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Report

Strategies and Approaches for Recruiting Indiana Teachers

Developed for the Indiana Department of Education

All photos in this report are for illustrative purposes only. All people depicted in all photos are models.

Contents

Introduction

In the fall of 2021, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) requested assistance from the Region 8 Comprehensive Center in finding research-based strategies for effectively recruiting teachers, especially teachers of color. This request stemmed from Indiana's growing difficulty in fully staffing schools, especially in high-need areas. This research report provides techniques and approaches to recruiting teachers that IDOE, districts, and schools might consider when planning recruitment efforts, especially those related to diversifying their teacher workforce. These include establishing educator pipelines for high schoolers and paraprofessionals, as well as financial incentives, innovative credentialing programs, and creatively connecting with potential teacher candidates, among others. While districts may not be able to utilize all of these approaches, this report provides information on a wide range of possibilities for teacher recruitment.

Teacher shortages occur in schools for various reasons. Overall, potential teacher candidates are less likely to want to teach in schools with low student achievement scores. With no additional compensation offered to teach in struggling schools, teachers are even less likely to seek employment there. In addition, teachers are less interested in applying for or accepting positions in schools that offer scant resources; large class sizes; and few opportunities for support, collaboration, and professional development (Gunther, 2019; See et al., 2020).

Background on Indiana's Needs

Teacher recruitment efforts are key to addressing critical teacher shortages across the United States and in Indiana, where the shortages are at all-time highs. Indiana has experienced a decline in the number of individuals interested in becoming teachers and in the number of teacher certifications each year for the past several years. A recent Regional Educational Laboratory [(REL) Midwest study](#) (Wan et al., 2021) showed that only one in six college students who study education actually become teachers in the state. Moreover, teachers are exiting the profession in greater numbers than previously, with most deciding to leave the classroom after only 3 to 5 years.

Additionally, the teacher workforce in Indiana has long been largely white. Current statistics indicate that 95% of teachers in Indiana are white, with only 4% Black and 2% Latinx. This contrasts with the student population: only 66% of Indiana students are white, 13% are Black, and 12% are Hispanic. The lack of teacher diversity may be a significant contributing factor for both recruiting and retaining teachers.

Furthermore, Indiana ranks 48th in "Teaching Attractiveness" based on compensation, teaching conditions, qualifications, and turnover rates (Learning Policy Institute, 2018). In 2021, IDOE identified significant teacher shortages in a number of areas across a wide range of disciplines, including special education, science, elementary generalists, and math. IDOE issued nearly 4,500 emergency permits across disciplines in 2021 and many districts had vacancies in several areas, such as special education, math, and science. Some districts had up to 20 positions vacant for more than 90 days.

IDOE reported the following information in its U.S. Department of Education Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund application (2021) related to high-need areas:

> Indiana continues to issue emergency permits for educators in critical areas such as special education (1,218 in 19/20) and [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] STEM (446). Additionally, Indiana must identify barriers keeping qualified candidates of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds from the teaching profession. Indiana's educator force is 92% white, while only 66% of students are white (p. 6–7).

Impact of Diverse Teachers on Students

A diverse teacher workforce benefits *all* students in a variety of ways, including providing role models for students, promoting an inclusive school culture, and ensuring all students are exposed to different perspectives in ways that prepare them to be global citizens (Nevarez et al., 2019; Lachlan-Hache et al., 2020). Furthermore, teacher diversity has a positive impact on the academic performance of students of color as well as on their graduation rates, social and emotional wellbeing, and absenteeism (Carver-Thomas, 2018a).

According to Ingersoll, May, and Collins (2017):

> [S]ome have concluded that the minority teacher shortage has resulted in unequal access to adequately qualified teachers and, hence, to quality teaching, in poor urban public schools serving minority students. Unequal access to educational resources, such as qualified teachers, has long been considered a primary cause of the stratification of educational opportunity and, in turn, the achievement gap—and, ultimately, unequal occupational outcomes for disadvantaged students (p. 2).

A recent study from the National Bureau of Economic Research (2018) noted that when Black boys had at least one teacher of color in grades kindergarten (K) to 3, they were more likely to graduate from high school and to pursue a college degree than their Black peers who did not have at least one teacher of color. There was no similar result for white students. Bringing teachers of color into the workforce is challenging for several reasons, but Young and Easton-Brooks (2020) assert that because minority

children have unequal access to qualified teachers, they are often prevented from becoming teachers themselves because of their poor performance on standardized exams, including teacher licensure exams. The authors note, however, that once in classrooms, Black female teachers are highly effective because they "utilize a pedagogy that propels students to reach their full potential by leveraging students' cultural funds of knowledge" (p. 392).

