

Rethinking Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Alabama

A New Focus on the Current and Future Millennial Workforce

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Introduction

Millennials have become the largest living generation in the United States.¹ A 2017 report estimates that by 2025, Millennials will dominate the workforce.²

This shift is affecting the teaching profession, and for Alabama to continually compete on a global scale, the teaching workforce will need to be sustained. The teaching profession is the starting point of all other professions, and investing in its vitality is essential to securing every sector of our economy.

Alabama, along with the rest of the nation, is suffering the consequences of a teacher shortage in critical areas: STEM, foreign language, special education, and rural areas. Researchers note more than half of teachers voluntarily leave the profession, leading to a major loss of taxpayer dollars- amounting to about \$20,000 per teacher (in large urban districts), with a national price tag of about \$8.5 billion dollars per year.³ Additionally, in attempts to recruit and retain Millennials, a 2015 study found that 53 percent of hiring managers find it difficult to recruit and retain Millennials, and one-third of companies lost their Millennial employees in 2015.⁴

A study conducted by the Center for Talent Innovation found that 85 percent of Millennials believe it is important for their work to be community driven,⁵ however, nationwide, students are not heavily attracted to the field of education. It is safe to say that for the state of Alabama, it behooves the State Department of Education and school districts to invest in effective strategies for recruiting and retaining Millennial teachers while also providing resources and support for the implementation efforts necessary to keep Millennials in the profession.

This brief addresses how Alabama school districts and the State Department of Education can recruit and retain the best, brightest, and highly qualified Millennial teaching force that will make up our next generation of teachers—the teachers that will sustain our teaching force for the next 30 to 50 years. This report focuses on the Millennial generation and efforts to recruit and retain them, while also acknowledging the current veteran workforce that is vital to successful implementation.

¹ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>

² iCMS report (2017)- *A recruiter's guide to attract*

² iCMS report (2017)- *A recruiter's guide to attract and retain millennials*

³ *Phi Delta Kappan* (May 2017) Teacher shortages: why, where, what to do. Article on p.19 "Sticky schools: How to find and keep teachers in the classroom".

⁴ iCMS report (2017)- *A recruiter's guide to attract and retain millennials*

⁵ <https://www.tasb.org/Services/HR-Services/Hrexchange/2016/September-2016,-Vol-1/b-millennial-teachers.aspx>

Recruitment

“Finding ways to better attract and retain Millennials is crucial for organizational success”

-iCMS, A Recruiter’s Guide to Attract & Retain Millennials, 2017

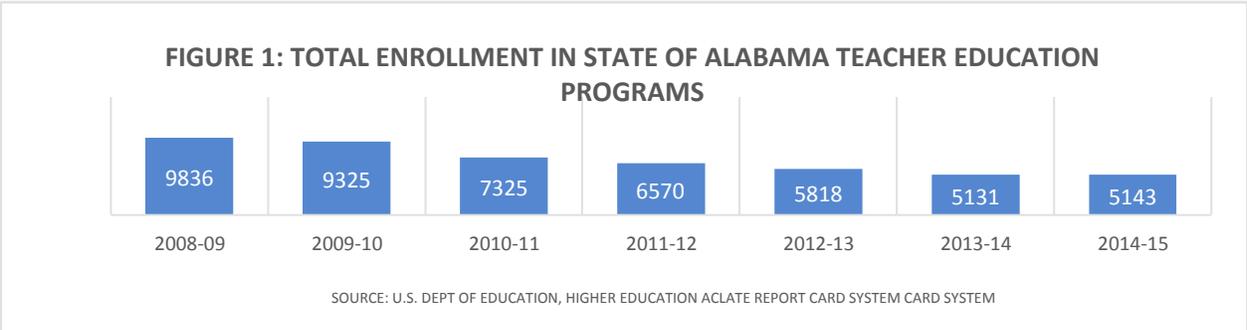
Nationwide, our greatest teacher shortages are in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (also known as STEM) education. This is also true in the Alabama teaching force. However, as reported by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2017-2018 school term, Alabama schools are experiencing shortages in most core academic areas, specifically in secondary education.⁶ The focus on STEM is generally attributable to the increase of technology in the workplace, presuming the need for more people in the workforce who can master the skills needed for economic development in the state.

In addition to this scarcity of teachers, researchers purport Alabama is losing potential STEM educators to competitors such as technology, engineering and

manufacturing firms, and other businesses that offer better salaries and benefits.

Companies across the nation are capitalizing on available Millennial talent and are preparing, through concerted efforts, to tailor their recruitment strategies towards the generation. Not only are these companies actively seeking Millennial employees, Millennials are also showing an interest. A 2014 study released by LinkedIn⁷ found the most in-demand jobs for college graduates were located at Google, Apple, Microsoft, Proctor & Gamble, and Unilever—and these companies go beyond monetary compensation to recruit top Millennials.

