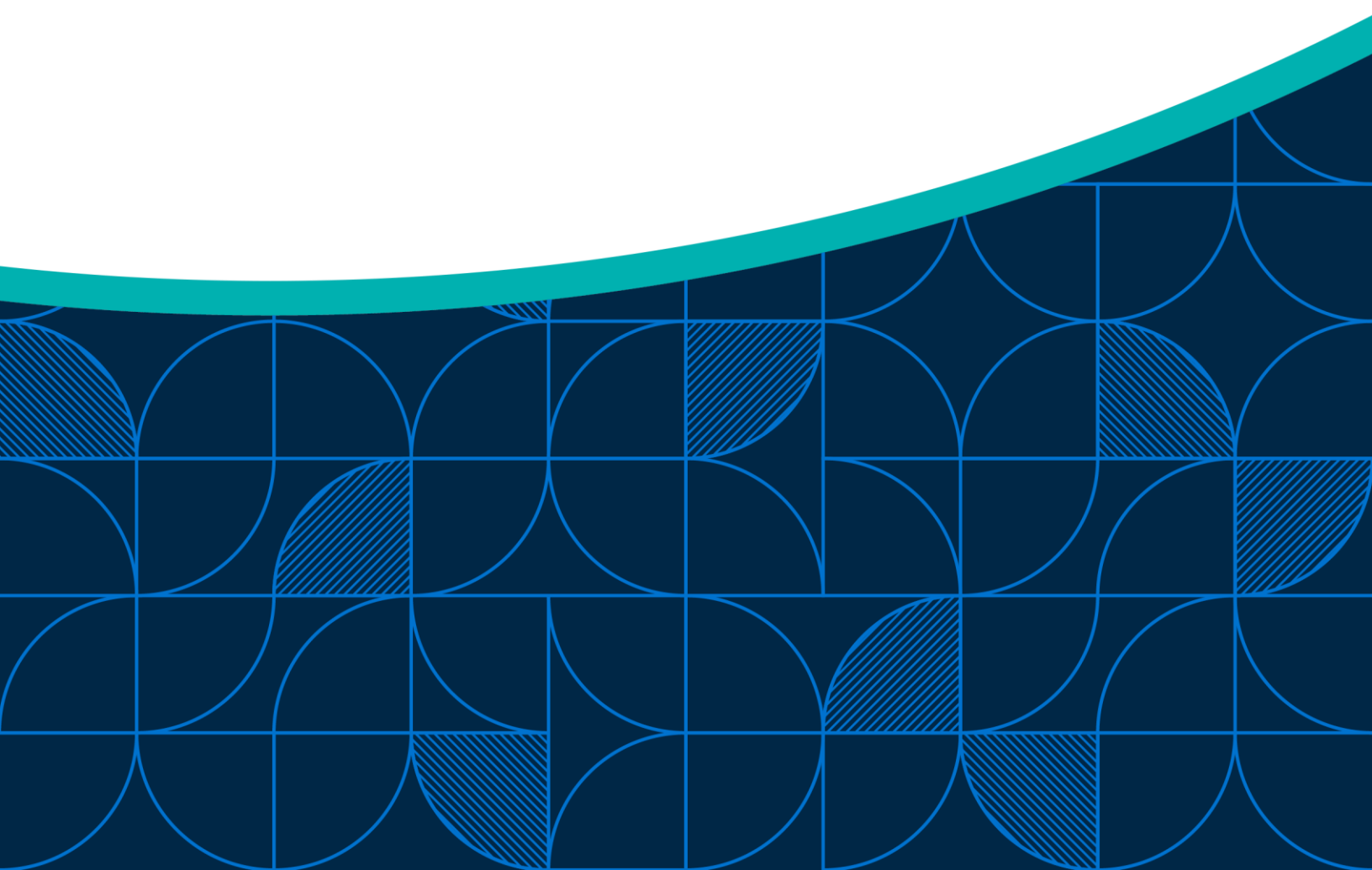




DISTRICT LEADERSHIP FORUM

# Modernizing the K-12 Education Workplace

Innovative Approaches to Redesigning  
the Employee Experience



# District Leadership Forum

## Project Director

Gavriel Rubenstein

## Contributing Consultants

Alexandra O'Brien

## Executive Director

Olivia Rios

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# Align District Actions to Key Candidate Decisions

