



Teacher Recruitment and Retention Playbook

2025

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AUTHORS: William J. Slotnik and Guodong Liang, Ph.D.

STUDY TEAM MEMBERS:

Jeff Edmison	Susan E. Kirkendol, Ph.D.	Raquel Reedy
Judy Finkel, Ed.D.	Joanna Mawhinney	Eduardo Soto
Kati Garness	Natalie Nier	Deborah Zych, Ed.D.
Geraldine Harge, Ed.D.	Andrew Pablo	

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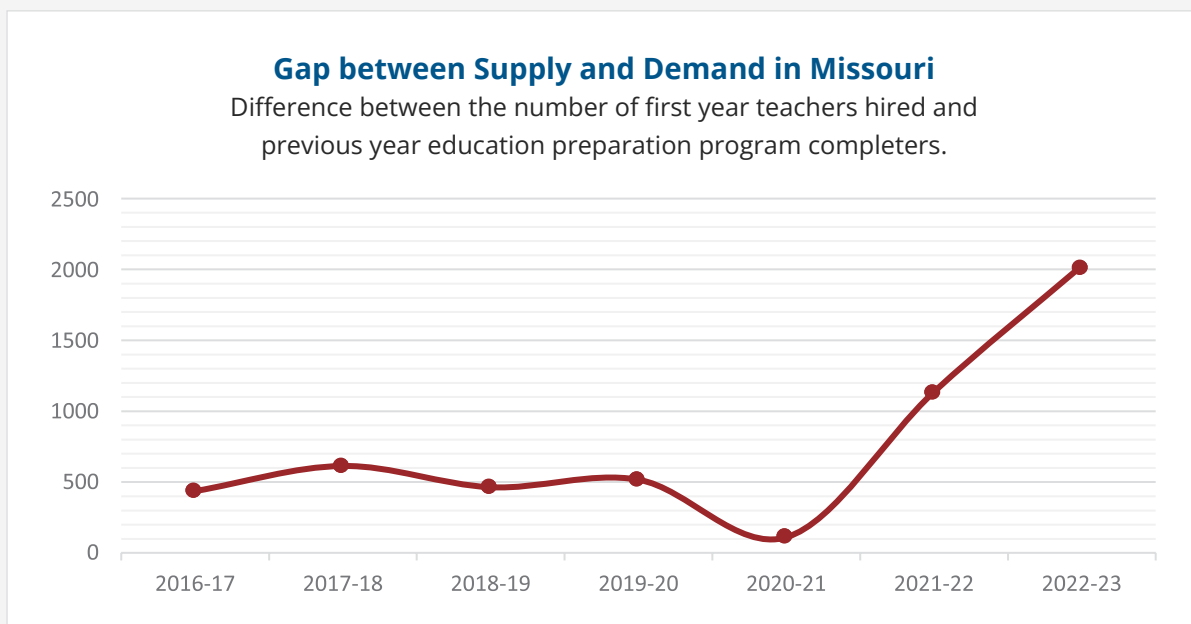
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Teacher Recruitment and Retention Playbook

The nation is facing a shortage of classroom teachers. Many effective teachers are leaving their classrooms and fewer candidates are entering the teacher pipeline. Factors such as negative perceptions of the profession and worsening working conditions contribute to this challenge.

Through the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) supported local education agencies (LEAs), educator preparation programs (EPPs), and community colleges (CCs) across the state to strengthen their existing strategies and experiment with innovative approaches for recruiting and retaining teachers.

Eight cornerstones of a playbook for a successful state system for teacher recruitment and retention emerge from this unprecedented financial investment; extensive collaboration among the LEAs, EPPs, and CCs; and learnings from four phases of a comprehensive evaluation.





CORNERSTONE #1: Effective teacher recruitment and retention requires the support of a state system.

The decision to become a teacher or stay in the profession is influenced by interconnected factors within the state educational system. Some (e.g., certification) are policies at the state level, some (e.g., teacher voice) are practices at the school and LEA level, and some (e.g., salary) can be policies and practices at both the state and LEA levels. Focusing only on one or two factors without anticipating and making major changes at other levels is unlikely to be successful in addressing the state’s teacher shortage challenge.