Along with teacher shortages, teacher preparation programs have also experienced a decline in enrollment. Recent data from the U.S. Department of Education shows a steep national decline in enrollment since 2008. In Alabama, since the recession, enrollment in teacher education programs has steadily declined by 48 percent from the 2008-2009 to 2014-2015 academic school year.



⁶U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (May 2017). Teacher shortage areas nationwide, 1990-1991 to 2017-2018.

⁷ <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/2014/05/the-state-of-student-recruiting-2014-infographic>

In a 2016 article, it was reported that over the three prior years, the University of Alabama College of Education reported a decrease of more than 10 percent in enrollment.⁸ This decrease was attributed to the continuous inconsistencies in the teaching profession, leading to decreased job security because of “budget constraints, few raises, and increases in benefit costs” of becoming a teacher in relation to any other profession.⁹ However, in the same time frame, the University of North Alabama experienced a 12 percent increase in graduate teacher preparation programs due to their implementation of incentives for participating teachers and their partnerships with local school systems.¹⁰ Incentivizing teachers and partnerships with local school systems are a few ways to recruit and retain educators. In Alabama, lawmakers should consider the UNA program for further review and modification for potential replication across the state.

The need for schools to compete for talent

In 2016, the Center for American Progress (CAP) surveyed a sample of 108 nationally representative school districts asking them about how they recruit, hire, support, develop, and incentivize their teachers. This survey was the first national attempt to assess school districts’ human capital systems

⁸http://www.timesdaily.com/news/education/teacher-shortage-not-so-much-in-northwest-alabama/article_0e4c8ccb-fc3d-5936-a110-a63a2af51172.html

⁹http://www.timesdaily.com/news/education/teacher-shortage-not-so-much-in-northwest-alabama/article_0e4c8ccb-fc3d-5936-a110-a63a2af51172.html

¹⁰http://www.timesdaily.com/news/education/teacher-shortage-not-so-much-in-northwest-alabama/article_0e4c8ccb-fc3d-5936-a110-a63a2af51172.html

and compare them with the best practices of other sectors. CAP found that many school systems are not keeping pace (nor competing) with the practices employed by other sectors. Its report¹¹ notes the following challenges of school districts:

Identified Teacher Recruitment Challenges

1. School districts’ recruitment strategies are hyperlocal, untargeted, or nonexistent.
2. School districts’ application and selection processes often emphasize static application materials—such as written applications, resumes, and proof of certifications—over performance-based measures.
3. School districts do not provide new teachers with substantive mentoring or onboarding opportunities to build new skills critical to their roles.
4. School districts do not provide teachers with enough opportunities for professional development or access to professional learning systems that support teachers’ continuous growth.
5. School districts do not compensate teachers similarly to college-educated professionals in other fields or provide teachers with the resources they need to do their jobs well.
6. School districts do not strategically recruit diverse candidates or create inclusive, supportive environments to retain them.

¹¹ Konoske, Graf, A., Partelow, L., and Benner, M. (December 22, 2016). “To attract great teachers, school districts must improve their human capital systems”. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2016/12/22/295574/to-attract-great-teachers-school-districts-must-improve-their-human-capital-systems/>

After identifying the core challenges, CAP made specific recommendations.¹² The authors note that “school districts across the country must compete with the companies that have more sophisticated human capital systems and offer more competitive salaries. As a result, school districts face obstacles to recruiting and retaining excellent, diverse talent.” CAP offered the recommendations listed on the right side of this page.

This research conducted by CAP, along with new information regarding Millennials in the workforce, further makes the case for new practices in recruitment and retention across the nation and in Alabama. As a state, Alabama should explore what teachers and school districts need, but also further explore the systematic and human resource department capacities to recruit and retain talent. Revising human capital systems to meet this growing need will prepare Alabama school districts’ human resource departments to compete.

Furthermore, if Alabama school districts acknowledge the shortage of teachers, it is necessary to adopt some of the strategies and models used by competitors to attract more talent to the teaching profession. Without adapting recruiting practices to this new generation, Alabama will continue to experience shortages for years to come and will also lose the most highly qualified teaching force possible.

Recommendations for Addressing Teacher Recruitment Challenges

1. School districts should devote more time and resources to intentional recruitment.
2. School districts should include performance measures in their application and selection processes.
3. School districts should provide new teachers with opportunities to build their skills and gradually assume increased responsibility.
4. School districts should offer teachers opportunities and time to grow, as well as implement professional learning systems that support teachers’ continuous growth.
5. School districts should ensure that teachers’ compensation is similar to that of other professions requiring the same level of education and provide teachers with necessary teaching resources.
6. School districts should prioritize teacher diversity and develop strategies to attract and retain teachers of color.

