

Realizing Reimagined Teaching

A Framework for Strategic Staffing Implementation

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Every student deserves access to excellent teaching. Yet too often, outdated staffing models leave schools understaffed and teachers overwhelmed.

Across the country, many K-12 schools and districts are trying new staffing approaches, but few have the conditions needed to sustain and scale them.

How can schools and systems build the conditions for new teaching models to thrive?

Executive Summary (1/3)

Strategic staffing has emerged as an approach to mitigate persistent and interconnected challenges in the K-12 teacher workforce.

- Strategic staffing reimagines how schools organize people, time, and resources to improve instruction and make the teaching role more sustainable. It is not a single model, but a variety of innovative approaches for reimagining the teacher role.
- The case for change is driven by persistent workforce challenges such as educator shortages, teacher burnout, inflexible roles, tightening budgets, and lagging student outcomes.
- Common strategic staffing models involve elements such as team-teaching, differentiated roles, distributed leadership, extended reach for high-impact teachers, innovative pay structures, teacher pipelines, and comprehensive professional learning — often combined in the same site.



Executive Summary (2/3)

Bellwether's seven-part implementation framework offers a roadmap for system leaders interested in moving strategic staffing from idea to practice. The framework and related case studies in this report demonstrate how implementation of strategic staffing initiatives is successful when the following components are present:

Strong Leadership

The presence of a committed site- or systems-level leader who drives change, fosters trust, ensures clear communication and alignment across all levels, and empowers educators to take ownership in sustaining long-term success.

Vision and Strategic Alignment

The establishment of a shared, compelling, and motivating aspiration for change grounded in feasible and measurable goals related to student and educator outcomes.

Stakeholder Engagement

The intentional, strategic process of creating buy-in, shifting mindsets, and building trust through multilateral communication with people across the system.

Capacity Building

The systems and structures to ensure that educators and leaders have the knowledge, skills, time, and support needed to implement strategic staffing policies effectively.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The ongoing processes of using data and evidence to monitor progress, assess effectiveness, and iteratively refine implementation to strengthen impact and sustainability.

Resources

The procurement and allocation of funding, time, technology, infrastructure, data systems, and physical space necessary to launch, sustain, and scale strategic staffing models.

Policy Environment

The political, organizational, and institutional context that enables strategic staffing initiatives.

Executive Summary (3/3)

In the years ahead, strategic staffing will require educators and system leaders to responsibly integrate artificial intelligence (AI), improve existing data and measurement systems, and strengthen policies and funding critical for implementation.

Artificial Intelligence

AI is already reshaping instructional planning and delivery, scheduling, and teaming. AI presents an opportunity to free up teacher time for relational work while maintaining instructional quality and increasing efficiency of routine task completion.

Measurement and Evidence

Systems need improved, real-time metrics that connect strategic staffing initiatives to educator and student outcomes and allow for schools and districts to continuously improve.

Policy and Funding

Effective implementation of strategic staffing will require expanded policy flexibilities (e.g., updated salary schedules and pay parameters, adjusted class size limits) and stable, adaptable funding streams embedded in regular budgets, not one-time dollars.



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Introduction

Strategic staffing is a growing focus for K-12 schools and systems that want to meet the needs of today's students, teachers, and communities. The approach reimagines how schools organize talent by redefining teaching roles, team structures, and the use of instructional expertise to improve student learning and strengthen the educator workforce.

Many education-focused organizations have developed strategic staffing models and provided technical assistance, but few have examined the conditions and supports that allow these models to succeed in different contexts. Bellwether's goal is to fill that gap.

This report examines the current landscape of strategic staffing, explores what effective implementation requires, and identifies the conditions that support scale. Drawing on national research, documentation from strategic staffing initiatives, and interviews with experts and practitioners, this analysis offers both a synthesis of the current landscape and practical guidance for implementation.

This report is intended to serve as a resource for policymakers, practitioners, and partners who are working to make excellent teaching sustainable and accessible to every student.

Strategic staffing, often synonymous with “reimagining” or “redefining” the teaching role, is a student-centered and teacher-sustaining approach to organizing people, time, and resources in schools.

Strategic staffing is not a single model, but a collection of many possible strategies that allow schools to address instructional quality and student learning outcomes while creating adaptive, rewarding, and sustainable roles for educators (Appendix).*

The [Implementation in Action](#) section analyzes nine strategic staffing initiatives and shows an implementation framework in practice.



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Strategic staffing is an approach to mitigate persistent and interconnected challenges associated with the K-12 teacher workforce.



Persistent Teacher Shortages

Fewer people are entering the profession, and many schools, especially those serving students in poverty, face chronic shortages of certified teachers.



Stretching Dollars

As COVID-19 pandemic relief dollars have expired and federal investment dwindles, school districts are facing tight fiscal outlooks.



Poor Working Conditions and Burnout

High workloads, low compensation, inadequate support systems, and growing student needs contribute to teacher burnout and dissatisfaction.



Expanded Educator Responsibilities

Teachers' roles have expanded with the post-pandemic social-emotional and mental health needs of students and the advent of new instruction-changing technologies like AI.



High Turnover and Attrition

Large numbers of teachers, particularly new educators, leave the profession within their first few years due to heavy workloads, lack of support, and misaligned expectations.



Lagging Student Outcomes

Persistent achievement gaps, chronic absenteeism, and continuing declines in math and English language arts proficiency scores signal a need for change in how students are experiencing school.



Inflexible Traditional Staffing Model

Teachers are often expected to manage all aspects of instruction, planning, classroom management, and student support on their own.

Nationwide, only about one-quarter of educators find the profession to be sustainable and only one-fifth would recommend it to others.

Educator Perspectives on Their Profession

In the 2025 Voices from the Classroom survey released by Educators for Excellence, only **28%** of educators said that the profession is sustainable, and only **19%** of educators said they would recommend the profession to others. Fewer than half described their profession as dynamic (**35%**) and collaborative (**47%**).

Educators cited higher salaries, better benefits, and increased pay for hard-to-staff schools or subjects as the top factors that could improve retention.

Educator Perspectives on Strategic Staffing

Teachers' openness to strategic staffing has grown recently, but they also wanted to learn more details before supporting any particular program — suggesting that implementation details are likely to play a big role in teacher buy-in.

- **46%** of teachers favored increasing veteran educators' class sizes to help shelter more novice teachers (and another **18%** were "open" to the idea).
- **76%** of teachers favored using paid non-teaching roles to provide additional classroom supports (and another **17%** were "open" to the idea).
- **75%** of educators favored adopting various team-teaching models, such as increased class sizes with added colleagues and shared rosters of students with varying instructional responsibilities.

Strategic staffing can enable districts to better recruit, develop, and empower educators to have a greater impact on student outcomes.