## A Structured Approach to Help Districts Secure Top Talent

This toolkit focuses on the “**Secure**” stage of the recruitment funnel, when candidates are weighing offers and deciding which district best fits their needs. Today, many K–12 classrooms have outdated structures that don’t offer what today’s educators value - flexibility and collaboration. Without rethinking teaching experiences, districts risk losing strong candidates to other districts or employer that better reflect modern workforce expectations.

As districts compete for talent in a changing labor market, it becomes even harder to meet candidate expectations when traditional classroom structures remain in place. Too often, these environments:



Isolate teachers and require each educator to “do it all”.



Struggle to adapt quickly to changing student and teacher needs



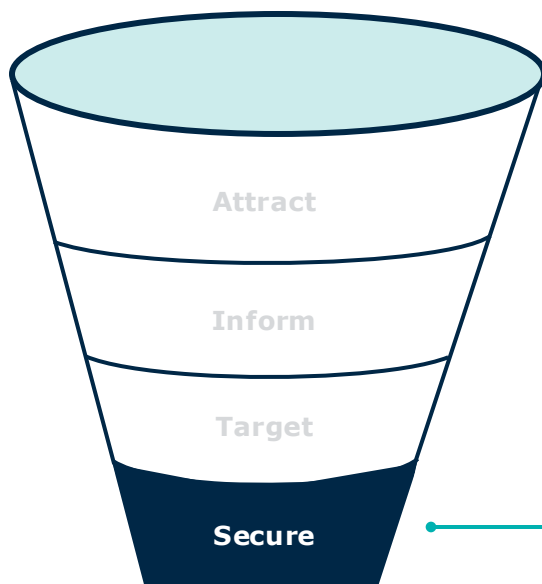
Provide limited flexibility for teachers to try new strategies

Use this toolkit to learn how ASU’s Next Education Workplace model and two K-12 districts modernize the workplace to strengthen the “**Secure**” stage of the Educator Talent Funnel and attract top talent. These changes help elevate the district’s employee value proposition (EVP) by demonstrating a commitment to creating a work environment that aligns the educator experience with staff needs and candidate expectations. See the Table of Contents on **pg. 4** for a summary of each modern workplace model.

The Educator Talent Funnel helps districts address persistent recruitment challenges by targeting the key moments that influence whether someone chooses a career in education. It breaks the candidate journey into four critical decision points where strategic district action can shape potential talent’s interest, engagement, and follow-through in becoming an educator. By applying targeted strategies at each stage, districts can build a stronger, more sustainable pipeline of future educators.

## The Educator Talent Funnel

### District Steps to Secure Talent



### Key Decision Points for Prospects

- ▶ *Am I interested in teaching?*
- ▶ *Should I get credentialed?*
- ▶ *Should I apply to this district?*
- ▶ *Should I choose this district over another?*

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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This toolkit highlights Arizona State University’s Next Education Workforce team-teaching model and two K–12 district case studies that demonstrate how modernized educator work experiences can strengthen districts' employee experiences. Review these case studies to understand how districts can reimagine the educator workplace to make teaching more sustainable, appealing, and competitive in today’s talent market.

**Next Education Workforce, Arizona State University** . . . . . Pg. 5

*Arizona State University pioneered the Next Education Workforce model to move beyond isolated teaching roles and create team-based structures that promote collaboration and shared responsibility.*

**Case Study 1: Distributed Expertise Model, Spring Lake Park School District** . . . . Pg. 8

*Spring Lake Park School District participated in the Next Education Workforce professional development series to implement the Distributed Expertise Model, leveraging educator strengths across grade bands to provide targeted student support.*

**Case Study 2: Center-Based Team Leader Model, Livingston ESA** . . . . . Pg. 11

*Livingston Educational Service Agency is piloting a Center-Based Team Leader model that organizes special education teachers into supportive teams, creating more time for collaboration, restoration, and professional growth.*

**Plan Next Steps** . . . . . Pg. 14

*Explore next steps districts can take to align with today’s workforce expectations and implement meaningful changes that modernize educator workplace models in ways that fit each district’s context.*

# Next Education Workforce, Arizona State University

Many schools have struggled to sustain the traditional “one teacher, one classroom” model, which places the entire instructional and student-support load on individual teachers. Because of this, teachers often feel isolated in their work, culminating in higher turnover due to burnout.