A state system is required to help all districts make progress in recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers. LEAs have very different levels of organizational capacity and resources for attracting teachers. Further, LEAs serving low-income students, students of color, and rural communities are often at a competitive disadvantage financially and lose teachers to districts that are better resourced. To ensure high-quality teachers for all students in all LEAs, it is the better part of wisdom to address teacher recruitment and retention as a state system.

In this context, the state education agency (SEA) should focus on such leadership functions as convening diverse parties in support of recruitment and retention, informing funding and policy decision-making, serving as a repository of evidence-based best practices to share with partners, and building the capacity of collaborators to advance best practices. Central to this cornerstone is creating the conditions through which all partners see how the status of the state’s teacher workforce impacts each one of them and the success of their individual efforts.



An example in Missouri has been the active support of the State Board of Education. The Board convened a Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Recruitment and Retention and ensured that at least 50% of the membership included business leaders from across the state, as well as legislators and professional organizations. The intentional and strategic selection of commission members by the Board communicated clearly that a high-quality teacher workforce also matters to stakeholders outside of the education sector, highlighting the need for a state system.



CORNERSTONE #2: Statewide campaigns are needed to elevate the teaching profession.

Current perceptions about the teaching profession are at or near their lowest level in 50 years. The negative perceptions of being a teacher are detrimental to current and future teachers' career decisions. It is therefore imperative for the field to improve the perception of the teaching profession.

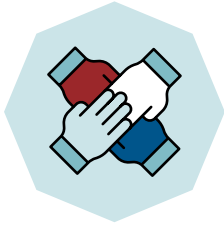
A state system should include launching promotional campaigns with a compelling theme such as *Our State Teaches*. The purpose of the campaigns should be to promote the value of teaching, strengthen the culture of respect and support for teachers, and enhance the statewide climate and culture for the profession. In essence, the campaigns should showcase the value, joy, and impact of teaching as a profession.

Elevating the teaching profession through a statewide campaign draws on practices from multiple sectors including health care campaigns to recruit nurses, statewide efforts to attract and retain talent in multiple fields, state campaigns to fill public jobs, the initiatives of teachers' unions to recruit new teachers in multiple states, and federal efforts to improve recruitment to America's Armed Forces.

“Education has moved from a highly respected and revered vocation to one that is struggling to find graduates. We have simply got to positively promote our own profession.”

Assistant Superintendent





CORNERSTONE #3: Effective teacher recruitment and retention requires collaboration and constituency building.

Collaboration (with both internal players and external stakeholders) is a must for recruiting and retaining teachers. However, the collaboration needs to be more meaningful than traditional approaches to partnership which often result in minor changes to business-as-usual practices. Instead, a state system’s emphasis needs to be on collaborative investment in and ownership of the system for recruitment and retention. A broad base of support is essential for an effective state system.

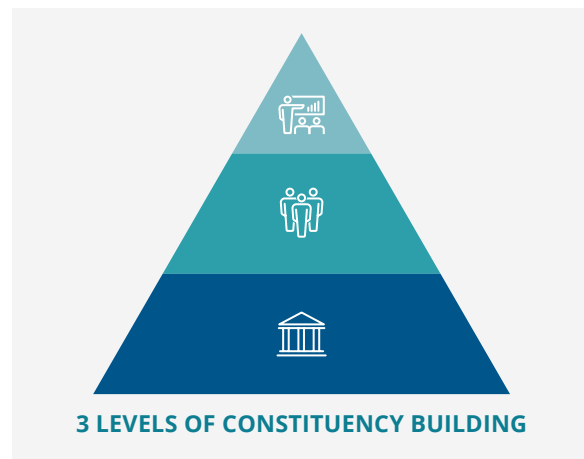
An example of this collaboration in Missouri was the creation of a statewide Recruitment and Retention Task Force. This task force has been in place for the past three years and includes the leadership of all professional education associations in the state. These organizations are interdependently investing and collaborating to further educator recruitment and retention efforts.