CURRENT STATE



Persistent Teacher Shortages



Stretching Dollars



Poor Working Conditions and Burnout



High Turnover and Attrition



Inflexible Traditional Staffing Model



Expanded Educator Responsibilities



Lagging Student Outcomes

FUTURE STATE

Multiple Pathways Into the Teaching Profession: Aspiring educators should have multiple, varied entry points to the profession beyond traditional university preparation programs. This includes growing and developing local talent.

Teacher Agency and Development: High-quality, ongoing professional development — paired with a shift from isolated teaching to more collaborative, team-based approaches — can strengthen instruction and improve teacher satisfaction and retention.

Team-Based Models: Team-teaching models can make it possible for teachers to share the load, support cohesion across subject areas, and engage around students' unique learning needs.

Student Achievement: Students are more engaged and connected to their school community when an ecosystem of support ensures their academic and social-emotional needs are met.

A small but critical group of national models and partners is leading efforts to address these staffing challenges.

National Models



Technical Assistance and Research Organizations



Local Models

Smaller, more localized models also exist, but they often have not scaled beyond a few sites. Because they are difficult to identify from outside their local communities, many of these models have not yet been the subject of research and learning for the education sector.

Many of the strategic staffing model provider, technical assistance, and research organizations participate in the **Coalition to Reimagine the Teaching Role**, a collaborative initiative housed within Teach Plus. The Coalition aims to transform teaching by facilitating policy changes, sharing knowledge, developing narratives about strategic staffing, and supporting pilot programs that reimagine teaching roles with a focus on improving student outcomes.

These models use multiple strategies that shift the teaching role and how students learn.

Major strategic staffing model providers use one or more of the following strategies in sites across the country.

Strategic Staffing Strategies

Team Structures	Team structures involve organizing educators into collaborative groups with differentiated roles, where teachers and support staff share responsibility for planning, instruction, and student success.
Extended Teacher Reach	Extended teacher reach strategies redesign roles, schedules, and class sizes so that the most effective teachers can impact more students.
Compensation Structures	Differentiated compensation structures provide competitive pay that varies by role, responsibility, and performance.
Distributed Leadership	Distributed leadership strategies empower educators with meaningful opportunities to lead, influence decision-making, and grow in their careers while continuing to teach.
Teacher Pipelines	Teacher pipeline strategies create supportive pathways into teaching by recruiting diverse candidates, leveraging nontraditional and entry-level roles, and providing structured growth opportunities.
Sustainability	Sustainability strategies design supports that prioritize teacher well-being, collaboration, and work-life balance.
Professional Development	Professional development strategies provide differentiated and comprehensive opportunities that build teacher expertise, leadership, and well-being through ongoing learning, collaboration, and feedback.

These national models demonstrate an underlying theory of action for redesigning teaching and supporting students.

IF education systems adopt a strategic staffing approach that leverages educator talent, expertise, and leadership through intentional policy and resource alignment,

AND education systems design roles, compensation, and professional learning pathways to support educators and extend impact,

THEN schools will be able to attract, retain, and equitably distribute effective educators, especially in high-need schools and subject areas,

SO THAT all students, particularly those furthest from opportunity, have access to excellent instruction and effective educators.



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Bellwether's work with education leaders informs an approach to implementation support.

The success of any new idea in schools and districts depends not only on the design itself but also on the conditions that allow it to take hold.

Bellwether's partnerships with state agencies, districts, and schools often show that moving from innovation to day-to-day practice requires more than a strong model. It calls for alignment among policy and what happens in classrooms, clear roles and expectations, realistic assessments of capacity, and room for ongoing adaptation and learning.

The strategic staffing implementation framework that follows in this report reflects lessons from Bellwether's work and draws on research, conversations with national experts, and the experiences of local systems leaders and practitioners navigating the complexities of strategic staffing every day.

MORE FROM BELLWETHER

- [From Policy to Impact: A State Education Agency's Guide to Implementation](#)
- [Pathways to Implementation: Building and Sustaining Effective Career Pathways](#)
- [A Pragmatic Playbook for Impact: Direct, Widespread, and Systemic](#)
- [Building Better Schools: Insights From Innovative Public Schools](#)
- [Change My Mind: People vs. Process for Effective Change Management](#)
- [Creativity From Necessity: A Practical Toolkit for Leaders to Address Teacher Shortages](#)

Bellwether has developed a seven-part framework for effective implementation of strategic staffing.*

Bellwether surfaced these seven framework components through extensive desk research and conversations with experts, systems leaders, and practitioners who have experience implementing strategic staffing initiatives. While each component is conceptually distinct, they often intersect in important ways.



Framework Intended Audiences

System leaders, such as district leaders, charter management organization network leaders, and state officials, as well as those involved in the design and implementation of strategic staffing across communities, such as model providers and technical assistance providers.

Framework Purpose

To elevate learnings from strategic staffing implementation efforts in diverse contexts across the country and distill key considerations for systems leaders that lead to success.

This framework reflects lessons from strategic staffing efforts nationwide and highlights key considerations for K-12 leaders.

Stakeholder Engagement is the intentional, strategic process of creating buy-in, shifting mindsets, and building trust through multilateral communication with people across the system.

Vision and Strategic Alignment establish a shared, compelling, and motivating aspiration for change grounded in feasible and measurable goals related to student and educator outcomes.

Capacity Building ensures that educators and leaders have the knowledge, skills, time, and support needed to implement strategic staffing policies effectively.

Strong Leadership includes the presence of a committed site- or systems-level leader who drives change, fosters trust, ensures clear communication and alignment across all levels, and empowers educators to take ownership in sustaining long-term success.



Evaluation and Continuous Improvement are the ongoing processes of using data and evidence to monitor progress, assess effectiveness, and iteratively refine implementation to strengthen impact and sustainability.

Resources encompass the procurement and allocation of funding, time, technology, infrastructure, data systems, and physical space necessary to launch, sustain, and scale strategic staffing models.

Policy Environment includes the political, organizational, and institutional context that enables strategic staffing initiatives.

Strong Leadership

Successful strategic staffing efforts typically have a strong site- or systems-level leader at the helm, like a principal or district official, who coordinates the change effort, fosters trust, navigates challenges, and maintains clear and ongoing communication with educators and administrators.

This leader can collaborate with an implementation team, composed of academic and human resources (HR) leadership, site-level principals, educators, and others. Vertical alignment, which includes ensuring clear communication and strategic alignment across all levels, is critical to success and is facilitated in this team. Strong leadership requires sustained, long-term commitment from district and school leadership working together to integrate strategic staffing into core organizational processes.

