that working together may improve their teaching ability, finding time to collaborate meaningfully can be difficult.

An established team dynamic provides teachers with the resources and peer support to work through frustrations and difficulties. Contacts at all profiled schools argue that this connectedness helps schools retain and develop teachers. To establish a collaborative culture, school leaders at all profiled schools build collaboration time into schedules and design teaching processes to include teamwork.

Professional Learning Communities

Organize Teachers into Professional Learning Communities to Establish Collaborative Teams

Contacts at **School C** explain professional learning communities serve as one of the core agents of change in struggling schools. These teams of grade-level teachers work together to plan lessons, assess student performance, and devise strategies to help struggling students catch-up while continuing into new units of the curriculum. As part of school turnaround and teacher retention efforts, the principal of School C grouped teachers into these professional learning communities aligned by grade level.

Educational researcher and former school principal Richard DuFour is widely credited with developing strategies for creating professional learning communities in K-12 schools. In his article, "What is a 'Professional Learning Community'", DuFour outlines three big ideas that define these groups.

Three Big Ideas of Professional Learning Communities⁶



#1 Ensuring Students Learn

A professional learning community holds responsibility for ensuring that students learn. As a group, teachers identify what each student should learn, how teachers will know if a student has learned it, and how teachers should respond if students experience difficulty learning.



#2 A Culture of Collaboration

A professional learning community should promote a collaborative culture. Teachers work as a team to analyze and improve their classroom practices. The team engages in discussions focused on teaching goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and student results.



#3 A Focus on Results

Professional learning communities judge their effectiveness on the basis of results. Instead of simply collecting data, teachers work as a group to analyze and compare data on student learning.

6) Richard DuFour. "What is a 'Professional Learning Community'." Educational Leadership (May 2004) pgs. 6-11
<http://www.allthingsplc.info/files/uploads/DuFourWhatIsAProfessionalLearningCommunity.pdf>

Administrators at **School A** and **School B** also structure teachers into professional learning communities to foster collaboration and curriculum coordination. These groups meet twice a week for 40 minutes each. The principal at School B joins meetings of each professional learning community once a month to hear how students are performing and participates in discussions on strategies to assist struggling students.

Structure Schedules to Include Collaboration Time

While collaboration and teamwork help teachers feel more supported and connected, professional learning communities and other collaborative activities may actually hurt teacher retention if they increase a teacher's workload. To create time for professional learning communities or other collaborative efforts, school administrators at all profiled schools structure class and weekly schedules accordingly.

Strategies to Provide Time for Collaboration



Shortened Instructional Days

Leadership at **School C** and **School D** shorten class schedules for one day on certain weeks to provide time for collaboration and professional development. At School D, students are released about two hours early every Wednesday afternoon to provide this time. Instead of an early release, School C uses a delayed start every Friday to set aside time for development and collaboration.



Coordinated Preparatory Periods

To allow professional learning communities to meet twice a week without shortening the instructional day, the principal at **School B** restructured class schedules to provide common planning periods for teachers in professional learning communities. By coordinating the timing of special classes (e.g., physical education, music, art), the schedule provides at least two 40-minute blocks per week for teachers to meet as a professional learning community.



Extended Days

Teachers at **School A** work an extended day every Tuesday that lasts from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm. Teachers meet as professional learning communities either during these extended days or outside of regular school hours. To accommodate this additional workload, the school provides compensation for these additional hours.

Because **School E** operates as an alternative school, students attend classes for only four hours per day. The shorter schedule provides extensive time for professional development and collaboration. This additional preparation time provides important support and assistance to the school's teachers to serve the school's population of high-risk students.

Professional Learning Communities Should Leverage Data to Evaluate Instruction and Interventions

Professional learning communities at **School A** and **School B** use student assessment data to track student progress and adjust instruction methods to help students learn. Professional learning communities at School B evaluate student performance on unit tests. Teachers compare student results to discuss differences between classrooms, identify effective instructional techniques, and separate struggling students into intervention groups for remediation. Because unit examinations occur every four to six weeks, teachers and school administrators can react quickly to changes in student performance with instructional interventions, small group instruction, or other approaches considered by the professional learning community.

Holding professional learning communities accountable for student success helps ensure that teachers invest the time and effort to make these groups work. At School A, the principal attends professional learning community meetings regularly and receives reports from the group on student data. In these reports, the professional learning community summarizes student results on assessments question-by-question, explains discrepancies in student scores, and describes next steps for assisting struggling students.

New Teacher Cohorts Help Young Teachers Transition into the District

Each year, **District D** groups first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the district into a cohort to provide tailored support and assistance for transitioning into the district. The new teacher cohort meets during regularly scheduled professional development days to discuss challenges and receive guidance from experienced teachers.