Constituency building is therefore needed at three levels:

- 1.** The **first level** includes the core of the SEA, LEAs, EPPs, and CCs.
- 2.** The **second level** includes the governor, the state legislature, business and community leaders, teacher and administrator organizations, and regional support centers.
- 3.** The **third level** includes other state departments (e.g., Department of Labor, Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development) and other key stakeholders (e.g., foundations, non-profit organizations, the media).

All three levels are needed in order to advance teacher recruitment and retention throughout

the state and ensure there is sufficient expertise and support for changes in funding, policy, and practice.



Missouri is growing in its ability to take on teacher recruitment and retention as a state system. Leaders are owning the responsibility to be hands-on in addressing recruitment and retention needs. With the SEA as the catalyst, the state’s educational and governmental sectors are demonstrating their leadership commitment by aligning their expectations, investing both short-term federal resources and long-term state resources, and synchronizing their efforts to strengthen teacher recruitment and retention.



CORNERSTONE #4: Funding is essential and must be targeted.

For a state system to be well-positioned to attract and hold on to teaching talent, there must be funding for both compensation and non-compensation purposes. When it comes to funding, every “yes” must justify the “no’s,” meaning the state needs to target funding for maximum impact on the greatest areas of need. It also means that a state system must provide a reasonable level of prescriptive direction for the funding, while coterminously encouraging LEAs, EPPs, and CCs to engage in innovative practices.

Funding for Compensation Purposes

Leaders across the educational spectrum highlight the importance of providing focused and sustained funding to raise teacher baseline salaries across a state. For those who do enter teaching, there has long been a “pay penalty” compared to professions that require similar levels of education. In Missouri, starting teacher pay and average teacher pay have historically been among the lowest in the country. However, the governor and state legislature have responded in real-time to this problem by increasing the baseline teacher salary in 2024.

The state has also provided Teacher Baseline Salary Grants to all eligible LEAs to cover the full cost of salary plus payroll benefits, and increase teacher pay for every starting teacher to \$40,000 per year. For teachers with more than two years of teaching experience, the state is spending more than \$45 million on a Career Ladder Program. Building on what the state has achieved so far, leaders are continuing to focus on increasing teacher compensation.

MISSOURI'S INVESTMENT IN TEACHER COMPENSATION



\$40,000

Starting teacher baseline salary.



\$45M+

Invested in Career Ladder Program.

As the state expands efforts to provide higher pay to teachers, it is also focusing on ensuring equitable distribution of the additional resources.

Funding for Non-Compensation Purposes

The efforts of LEAs' to be innovative in encouraging the entry of new candidates into the teaching profession underscore the need to make funding available for non-compensation purposes.

Three of the practices which LEAs, EPPs, and CCs highlight as promising are:

- 1.** Providing funding for recruitment grants to LEAs, EPPs, and CCs at a cost of \$2.5 million per year to the state to incentivize participation in Grow Your Own initiatives;
- 2.** Offering stipends for teacher candidates in educator residency or registered apprenticeship programs;
- 3.** Providing scholarships at a cost of \$800,000 to the state in the first year of the scholarship program to help with student loan debt relief so that entry into teaching is a more financially viable option for prospective teachers. This amount will grow to more than \$3 million dollars over a five-year period. These scholarships include a commitment from the individuals to teach in the same LEA where they received their support, establishing a unique teacher pipeline into that LEA.

FUNDING PRACTICES FOR NON-COMPENSATION PURPOSES



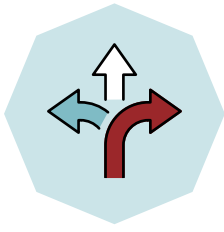
**Recruitment
Grants**



**Residency &
Apprenticeship
Stipends**



**Scholarships
for Future
Teachers**



CORNERSTONE #5: The tools of public policy need to be used strategically.