Structured opportunities for educators to lead change initiatives that build genuine commitment, buy-in, and agency are another critical form of leadership in strategic staffing implementation.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR STRONG LEADERSHIP

- ❑ **Build trust and buy-in.** Effective leaders earn trust from educators and other stakeholders by fostering open dialogue that builds collective commitment to the new initiative. Strong site leaders model reflection, humility, and vulnerability through the process of change.
- ❑ **Set and communicate a clear vision.** Strong leaders continuously articulate a compelling and consistent vision for how staffing models align with instructional goals. They strategically use language that resonates with stakeholders and builds support and coordinated action. Site-level leaders who clearly communicate the mission, share stories of impact, provide support, and create collaborative environments are critical to success.
- ❑ **Assemble a diverse implementation team.** Successful efforts rely on assembling and empowering teams with genuine authority to innovate, rather than relying on top-down compliance. Successful district implementation teams often represent a variety of functional perspectives, including HR, innovation, operations, finance, and educator support.
- ❑ **Empower distributed leadership roles.** System leaders should empower school principals and teachers to pilot, experiment, and exercise autonomy within clear guardrails.
- ❑ **Facilitate collaboration and co-design.** Leaders should continuously create opportunities to involve teachers in co-designing, launching, implementing, and refining new staffing models. Some of the most effective champions of strategic staffing are individual teachers or teams of teachers. Leaders can empower those individuals to spearhead change within their schools and communities.
- ❑ **Drive continuous improvement.** Effective leaders build the infrastructure, culture, and accountability needed to assess results, learn from challenges, and scale what works.
- ❑ **Institutionalize structures for sustainability.** Systems leaders can create institutional structures that promote scalability across sites and ensure initiatives survive beyond leadership transitions. These new institutional structures often reshape the way that policies, resources, relationships, and power dynamics flow throughout the system.

Vision and Strategic Alignment

Vision and strategic alignment involve establishing a shared, compelling, and motivating aspiration for change grounded in feasible and measurable goals related to student and educator outcomes.

A strong vision reflects a clear “why” for strategic staffing and also a shared understanding of the human realities of the work — including the mindset shifts, relational trust, and collaborative learning needed to bring that vision to life.

Strategic alignment ensures that new initiatives are coherent and connected to ongoing work — making implementation supporting and sustaining of existing initiatives, rather than additive. It involves ensuring that strategic staffing implementation integrates with other core school or district priorities and processes, including community goals, talent systems, curriculum strategies, assessment approaches, and leadership team structures. Strategic alignment anchors subsequent decision-making around established policy and practice and can be revisited over time (e.g., during continuous improvement cycles).

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR VISION

- ❑ **Build the “why.”** Establish a clear causal narrative that defines the problem and why strategic staffing is the right solution.
- ❑ **Leverage a higher purpose.** Connect the “why” to shared community values and higher goals like equity or economic mobility. Framing the work around these broader educational aspirations can build motivation and collective commitment.
- ❑ **Consistently communicate the vision.** Keep the “why” at the center of all messaging and ensure leaders use clear, consistent, and unified language across the system. Ongoing communication helps build coherence and address questions or skepticism.
- ❑ **Keep the vision flexible.** The vision will likely evolve as implementation progresses to maintain relevance and support scaling. Ensure the vision remains broad and flexible enough to allow for a diversity of perspectives and emergent learnings.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

- ❑ **Pursue integrative (not additive) approaches.** Consider how strategic staffing can be integrated into existing policies, budget realities, and strategic priorities, rather than exist as a separate and competing program. Position staffing innovation as a solution to multiple challenges simultaneously — such as talent acquisition and retention, instructional quality, and academic performance.
- ❑ **Align systems for long-term sustainability.** Plan early for the new roles, organizational structures, internal practices, and budget shifts needed to launch and sustain the work over time. This includes planning for leadership turnover.
- ❑ **Build cross-functional ownership and alignment.** Strategic staffing requires aligning a variety of cross-functional roles and divisions, including talent, operations, academics, finance, educator support, and innovation. Formalize new relationships and collaborative structures across departments and examine how prevailing system dynamics might reinforce or impede initiatives.
- ❑ **Go slow to go fast.** Invest early in team cohesion, shared norms, and clear decision-making processes before launching and scaling staffing innovations. Small pilots at first, paired with a learning infrastructure, can help feed aligned learnings about design, impact, roles, and norms across the system.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is the intentional, strategic process of creating buy-in, shifting mindsets, and building trust through multilateral communication with people across the system, including those whose work is directly affected by strategic staffing. The term “stakeholders” encompasses internal staff — such as school and district leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other employees — as well as other players in the education system, such as students, families, and community members.

Stakeholder engagement involves gathering input and constructive advice on initiative design; creating and executing tailored communications plans and strong messaging; acknowledging and transforming relationships, power dynamics, and mindsets; leveraging champions of the work; celebrating implementation successes; and openly confronting challenges.

By fostering authentic engagement with educators, families, and students, leaders can anticipate implementation obstacles, incorporate ongoing feedback to make adjustments, and foster feelings of motivated co-ownership throughout implementation.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- ❑ **Engage with educators.** Be transparent with teachers and principals about the benefits and trade-offs of new staffing models and how roles may shift. Leverage educator champions to build credibility and demonstrate the model's value to peers.
- ❑ **Offer multiple modes and levels of engagement.** Provide teachers with opportunities to participate in design sessions, input meetings, and pilots. These opportunities should be voluntary, rather than mandated. Educators are more likely to support and sustain changes they helped shape.
- ❑ **Engage with families.** Ensure families understand the "why" behind strategic staffing and have opportunities to provide input and ask questions. Use plain language in communications and appeal to shared community values. Offer multiple ways for families to learn about and offer feedback and input on the initiative, including written correspondence, in-person meetings, and virtual engagement spaces.
- ❑ **Assemble a coalition of the willing.** Identify school leaders and staff who are eager to be early adopters and drive implementation pilots. Early adopters can help generate critical momentum and demonstrate proof of concept for others. Pilots have a higher likelihood of success if they leverage existing enthusiasm for innovation.
- ❑ **Leverage pilots as proof points.** Teacher champions who can demonstrate success are more effective at convincing peer educators to adopt new models than top-down administrative directives.
- ❑ **Shift mindsets by "showing, not telling."** Educators often need to see strategic staffing in practice to fully believe in its potential. Site visits, classroom observations, virtual visits, and other hands-on experiences can help build educator understanding and enthusiasm. Experiential learning is most effective when it is paired with structured opportunities for reflection about the possibilities of change.
- ❑ **Include union leaders in design.** Proactively engage with teachers unions to co-create contract flexibilities and align on shared goals. Collaborative design helps ensure the initiative will support the goals of administrators, teachers, and unions alike.
- ❑ **Create regular feedback processes.** Gather ongoing feedback through check-ins, surveys, focus groups, standing committees, or community forums. Ensure stakeholders can see how their input is being used and implemented in later decision-making.