As a solution, Arizona State University (ASU) developed the Next Education Workforce model to help K–12 districts modernize their teaching structures through collaborative educator teams. Rather than isolating teachers in the traditional classroom, ASU’s model creates teams of teachers that work collectively and flexibly, taking on specialized roles based on their expertise. This collaborative approach creates a supportive and sustainable system that better meets educator needs, allowing for higher quality instruction and intervention for students.

## Three Requirements to Launch a Successful ASU Team-Based Model

### 1 Shared Teacher Responsibility to Meet Students Needs

- On the *core teaching team*, at least two educators co-own instruction at grade level, sharing planning and student data analysis for a roster of students.
- The *extended teaching team* collaborates to provide services across all students and is composed of instructional specialists, behavioral specialists, and enrichment teachers.
- Roles within each team are defined based on strengths and certifications.
  - For example, one core team teacher leads specific content delivery for a subject area, while an extended team teacher focuses on academic or behavioral intervention.

### 2 Strong School Leadership to Coordinate Staff Teams

- District leadership teams allocate roles and design schedules collaboratively with educators to ensure the model’s sustainability and alignment with district goals.
- Schools use strategic staffing, a process of evaluating educators’ strengths and professional certification, to match educator expertise with student and grade-level needs (e.g., bilingual educators paired with students that need ELL support).
- Leaders provide continuous coaching and professional development to ensure team goals align with evolving student needs.

### 3 Intentional School-Level Planning to Create Flexible Student Groups, Schedules, and Classroom Spaces

- Students are grouped dynamically based on current learning data, not static rosters. Teams adjust instruction fluidly for remediation, enrichment, and project-based work.
- Physical spaces and schedules are redesigned to support collaborative teaching, including shared classrooms that allow multiple educators to work simultaneously.
- Intentional scheduling allocates protected educator collaboration blocks each week, reducing planning inefficiency and preventing burnout.

## ASU Provides Guidance to Support District Implementation

ASU’s Theory of Action gives districts a clear roadmap for launching a team-based model, outlining specific district-level activities that builds strong educator teams, promotes collaboration, and improves student outcomes.

### Theory of Action (ToA) | *noun*

A research-backed framework that connects specific district-level activities to meaningful outcomes for educators and students. The Theory of Action guides districts to implement the Next Education Workforce model, taking into account local context and student needs.

#### District Activities to Operationalize the ToA

- Build teams of educators with distributed expertise
- Provide educator teams with autonomy
- Design learning spaces and create flexible schedules to support teaming
- Group students dynamically and strategically based on needs

#### Resulting Outputs That Activities Produce in Practice

- New & differentiated educator roles and responsibilities
- Increased communication and collaboration among educator team
- Dynamic and flexible schedules to meet changing educator and student needs
- Student-centered learning environments learning modules

### Steps for Districts to Launch a Team-Based Model

- ▶ **Plan and implement activities** (see examples above) that support schools in exploring team-based teaching models beyond the traditional “one teacher, one classroom” structure.
- ▶ **Monitor progress** to ensure activities align with outputs and there is a collaborative work environment with shared educator responsibility and student-centered decision making.
- ▶ **Measure student and educator outcomes** using shared metrics for student growth (e.g., academic achievement), educator experience (e.g., retention), and school performance (e.g., educator recruitment).
- ▶ **Engage with ASU’s professional development implementation supports** to sustain progress and ensure each activity contributes to long-term success:
  1. Explore team-based models through ASU resources, case examples, and staff testimonials.
  2. Identify one pilot school, a team of educators, and a flexible schedule to launch.
  3. Participate in ASU professional development, including webinars, coaching, and site visits (see **pg. 7** for more information).