There are three tools of public policy: legislation, regulation, and the role of the bully pulpit. A state system for recruitment and retention must draw on all three. The legislation and regulation signal the state’s priorities and frame the policy direction and pathway to implementation, while the bully pulpit builds understanding of and support for the changes. Two examples below are areas that can be addressed by using these tools of public policy.

Routes to Teacher Certification

There are multiple routes to becoming a classroom teacher. These different routes have expanded during this teacher shortage era. They include traditional preparatory programs, alternative certification, and a broad category of “other” that includes test-based certification without coursework, preparation from other states and countries, and substitute teachers and student teachers being recognized as teachers of record.

States increasingly value the availability of alternative routes for teacher certification. These alternative routes make it possible to hire novice teachers even if they have not gone through traditional teacher preparation programs. The growing need is for a state system to

continue to explore innovative routes to teacher certification, while having meaningful standards for that certification. This requires the state to effectuate a balance between eliminating unnecessary barriers while ensuring readiness through necessary requirements. A key first step is to conduct a detailed review of the criteria for teacher certification and propose adjustments where feasible. These adjustments can then be embedded, as appropriate, into legislation or regulation. It is important that these adjustments become major speaking points for the SEA in advancing these changes. Stakeholders must clearly hear the SEA is working to provide new teachers that are classroom ready, while still doing everything to eliminate unnecessary requirements and cost.



“If my only option had been going back to college for four years, I am not sure I would have done it. I like school, but I need to support my family.”

Teacher

Residencies and Apprenticeships

Informed policy matters for innovative pathways such as residency programs and apprenticeship programs. Research shows that strong educator residencies have rigorous and intentional selection criteria, relevant coursework built around the classroom experience, structured coaching and feedback, evaluation for continuous improvement, and expert and ongoing mentorship (Fitz & Yun, 2024; National Center for Teacher Residencies, 2014). In addition, states and districts must set the conditions to enable residencies to succeed, such as developing strong partnerships with teachers’ associations and educator preparation programs, providing financial supports, and aligning recruitment with teacher subject area shortages (Fitz & Yun, 2024; Worley & Zerbino, 2023).

In addition to the two teacher residency programs in the state, Missouri is one of the leading states in the country for teacher apprenticeship programs. These programs allow potential future teachers to undergo teacher preparation training while working in schools and earning a paycheck (Will, 2023). The state can take the lead in promoting policy actions in each of these areas and use the power of the bully pulpit to assemble key partners in supporting innovative approaches to preparing teachers.



CORNERSTONE #6: Funding and policy choices trigger decisions related to teacher development.

A state system for recruitment and retention must anticipate the requirements for teacher development that result from funding and policy decisions. The state cannot leave to chance educator development. It must purposefully recognize, for example, that an increase of novice teachers and teachers who have received less formal preparation means districts and schools must be able to accelerate their development into accomplished teachers. Similarly, the state needs to recognize that teachers with experience, who remain in the profession, also have developmental needs. Districts and schools need to support experienced teachers to become expert instructors in their own classrooms and teacher leaders who influence other teachers' practices. Several implications are highlighted below:

Induction

Developing teachers who enter from various pathways, and with different levels of preparation, requires LEAs to rethink

their induction strategies.

Research shows that induction affects teacher commitment and retention, instructional practices, and student achievement

(Glazerman et al., 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Schmidt et al., 2017). Research also finds that less than 1% of teachers actually receive a comprehensive induction (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

A comprehensive induction program is multi-year and instructionally focused.

In a state system for recruitment and retention, the SEA needs to provide LEAs with a framework for induction that includes the content needed to accelerate teacher skills, approaches and sequences for delivery of the content, and methods for determining the impact of the induction.

In response to low teacher retention data, particularly related to the first two years of teaching, the state of Missouri offers two significant components of comprehensive induction. They are both required in statute and regulation. **The Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (BTAP)** regulation was revised to require two years of capacity building to ensure new teachers develop critical skills and knowledge, participate in support networks, and experience success as a new teacher in their first years in the profession.