Capacity Building

Capacity building ensures that educators and leaders have the knowledge, skills, time, and support needed to implement strategic staffing policies effectively. Capacity building, done internally or with the support of an external partner, includes developing educator leadership and capabilities, fostering collaboration and autonomy, and creating an infrastructure of support for ongoing learning and execution.

Capacity building can be embedded across all parts of professional pathways, including the recruitment of educators; development of pre-service and in-service educators; retention of mission-aligned staff; and the structuring of educator roles, compensation, and career paths. Capacity building can be aided by partnerships with institutions of higher education, technical assistance providers, regional education service centers, teachers unions, and state education agencies.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

- ❑ **Provide targeted training for school and systems leaders.** School and systems leaders often need dedicated support to build the technical expertise and leadership capabilities to drive innovation and manage change. This can require new or reallocated investments in leadership development and technical training.
- ❑ **Embed regular coaching and mentorship into staffing structures.** Sustained, job-embedded coaching is more effective than one-time professional development. Provide core learning resources systemwide while granting school sites flexibility to adapt them and pursue additional supports locally.
- ❑ **Create team learning communities.** Build and institutionalize networks and structures for collective learning, knowledge sharing, and problem-solving to strengthen staff capacity across schools and systems. Learning communities can exist both within a school or system (e.g., a monthly design standup) or across schools or systems (e.g., statewide convenings).
- ❑ **Partner with technical assistance partners.** External experts can help sites plan, design, launch, adapt, and scale throughout implementation. Full-time coaches and technical partners can offer critical hands-on support, facilitate collaboration, and ensure sustained progress.
- ❑ **Build strategic partnerships with state and local organizations.** Pursue and formalize partnerships with state agencies, institutions of higher education, educator preparation programs, and nonprofits to expand capacity, facilitate resource pooling, and foster greater systems alignment. Initiatives are more likely to succeed when multiple institutions “have skin in the game” and feel accountable to one another.
- ❑ **Reimagine educator preparation pathways.** Align recruitment, hiring, and onboarding systems with the new expectations of strategic staffing models. Candidates should enter the profession equipped with the mindsets and skills needed for team-based, innovative roles.
- ❑ **Reduce new teacher workloads.** Protected time for coaching, collaboration, and creative problem-solving is critical for educator success, particularly in their early years on the job. Approaches like shelter-and-develop models or dedicated planning blocks can make innovation more successful and sustainable.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Evaluation is the structured, ongoing process of using data and evidence to monitor implementation progress and assess initiative effectiveness. Evaluation involves setting clear and measurable goals, identifying indicators of progress toward those goals, and collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data.

Continuous improvement is the iterative cycle of using data to improve and refine implementation. Continuous improvement involves engaging stakeholders in meaning-making to identify opportunities for improvement.

By building and leveraging a culture of learning, evidence-based decision-making, and planned improvement cycles, leaders can strengthen initiative impact and sustainability.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR EVALUATION

- ❑ **Set clear, measurable goals and metrics.** Identify specific, goal-aligned indicators of success before launch to guide implementation decisions. Metrics should include a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, including administrative records (e.g., test scores, teacher retention rates), as well as survey, focus group, interview, and observational data.
- ❑ **Measure educator perceptions and outcomes.** Track teacher satisfaction, collaboration, school climate, and other perceptual data as early signals of system health. These perceptual measures can foreshadow improvements in teaching and learning outcomes.
- ❑ **Prioritize student outcomes.** Successful strategic staffing models prioritize improved student experiences and outcomes, not just educator workforce outcomes. Staffing innovations should ultimately enhance what students experience and achieve in classrooms.
- ❑ **Establish new data and learning systems where needed.** Strategic staffing innovations can run up against existing data collection and accountability system limitations. Where existing systems fall short, build flexible protocols for data collection and evaluation. Early-stage models often require new tools and routines to track progress effectively.
- ❑ **Share findings transparently.** Regularly discuss data and insights with educators, families, and the broader community. Transparency builds trust and supports collective learning and meaning-making of results.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- ❑ **Embrace adaptive change.** Leaders need to be flexible, model vulnerability, and create an environment that empowers people to take risks and learn from struggles. Use data as a tool for reflection and improvement, not punishment and compliance.
- ❑ **Build short improvement cycles.** Implement rapid feedback loops that allow teams to test, learn, and adjust strategies continuously throughout the year. Iteration strengthens both the model and a culture of improvement.
- ❑ **Use and triangulate multiple data sources.** Continuous improvement depends on the rigorous, ongoing collection and analysis of diverse forms of evidence. Align evidence sources to specific learning questions to drive targeted adjustments. Where possible, compare performance against research-based standards.
- ❑ **Go beyond the numbers.** Leverage learning tours, site visits, classroom observations, and interviews to better understand, refine, and spread successful approaches. Engage educators in a process of reflection and meaning-making that connects back to their teaching experiences.

Resources

Resources encompass the procurement and allocation of funding, time, technology, infrastructure, data systems, and physical space necessary to launch, sustain, and scale strategic staffing models.

Strategic resource acquisition, planning, and deployment in the short and long term ensure that schools and systems have the materials they need to support educators, build capacity, and sustain innovation over time.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR RESOURCES

- ❑ **Plan for financial sustainability.** Grant funding can help launch strategic staffing efforts, but long-term success requires stable revenue streams. More sustainable funding sources often include state budget line-items and creative repurposing of existing district budgets.
- ❑ **Align resource allocation with capacity-building needs.** Set aside dedicated funds for ongoing professional development and training to sustain implementation over time. Ongoing investment in people and systems is essential for lasting impact.
- ❑ **Increase school autonomy over resources.** Allow schools flexibility to allocate funds in ways that best support their staffing models. Greater autonomy over resources — paired with accountability — encourages creative, context-specific solutions.
- ❑ **Audit resource use regularly.** Conduct frequent reviews of strategic staffing initiative spending and allocations to identify resource gaps, inefficiencies, and sustainability risks. Regular audits also uncover opportunities to reallocate or leverage existing funds.
- ❑ **Treat time and space as resources.** Flexible schedules and collaborative spaces enable new models. School materials and enhancements (e.g., flexible seating, removable walls, and roller carts) can be important when experimenting with larger class sizes and collaborative teaching models.
- ❑ **Pay teachers for their time and responsibilities.** Ensure educators are compensated for additional hours or new responsibilities tied to staffing innovations. Enhanced pay reflective of new realities reinforces buy-in and helps sustain long-term participation.
- ❑ **Reassess which costs are truly fixed.** Districts often set aside funding for strategic priorities or other ongoing needs (e.g., substitute teacher per diems) that can feel fixed. However, strategic staffing models can alleviate some of these costs and repurpose these dollars to support innovation and longer-term resource synergies.
- ❑ **Provide financial supports for pipeline access.** Invest in tuition assistance, certification assistance, residencies, and paraprofessional pipelines. These investments expand access to teaching roles and strengthen the talent pipelines aligned with strategic staffing models.
- ❑ **Pursue creative funding sources.** Explore federal, state, and local grants, apprenticeships, and philanthropic partnerships that can underwrite pilot programs or support capacity building. Tapping unconventional sources can reduce reliance on short-term funding.