# Targeted PD Series Builds District Capacity

ASU's structured professional development offerings equips districts with the knowledge and tools needed to implement and sustain team-based teaching models. Through interactive workshops and personalized one-on-one guidance, district teams strengthen instructional leadership, build district capacity, and ensure long-term sustainability of the team-based staffing model.

## ASU's Next Education Workforce Professional Development Offerings



Attend [information sessions](#) with ASU leaders and district panels to explore team-based teaching models.



Use the [School Leader Launchpad](#) to set meaningful goals with district teams and plan implementation.



Partner with an [ASU implementation coach](#) to plan, problem solve, and strengthen the model.



Utilize the [Community Educator Learning Hub](#) to collaborate with other educators in team-based models.



Collaborate with peers nationwide through [webinars and panels](#) to share strategies and successes.

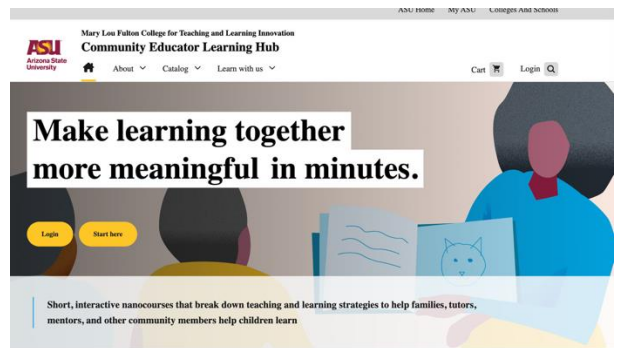
### Leading Educator Teams Series

**Who it's for:** School and teacher leaders actively implementing or scaling team-based models

**Who should attend:**  
School leaders | School leadership teams |  
Teacher leaders | Training managers and coaches

**Format:** Virtual via Zoom

**Time commitment:** Four, 4-hour sessions



## Evidence of Impact from Next Education Workforce Districts

143

Schools participated in PD and implemented model

375

Teams of educators created across schools

### Districts who have implemented the Next Education Workforce model have seen:

+6%

Increase in teacher collaboration

+10%

Increase in teacher job satisfaction

+4%

Increase in teacher retention

+1.4

Months of reading growth in students

# Distributed Expertise Model, Spring Lake Park (MN)

Spring Lake Park faced persistent substitute shortages, high teacher turnover, and fragmented intervention support across K-12. Frequent staff absences and substitute shortages, as well as high caseloads and limited specialist availability led to inconsistent coverage, uneven instructional quality, and increased workloads for classroom teachers.

In response, the district launched the Distributed Expertise Model in 2021 to build stable, collaborative teams that could provide consistent instruction and meet diverse student needs. The model organizes staff into core teams, which deliver grade-level instruction, and extended teams, which offer specialized academic and behavioral support. Unlike departmentalized models, Distributed Expertise does not assign teachers to teach only one subject across all classrooms. Instead, teachers remain connected to a homeroom group of students while leveraging specialized expertise through coordinated team structures. This approach allows schools to deploy staff strategically, reduce disruptions, and improve instructional continuity across classrooms.

## *Model at a Glance*

### **Educator Teams Strategically Staffed to Deliver Consistent, High-Quality Student Instruction**



#### **Core Team Leads Grade-Level Instruction**

- Includes grade-level lead teachers, English language teachers, academic specialists, and special education teachers.
- Focuses on consistent, high-quality instruction for a shared group of students, using intentional, flexible grouping driven by student and educator strengths, interests and needs.
- Collaborates to plan lessons and analyze student data while remaining in their primary “homeroom” classroom for core instruction.



#### **Extended Team Addresses Students’ Specialized Needs**

- Collaborates across multiple classrooms to deliver targeted supports and interventions based on student data—enhancing, not replacing classroom core instruction.
- Uses flexible schedules to serve multiple grade levels efficiently.
- May include behavior specialists, elective teachers, special education teachers, school psychologists, speech language pathologists, and occupational therapists.



