



Educator Recruitment and Retention Task Force

The Arizona Department of Education Educator Recruitment and Retention Task Force is comprised of teachers and district leaders from around the state, as well as Institutes of Higher Education, and representatives of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Meetings for the ADE Task Force began in July 2023. Throughout the meetings from July 2023-November 2023, three main topics surfaced as areas of focus regarding educator recruitment and retention:

1. Teacher Voice
2. Induction with Robust Mentoring
3. Retention Plans

The Task Force overwhelmingly agrees that educator salary is an important ongoing factor that significantly impacts educator retention, as well as potential educator decision-making in selecting teaching as a career. The Task Force, and this document, are focused on specific strategies that the Arizona Department of Education and Local Education Agencies (school districts and charter schools) can implement to have an immediate impact on educator retention. This impact will support educators not only in their first years in the teaching profession but beyond as well.

As the Task Force continued to meet as a whole group, three focus groups collaborated to create definitions, components, and promising practices for each of the focus areas listed above. Information was shared with the entire Task Force for final editing and revising. The Task Force's final recommendations, with critical and important components, of the focus areas for Arizona's workforce are outlined below.

Teacher Voice

Why is Teacher Voice Important to Teacher Retention?

If teachers truly have input into the creation of the systems, procedures, and expectations at their schools, they feel more empowered to achieve desired outcomes. Work time is maximized, and teachers' strengths are engaged at a variety of levels. Teachers feel valued and work together to find solutions; this creates long-term satisfaction and a commitment to the field of education. A greater retention rate for not only the campus, but the district takes place when utilizing the strategy of teacher voice. Research shows that when teachers are engaged in school decisions and collaborate with administrators and each other, school climate improves. This promotes a better learning environment for students, which raises student achievement, and a better working environment for teachers, which reduces teacher turnover.¹

Richard Ingersoll, an expert on teacher workplace issues, shares that schools with a high level of teacher voice have positive effects on the overall school climate. He describes teachers as people “in the middle,” “caught between the contradictory demands and needs of their super-ordinates—principals—and their subordinates—students.” When teachers have the right amount of control, Ingersoll argues, they are able to do their job successfully, earning respect from principals, coworkers, and students.¹

Schools in which teachers have more control over key schoolwide and classroom decisions have fewer problems with student misbehavior, show more collegiality and cooperation among teachers and administrators, have a more committed and engaged teaching staff, and do a better job of retaining their teachers¹, also according to Dr. Ingersoll.

A shared understanding of Teacher Voice, according to the Arizona Department of Education Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force:

The ability to participate in the decision-making process that impacts systems, procedures, and expectations.

By ensuring that teachers participate in decision-making processes, leaders will demonstrate to teachers that their expressed opinions are being heard and that their voice matters.

Especially important is the amount of “voice” teachers have into key decisions in their schools. He (Ingersoll) recommends policymakers and district leaders incorporate teachers’ input into the decision-making process to improve retention.²

Recommendations:

- The Arizona Department of Education’s Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force recommends that Local Education Agencies establish a clearly defined and well-communicated system to encourage and expect teacher input on matters that impact daily classroom activities, site-based protocols, processes, and procedures (i.e. master schedule, school-wide discipline and classroom management, safety, communication...).

Critical components of Teacher Voice include:

- Having systems in place to gather teacher input and feedback (Strategic Plan goals, Stay Interviews, regular check-ins by administration with educators, collecting input from surveys, etc.).
- Supportive administrators who demonstrate behaviors of high trust, value the individual and their work, respect the variety of viewpoints on a campus, are positive climate builders, with the ability to manage conflicts productively and professionally, and can have crucial conversations, respectfully, when necessary.
- Positive cultures where teachers feel comfortable and heard with varied opportunities to express relevant opinions.
- Rationale for initiatives, procedures, and expectations provided by leadership. (Share *The Why*)

Important components of Teacher Voice include:

- Teacher-led committees/work teams/leadership opportunities.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for teacher input, feedback, and follow-up (i.e.: Stay Interviews, touchpoints, surveys, etc.).
- Soliciting teacher concerns, questions, and ideas for systems, procedures, and expectations.

Induction with Robust Mentoring

Why is Induction with Robust Mentoring Important to Teacher Retention?

When teachers feel supported, they are more likely to stay in that working environment because they feel part of the community and begin to experience collective efficacy. Providing an induction and mentoring framework in a Local Education Agency (LEA) allows opportunity for ongoing support, coaching, and feedback.