Policy Environment

Policy environment refers to the political, organizational, and institutional context that enables strategic staffing initiatives.

Policy environment includes the constellation of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and rules that govern education, and institutional practices and customs that shape individual and collective behavior. Supportive environments allow flexibilities for schools to adopt and scale innovative staffing models (e.g., flexibilities around teacher roles, schedules, teaming, pay structures, class sizes, preparation, and performance evaluation).

Supportive environments also allow for genuine systems change by shifting policies and practices that enable innovation to take root and sustain over time.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR STATE POLICY

- ❑ **Incentivize strategic staffing pilots.** Establish grants or pilot opportunities for schools and systems to test strategic staffing models.
- ❑ **Modernize licensure and certification policies.** Teacher licensure and certification requirements should enable differentiated roles and support districts in establishing new pathways to recruit community members into the workforce.
- ❑ **Support improved data transparency.** Promote and fund state-level data collection on teacher assignments, student access to effective educators, and educator working conditions to better target supports and reforms.
- ❑ **Update accountability systems.** Revise school accountability metrics to accommodate collaborative teaching models and team-based approaches versus a traditional “one teacher, one classroom” structures.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR LOCAL POLICY

- ❑ **Revamp compensation systems.** Create career ladders and pay structures that reward leadership roles, specialized expertise, and contributions to team-based teaching rather than seniority.
- ❑ **Embed flexibilities into collective bargaining agreements.** These agreements should allow for differentiated pay and roles and offer waiver processes for regulations like student-teacher ratios. Teachers union contracts should enable innovation, not block it.
- ❑ **Seek flexibilities on class size and teacher-of-record rules.** Rules should enable team-based staffing by allowing leaders to oversee multiple classrooms, group students in strategic ways, or permit multiple educators to share instructional responsibility.
- ❑ **Promote collaboration between departments.** Effective strategic staffing requires breaking down central office silos among HR, curriculum, and other departments.
- ❑ **Improve data systems.** Update data collection and monitoring protocols to include new metrics for measuring impact. Ensure that data and student information systems allow for the tracking of new indicators.



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Case study analyses of nine strategic staffing initiatives show the implementation framework in practice.*

Strategic Staffing Implementation Framework Component

Case Study	Strong Leadership	Vision and Strategic Alignment	Stakeholder Engagement	Capacity Building	Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	Resources	Policy Environment
1 Central Falls School District, Rhode Island							
2 Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP), Massachusetts							
3 US PREP, Texas							
4 Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences (DAAS), Michigan							
5 Opportunity Culture®, Various States							
6 Teach Indy, Indiana							
7 CitySchools Collaborative, District of Columbia							
8 Mountain View School, California							
9 Albuquerque Public Schools, New Mexico							

Central Falls School District

Educator Pathways Ecosystem • *Rhode Island*

In 2016, Central Falls School District launched the “Warrior Teaching Fellowship” to address persistent substitute shortages and strengthen the local educator pipeline. Fellows with a bachelor’s degree work full time in one school, covering absences, supporting small-group instruction, co-teaching, and leading other student-centered work.

Over time, the district expanded the Fellowship into a full talent “ecosystem” that creates multiple entry points for aspiring educators, alumni, and community members to build valuable classroom experience and move many into permanent teaching roles. These programs diversify the workforce by recruiting multilingual and community-connected candidates who reflect the student population and provide them with structured supports and personalized career plans.

Strategic partnerships with nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education strengthen the pipeline even further, ensuring that each step builds toward the next and creating concrete pathways from tutoring and mentoring into full-time teaching roles.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

Vision and Strategic Alignment | **Stakeholder Engagement** | **Capacity Building**

Vision and Strategic Alignment

Central Falls School District anchors its work in a clear workforce-development vision that gives people a “runway” into teaching — using the district as a clinical home that ladders candidates (new and mid-career) through a process of self-exploration so that they can better grasp what working in education entails and determine where they see themselves within the ecosystem. The district recognizes that some candidates might come to view themselves as future teachers while others might want to serve as behavioral staff, mentors, or paraprofessionals. The guiding vision is long-term and purpose-driven, focused on building a more robust and diverse pipeline of educators.

Strategic alignment is manifested across the district’s talent systems: defined core competencies drive hiring and onboarding, and the district’s strategic plan prioritizes attracting and retaining top talent. Central Falls School District also personalizes these adult pathways and supports to accommodate Rhode Island’s tight labor market and the district’s high-need student demographics,* embedding the model in existing priorities and committing to a sustained, system-level strategy.

This long-term vision and alignment across systems lays the foundation for how Central Falls engages stakeholders and builds staff capacity to sustain and expand the educator pipeline.

Stakeholder Engagement

Central Falls School District's intentional use of language and communications helps to ingrain the staffing ecosystem as a part of the district's culture. For example, when launching the Warrior Teaching Fellowship, program leaders redefined what it means to be a substitute teacher in the district. Districtwide staff refer to their colleagues as "fellows" rather than "substitute teachers" to validate and elevate nontraditional pathways and instill the idea that these individuals are more than just temporary fixtures in their school communities.

The district also created detailed FAQs and other communications resources to transparently explain programs, answer common questions, and build trust across educators, families, and community partners.

Teachers union engagement was another crucial element of stakeholder engagement. A main driver of union buy-in was the district's demonstration of success for the program, with more than 70 fellows transitioning into teaching roles (and likely union membership) in Central Falls School District and its neighboring districts since 2016.



"We invested heavily in shifting the language from 'subs' to 'fellows.' And we made it very clear any time we would hear someone use the wrong term, we would correct the person. We made sure our language and emails and white papers or [memoranda of understanding] used 'fellows' so we could indicate who these individuals are and their importance to the district. By the end of the year, we began to see the verbiage change, and then the narrative began to change, and that's how we knew we had just made some cultural change in the district."

—JASON MIDWOOD, DEVELOPMENT OFFICER AND ARCHITECT OF THE TALENT ECOSYSTEM, CENTRAL FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND



Capacity Building

The Central Falls School District staffing ecosystem builds capacity by weaving strategic partnerships with higher education teacher preparation programs, alternative certification providers, and nonprofit service organizations (e.g., City Year, Teach For America) into the district's core operations, ensuring multiple pipelines feed into teaching roles.