#### **Teacher Apprentices and Residents Strengthen Team Capacity**

- Embedded in extended teams to gain meaningful classroom experience and prepare for full-time roles.
- Assist with instruction and fill in during absences, maintaining classroom continuity and easing substitute shortages.
- Gain hands-on experience from a variety of teachers on core and extended teams.

See an example of two team models with a core team, extended team, and novice teachers on **pg. 10**.



# Implementing the Distributed Expertise Model

## Co-Designing with Staff to Build Buy In and Long-Term Sustainability

After participating in ASU's professional development series, Spring Lake Park leaders and educators spent over two years co-designing and testing the Distributed Expertise Model. Through a collaborative design process with their educators, staff explored flexible staffing structures, piloted new approaches, and refined the model to ensure long-term sustainability.

### Phases of Model Development:

#### 1 Early Exploration of Staffing Models (2019)

- District leaders explored team-based staffing options.
- Leadership and board members engaged with ASU's professional development series to learn about model design and pilot implementation.
- District leaders selected an elementary school that was facing ongoing substitute shortages to pilot the model.

#### 2 Staff Provocations and Design Workshops (2020)

- Leaders facilitated design sessions with K-12 teachers to deepen understanding of the model.
- Educators led discussions called "provocations" to shape model options based on school needs and teaching expertise. See example stakeholder design questions below.
- The process built early buy-in, shared ownership, and alignment across schools.

##### Examples of Design Questions for Stakeholders

- **School Leaders:** What grade levels would this model be most effective for? How can you support teachers to sustain the model?
- **Teachers and Staff:** What subject area do you feel the most confident in teaching as an expert? How can this model support student learning?

#### 3 Pilot & Expansion (2021)

- The model launched in one elementary school with a teacher-designed team structure, reducing reliance on subject-specific substitutes.
- Families attended information sessions to learn about the new model.
- Following strong student outcomes and teacher satisfaction, the district expanded implementation to four schools across elementary, middle, and high school. See **pg. 10** for examples SLP's elementary team models.

## Evidence of Impact from Spring Lake Park's Classrooms

### Model grows in-district talent and eliminates vacancies:

37

Apprentice teachers have joined SLP since launch

51%

Of apprentice teachers remain in the district

75%

Of resident teachers remain in the district

11

Apprentice and resident teachers advanced to home-base roles

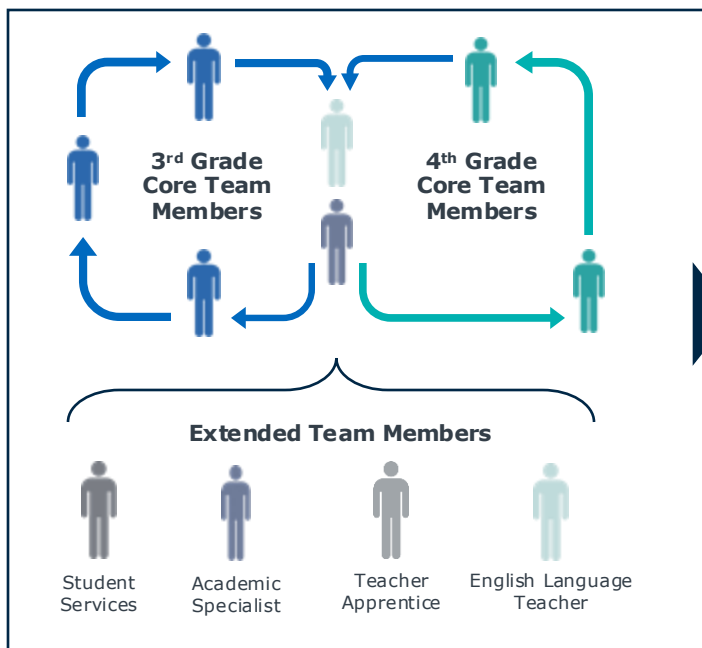
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Classroom vacancies in Distributed Expertise Model schools