¹² Konoske, Graf, A., Partelow, L., and Benner, M. (December 22, 2016). “To attract great teachers, school districts must improve their human capital systems”. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2016/12/22/295574/to-attract-great-teachers-school-districts-must-improve-their-human-capital-systems/>

Recruiting methods of top companies

The success of top companies in recruiting top Millennial candidates extends beyond their prestige and brand. These companies provide some of the core incentives and atmospheres that are conducive to what Millennial employees desire.

Google is one of many examples of companies that effectively recruit and retain Millennial employees—some of whom are brilliant and would add to the teaching workforce across the nation. Regardless, if schools' competition is Google, Hyundai, Honda, Toyota, Kia (and other major companies in or near Alabama), there is an increased need for innovation when recruiting teaching talent.

After analyzing the interactions of over 39 million students and employers on LinkedIn, and interviewing over 6,000 students, researchers found that students were interested in jobs that provided a good work/life balance, compensation, benefits and a strong career path.

In addition, *Business Insider* notes that these companies also have the following in common: they create fun and inspiring environments that are engaging; think differently about compensation (such as providing more flexible schedules); “cater to entrepreneurial change,” allowing employees to be active participants in change efforts and listen to them; and use social media as an outlet to further recruit.

Google, which is rated as one of the best places to work for Millennials, uses internal and external recruitment to hire top talent. The company also relies heavily on recruiting a great human resources department to

sustain its operation.¹³ Internally, Google utilizes its human capital comprising both direct and indirect methods to recruit talent. This is accomplished through directly contacting potential future interns and employees through academic institutions, and indirectly contacting them via website advertisements.

Furthermore, Google retains high-quality employees similar to other major corporations through competitive and above-average compensation packages, free meals, incentives, and benefits. Additionally, employees engage in a fun and exciting environment and are provided ongoing coaching and mentoring with the intent of developing employees with demonstrated leadership skills. The coaching and mentoring component provides the potential for upward mobility and pay, which is linked to increased job satisfaction for Millennial employees.

Tennessee campaign for recruiting Millennial teachers

Tennessee is an example of a state acknowledging Millennials as the future of their teacher workforce. In May 2017, a Tennessee-based organization, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), released a statewide campaign to recruit Millennials, called “Teach Today. Change Tomorrow”. Similar to Alabama, Tennessee is experiencing teacher shortages in high-needs rural and urban districts, particularly in STEM instruction.

¹³ Panmore Institute - Google's HRM: Recruitment, Selection, Retention (January 28, 2017) by Jessica Lombardo

For this campaign, SCORE created a website that serves as a central hub for prospective teachers in Tennessee. The campaign site displays a youthful feel, is aesthetically pleasing, and is easy to navigate. Accompanying the website, SCORE reaches a larger demographic through its social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (which are heavily trafficked by Millennials). In a 2015 Talent Trends report, 62 percent of Millennials stated they visited a company website (such as the campaign) to learn more about a job.¹⁴ Thus, making sure information is accessible and clear is necessary.

UNC Educator Quality Dashboard

Also serving as a central hub of information for potential and current North Carolina educators, The UNC Educator Quality Dashboard eloquently describes its purpose as the following:

“The UNC Educator Quality Dashboard serves as an interactive on-line tool for viewing and analyzing data reflecting our progress towards the goal of augmenting the quantity and quality of public school educators serving our state’s students. The dashboard allows for increased transparency and ease in data access for education stakeholders, including educators, administrators, policymakers, parents, and students. The key outcome and performance indicators reflected in the dashboard are organized into the following categories: Recruitment and Selection, Educator

Preparation, Performance and Employment, and University-School Partnerships.”¹⁵

After five years of experiencing a 27 percent statewide decline in teacher preparation programs, UNC released this interactive tool in 2015. The tool provides a level of transparency and clarity surrounding the teaching profession, including recruitment procedures, requirements to become an educator in North Carolina, and access to professional pathways in the state. The accessibility of this tool gives current and potential educators the roadmap for their success and prospects for upward mobility in the profession. Additionally, providing this tool in an interactive format further appeals to Millennials, through its user-friendly appearance.

Moving forward, providing timelines and clarity around professional options may also lead to higher retention rates because current and potential teachers are equipped to strategize and make the best decisions for their careers from readily available information. Providing central hubs of organized information also alleviates the inconveniences of going through multiple channels to locate information surrounding teacher prep programs, certification requirements, etc. Fortunately, this tool is not only used for educators, but also for anyone who is interested and/or involved in education in North Carolina, thus serving as a source of data and clarity for stakeholders in educational reform.