These collaborations are not static; they evolve as district needs change and new opportunities arise. For example, the district has worked with partners to create residency placements specific for special education and multilingual learning as needs have risen. It has also worked in partnership with the state's Department of Labor to place Rhode Island's first principal apprentices and out-of-school time youth leaders.

SEZP

Partnership with Springfield Public Schools • *Massachusetts*

SEZP was created in 2015 as a collaboration between Springfield Public Schools, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Springfield Education Association teachers union to transform the community's chronically underperforming middle schools and avoid an imminent risk of state takeover. Starting with six middle schools in 2015, the Zone has since expanded to 16 middle and high schools and is often elevated as a national bright spot in school innovation, turnaround, and governance.

In the SEZP model, schools retain autonomy to design learning experiences while remaining aligned and accountable through a shared Framework for Equitable Schools and a Roadmap for Equitable Student Outcomes. SEZP schools are led by teacher leadership teams with formal decision-making authority over things including school calendars, schedules, and staffing structures. Principals serve as facilitators rather than unilateral decision-makers. SEZP schools also feature innovative teacher teaming and collaboration structures, differentiated educator roles and leadership pathways, and flexible and extended schedules to broaden the reach of educators.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

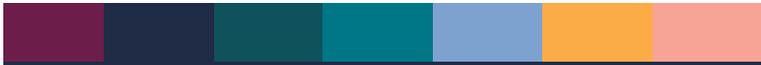
Vision and Strategic Alignment | **Capacity Building** | **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

Vision and Strategic Alignment

SEZP grounds its schools' approach to education in a purpose focused beyond academic outcomes to include liberating students from generational poverty and racism. This vision has resonated deeply with local educators and created a sense of mission that extends beyond classroom walls.

At the high school level, SEZP has framed its work with a vision that moves beyond graduation as the ultimate endpoint, instead centering on graduates' long-term economic mobility. This framing has shifted the purpose of high schools away from compliance toward equity and opportunity, and it has given educators a clear, motivating "why."

At SEZP's Discovery High School, for example, students receive wall-to-wall early college and work-based learning pathways, where teachers lead college development seminars and ensure that students experience college coursework and career preparation as part of their core high school experience. To bring this vision to life in daily practice, SEZP invests deeply in building educator capacity and shared leadership structures that sustain and advance educator practice.



"This idea that there's a purpose to school that goes way beyond the school walls is something right out of the gate that really impacts our ability to recruit, retain, and promote educators, particularly educators of color in Zone schools. And for us at the high school level, it's early college and work-based learning. Those are the direct conduits to economic mobility... You're watching this mission unfold every day. It's not just on paper. You really see it, you hear it, you feel it. I think that that really leads to practitioner development of deep commitment as educators."

—KELLEY GANGI, CHIEF OF SCHOOL INNOVATION, SEZP, MASSACHUSETTS

Capacity Building

Teacher leadership development is a central focus in SEZP. Every school operates Teacher Leadership Teams where educators set school priorities and staffing structures, collaborate on improvement cycles, and gain hands-on leadership experience. Zone-wide trainings further strengthen this model by providing shared language, resources, and infrastructure (e.g., data systems), while still affording schools the space to tailor their approach to local needs.

SEZP also supports flexible professional learning, offering core zonewide resources — such as *Core Learning*, a training for educators to grow their capacity to deliver instruction aligned with the Common Core Standards — while encouraging schools to adapt and innovate locally with strategies such as team-teaching, seminar-style interventions, or competency-based models.

“We have several opportunities for educators in our schools to lead deep, meaningful change initiatives that really push and encourage educators’ development of leadership skills and identities while they’re doing actual work that benefits students.”

—KELLEY GANGI, CHIEF OF SCHOOL INNOVATION, SEZP, MASSACHUSETTS



Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Each year, SEZP schools undergo a School Quality Review (SQR), a site visit and artifact-based evaluation that uses more than 40 indicators from the Framework for Equitable Schools to ensure outcomes are in line with broader Zone goals.

The SQR is part of a larger Roadmap for Equitable Student Outcomes, which is a Zone-wide guidebook that incorporates assessment data, attendance and chronic absence, NWEA MAP results, and family feedback to assess performance. These measures are tightly aligned with SEZP's goals. For example, efforts to track the recruitment and retention of educators of color help ensure equity remains a central goal of the initiative.

To sustain progress, SEZP uses a structured planning process that helps teams analyze data, set priorities, and design strategies for the school year ahead, fostering transparency, shared decision-making, and continuous growth.

US PREP

Teacher Residency Partnerships • Texas

To address the challenges of underprepared new teachers and high turnover in Texas, US PREP, a coalition of universities partnering with school districts, redesigns teacher preparation around full-year, paid residencies. The coalition embeds residents in K-12 schools for an academic year with mentorship, coursework, and stipends that make the pathway viable. Over its 10-year history, US PREP has expanded from working with two educator preparation programs to 20, in part due to demonstrating that it is possible to revise clinical faculty roles and prioritize deep, sustained partnerships with school districts.

With US PREP's support, districts and educator preparation programs co-design residencies that deepen residents' learning while meeting school needs. Residents contribute to small-group instruction, provide paraprofessional coverage, and support classrooms as substitute teachers. The program's goals are to strengthen teacher quality, build sustainable pipelines, and improve student outcomes while expanding access for aspiring educators — especially those who traditionally could not participate in a year-long residency.

Evidence shows that participating teachers boost student achievement, remain in classrooms at higher rates, and deliver long-term economic benefits for students.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

Capacity Building | **Resources** | **Policy Environment**

Capacity Building

Building local capacity is at the heart of US PREP’s approach, ensuring districts and preparation programs have the support needed to make residencies successful.

Site coordinators are university-funded faculty embedded in districts. They teach courses, train mentors, conduct performance assessments, and facilitate quarterly governance meetings. Over time, districts have come to see them as part of their own staff.

Technical assistance coaches guide Educator Preparation Program (EPP) and district partnerships by facilitating design sessions, managing projects, and coaching teams through implementation. In recent years, US PREP has also trained Texas’s Education Service Centers to strengthen strategic staffing professional learning and supports across districts.

Together, these roles created a multilayered support system that buttressed implementation and embedded professional learning for both novice residents and veteran educators.



“A key is having a strong vision. Technical assistance from people who have done this work helps providers move faster and clarify the details needed to bring that vision to life.”

—SARAH BEAL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, US PREP

Resources

The launch and scaling of US PREP's model were made possible through layered financial supports. Locally, districts reallocated funds — such as dollars previously spent on paraprofessionals, substitutes, or acceleration supports — to cover stipends, showing the model could be cost-neutral and sustained without new revenue. Early pilots provided stipends of about \$12,000, an amount intentionally aligned with minimum wage so candidates would not be forced to choose outside work over completing their residency.