Irizarry (2007) also notes:

> Many teachers of color have valuable insight into the cultures of their students. Based on their experiences, this particular group of teachers is often well-versed in the sociocultural realities faced by many students in these communities, and they can use this information to inform their practice (p. 88).

A review of the literature on recruitment follows. It begins with general recruitment considerations, followed by recruitment of diverse teachers, Grow Your Own (GYO) programs, and state policies and initiatives.

General Considerations for Recruitment

As IDOE works to support districts, there are some general strategies and approaches that help strengthen recruitment efforts across contexts. These include both common strategies, such as financial incentives, and innovative approaches, such as capitalizing on social networks and looking beyond the typical labor market perspective for recruitment.

A study involving professional development schools working with Georgia State University (Fisher-Ari et al., 2018) noted that recruitment of all teachers, not specifically teachers of color, was strengthened by competitive compensation, a respect for the profession, and "innovative teaching practices" experienced by students while in the K–12 system. A study of Knowledge is Power Program schools' recruitment efforts demonstrated that using a school's mission as a recruiting tool to attract altruistic candidates who seek to make a difference as a teacher was effective (Shuls & Maranto, 2014).

Social Networks and Community Ties

An important aspect of recruitment and retention, as explained by Baker-Doyle (2010), involves understanding teachers' social networks and the implications of these for both attracting and keeping teachers. The social network perspective (SNP) "focuses on the patterns of links and interactions between individuals or groups in a social network and how these trends shape their experiences and choices" (p. 5). The author notes, "Research on the social networks of teachers has found that the characteristics of teachers' social networks directly influence their decision to teach or stay in a certain location." Moreover,

> … teachers tend to look for positions close to home or in areas similar to their homes. This finding can be explained through the SNP principle of homophily, [meaning that] that people tend to seek out others who are similar to them (p. 7).

Strong community ties—both in and out of school—impact teachers' job-related decisions and leaders' understandings of how these networks influence the school climate and culture, and are key to recruiting new teachers. By capitalizing on these networks, both formal and informal, schools and districts can begin

connecting with potential teacher applicants in systematic ways. In a later section of this report, the concept of social networks will be discussed in relation to recruiting diverse teacher candidates.

Labor Market Perspective Framework

Baker-Doyle notes that while using a labor market perspective (LMP) framework is often successful in recruitment, it is less successful than the social networking aspect for *retaining* teachers. This LMP framework centers around the concept of supply and demand. The notion of teacher supply involves individuals choosing to apply for and accept particular teaching jobs based on their perception of the benefit of those jobs, such as compensation, working conditions, and so forth. The LMP framework is useful in examining teacher recruitment because it focuses on factors to attract potential teachers by "offering financial incentives, changing entry requirements, and developing human capital" (p. 3). Financial incentives include compensation, sign-on bonuses, merit pay, and so on, and play an important role in recruiting teachers. For example, programs such as Teach for America provide alternate routes to teacher certification and recruit new teachers based on a short-term commitment of 2 or 3 years. Another LMP strategy used to attract new teachers is human capital development, which links an employee's level of education and training to their compensation, so districts that offer professional development and learning opportunities are in a stronger recruiting position. Another approach specific to recruiting new teachers is the use of induction programs to support them in developing skills to teach effectively. This is a "front-end" strategy for recruitment because it provides a benefit to novice teachers and so may contribute to a potential teacher candidate applying for and accepting a new position. It is important to note that none of these three LMP factors show evidence of retaining teachers once they have been recruited.

Recruiting a Diverse Teacher Workforce

Relationships as a Recruiting Strategy

For decades, relationship building has been an important strategy for both job seekers and human resource managers across all occupational sectors. Schools and districts have opportunities to capitalize on relationship building to strategically anticipate and fill teacher vacancies. Key strategies for recruiting related to relationship building include informal connectors, connections with community members, personal relationship building, and special emphasis recruiting.