¹⁴ iCMS, *A Recruiter’s Guide to Attract & Retain Millennials*, 2017

¹⁵ <http://eqdashboard.northcarolina.edu/>

UABTeach and alternative certification routes for teachers

UABTeach, at the University of Alabama—Birmingham is an example of a program providing incentives to students pursuing a career in education. In the UABTeach program, select STEM students receive teaching experience and training without additional cost to their education. The program is modeled after the nationally renowned UTeach program at the University of Texas at Austin (developed in 1997 and now nationally replicated by 40 universities). Engagement with local school districts is noted as a staple of the program’s model, where prospective teachers are provided mentoring from current educators.

Students involved in UABTeach (who apply during their sophomore or junior year) receive the following resources while in the program:

1. Academic support including an academic coach
2. A part of a cohort of support
3. Induction support, including mentorship with a Master teacher for the first few years of the student’s teaching career
4. Access to internship opportunities
5. Financial support, through special UABTeach scholarships that assist with at most 25-50% of funding.¹⁶
6. Multiple career paths

As a result of incentives like this, UTeach reports 88 percent of its graduates enter the teaching profession, and 80 percent remain in

the profession beyond 5 years.¹⁷ UABTeach will likely see similar results once it establishes a track record of alumni. This model for teacher recruitment and retention should be a staple in Alabama for recruiting top STEM talent because graduates have the additional incentive of receiving a teacher certification in addition to their STEM degree. This flexibility provides multiple career options for a Millennial, and dutifully serves school districts who need highly-trained teachers who both understand content and effective pedagogy. With its effectiveness in recruiting and retaining top talent, hopefully more schools of education in Alabama will adopt a similar model to recruit, train and retain Millennial teachers in high need areas.

Alternative certification programs such as Teach For America (TFA) also provide similar incentives as UABTeach. Teach For America-Alabama provides ongoing supports and onboarding for participating teachers. Similar to UABTeach, TFA seeks quality talent to teach in high needs areas, but in exchange for a two-year commitment. To date TFA-Alabama is working to engage its corps members in conversations about remaining in the classroom and/or field of education beyond two years. If effective in this approach, TFA-Alabama could also help close the shortage of teachers for not only two years, but for a generation.

In recruitment, as an organization, TFA is desirable to Millennials due to its professional appeal, where corps members are coming into a community of driven professionals. Corps members also receive ongoing leadership development and training, annual stipends of about \$5,000 to devote towards loans and/or other educational expenses, loan forbearance, and accrued interest fees

¹⁶ This does not include the additional federal funds, grants, and scholarships a student receives outside of the program.

¹⁷ <https://www.uab.edu/uabteach/about>

paid at the end of the two-year commitment. In addition, corps members are on track to become certified teachers. Although many corps members go on to become leaders in other fields than the field of education, they also have several in-house options to continue their involvement with TFA through assisting with the recruitment of more teachers, becoming a part of regional staff, and/or receiving assistance through the Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE) to engage in policy fellowships or receive ongoing support to run for elected office.

Teacher fellows programs

Nationwide, teacher fellows programs are also appealing to the Millennial cohort. States and districts develop teacher residency programs to improve teacher preparation and to recruit talented individuals to the field. Teacher fellows and residency programs are commonly used in the following southern states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. These programs not only enhance the professionalism of the field, but also provide supports that are essential to the onboarding and retention of teachers.

In addressing teacher shortages, the Learning Policy Institute proposes that “districts could develop teacher residencies by investing a portion of funds they receive under Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as well as accessing funds under the Higher Education Act (HEA) Title II and AmeriCorps.”¹⁸ Through these collaborations and reallocation of funds, districts may also establish and continue even stronger

¹⁸ Learning Policy Institute (November 2016). *Addressing the Teacher Shortage: What Districts Can Do*.

partnerships with alternative certification programs like Teach For America to recruit highly qualified applicants who have high potential for remaining in the classroom as a career teacher. To date, in the state of Alabama, there are no teaching fellows programs, meaning there is a future opportunity for dialogue about implementing these programs to sustain the teaching force, and to draw in the Millennial cohort.

University of West Alabama and federal funding

In 2016, the University of West Alabama (UWA) was one of four recipients of the U.S. Department of Education’s Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) program. UWA’s college of education received its first installment of \$1.2 million during the first year and will receive the remainder over the five-year grant period. The funding is going towards the Rethinking Rural Education Programs Initiative (REP) to assist in the recruitment, training, and support of teachers working in rural communities. Through this program, rural teachers receive¹⁹:

1. Training with UWA faculty, providing university-school collaboration
2. Comprehensive reform of teacher recruitment methods
3. Clinical experience to prepare for effectiveness in the classroom
4. Usage of data-driven methods to establish targeted professional development

¹⁹[http://www.uwa.edu/News,_Events,__amp;_Media/News_Archive/2016-10-05_UWA_College_of_Ed_receives_\\$3_million_USDE_grant.aspx](http://www.uwa.edu/News,_Events,__amp;_Media/News_Archive/2016-10-05_UWA_College_of_Ed_receives_$3_million_USDE_grant.aspx)

In addition to federal funding, federal TEACH Grants also provide an additional incentive. Through the TEACH Grants, students receive a yearly stipend of up to \$4,000, in exchange for committing to teach in a high-needs school or educational service agency for four years after graduating from their teacher preparation program.²⁰ Due to the nature of federal funding, Alabama may also establish a sustainability method to ensure that similar incentives like the TEACH Grant will be available in the future for prospective teacher candidates.²¹ It is essential that Alabama continues to offer similar incentives for students to provide more momentum towards the profession, and support for students who may not otherwise consider teaching in high-need schools.