As the work expanded, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) catalyzed scale through its Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports initiative, which offered districts up to \$20,000 per resident. A further policy breakthrough came with House Bill 2, which allocated \$400 million to teacher preparation statewide, including allotments ranging from \$24,000 to \$39,500 per resident. Together, these funds can reduce barriers for candidates, support EPPs, and incentivize districts to sustain residencies long term.



“The early evidence we saw went against a lot of people’s thinking that residencies can’t be scaled, that they’re ‘boutique’ ... This was a really important proof point for the state.”

—SARAH BEAL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, US PREP

Policy Environment

The success of early residency pilots spurred policy shifts in Texas. These proof points — amplified through learning tours and governance structures — prompted statewide action. TEA responded by establishing residency quality criteria and a vetted program list, moves that ensured accountability and protected against low-quality providers.

The agency also articulated a strategic vision that positioned residencies as central to teacher pipeline reform. Building on this foundation, the state introduced the Residency Certification Pathway, which included enhanced certificates for completers and removed barriers like the state's teacher candidate portfolio requirement.

These early steps paved the way for House Bill 2, which formalized residencies as a core preparation route in Texas and allocates state funds to scale the work. Together, these changes created an enabling policy environment that transformed residencies from small-scale pilots into a systemic teacher pipeline strategy.

DAAS

Next Education Workforce • Michigan

Facing high numbers of uncertified teachers and limited staff capacity, DAAS partnered with Arizona State University's Next Education Workforce to redesign how teaching teams were organized. DAAS sought a more sustainable staffing approach to strengthen teacher retention and quality by creating team-based structures where model teachers could extend their reach and mentor early-career colleagues. The work began with pilots in kindergarten and second grade before scaling to additional grade levels, with the goal of improving both student outcomes and teacher satisfaction.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

Strong Leadership | **Stakeholder Engagement** | **Resources**



Strong Leadership

The launch of DAAS' pilot initiative relied on strong buy-in from school and system leaders who set the tone for the initiative by granting "permission to innovate" while maintaining fidelity to core curriculum and instruction goals.

Teachers were empowered to adapt instructional structures without needing constant administrative approval, balancing autonomy with accountability. This distributed leadership approach created a culture where principals, coaches, and teachers shared responsibility for implementing the model and sustaining it over time.

While strong leadership set the conditions for innovation, genuine momentum depended on engaging teachers directly and building their authentic buy-in along the way.

Stakeholder Engagement

Teachers have been at the center of implementation, with voluntary rather than mandatory participation in the pilots.

Ultimately, kindergarten and second grade teachers volunteered to be the first-year adopters of this initiative. This approach built buy-in and ensured early adopters were genuinely invested. Skepticism from peers was addressed through teacher-to-teacher advocacy and peer-led testimonials, which proved more persuasive than directives from school leadership.

The model has also fostered a stronger professional culture and sense of belonging: Teachers reported feeling less isolated, more supported, and more confident in their roles, which in turn cultivated more learning and innovation.

“The third grade team is launching a pilot this [coming] school year. They initially did not raise their hands to try this out in the first year. But at the end of the school year, the second grade team called all the administrators to a meeting and had a PowerPoint presentation that said, ‘Here’s all the great things we did this year. Here’s the data that shows how our kids grew. Here’s what we loved about this. You guys should make third grade do this because we don’t want our kids to go on to third grade next year and not have this again.’ And we said, ‘You’re pitching to the wrong people. We’re not going to make third grade do it, but you can tell them. You pitch it to third grade.’ And they did, and now third grade is starting implementation.”

—DARA KLEIN, FORMER DIRECTOR OF TALENT,
DAAS, MICHIGAN



Resources

A grant from the Michigan Education Workforce Initiative was a critical enabler for the DAAS pilot. It funded coaching, professional development, site visits to other Next Education Workforce schools, and classroom materials such as rolling carts and flexible seating needed for team teaching.

State tuition assistance grants for alternative certification programs helped uncertified teachers gain credentials while staying in the classroom and contributing to a sense of community in the building.

These investments demonstrated how external funding could offset immediate staffing challenges, provide key physical materials and resources, and ensure teachers felt supported and rewarded for doing “extra” work in the strategic staffing model.

Opportunity Culture®

National Program Insights • *Various States*

Public Impact’s Opportunity Culture® model redesigns schools so that excellent teachers can reach more students, mentor peers, and lead instruction as a team. The Opportunity Culture® Initiative offers districts a sustainable, scalable model for improving student outcomes, increasing teacher retention, and providing sustained and embedded professional growth opportunities. Implemented in more than 80 school systems across 17 states and the District of Columbia over the past dozen years, the model has shown that by empowering teacher-leaders and creating team structures, schools can drive measurable student growth and stronger teacher satisfaction.

Case studies of various Opportunity Culture® sites show that this model fosters collaboration, leadership development, and educator retention by transforming teaching into a team-based profession with clear career advancement pathways. The model’s strengths include its financial sustainability, alignment with research-backed instructional practices, and adaptability across contexts. Opportunity Culture® design also helps make teaching a more rewarding and high-impact career while maintaining a focus on long-term professional growth pathways for educators.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

[Capacity Building](#) | [Evaluation and Continuous Improvement](#) | [Resources](#)



Capacity Building

The Opportunity Culture® model exemplifies capacity building through job-embedded coaching, selective advancement pathways, and continuous professional learning.

The Multi-Classroom Leader® structure provides daily feedback and development for teachers, replacing traditional “one-off” professional development with continuous, embedded learning. This ensures educators have the knowledge, skills, time, and support for effective implementation of innovative teaching models. Districts use these structures to grow internal leadership pipelines and increase retention, demonstrating the model’s success as a system for long-term professional growth.

This foundation of ongoing learning and teacher development naturally feeds into a culture of reflection and refinement, making continuous improvement a defining feature of the Opportunity Culture® model.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Data analytics and continuous improvement are central to Opportunity Culture® design. Public Impact regularly gathers and analyzes student outcomes data, teacher perception data, and program design data to refine implementation and identify high-impact practices.

Schools can compare their data to national, research-backed benchmarks through an Opportunity Culture® portal that tracks schools' design and implementation features as well as rich survey data that measures educators' perceptions of strategic clarity, instructional change, role responsibilities, compensation, and coaching and feedback, among other topics.

Schools and districts use these data sources to make adjustments both during the year and in planning for the next year.



"We focus on three buckets of data: student data, data from our [educator] perception surveys, and data on different elements of model design and implementation. We use the data, both at the school level and nationally, to see how the initiative's going. Schools can also compare their data with national data on our portal, and the data is updated live in real time... From that data, we've nailed down a short list of what is getting results, and how each school's model compares to research-backed standards. Each year, sites are inputting their data, comparing [them] against our benchmarks and indicators, and then they're able to improve."