In addition to BTAP, **new teachers in Missouri participate in two years of required one-to-one mentoring.** The state's regulatory standards for mentoring are being revised as well to ensure new teachers are fully supported in their beginning years of teaching. Both efforts are being carried out to improve the instructional skills and retention rates of new teachers in Missouri.

Less than 1% of teachers receive a comprehensive induction.

Principal Leadership

Principals play a pivotal role in teacher recruitment and retention. In particular, effective principals have lower rates of teacher turnover. Research shows that principal support is a deciding factor in teacher decisions to remain in their schools, even more important than salary. Effective principals are more likely to retain high-performing teachers. Moreover, principal leadership is second only to effective instruction among school-related factors that contribute to student achievement. Yet, the task of developing principals as skilled school leaders is largely left to individual districts. In a state system for recruitment and retention, a formalized system for leadership development and support must also be included.

Developing effective principals and enhancing their leadership ability to recruit, develop, and retain teachers is a challenge which lends itself to a state-level response. **The Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS)** is a highly successfully system for building the capacity of principals in five leadership domains and at each phase of their careers from Aspiring (pre-certificated), to Emerging (initial career entry), through Developing (mid-career), and ultimately to Transformational (exceptional). MLDS is widely hailed by superintendents, principals, and teachers in Missouri. MLDS specifically includes trainings for principals on how to address teacher recruitment and retention. In particular, it strengthens principals' capacity to build cultures and structures which enhance teachers' professional and personal growth. In addition to its impact on principal leadership, school culture, working conditions and teacher pedagogy, it has resulted in principal retention rates over the past six years that are more than ten percentage points higher than the state's average principal retention rates.

Statewide and Regional Professional Development

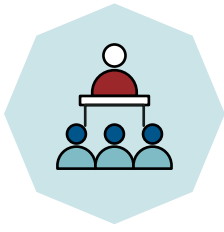
Building teacher capacity means a state system must have a delivery mechanism for professional development so that it can share evidence-based practices, provide LEAs with current research, and build multi-district learning communities.

The **Missouri Teacher Development System (MTDS)** provides a competency-based approach for developing teachers statewide, with just-in-time learning, support for different phases of new teacher learning, and statewide networking opportunities.

Teacher retention rates for those participating in MTDS exceed 95%, far surpassing the state's average teacher retention rates. MTDS demonstrates the value of involving teachers in cohort-based learning opportunities as a means to improving teacher retention.

Teacher retention rates for those participating in MTDS exceed 95%.

In addition, Missouri has a statewide network of professional learning centers called the **Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs)**. These regional centers provide teachers with trainings, coaching, and instructional materials. The centers provide some of these trainings in regional meetings with staff from multiple schools and provide others on-site where the trainers come directly to the school. As regional centers, they ensure close proximity of high-quality professional learning to all teachers throughout the state.



CORNERSTONE #7:

A state system needs to recognize the critical importance of teacher voice.

The voices of current teachers are pivotal when conducting outreach to and recruiting potential candidates—they are effective recruiters for new teachers. As Darrion Cockrell, Missouri’s 2021 Teacher of the Year, emphasizes, teachers are walking billboards for the profession (Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support, 2022). Students’ aspirations for becoming a teacher can be heavily influenced by their current teachers.

Teacher voice is also key to pinpointing the areas where pedagogical development is most needed. Further, **teacher voice is essential for understanding the school factors that are critical to retention—a principal with leadership skills and a supportive school culture that values the teacher both professionally and personally.** Including teacher voice is critical to helping ensure efforts by a state system for recruitment and retention are responsive to a new generation of teachers whose aspirations and needs may differ from the state’s veteran teachers.

The challenge is how to promote teacher voice at state and LEA levels. Addressing this challenge requires two-way communication between the SEA and LEAs, as well as direct communication with teachers. The SEA should share evidence-based practices for enhancing teacher voice as part of its general guidance on school improvement for all districts as well as its targeted guidance for schools in Comprehensive Support and Improvement status. At the same time, the more enterprising LEAs are often knowledgeable and skilled in engaging teachers as partners in school improvement. The SEA

must also create opportunities for teachers to offer input directly at the state level, where their ideas, opinions, and suggestions can be collected and used to inform state policy. In Missouri, a Teacher Advisory Committee meets directly with the Commissioner of Education multiple times throughout the year. This provides opportunities for the Commissioner of Education to hear directly from teachers who represent different types of schools across the state.