²⁰<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/teach-grant.pdf>

²¹ The TEACH Grant is a part of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (also known as the sequester law) that is an automatic budget cut. For example, students receiving their grant award before October 1, 2017 would receive a 6.9 percent decrease in their award with a maximum award of \$3,724; and students receiving their award between October 1, 2017, and October 1, 2018 will receive a 6.6 percent reduction, with a total award of \$3,736 [<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/teach#sequestration>].

Retention

Along with recruiting Millennials to the teaching profession in Alabama, ensuring that talent is retained is a significant issue. While recruitment is essential to our state's economic vitality, recruitment alone does not address "longstanding retention issues, and as a result, contribute to a 'revolving door of in-and-out recruits'"²² without intentional and ongoing efforts to retain employees. Models and programs undertaken by corporations like Google and non-profit organizations like SCORE, through their "Teach Today. Change Tomorrow Campaign", the UNC Educator Quality Dashboard, and UABTeach, providing incentives to join the profession, both directly recruit teachers and serve as indirect mechanisms of retention. The strategies used by these corporations, organizations, and schools of education indirectly set the groundwork for a sustainable teaching force by ushering potential educators into a system of support and transparency. To further this charge, there are a few things organizations can implement to assist in keeping Millennial teachers in the profession.

Some necessities for a Millennial, as he or she pursues a profession, are 1) compensation packages/perks, 2) ongoing professional development, 3) opportunities for advancement, and 4) a culture and climate of the workplace.

Regarding compensation packages and perks, it is no secret that teachers are amongst the lowest paid compared to other professions requiring similar education levels. While many teachers find their work rewarding, they

²² Aragon, Stephanie (May 2016). *Teacher Shortages: What We Know*. Education Commission of the States.

would love to be compensated beyond their salaries and general retirement. Teachers from across Alabama representing districts such as Huntsville, Selma, Birmingham, Greensboro, and Perry County, gave insight on what they see as efficient compensation. Some suggestions listed were:

- Free lunch and coffee
- Increased classroom material funding
- Extended planning periods
- Reduction in paperwork not aligned with instructional purposes
- More administrative support in disciplinary issues
- Specific new teacher onboarding, with consistent professional development for the new cohort
- Housing options and relocation fees
- Compensation for teacher travel²³

Several of these suggestions are closely aligned with perks used to retain Millennials in major companies like PwC and Deloitte, and in Silicon Valley. These requests align with a general development of a "culture of care."

In describing the culture that appeals to Millennials, a recent *Fortune* article²⁴ noted Silicon Valley is appreciated for providing "nap rooms, free food, and pet-friendly policies." A member of PwC informs that Millennials are obsessed with how things feel in the workplace and driven by how well their teams work together - especially as a result of

²³ These suggestions are derived from ongoing dialogues with Alabama Millennial teachers, and this list is not exhaustive.

²⁴ <http://fortune.com/2016/03/04/attracting-millennial-talent/>

the culture that is enhanced by the general perks of the job. While not all of these may be the right fit for schools in Alabama, it is necessary to take inventory of these special needs of teachers and develop a culture of care to retain millennial employees. This culture of care is not necessarily extensive nor expensive, but demonstrates that school leaders and districts care about even the seemingly small needs of their teachers.

In line with enhancing the culture of the teacher workforce, improvement of teachers' working conditions was among the strategies proposed for keeping teachers in the classroom in a 2017 article.²⁵ It was further noted that teacher effectiveness and retention rates are higher at schools with positive working conditions, including "sufficient instructional materials and supplies, safe and clean facilities, reasonable student-to-teacher ratios, and adequate support personnel," leading to higher student achievement.

The issue of school culture was also addressed by The New Teacher Project (TNT), which conducted a study finding that "poor school cultures and working conditions drive away great teachers," and schools with higher retention rates have school leaders who have a vested interest in creating school cultures based on respect, trust, and collaboration.²⁶ While this is not specific to Millennials, it is significant because these are workforce characteristics this cohort values. If Alabama seeks to retain this subgroup, it is essential to begin adapting environments that

are not only conducive to students, but also the teachers who teach them.

