



Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Low-Income and Low-Performing Schools— A Resource Brief

This brief is part of [a seven-part series](#) on challenges related to recruiting and retaining teachers from underrepresented backgrounds or with certain certifications. This series was developed as part of the R9CC Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition project with Illinois.

Combatting the Teacher Shortage in Low-Income and Low-Performing Schools

Attracting and retaining excellent educators is one of the most important drivers of a well-functioning education system—a system that must prepare diverse students with complex needs to participate in today’s knowledge-driven economy. However, a recent surge in the demand for teachers, alongside a diminishing supply and a steady rate of teachers leaving the profession, threatens students’ academic and economic welfare.¹ Teacher turnover adversely impacts student achievement, school finances, and school improvement efforts.² Specific, targeted supports can help recruit and retain teachers in your district.

Teacher shortages disproportionately impact high-need schools that can be hard to staff. However, effective teachers have an influential role in improving low-performing schools.³ Focusing on recruiting and retaining teachers to low-income and low-performing schools is crucial not only to closing achievement gaps, but also to ensuring that students in these schools have access to high-quality teachers.

This brief provides resources that highlight examples of strategies, programs, and initiatives that assist states, local education agencies, and school districts with addressing the shortage of certified teachers who commit to teaching in low-income and low-performing districts. This brief also includes additional resources related to recruiting, retaining, and supporting teachers.

Highlighted Resources

This section highlights examples of strategies, programs, and initiatives that help states, local education agencies, and school districts address the shortage of certified teachers who commit to teaching in low-income and low-performing districts.

Title	Summary
<p><u>Do bonuses affect teacher staffing and student achievement in high poverty schools? Evidence from an incentive for National Board Certified Teachers in Washington state (2018)</u></p>	<p>This report studies a teacher incentive policy in Washington state that awards a financial bonus to National Board–certified teachers (NBCTs) in high-poverty schools. Using a regression discontinuity design, it finds that the bonus policy increased the proportion of certified teachers in bonus-eligible schools by improving hiring, increasing certification rates of incumbent teachers, and reducing turnover. Depending on the method, the authors estimate that the proportion of NBCTs in treated schools increased by 4 to 8 percentage points over the first 5 years of eligibility. However, the improvement in certification rates corresponds to a change of about 0.2% to 0.3% of a standard deviation in teacher quality per year, and the study not find evidence that the bonus resulted in detectable effects on student test achievement.</p>
<p><u>The Opportunity Schools initiative: How Chicago Public Schools recruits, retains and develops high-quality teachers for hard-to-staff schools (2021)</u></p>	<p>This case study details how the Opportunity Schools initiative recruits, develops, and retains excellent teachers in its hardest-to-staff schools. In telling the story of the program’s challenges, strategies, and successes—often through the eyes of those who played key roles in its creation—the case study offers a blueprint for urban school districts facing their own obstacles on the road to educational equity. It also features actionable recommendations and considerations for philanthropy.</p>
<p><u>Flipping the readiness paradigm: Tailoring programs to address the achievement gap and teacher shortages in high-need schools (2019)</u></p>	<p>This brief from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders outlines the unique characteristics of high-need schools, supports state and district leaders as they consider their role in implementing initiatives with a focus on equity, and explores how programs can be customized to meet the unique circumstances of a high-need school context. We illustrate how to take these factors into account when designing and implementing mentoring and induction programs in high-need schools, the challenges that practitioners may face when implementing such programs in these schools, and the unintended consequences—most notably, the widening of achievement gaps—that may occur if these programs are not designed to meet the specific needs and challenges of high-need school contexts. By addressing these challenges and leveraging mentoring and induction programs to tackle teacher shortages and improve equitable access in</p>

Title	Summary
	high-need schools head on, these schools can create the stabilizing supports required to keep effective teachers. Although this paper focuses on mentoring and induction, the discussion applies to the implementation of all teacher quality programs in high-need schools.
<i>Principal leadership in low-performing schools: A closer look through the eyes of teachers (2012)</i>	This qualitative study of teachers in three low-performing elementary schools in Chicago reveals that transformational leadership behaviors were important to teacher motivation, affecting whether they believed that they could improve student performance as the accountability policy required. The findings suggest that principal leadership is critical to turning around low-performing schools. Implications include developing policies to hire principals with proven track records and increasing the capacity of current principals to ensure that they are able to support and motivate teachers in low-performing schools.

Additional Resources

Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge across teacher subgroups. These resources offer a more general overview of strategies to combat the teacher shortage.

Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes for Research. (n.d.). *Improving teacher well-being and teaching conditions*. <https://gtlcenter.org/evidence-based-strategies/teaching-conditions>

Duncan, E. (2022). *Addressing teacher shortages in the short and long term: What states and districts can do*. Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Addressing-Teacher-Shortages-in-the-Short-and-Long-Term-May-2022.pdf>

Konoske-Graf, A., Partelow, L., & Benner, M. (2016). *To attract great teachers, school districts must improve their human capital systems*. Center for American Progress. <https://americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HumanCapitalSurvey-report.pdf>

Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Bishop, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). *Solving the teacher shortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators*. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Solving_Teacher_Shortage_Attract_Retain_Educators_REPORT.pdf

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). (n.d.). Ideas that work: Attract, prepare, retain resource database.

<https://osepideasthatwork.org/federal-resources-stakeholders/topical-issues/attract-prepare-retain-resource-database>

Other Briefs

This section includes links to other briefs in the series.

[Bilingual Teachers](#)

[New Teachers](#)

[Rural Teachers](#)

[Special Education Teachers](#)

[STEM Teachers](#)

[Teachers of Color](#)

Endnotes

¹ Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Learning Policy Institute.

² Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Bishop, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). *Solving the teacher shortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators.* Learning Policy Institute.

³ Viano, S., Pham, L. D., Henry, G. T., Kho, A., & Zimmer, R. (2021). What teachers want: School factors predicting teachers' decisions to work in low-performing schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 58(1), 201–233.