## Team Structures Vary to Meet Each School’s Need

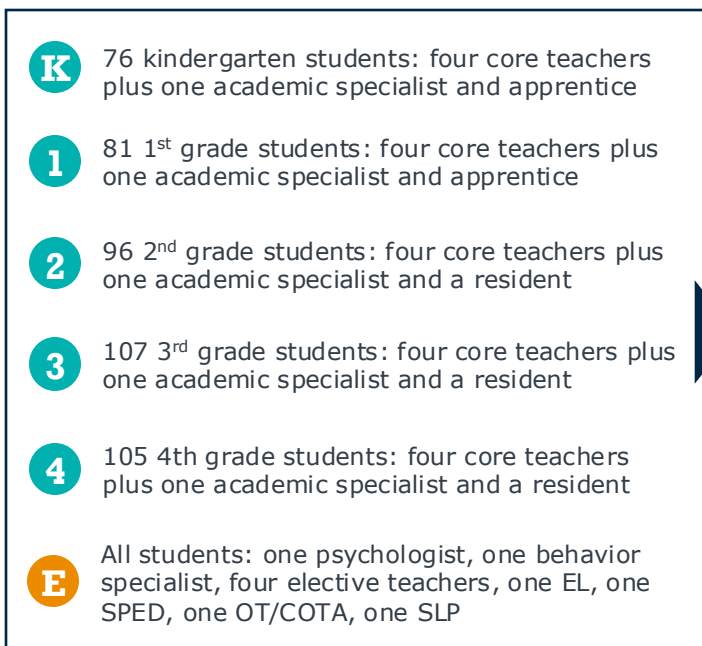
Instead of using a single team model, Spring Lake Park empowered teachers to design structures aligned with their school context and student needs. This teacher-driven approach sparked creativity and ownership, enabling schools to organize roles for maximum impact. The examples below illustrate two ways the Distributed Expertise Model adapts to different grade levels and instructional priorities.

### Example Model #1: 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Team Model



- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade core teachers stay within their grade bands, grouped to be flexible and address student and educator strengths and needs rotating between classrooms.
- One EL teacher and one academic specialist support the core team to ensure consistent coverage.
- The extended team includes academic and behavioral specialists serving all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- One teacher apprentice rotates among classrooms to provide instructional support and coverage during absences.

### Example Model #2: Multi-Grade Elementary Team Model



- Four instructional teachers form the core team for kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, sharing responsibilities across a shared roster of students.
- One apprentice or resident is assigned to each grade level, offering instructional support and consistent coverage.
- The extended team includes academic and behavioral interventionalists, enrichment teachers, and a school psychologist.
- Extended team members provide support services for all K-4 students.

**Note:** Spring Lake Park uses team models across K-12. These two models are examples of teacher-designed elementary teams to show distributed grade-level and student intervention expertise.

# Center-Based Team Leader Model, Livingston ESA (MI)

Special education teachers often experience high burnout due to the rigorous work environment, overwhelming volume of administrative tasks, and limited collaboration. Frequent vacancies and turnover make it difficult to sustain consistent, high-quality instruction for students and meet their needs.

To address these challenges, Livingston ESA is developing and preparing to pilot the Center-Based Team Leader (CBTL) Model to strengthen support for special education teachers through a rotational structure in which a team leader provides instructional coverage, coaching, and planning support. This developing model allows teachers to take scheduled restoration and professional learning time without disrupting student instruction, creating a more sustainable, collaborative work environment that produces high-quality instruction.

## *Model at a Glance*

### **Core Design Objectives to Protect Teacher Time and Reduce SPED Teacher Burnout**



#### **Rotational Team Schedule with Co-Teaching Transitions**

- A team leader will rotate through classrooms, providing coverage while teachers take restoration or PD time.
- Co-teaching occurs briefly at the start and end of each rotation to ensure smooth handoffs and instructional continuity.
- The rotation creates a sustainable structure for teacher relief and professional learning without adding staff or interrupting instruction.



#### **Team Leader Consistently Provides Relief for SPED Teachers**

- Each CBTL team includes one team leader supporting three special education teachers, each with their own roster of students.
- The team leader acts as both an instructional coach and relief teacher, ensuring continuity when classroom teachers take restoration time.
- Team leaders collaborate with teachers to align instruction and share best practices across classrooms.