Additionally, Millennials seek ongoing and meaningful professional development. In Alabama, TFA engages in ongoing professional development with its corps members through bi-monthly summits that allow teachers to reflect on their practice and learn new strategies to enhance it. Similar and frequent professional development should also be provided to teachers in schools across Alabama. Implementation efforts may be achieved through school-university partnerships with schools of education or through organizations such as the Alabama Best Practices Center, which provides professional development for partner districts.

In addition to efficient professional development, Millennials also desire ongoing and consistent feedback. In a recent study, 80 percent of Millennials desired feedback in real time.²⁷ For example, when a teacher is observed, it is beneficial for them to receive immediate and/or timely feedback to begin making improvements as soon as possible. This is important because Millennials highly value feedback, with 60 percent considering these incremental opportunities to grow in the profession as one of the most attractive perks of their jobs.²⁸

Furthermore, Millennials seek upward mobility and opportunities for advancement. The Professional Pathways model is one example of an opportunity for teachers to advance in Alabama and may also lead to higher retention rates among Millennials.

²⁵ "Sticky schools: How to find and keep teachers in the classroom" (May 2017) Anne Podolsky, Tara Kini, Joseph Bishop, and Linda Darling-Hammond. Page 19 of *Phi Delta Kappan*.

²⁶ The New Teacher Project. *The Irreplaceables: Understanding the real retention crises in America's urban schools*.

²⁷ iCMS, *A Recruiter's Guide to Attract & Retain Millennials, 2017*

²⁸ iCMS, *A Recruiter's Guide to Attract & Retain Millennials, 2017*

Professional Pathways

“We have less than a decade to replace the stand-and-deliver teaching model with more rewarding professional career pathways, by orchestrating a new workforce of educators who work together to facilitate learning as apprentices, professional teachers, coaches, mentors, learning team leaders”

-Tom Carroll, Ph.D. President National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, from the Foreword of Innovations in Teaching: Creating Professional Pathways for Alabama Teachers

The concept of professional pathways is not new to Alabama. The words above were written in 2008, but Alabama did not heed their warning. Today, we must be intentional with implementing new policies if we are to sustain and retain teachers.

Millennials prefer working environments that encourage and/or provide upward mobility as a result of hard work and dedication. Professional Pathways provides this very system of advancement. Alabama has not adopted this practice, however.

In 2008, The Governor’s Commission on Quality Teaching in Alabama proposed Professional Pathways as a “system designed to retain and recognize highly effective teachers, attract and excite new teachers, and enhance teaching quality in every classroom across the state.” Most significantly, the system provides opportunities for teachers to become leaders in their field while remaining in the classroom. As such, highly qualified teachers are not lost to administrative positions when their talents are needed in

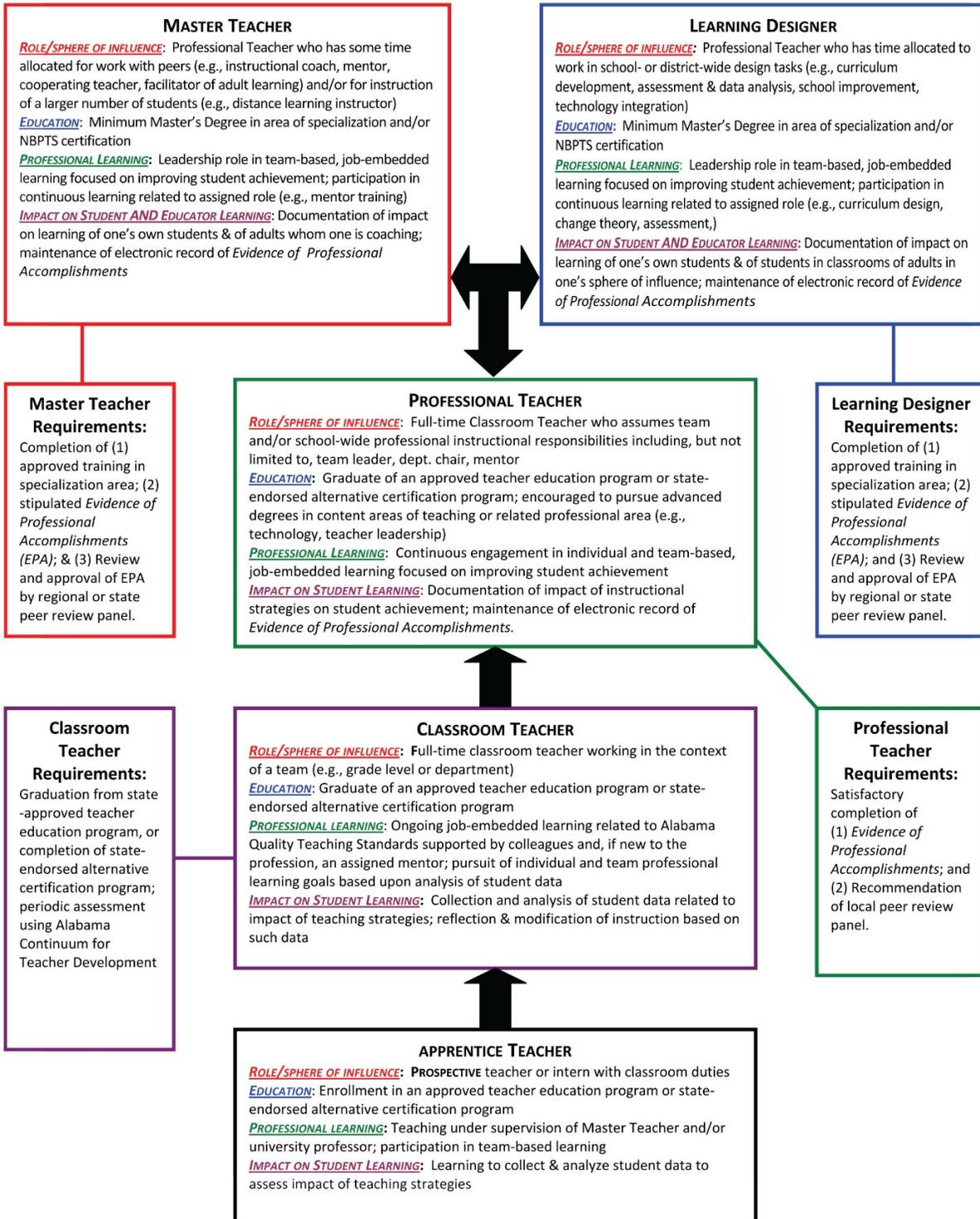
the classroom. While many teachers will still pursue administration or policy positions, Professional Pathways ensures highly- qualified teachers have flexibility in their current role. Professional Pathways was also created to provide appealing options to both current teachers and upcoming generations who display interest in the profession.