A recent REL Northwest report (Motamedi & Stevens, 2018) suggests that in order to recruit diverse teachers "…districts may wish to identify informal connectors—teachers of color, paraeducators, or other community members—who can use their broader networks [and recruiters who are part of these communities] to help the district develop relationships with communities of color," (p. 3) and to use personal relationship building as a tool for recruitment, which can be initiated during campus visits or alumni calls to potential teacher candidates. Hill-Jackson (2020) advocates for a recruiting approach known as special emphasis recruiting (SER), which is the "intentional recruitment of underserved populations" (p. 432). This approach calls on teacher education programs and school districts to personally interact with diverse potential teacher candidates where they live, work, worship, volunteer, or are served by community organizations, building connections and relationships as a recruiting strategy.

> ### Recruitment Strategies
>
> - Provide flexible scheduling
> - Offer coursework onsite
> - Provide coursework on licensure exam preparation
> - Partner with higher education institutions that serve diverse students
> - Develop strategic communications and marketing plans
> - Use data to assess current and future vacancies
>
> — *Washington State Vibrant Teaching Force Alliance Meeting Materials*

Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) and Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory (1981), Farinde-Wu, Butler, and Allen-Handy (2020) explored how to create a Black female teacher pipeline, recommending strategies that include:

- Exposing students to the possibility of entering the teaching profession beginning in elementary school
- Creating or instituting programs for future teachers, such as cadet teaching or Future Teachers of America chapters
- Offering financial support for Black women in college who are preparing to teach
- Having district-level commitments to hiring practices that help diversify their workforce

Another REL Northwest report (Leong et al., 2018) outlined several strategies for recruiting diverse teachers, listing programs that were implementing them. Innovative ideas such as flexible coursework scheduling to accommodate work and home demands, financial assistance, time for paraprofessionals to take courses during the workday, not requiring additional classroom observations on top of their current

classroom roles, and making courses more convenient by offering them onsite. Many of these strategies are coupled with unique communications strategies focused on diverse potential candidates and admissions policies that aim to provide greater access to educator preparation and certification for diverse teacher candidates. Other suggestions include providing teacher licensure exam preparation coursework (Young & Easton-Brooks, 2020).

Motamedi and Stevens (2018) also noted the importance of districts building partnerships with colleges and universities that educate a diverse student body:

> These include historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges and universities. Research also suggests that districts partner with alternative teacher preparation programs, which are more likely to serve people of color, to identify and recruit teachers by sharing information about anticipated vacancies (p. 3).

The authors emphasized that it is important for a district to first understand the landscape of its teacher workforce and its level of diversity, and to use this data in forecasting vacancies before then developing a marketing campaign focused on diverse potential teacher candidates with clear messaging across a variety of channels (social media, websites, job postings, and so on).

Grow Your Own Programs

Urban GYO Programs

Coffey, Putnam, Handler, and Leach (2019) found that community-based efforts to develop GYO programs have been effective in recruiting teachers of color and bilingual teachers in urban areas where shortages are high and where the programs are "[o]ften tailored to meet the unique needs of a particular community and utilize existing resources, partnerships, and talent to attract and develop candidates for the field" (p. 38). The authors note that such GYO programs can involve parents, community members, veterans, career changers, and high schoolers. Though now defunct, one program in Chicago, IL—Project Nuevo Generación—recruited and placed 120 GYO teachers. This program, which ended due to funding issues, helped parents and other community members become certified by providing funding and academic support to the participants. Another program in Sacramento, CA, sought to diversify the teacher workforce as a social justice effort, targeting first-generation college and nontraditional students. The authors wrote, "[T]hese two equity-based GYO models [in Chicago and Sacramento] are exemplary in their

intentions to recruit candidates from the local community and create accessible pathways for nontraditional university students to pursue careers in education" (p. 40) and added, "Some of these precollegiate GYO programs aim to repair the 'leaky [teacher] pipeline' by supporting youth throughout the transition from high school into higher education" (p. 41). Other GYO programs aimed at high school students of color in Washington, DC; Texas; and New York capitalized on their experiences as students to not only recruit them into teaching, but to become change agents in their communities. One study (Irizarry, 2007) of a GYO program that resulted from a collaboration between a community center, a university, and a local school district provided students with financial and academic support in return for years of service to the district. One participant said:

> I am from this community. I knew I wanted to teach here, so it made sense to apply to Project TEACH. This way I could do my student-teaching and such in the district I wanted to work in. I think I can relate to the kids [in this district] in ways that some other teachers can't. I know where they are because I've been there. I attended school here. I've dealt with some of the same stuff they are dealing with. That knowledge can help me get them where they want to go—to college and beyond (p. 91).

