

Reimagining the Teaching Role

How Strategic Staffing can Attract and Retain Effective Teachers

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National Council
on Teacher Quality



**Most importantly,
redesigning teaching
can improve student
outcomes.**

Early evaluations show that redesigning teaching roles can help solve one of the biggest staffing challenges, attracting and retaining great teachers – and in one model, even equated to an extra half year of learning for students.

Reimagining teaching has the potential to address several challenges faced by students and teachers.

Benefits to students

- Responds to the needs of all learners, especially students farthest from opportunity.
- Creates conditions for teachers to be the most effective in classrooms.
- Centers student outcomes by ensuring students receive robust learning experiences and exceptional instruction.

Benefits to teachers

- Ensures more time for collaboration and professional development.
- Offers opportunities for increased compensation.
- Fosters better career pathways for teachers.
- Implements strong accountability and instructional teams.⁵

The Role of State Policy

A National Landscape Scan

To determine whether states are adequately supporting districts to reimagine the teaching role, NCTQ examined five state policy areas.

1. **Compensation Structures:** Differentiated pay structures for various types of teacher leader roles.
2. **Extended Teacher Reach:** Policies that relate to class size, student-teacher ratios and if there were any state restrictions on the use of teacher's time.
3. **Team Structures:** Opportunity for shared accountability, teachers as observers, etc. as well as whether there were barriers in identifying a "teacher of record" in the state data system.
4. **Staffing Structures to Cultivate Pipelines:** State requirements for residents, paraprofessionals, etc. as well as any restrictions for paraprofessionals and new teachers.
5. **Funding:** State role in direct or indirect funding opportunities to reimagine the teaching role as well as waivers.

State policy can help or hinder a district's ability to reimagine the teaching role.

- **Few states** explicitly focus on reimagining the teaching role as a strategy, despite its powerful potential to attract and retain talented teachers.
- **Less than half of states (23)** allow for “innovation zones” where districts can apply for waivers from existing policy to implement strategic staffing models.
- **Only 14 states** offer grants that could be used by districts to innovate with strategic staffing models.
- **Just 8 states** provide some type of supplemental pay for teacher leadership roles beyond mentoring novice or aspiring teachers.




The data tells us that teachers crave better support at all levels of their career, as well as meaningful opportunities to advance their careers without leaving the classroom for administrative roles. Transforming the way we recruit, retain, support, and compensate teachers will keep great teachers in the classroom, generate interest in the profession, and increase every student's access to a high-quality education."

— Catherine Truitt, former North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction

Companion Resources

State-Specific Profiles

Customized summaries for each state, highlighting their current policies and recommendations for improvement

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How Pennsylvania's state policy can help or hinder the implementation of strategic staffing models

Our classrooms haven't kept pace with innovation. The Ford Model T represented breakthrough technology in its day—more than 100 years ago—but it wouldn't serve us well today. Likewise, our traditional classroom model from the same era doesn't work well for far too many students and teachers. **In fact, as a result of this outdated model, it is more difficult for schools to find and keep great teachers, which ultimately hurts student learning.**

NCTQ's latest report, *Reimagining the Teaching Role*, highlights innovative approaches some states are taking to give school districts more autonomy and flexibility in designing and organizing their workforce. These restructuring efforts are often referred to as "strategic staffing models."

Unfortunately, few states seem to promote strategic staffing models, despite promising early results. Studies show these models not only boost teacher retention but, in one model, can lead to an extra half year of learning for students.¹

What does it mean to reimagine the teaching role?

Often used interchangeably with terms like "strategic staffing" or "strategic school staffing," reimagining the teaching role involves disrupting traditional approaches to teaching in favor of innovative solutions like creating teacher teams to manage the instruction of larger classrooms, flexible scheduling, and developing new roles for teachers that allow them to advance in their careers while staying in the classroom, making the profession more sustainable - ultimately leading to improved student outcomes.

The stakes for students and teachers in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania needs to attract and retain great teachers for great results for kids. Right now only **34%** of Pennsylvania's fourth grade students read proficiently, and that number falls precipitously for Pennsylvania's underserved population. So how can Pennsylvania design roles that attract and retain the best teachers and improve results for students?

Only 25% of teachers in the northeast region of the country agree that the teaching profession is dynamic, meaning it has role flexibility with opportunities for growth and leadership.²

1. McKinley, J., Orlitzky, J., & Ginn, J. (2024). *Step 1: Opportunity culture update and program evaluation*. Ector County School District. <https://metriqsa.scorebook.org/Documents/WHO/Viewer/80d71e155493391a392c499f1602c64450598912>

2. EAE. (2024). *Voices from the classroom: A survey of America's educators*. <https://vle.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-Voices-from-the-Classroom-Report-V2.pdf>

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Recommended Teacher Contract Language

Model language for incorporating policies into teacher contracts that will support reimagining teaching roles

ENDNOTES

1. *School pulse panel*. Institute of Education Sciences. <https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/>
2. Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it*. Learning Policy Institute.
3. *Voices from the Classroom: A Survey of America's Educators*. (2024). Educators for Excellence. <https://e4e.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-Voices-from-the-Classroom-Report-V2.pdf>
4. Ingersoll, R. M., Merrill, E., Stuckey, D., & Collins, G. (2018). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teacher force—updated October 2018 (CPRE Research Reports)*. University of Pennsylvania.
5. *Strategic School Staffing Landscape Scan: Transforming School Staffing to Improve Student Learning and Reimagine the Role of Teachers*. (2023, August). Education First. https://www.education-first.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/EducationFirst_StrategicSchoolStaffingLandscapeScan.pdf
6. *Voices from the Classroom: A Survey of America's Educators*. (2024). Educators for Excellence. <https://e4e.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-Voices-from-the-Classroom-Report-V2.pdf>
7. Garcia, J., Wiseman, A. W., Ph. D., Kirksey, J., Ph. D., & Gottlieb, J., Ph. D. (2021). *Ector County Independent School District: Opportunity Culture Update and Program Evaluation*. In *BoardBook Premier*. Texas Tech University. <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Documents/WebViewer/1406?file=85d90391-a392-499f-b02c-e4460df99831>