

The Challenge of Teacher Retention



Defining The Problem



We understand that:

- **There is a teacher shortage.** Students in more than 110,000 classrooms have an under- or unqualified teacher.¹ The problem disproportionately affects students of color. The ratio of uncertified teachers leading classrooms in high v. low minority schools is 3.7 to 1.²
- **We are losing teachers prior to retirement at an alarming rate.** Roughly 14% of teachers leave teaching or the profession each year. Less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of them leave for retirement.^{3,4}
- **The quantity of teachers entering the workforce is down.** Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has decreased 50% since the 1970s.⁵
- **Teacher retention is an expensive problem.** Recruiting and replacing teachers costs urban districts roughly \$20,000 per teacher and rural districts almost \$10,000 per teacher.

Current Challenges



We have seen that:

- Teacher retention is one of the most challenging issues facing school districts.
- External factors such as federal and state funding, changes in cost of living, and local employment opportunities have a dramatic impact on teacher retention and that we can design internal innovations within these external constraints.
- As other industries have capacity shortages, they will recruit educators away from schools and into other markets.
- Currently teacher retention, recruitment, and training work is happening in isolation and not successfully addressing the complex challenge of teacher retention.

Our Beliefs



We believe that:

- While specific strategies have improved some focused aspects of teacher retention, there has not been a significant improvement in overall teacher retention- it is a challenge that requires our best thinkers and thinking.
- We must learn from other industries' approaches because we are competing with them for top talent.
- Teacher retention could be addressed more effectively if we took an approach that eliminated silos and considered the teachers' experience across recruitment, retention, and training, from their initial interaction to their retirement.

¹ [U.S. schools struggle to hire and retain teachers](#), Economic Policy Institute

² [Understanding Teacher Shortages Interactive Map](#), Learning Policy Institute

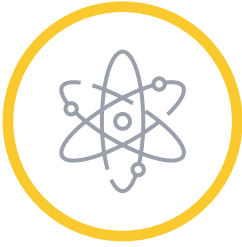
³ [Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It](#), Learning Policy Institute

⁴ [Understanding Teacher Shortages Interactive Map](#), 2016, Learning Policy Institute

⁵ [Colleges of Education: A National Portrait](#), AACTE



Our Theory of Action



Instead of thinking of recruitment, retention, and training as separate challenges we need to design solutions that improve a teacher's comprehensive experience. This will help to:

- **increase collaboration** across departments by breaking down silos;
- **deepen empathy** for teachers and their journeys across the system, from initial engagement through departure;
- **create clear and compelling messaging** to inspire, recruit, and retain teachers; and
- **design actionable solutions** that address the complex challenge of teacher retention.

Our Focus



We believe these are the [eight design elements](#) to consider at a systems-level when working to improve teacher retention:

- Dynamic Recruitment
- Energized by Purpose
- Teacher Agency
- Targeted Incentives
- Curated Communities
- Career Pathways
- Clear Communication
- Consistent Celebrations



Our Unique Value



The Education Elements team can offer support as a trusted advisor and project manager.

- We are **expert facilitators** who engage diverse groups and bring in processes and protocols that drive collaboration, alignment, and action.
- We **customize our approach** based on your unique needs, taking time to learn your context. We never bring in a one-size-fits-all solution.
- We **get results**. We are one of the few education consulting companies that publishes an annual impact report showing how visions and plans translate into results at the district, school, and community level.

Thought Leadership



Education Elements has published many resources to help shape the national conversation around teacher recruitment, retention, and training. Below are a few examples:

- **Dynamic Recruitment** | [Evolving How We Meet the Recruiting and Retention Needs at the Nation's 4th Largest School District](#)
- **Energized by Purpose** | [We Must Reboot Our Schools, San Francisco Chronicle](#)
- **Teacher Agency** | [Recruit and Retain the Best Teachers by Tapping into Teacher Agency](#)
- **Career Pathways** | [How to Elevate Teachers in the Age of Computers](#)
- **Clear Communication** | [How Clear Communication and Defined Career Pathways Can Boost Teacher Retention](#)
- **Consistent Celebrations** | [40 Ways to Celebrate Teachers and Impact Teacher Retention](#)