Kier and Chen (2017) found that "to recruit preservice teachers for teaching in high-needs settings, they must genuinely see strengths in the communities in which they teach" (p. 896). By capitalizing on participants' ties to their communities, these types of GYO programs are not only successful in building their teacher pipelines, but also in strengthening retention rates.

One project, Teacher Education for the Advancement of a Multicultural Society (TEAMS), funded by AmeriCorps and led by the University of San Francisco, involved K–12 collaborators and community organizations in recruiting over 3,000 paraprofessionals and counselors for urban teaching jobs on the West Coast. Nuñez and Fernandez (2006) reported that by "[c]reatively leveraging the resources that each of our partners brings to the collaborative, the [TEAMS] program has been able to provide this unique combination of financial, educational, career, and professional development support to over 3000 aspiring and new teachers during its existence" (p. 50).

Especially in urban areas, Carver-Thomas (2018b) notes that teachers of color are an untapped resource that can help fill vacancies. As discussed previously, teachers of color bring a myriad of benefits to all students, especially students of color. A focus on recruiting a diverse teacher workforce, especially those in their own communities, can help address shortages in these urban areas. She states:

> Teachers of color are a resource for students in hard-to-staff schools. Many teachers of color report feeling called to teach in low-income communities of color, positions that are often difficult to fill. Indeed, three in four teachers of color work in the quarter of schools serving the most students of color nationally. Teachers of color play an important role in filling gaps in these schools … (p. v).

Rural and Native GYO Programs

In a study involving 113 teachers (54%) from 24 of the smallest rural Illinois districts, researchers found that teachers from surrounding communities and teachers who wanted to teach in rural settings were key

to recruitment efforts (Ulferts, 2016). Rural recruitment is often affected by a lack of teacher preparation in rural areas, with many teacher candidates seeking positions in non-rural settings.

However, those who did choose to explore rural teaching options viewed strong administrative support as an attractive element for taking new teaching positions in rural settings (Tran & Dou, 2019). This study looked at small rural South Carolina schools and mirrored newly-recruited teachers' desire to teach in a rural setting, with small class sizes, and community support. The authors note, "Given that rural communities offer stronger community relations and deeper camaraderie of teachers and students, schools can leverage this strength by integrating teachers into the community" (p. 144). While other important factors involved small class sizes and a singular job offer, rural districts may find GYO programs can enhance recruiting efforts by targeting their own rural students and/or adults for nontraditional GYO programs—especially if there is a strong community component.

One university in Oregon sought to enhance recruitment of diverse teachers, including those from local Native American communities, by creating "satellite" programming in which preservice teachers stay in their local communities to earn course credit where their rural, and often Native American, perspectives and experiences are valued and respected. The program offered an additional year to complete course requirements to allow preservice teachers time for work and family obligations while completing their education. This GYO program aimed to recruit rural and Native American teachers into the profession,

filling vacancies that were too often hard to fill in the past without this type of "place-based" experience (Adams & Farnsworth, 2020).

Career and Technical Education GYO Programs

In a New York City program that aimed to address the shortage of career and technical education (CTE) teachers, high school students in CTE courses were identified as potential CTE teachers. They learned how to plan and teach lessons alongside a mentor CTE teacher while still in high school. After graduation, students worked in their respective CTE certification program for 4 years, often with employers that the district had developed close relationships with over many years. Students then completed the necessary college coursework to become certified teachers and returned to fill vacancies in the district. This GYO program allowed schools to project vacancies and identify potential candidates years in advance (Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011).

State Policies and Initiatives

There are several levers that state departments of education can use to enhance teacher recruitment efforts. Some of these involve financial investments in the profession, such as funding for salary increases, loan forgiveness, mentoring programs, or paid teacher residencies. Indiana has recently offered some of these funding solutions not only through legislation, but also through grants offered by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and IDOE. Other levers relate to implementing policies that make earning certification more attainable and the profession more attractive. Policies like these provide flexibility to educator preparation programs (EPPs), for example, which allow for paid residencies, licensure exam waivers at the state level, or alternative certification programs.