New teacher cohorts meet regularly for three years. At the end of these three years, administrators meet with each new teacher to learn about their experience and identify areas where the district can better support new teachers in the district. This regular review process helps district leaders maintain high teacher retention rates.

Consider Including All Teachers and Staff in School Accountability Meetings

At the beginning of **School B's** turnaround effort, the principal convened a school improvement team of five experienced teachers to track student performance and improvement efforts across the school. However, because many teachers and staff members did not participate in these meetings, most in the school were unaware of school improvement efforts and details about school improvement goals.

To increase awareness and involvement in school improvement initiatives, the principal expanded the school improvement team to include all school employees. This team meets once a month to focus on school improvement goals, assess progress towards achieving these goals, and discuss new approaches where necessary.

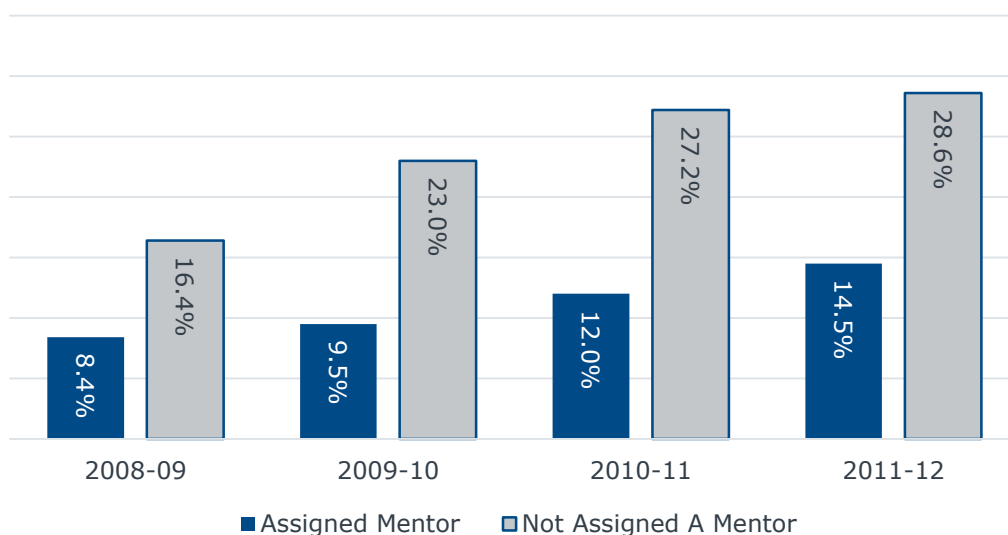
5) Coaching and Mentorship

Mentors and Coaches

Structure Mentorship Networks for New Teachers

Providing new teachers with mentors helps increase teacher retention. A longitudinal study on public school teacher attrition conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics followed over 1,900 public school teachers starting as first-year teachers in the 2007-2008 academic year. Over the following four years, 14.5 percent of the initial cohort who were assigned a mentor during their first year of teaching left the profession compared to 28.6 percent of those not assigned a mentor.⁷

Percent of 2007-08 Cohort No Longer in Teaching⁸



Administrators in **District D** match teachers in the new teacher cohort with mentors. This structure provides new teachers with additional support, both with peers in the cohort and their assigned mentor. During professional development time set aside each Wednesday, mentors connect with these new teachers to offer assistance and answer questions. Mentors provide information about upcoming district events like parent-teacher conferences and sometimes model instructional techniques.

The district selects mentors from two groups. Instructional coaches in the district serve as mentors for new teachers. The district also recruits retired teachers to serve as mentors and provides these teachers with a stipend for their assistance.

District D does not require new teachers to meet regularly with their assigned mentors. However, the district does require mentors to reach out to these teachers to check in and offer their assistance every other week. This helps ensure that mentors remain connected with new teachers even if they do not request specific help.

7) Lucinda Gray, Soheyla Taie, and Isaiah O'Rear. Public School Teacher Attrition and Mobility in the First Five Years: Results From the First Through Fifth Waves of the 2007-08 Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study (NCES 2015-337). Washington, DC: 2015. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015337.pdf>

8) Ibid. Table 2

Most Profiled Schools Employ Instructional Coaches to Support Teachers

School A, School B, and School C all employ instructional coaches to provide assistance and guidance on instruction and curriculum. Contacts at School B explain that while principals and administrators should also be able to provide coaching and guidance on instruction, teachers may be reluctant to seek their advice for fear of affecting future performance reviews. Because instructional coaches operate outside of normal management lines, they can offer teachers assistance and observe teaching in low-pressure, non-evaluative settings. Struggling teachers feel more comfortable approaching instructional coaches for help and instructional coaches can spend more time helping address teacher needs than building administrators. As a result, these coaches can help reduce teacher turnover.