#### **Scheduled and Protected Time for Restoration and Professional Learning**

- Every teacher on the CBTL team receives scheduled time for professional learning, planning, or personal restoration, while the team leader provides coverage.
- Educators use this time for activities such as:
  - Wellness or restorative time
  - Targeted skill-building
  - Paraprofessional training
  - Parent literacy training
  - Independent research projects
  - Observing peers

See sample rotational calendars for the team leader and classroom SPED teacher(s) on **pg. 13**.

# Developing the CBTL Model

## Creating and Refining a Cost-Effective, Scalable Model For Pilot Implementation

In developing the model, Livingston ESA is focusing on collaboration, clear communication, and cost-effective design to ensure sustainability. The CBTL model is being designed to reduce financial investments by reallocations resources and leveraging existing staff so they can implement the model without adding new classroom positions.

### Phases of Model Development:



#### Engage in Discussion with Key Stakeholders

- Build early alignment across district leaders, teachers, and the union to support a collaborative and sustainable model.
- Draft a pilot proposal outlining the timeline, structure, and funding requirements
- Create a Letter of Agreement between the district, the board, and teacher's union.



#### Design and Staff the Team Leader Model

- Engage educators as co-designers and maintain transparent communication throughout planning.
- Plan and launch an application process for existing teachers to apply for team leader positions.
- Host a family town hall to explain the model's purpose and expected benefits to student instruction and student outcomes.



#### Establish Two Center-Based Teams for Pilots

- Plan to launch the early pilot for one semester (e.g., January to June) without additional staffing to test feasibility and gather feedback.
- Establish two pilot teams in elementary schools for the one semester.
- Draft two team calendars to assess scheduling impacts: one team follows 180-day student calendar, and the other follows a 200-day student calendar.



#### Review Pilot Data Before Scaling Districtwide

- Partner with a regional university, Michigan State University, to review student outcomes, educator feedback, and areas for model refinement.
- Analyze strengths and improvement areas using pilot data.
- Use pilot data to inform implementation for the following school year.



#### Invest Strategically in Teacher Leadership

- Offer financial stipend to team leaders to enable the district to pilot the model in a way that is both feasible and sustainable within existing budget constraints.
  - \$2,500 for a a 180-day calendar
  - \$3,000 for a 200-day calendar

## Early Indicators of Success in Livingston ESA's CBTL Pilot Development

### District secures key stakeholder approvals to build momentum:



**School board endorsement**  
secured early in design phase







**Teacher union approval** of  
CBTL model and pilot process

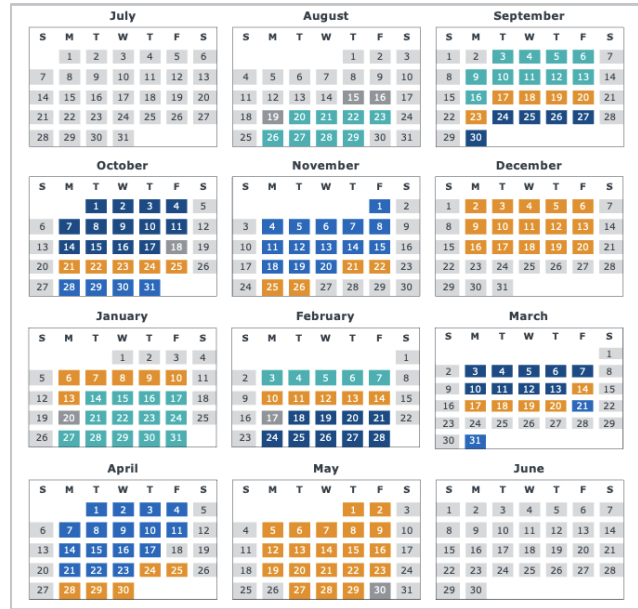
# Example Instructional Calendars of CBTL Model







Team leaders are being designed to support both SPED classroom teacher relief and instructional quality through structured, predictable coverage across the team. Below are draft examples of a team leader and one SPED classroom teacher calendar with scheduled classroom coverage, co-teaching transitions, and restoration and PD time. Each team leader has three classroom teachers with dedicated coverage time twice a year.