CORNERSTONE #8:

Teacher retention requires the alignment of three factors: recruitment, development, and compensation.

Retaining teachers depends on attracting promising and well-prepared teacher candidates to the teaching profession, supporting their growth and development at the hands of an effective leader in each school, and providing professional and appropriate compensation.

3 LEADING INDICATORS OF SUCCESS



Recruitment



Development



Compensation

In a state system for teacher recruitment and retention, retention is a dependent variable. A higher rate of retention happens when a state system effectively addresses **recruitment**, **development**, and **compensation**. These three factors are the leading indicators of success, while retention is a lagging indicator of success.

Engaging multiple partners to jointly boost recruitment results in an increase of well-prepared new teachers on the supply-side of the teacher workforce. Using state-administered programming like BTAP is an effective way

for SEAs and LEAs to collaboratively provide effective professional development. Steering efforts such as MLDS ensures there are principals who can improve the organizational conditions of the schools which results in teachers being more successful in their teaching. Using regulations and statutes to promote appropriate levels of compensation results in teachers feeling appreciated and compensated for the very challenging work they perform. Recruitment, development, and compensation working in tandem results in improved retention rates of teachers.

“When we began the grant in 2021-22, our teacher retention rate had dipped to a low of 57%. As of 2023-24 our rate of teacher retention is 82%! And our overall employee retention rate went from 60% to 85%.” *Director of Development*



CORNERSTONES IN ACTION: A Primer on Do's and Don'ts in Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Do	Don't
<p>CORNERSTONE #1: Elevate teacher recruitment and retention to a state system that addresses issues through state and local level investments and actions from numerous key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Leave teacher recruitment and retention to a single player/stakeholder at a single level (e.g., the Human Resources leader at the local level).</p>
<p>CORNERSTONE #2: Develop statewide campaigns to elevate the profession by explicitly highlighting the benefits and valuable contributions that come from teaching.</p>	<p>Assume people want to be teachers and that those impacted by teachers know the many benefits and valuable contributions of the profession.</p>
<p>CORNERSTONE #3: Build a constituency group at multiple levels with a variety of internal players and external stakeholders collaborating to provide the necessary support and expertise for funding, policy, and practice.</p>	<p>Attempt to address recruitment and retention with single, isolated strategies implemented at only one specific level (e.g., state level).</p>
<p>CORNERSTONE #4: Target funding for both compensation and non-compensation purposes (e.g., scholarships, tuition benefits, stipends) for supporting teachers and teacher candidates.</p>	<p>Focus funding on traditional marketing approaches (e.g., distributing printed brochures) that have a relatively low payoff.</p>
<p>CORNERSTONE #5: Maintain high standards for teacher certification while also providing more alternative and innovative routes, and eliminating unnecessary barriers to teacher certification.</p>	<p>Lower the standards for teacher certification without proper research and data, which could communicate the message that anyone can do the job with relatively little training and preparation.</p>
<p>CORNERSTONE #6: Create a robust system of teacher development and growth that is supported by highly effective principals.</p>	<p>Provide routine, invaluable professional development which fails to meet the needs of teachers and is delivered by less effective principals.</p>
<p>CORNERSTONE #7: Create mechanisms at the state and local levels to promote teacher voice and ensure that teacher ideas and suggestions inform state and local policies.</p>	<p>Overlook teacher voice as the critical and necessary source of data and information that it can be.</p>
<p>CORNERSTONE #8: Improve teacher retention by implementing interconnected and effective recruitment, development, and appropriate compensation strategies.</p>	<p>Believe that any one single approach in isolation, such as compensation or development, will improve teacher retention for the long-term.</p>

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