In Arkansas, three different state initiatives aimed at recruiting teachers to rural schools were created in response to a 2002 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the state's school funding system was unconstitutional. In order to address the lack of teachers in "Geographic Shortage Districts" (GSDs)—as well as in high-need subject areas—the state initiatives included monetary bonuses for new hires in GSDs, financial assistance for buying a house or renting close to these high-shortage regions of the state, and a loan forgiveness program for teachers who work in GSDs (Maranto & Shuls, 2012).

Carver-Thomas (2018b) makes several recommendations for states seeking to enhance recruiting efforts— especially for teachers of color: include loan forgiveness programs; offer scholarships in return for service as was done in Kentucky, Tennessee, Minnesota, and Montana where these scholarships are aimed at diversifying the teacher workforce; invest in teacher residency and GYO programs, nontraditional coursework and certification programs; and use data monitoring to gauge and reward increasing diverse preservice teacher enrollment. A Learning Policy Institute report recommends state policies that provide loan forgiveness, "high retention pathways" such as teacher residencies and GYO programs, mentoring, and competitive compensation (Espinoza et al., 2018). Another recent report from the Learning Policy Institute (Oakes et al., 2020) made a series of recommendations to help New Mexico address the state's 8% teacher shortage issue. These recommendations included funding GYO and residency programs as well as CTE, dual credit, and other credit-earning opportunities for high school students, and enhancing the state's loan forgiveness policy for teachers. In addition, a 2016 report from the Learning Policy Institute included other recommendations to enhance teacher recruitment such as housing subsidies; higher salaries; opportunities for advancement with salary increases; and ongoing induction, mentoring, and professional learning. A study by REL Southwest (2017) found that "higher compensation and increased responsibilities in job assignment are positively associated with successful recruitment…" (p. ii) in rural Oklahoma districts.

The Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center assisted the Delaware Department of Education with the *Delaware Teacher Recruitment and Selection Toolkit* (2016) to support districts across the state in their recruitment and hiring of teachers. This toolkit provides templates and examples for identifying needs, timelines, and communication strategies, including using social media to attract potential teacher candidates. This comprehensive resource can serve as a model for districts in Indiana as they work to recruit and hire new teachers, especially with the toolkit's focus on recruiting diverse teachers.

Conclusion

There are a number of strategies for recruiting teachers, especially diverse teachers, to fill vacancies across the country. GYO programs have shown success in addressing shortages while other strategies can be bolstered through state-level funding or policy, such as teacher pay raises, teacher residencies, flexibility in programming and/or requirements, housing subsidies, and loan forgiveness.

At the district level, providing opportunities for job-related responsibilities, professional development, mentoring, and other kinds of support, along with competitive compensation have been shown to contribute to successful recruiting efforts. Rural and urban schools face different challenges in recruiting teachers to fill vacancies. Each have distinctions that can play a role in attracting teacher candidates, particularly with GYO programs and supports throughout teacher efforts to complete certification. Identification of hiring needs, with a focus on increasing the diversity of the teacher workforce; clear and effective communication strategies, including the use of social media; and capitalizing on social networks to identify and connect with potential teacher candidates long before vacancies open have all shown promise across the research. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but there are solutions to consider across contexts as Indiana districts attempt to address their teacher shortages.

A summary of strategies for recruitment is on the following page.

Summary of Key Recruitment Strategies

State Level	District Level
◄ Loan forgiveness	◄ Use data to understand the current makeup of the district's teacher workforce and its diversity
◄ Housing subsidies	◄ Strategic marketing and communication plan for recruiting, capitalizing on social media channels
◄ Licensure exam waivers	
◄ Competitive compensation	◄ Grow Your Own programs
◄ Paid teacher residencies	◄ Paid teacher residencies
◄ Fund Grow Your Own programs	◄ Competitive compensation
◄ Flexibility for educator preparation programs	◄ Housing subsidies
◄ Course credit opportunities for high schoolers	◄ Course credit opportunities via dual credit, Advanced Placement, and College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)
◄ Support for district efforts to develop strategic marketing and communications plans for recruiting locally	◄ High-quality mentoring
	◄ Ongoing professional learning
	◄ Opportunities for greater responsibilities
◄ Network with potential candidates via social media to learn about where they work, live, worship, and volunteer, or are served by community organizations	◄ Relationships with universities with diverse student populations
	◄ Connect with potential candidates via alumni calls or social networks

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