The Professional Pathways system proposed by the commission includes five career pathways for teachers:

1. **Apprentice Teacher** – a prospective teacher or intern with classroom duties.
2. **Classroom Teacher** – a full-time classroom teacher working in the context of a team.
3. **Professional Teacher** – a full-time classroom teacher who assumes team and/or school-wide professional instructional duties (mentor, team leader, department chair, etc.).
4. **Master Teacher** – a professional teacher who has some time allocated to work with other teachers or to teach a larger number of students.
5. **Learning Designer** - a professional teacher who has time allocated to work in school or system-level design tasks (curriculum development, data analysis, school improvement, technology integration, etc.)

The model on page 15 displays the requirements for pursuing each pathway, as designated by the commission.

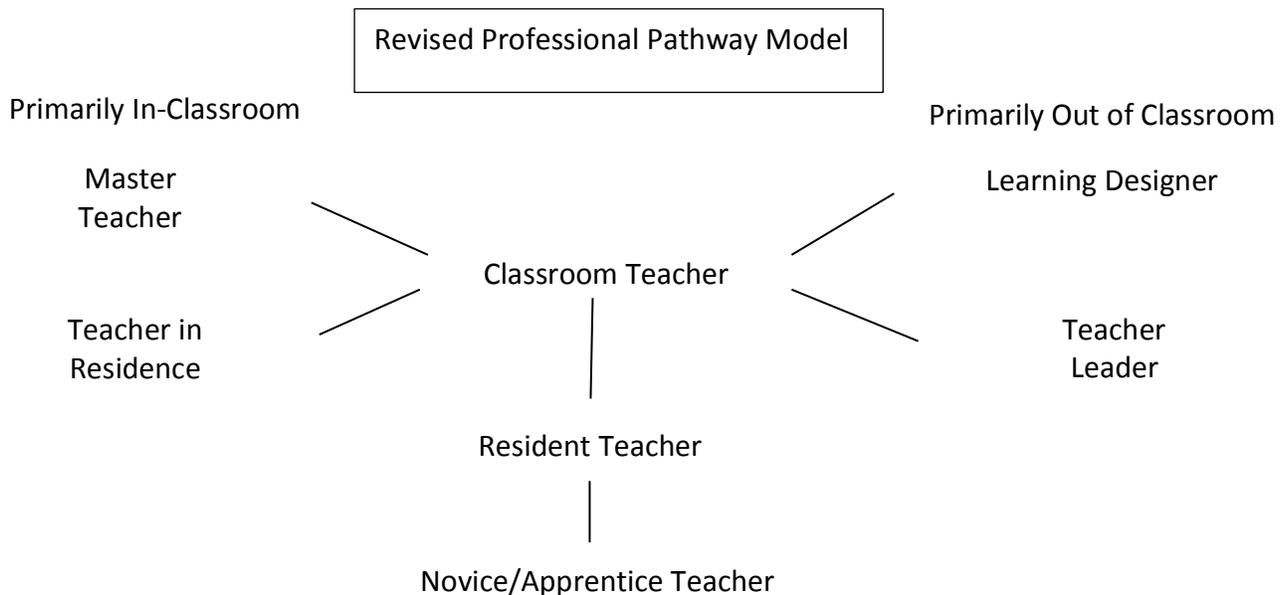
Professional Pathways for Alabama Teachers