## Team Leader Rotation Designed to Provide Consistent Coverage and Relief for SPED Teachers





-  Team leader **covers each team SPED classroom twice a year** to provide instructional relief and lead instruction.
-  Co-teaching days allow team leaders to **model best practices** and provide instructional support.
-  Team leaders receive protected time between rotations for **restoration and PD time**.
-  Schedule provides a **reliable structure** to support team teachers.

**Team Leader Calendar**

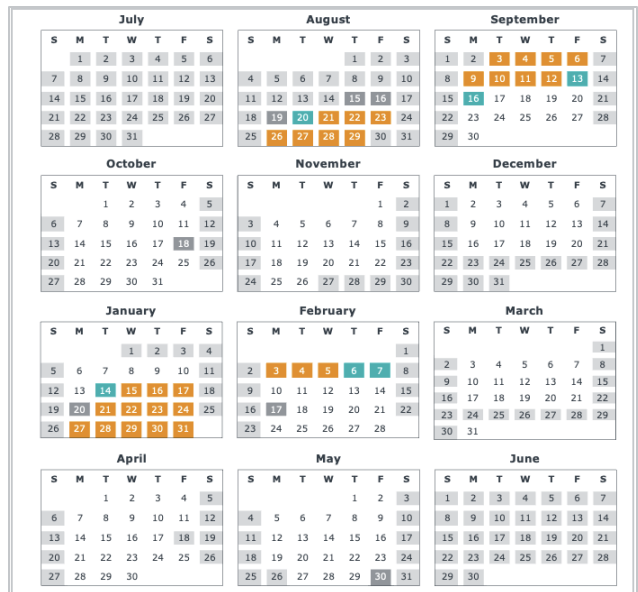


-  Teach in Room A
-  Teach in Room B
-  Teach in Room C
-  Restoration and PD
-  No Work/Holiday
-  Staff In-Day

## Proposed SPED Teacher Schedule Aims to Reduce Burnout and Provides Protected PD

-  Team teachers serve as the **lead SPED teacher** in their respective classrooms for most of the year.
-  **Dedicated restoration time** helps reduce burnout and sustain teacher well-being.
-  Protected PD time supports **skill development** and strengthens team collaboration.
-  Co-teaching days ensure a **smooth transition** period for uninterrupted student learning.

**SPED Teacher in Classroom A Calendar<sup>1</sup>**



-  Teach in Room A
-  Restoration and PD
-  Co-Teach Days
-  No Work/Holiday
-  Staff In-Day

1) SPED Teacher Calendar portrays one example for classroom A. SPED teachers B and C have similar calendars with different coverage days by the team leader.

Sources: Livingston Educational Service Agency, Michigan; EAB interviews and analysis.

## Actions Your District Can Take to Modernize the Workplace

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Review the checklist for next steps to learn more about team-teaching models, receive actionable guidance on modernizing your district's workplace environment, and explore ASU's resources and professional development series.



Use the questions at the bottom of the page to guide a discussion with your district leadership team after reviewing these case studies. The goal is to reflect on what feels most relevant, practical, and applicable to your district context.



Revisit the employee needs, pains, and gains work in the [Converting Applicant Offers into Hires Toolkit](#). Consider what is feasible for your district and what aligns with employee needs, pains, and gains.



Reach out to your dedicated advisor to express interest in having EAB connect you with one of these district examples for networking.



Explore Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce model. ASU offers a professional development series, one-on-one coaching, and online resources. To learn more about the program, connect with the team here: <https://workforce.education.asu.edu/>.

### Reflection Questions for District Leadership

- What challenges or pain points are our teachers currently experiencing in our district's work environment?
- Which ideas or practices from the case studies feel most relevant to those challenges?
- How might these approaches reshape the day-to-day experience of our staff?
- What questions or concerns do these models raise for us?
- What supports or resources (internal or external) would we need to explore these ideas further?
- How well do these approaches align with our district's broader strategic goals and our educators' priorities?
- If we could make one meaningful improvement to our district's work environment in the next few years, what would it be?



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