The instructional coach at School B works with 24 classroom teachers and checks in with each teacher every month to provide assistance as necessary. The coach also regularly conducts classroom observations and provides professional development customized to each teacher's needs.

School C employs two specialized instructional coaches, one focused on math instruction and one focused on literacy instruction. These coaches provide professional development to teachers in the school and help develop curriculum for each grade level.

School A employs multiple learning strategists as part of their staff. These strategists provide professional development for teachers and conduct learning interventions with small groups of students. When the school hires a new teacher, the principal assigns one of the learning strategists to provide additional support and guidance to the new teacher.

Mentors and Coaches Do Not Participate in Formal Teacher Evaluations at School B

Although the instructional coach at **School B** regularly visits classrooms to observe teacher instruction, these classroom observations do not factor into performance evaluations conducted by school administrators. Administrators explain that this separation helps teachers feel comfortable asking for help and guidance.

Professional Development

Provide Teachers with Extensive Professional Development

Teachers in **School C** and **District D** receive eight hours of professional development per month. This professional development helps teachers work with more difficult student populations. Leaders at School C explain that professional development plays a key role in retaining teachers during times of institutional change. Improving a struggling school's performance requires both pressure and support. Leaders provide the catalyst for change, but if teachers do not receive ample support and guidance to implement these changes, this pressure can frustrate teachers and lead to burnout. Offering extensive professional development helps ensure that teachers receive the support necessary to make (and sustain) positive results.

District D dedicates two hours each Wednesday for professional development. The district organizes these activities two weeks out of the month, and teachers can decide how to use the professional development time during the other two weeks.

Teachers can use this self-directed time to meet with mentors or instructional coaches, prepare class materials, or attend formal training sessions.

Consider Conducting In-School Professional Development

School C adopted a full-day, in-school professional development model to help quickly build teacher content knowledge and instructional skills. This approach allows teachers to receive hands-on training and provides teachers with opportunities to apply lessons and strategies in their own classrooms with instructors present. Administrators initially funded this relationship with funds from School Improvement Grants.

To facilitate this training, the school contracted with a nearby university for professional development assistance. Instructors from the university visit the school each Wednesday during the school year to work with teachers from one grade level on a five-week rotation. The school hires substitute teachers to cover classes each Wednesday to allow teachers to participate. These teachers, along with the school principal, receive instruction related to an upcoming unit in the class curriculum. Instructors work with teachers to address the standards in the unit, discuss strategies for teaching each standard, and model teaching approaches.

In-School Professional Development Agenda

Classroom-Style Instruction



Instructors provide a classroom-style presentation to teachers on an upcoming unit. This presentation includes information about the standards that teachers need to teach and strategies to consider when teaching these standards.



Develop Sample Lesson

Based on the presentation, teachers develop sample lessons to cover a standard in the curriculum.



Teach Sample Lesson

Each teacher presents their sample lesson to their students for 20-30 minutes with other grade-level teachers and the instructors in attendance.



Discuss and Evaluate

After a teacher presents their sample lesson, the group leaves the classroom to evaluate the lesson, assess the effectiveness of the strategies used, and provide feedback for the teacher.

By providing hands-on instruction and guidance, this approach helps teachers develop a common vision and shared expectations for teaching. Because of this success, school leaders have continued this model of professional development even after School Improvement Grants expired. Now in the seventh year of this model, the school's own instructional coaches develop and lead these intensive trainings.

6) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

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

- What causes teachers to leave teaching positions in low performing schools at contact districts?
- What incentives do administrators at contact districts provide to teachers in low performing schools to encourage retention?
- How do compensation structures at contact districts incentivize retention? Do teachers in low performing schools receive different compensation?
- What tactics do leaders at contact districts use to retain highly effective teachers in low performing schools?
- What strategies do leaders at contact districts use to retain and develop new or struggling teachers in low performing schools?
- What roles do school and district administrators play in efforts to retain teachers in low-performing school districts?
- How do school and district administrators use professional development to increase teacher retention?
- What community resources do contact districts partner with to incentivize teacher retention?
- What teacher retention strategies do leaders at contact districts ineffective or counterproductive?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
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- McFeely, Shane. 2018. "Why Your Best Teachers Are Leaving and 4 Ways to Keep Them." *Gallup*. March 27. Accessed July 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/231491/why-best-teachers-leaving-ways-keep.aspx>.

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed school principals and other district administrators at the following districts.

A Guide to Schools Profiled in this Brief

School	District	Title I?	Free Lunch Eligible	Total School Enrollment
School A	District A	Yes	460	472
School B	District B	Yes	198	312
School C	District C	Yes	337	417
School D	District D	Yes	238	469
School E	District E	No	103	143