The Professional Pathways system was proposed by the Governor’s Commission on Quality Teaching in 2008, and in 2009 a pilot for the system was proposed in select school systems. However, with the onset of the economic recession, the pilot was not funded.²⁹

Although this system went unfunded, the idea of Professional Pathways is still alive in Alabama and warrants a response. In July 2017, the Alabama State Department of Education held a MEGA Conference in Mobile, AL, where a professional pathways session was facilitated by A+ Education Partnership and the David Mathews Center for Civic Life. Teachers convened, providing input on the previously described model, making recommendations to be shared with policymakers. Among the thoughts generated were suggestions that led to a new potential three-tiered structure of the professional pathways model:

1. **Novice/Apprentice Teacher** – This position would be redefined as someone actively in a certification process.
2. **Resident Teacher** – Practitioners (within 1-7 years of teaching) who are still perfecting their content and pedagogy.
3. **Classroom Teachers** – Also practitioners and leaders in mentoring, observing, and facilitating professional development for resident and apprentice teachers. This group will also continue active learning in the profession. At the heart of this new model is the classroom teacher, with flexibility to move from classroom teacher to other positions sporadically throughout their careers. For example, a classroom teacher may decide to branch out and become a learning designer or master teacher. He or she will always have the option of returning to and/or remaining in the classroom.



²⁹ *Teachers Matter: Rethinking How Public Education Recruits, Rewards, and Retains Great Educators* (August 15, 2015) by the Business Education Alliance and the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

In Alabama, former educators are actively engaged in the State Department of Education, local district offices, and community organizations. In creating a professional pathways system, however, Alabama should also ensure the message is sent to Millennials that there are multiple pathways inside and outside of the classroom. The State Department of Education and district offices should additionally review strategies to improve the pipeline of teachers who transition into policy and/or state-level roles and provide the necessary supports to assist in training the education system's next leaders, so as to aid in continual growth of Alabama's educational system.

Promoting and encouraging additional supports and vested interest in seeing teachers succeed at this level would serve as another incentive for teachers to remain in the classroom as they learn more about the field of education and build vital networks. The effectiveness of such a model is practiced by Teach For America, which maintains a close relationship with the

Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE). LEE provides summer fellowships, trainings, resources, and support for teachers who are interested in pursuing policy roles. LEE acknowledges that although most participating teachers plan to return to the classroom, the professional development provided through the organization is preparing teachers for future roles in policy and advocacy, roles that are also essential to the future of education.

Conclusion

Without a focus on strategic and comprehensive ways of retaining and recruiting our nation's brightest to become a part of Alabama's teaching workforce, our state is missing an opportunity. It is important for Alabama's school districts, the Alabama State Department of Education, and institutions of higher education to become proactive participants in this issue. Alabama cannot wait to see who will enter the profession; it must market the profession to potential candidates.

Recommendations for Alabama policymakers and school leaders to improve teacher recruitment and retention

- Build relationships and/or partner with top employers nationwide and in Alabama, including Google, to develop models and assistance in recruiting the nation's brightest into Alabama's classrooms.
- Launch a statewide Teacher Fellows Program.
- Launch a statewide campaign for recruitment of Millennials.
- Strive to adopt culture, climate, and benefit models of top employers nationwide that align with Millennials lifestyles.
- Develop partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts.
- Create an incentive system for schools that do a great job of retaining teachers based on a certain benchmark (e.g. 95 percent annual retention).
- Focus on veteran teachers' importance in recruiting the next generation of Alabama teachers by engaging them as mentors for new teachers, both formally and informally.
- Revive official discussions and study of a statewide professional pathways system and provide a framework for districts that gives them flexibility to implement and tailor the model to their population.
- Develop a data collection and dissemination tool with a focus on teacher pipeline metrics.
 - This should be similar to the UNC Educator Quality Dashboard, which provides the selection criteria for all North Carolina teacher preparation programs, among other things. This one-stop option for potential applicants provides the opportunity for cross comparison of programs. Additionally, the university-school partnerships tool also provides applicants an opportunity to see the feeder schools for the university of their choice.
- Require each school system to create a comprehensive teacher recruitment and retention plan.
 - These plans should include strategies for attracting and retaining in- and out-of-state candidates, special education teachers, and STEM teachers. Recruitment plans should be shared on the State Department website to serve as a resource tool so that districts can collaborate or share their methods of recruiting.