Teacher induction is critical to teacher retention. Beginning teachers who participate in induction programs are better able to keep students on task and focused, design functional lesson plans, utilize effective questioning techniques, differentiate classroom activities to meet the needs of various learners, maintain a positive classroom atmosphere, and successfully manage a classroom. These factors combine to ultimately make beginning teachers feel more successful and have a higher sense of self-efficacy, which leads to greater job satisfaction, one of the key indicators of retention.³

According to the [Arizona Classroom Teacher Attrition and Retention Dashboard](#), Arizona continues to lose teachers in their first four years of experience at an alarming rate. This not only impacts staffing for schools but most importantly reduces achievement for students. If novice educators are left to sink or swim without support during this critical period in their development, they may become overwhelmed and leave the field.⁴

Recommendations:

- The Arizona Department of Education's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force recommends that Local Education Agencies reassess current resources, including Title I, Title II, M & O, and Title IV funds, as well as the availability of grants to prioritize and implement an Induction Program with Robust Mentoring, that is aligned to the Arizona Beginning Teacher Induction Program Standards.

Critical Components of an Induction with Robust Mentoring Program:

- Standards-based; programs should be aligned with [Arizona Beginning Teacher Induction Program Standards](#)
- Dedicated funding for Induction with Robust Mentoring programs

- Induction and Mentoring program leader(s) with experience in coaching/mentoring
- Intentional and detailed criteria for mentor selection
- Clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and avenues of support for site-based leaders, mentors, and other district personnel with ongoing training
- Common language defined and used within the induction and mentoring program
- Identify and supply appropriate teacher resources: curriculum maps, pacing guides, common formative assessments, lesson plans, etc.
- Differentiated support for mentees
- Engaging, ongoing professional development for mentors that allows them to develop skills and individualized support structures for mentees
- Regular coaching cycles by mentors for mentees, using data to drive improvement
- Regularly scheduled peer observations between mentee and colleagues focused on targeted areas
- Regional and/or statewide opportunities for induction and mentor program leaders' community of practice (COP)
- Regional and/or statewide opportunities for induction and mentor program mentors' community of practice (COP)

Retention Plans

Why are Retention Plans Important?

Retention begins the moment an employee is hired, and it continues with the employee through their organizational journey. School districts can support strong employee retention by developing a strategic process that assesses and addresses retention efforts in a systematic way.⁵

By being intentional about not only recruitment but also retention at the Local Education Agency level, Arizona schools can address staffing issues and make a positive impact on classrooms. Among the many strategies that can impact educator retention are focusing on support systems, gathering input and feedback, positively promoting the profession, and addressing educator needs.

As teachers are leaving the profession in their first four years of teaching, at an alarming rate, an intentional retention plan must be created with a focus on increasing teacher retention. According to Hanover Research, Supporting Teacher Wellbeing, Promoting Teacher Engagement, Creating a Supportive School Climate, and Monitoring Teacher Retention and Attrition are four strategies to increase teacher retention.⁶

Retention Plans encompass several components at the building level and central office level. The previous two focus areas of Teacher Voice and Induction With Robust Mentoring must be included in a Retention Plan.

Recommendations:

- The Arizona Department of Education's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force recommends that the Arizona Department of Education's Educator Recruitment and Retention

unit prepare and distribute guidance for Local Education Agencies detailing specific evidence-based practices and elements of a Local Education Agency retention plan.

- The Arizona Department of Education's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force recommends that Arizona Local Education Agencies prepare and utilize a retention plan based on evidence-based practices and elements. This plan should be clearly defined and communicated with all stakeholders.

Critical Components of a Retention Plan:

- Systems in place for gathering teacher input and feedback (Teacher Voice)
- Induction Program with Robust Mentoring
- System of right-sized instructional support that collaborates with common language and common goals (i.e.: special education teacher(s), content specialists, behavioral interventionists/supports, etc.)
- Reflection of teacher retention/student achievement data by administration
- Buy-in/belief for teacher retention by the whole Local Education Agency and school community
- Pathways to build educator leadership capacity
- Strong strategic leadership
- Strategic plan that is well defined and well communicated to all staff members
- Varied staffing models to meet student and staff needs
- Data-driven decision-making at the Local Education Agency and site level
- Utilization of Stay Interviews at multiple checkpoints for educators
 - Use Stay Interview data to make necessary adjustments to plan(s)
- Differentiated professional development for educators
- Regular check-ins by administration for educators
- Visibility from Local Education Agency and site leadership
- Properly communicated processes, procedures, and systems at the Local Education Agency and site level

Important Components of a Retention Plan:

- Training for site-based and district-level administrators re: instructional leadership, community building
- Distributive leadership that includes varied responsibilities and opportunities for educators, a culture of trust, and shared responsibility for students
- Individualization of teacher growth through goals and professional development
- Interviews with new teachers at 30, 60, and 90 days
- Community involvement and support

References

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Acknowledgments

Arizona Department of Education Superintendent's Task Force Members

Thank you to the Task Force members for their time, dedication, and contribution. These members have provided valuable insight, input, and recommendations to help educational leaders recruit and retain educators for Arizona.

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