—KENDALL HEDDING KING, SENIOR
VICE PRESIDENT AND GROUP DIRECTOR,
OPPORTUNITY CULTURE® INITIATIVE

Resources

One of the model's defining features is its financial sustainability: Schools build pay supplements for Opportunity Culture® roles (e.g., Multi-Classroom Leader® roles) directly into their budgets from the start, instead of funding them through short-term grants.

Schools often repurpose existing resources to do this, such as leaving a small number of classroom and specialist vacancies unfilled and redirecting those dollars to fund teacher-leader stipends or supplements for team teachers and advanced paraprofessionals. This creative reallocation allows schools to raise teacher pay and support leadership development without increasing overall spending. The model also encourages flexible use of Title I and professional development funds, investing those dollars in job-embedded learning rather than single-use workshops.

Additionally, the model acknowledges time as a key resource — structuring schedules so that Multi-Classroom Leader® roles have protected time for coaching, planning, and data analysis.

Teach Indy

Reimagining the Teacher Role Cohort • *Indiana*

To address the growing challenge of retaining strong early-career teachers, particularly in the wake of pandemic-era decreases in job satisfaction, Teach Indy launched the “Reimagining the Teacher Role” fellowship in 2024 in partnership with four schools in Lawrence Township, a midsize district outside Indianapolis.

The initiative focused on sustaining “irreplaceable” teachers in years three to five by pairing them with site leaders over the course of 12 months to co-design professional learning, school improvement, and community-building pilots that would improve teacher experience, retention, and student outcomes. The rationale was that sustaining excellent educators in schools would lead to stronger long-term academic results, even amid funding cliffs and district budget contractions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

Strong Leadership | **Vision and Strategic Alignment** | **Stakeholder Engagement**

Strong Leadership

During design thinking sessions led by Teach Indy, the participation of principals, deans, and system leaders alongside educators was critical in ensuring effective implementation, setting collective expectations, and clarifying decision-making rights.

One key lesson was that leadership alignment across levels was fragile; principals sometimes approved projects only to have them later blocked at the district level, underscoring the need for vertical decision-making clarity. By involving leadership and educators, the pilots were able to establish clearer expectations, decision-making rights, and openness to teacher-led innovation.

Additionally, the inclusion of site leaders on every cohort team built stronger bridges between teachers and administrators, ensuring momentum carried beyond fellowship sessions.

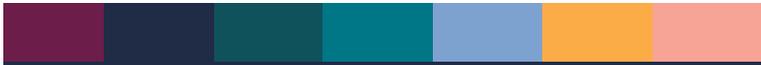


Vision and Strategic Alignment

Initiative leaders emphasized the need for a clear “why” behind strategic staffing, and success depended on connecting staffing innovation to the district’s broader priorities. When staffing was framed as a separate initiative, it was deprioritized in favor of other district priorities. Positioning staffing redesign as a lever to strengthen existing goals, such as student literacy or curriculum reforms, helped demonstrate that strategic staffing was not additive but integrative.

Language shifts also mattered in establishing a clear vision and understanding of the initiative. Initiative leaders found that “reimagining the teacher role” resonated more positively with site educators and district officials than “strategic staffing,” which carried HR-like connotations, evoked skepticism around goals, and narrowed a sense of strategic ownership.

With this vision established, Teach Indy was positioned to ensure staffing redesign initiatives were aligned with district policy and understood across the ranks of school and district leadership.



“One of the things that we heard when we went to new schools to try to talk to about the project, was ‘We’re focusing on literacy, so we can’t focus on staffing.’ But these things are not competing. In fact, you need to be thinking about staffing when you’re thinking about literacy ... We have to be able to make the case for strategic staffing together with other priorities, and then I think funding and resources will follow.”

—SARA MARSHALL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TEACH INDY, INDIANA



Stakeholder Engagement

The cohort emphasized authentic teacher leadership and human-centered design as a way to bring educators on board through the pilot and beyond. Teachers led projects, engaged in empathy interviews with peers, and co-designed pilots alongside school leaders.

This participatory approach fostered strong buy-in and surfaced candid perspectives about feasibility. Teachers expressed more trust in projects led by their peers, and school leaders were asked to step into sessions not as supervisors but as collaborators.

This shift helped build shared ownership and precluded perceptions of top-down mandates.

CitySchools Collaborative

Partnership with DC Public Schools • *District of Columbia*

CitySchools Collaborative, formerly CityTutor DC, piloted a strategic staffing initiative in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) over a two-year period, focusing on three middle schools and one elementary school to reimagine how educators work together and support student learning. The pilot centered on three key components: creating collaborative team structures, leveraging high-quality instructional resources, and developing flexible scheduling approaches.

By empowering educators to make strategic decisions about their work, the initiative sought to increase teachers' autonomy, improve professional relationships, and create a more holistic approach to education to meet both student and adult needs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

Strong Leadership | **Stakeholder Engagement** | **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

Strong Leadership

For CitySchools Collaborative, strong leadership meant removing roadblocks to innovation while putting structures in place for teams to share responsibility and extend the reach of the schools' most effective educators. School leaders in the pilot understood that a true team meant clear roles, responsibilities, and community agreements to support effective collaboration.

Structures like triad meetings brought together a coach, the school leader, and team leading teachers to connect shared goals to daily practice with students. DCPS leaders in the pilot served as advocates when systems such as standardized bell scheduling and attendance-tracking software posed challenges for team-based staffing. Communities of learning with system leaders and multiple school teams strengthened the school-district relationship in a context of innovation.

Strong leaders not only permitted innovation but engaged and supported the educator mindset shifts required for genuine transformation.



“We know that, when schools rely on rigid staffing patterns, students lose access to the learning they deserve and teachers lose the support they need. Through this pilot, we worked hand in hand with school teams to reimagine roles and design innovative instructional models. We saw what can be possible across our system — these shifts expanded student access to quality instruction while creating more sustainable, collaborative roles for educators.”

—SUSANNAH TSIEN, SENIOR DIRECTOR,
PROGRAM STRATEGY, CITYSCHOOLS
COLLABORATIVE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Stakeholder Engagement

CitySchools Collaborative recognized that both system and school leader buy-in were necessary to drive progress. System leaders identified school leaders who recognized that teaching as it is currently organized is not working for students or teachers. And, in turn, those leaders rallied coalitions among their faculty and staff who were ready to prioritize distributed leadership. As a result, pilot DCPS schools that empowered both leaders and teachers to own and drive this work, rather than keeping it in the central office, saw stronger student and teacher outcomes.

Additionally, the CitySchools Collaborative team facilitated learning tours locally and nationally, giving leaders the opportunity to observe talent innovation in action. Leaders reported that seeing various design principles was transformative to their planning and implementation. These experiences coupled with post-visit structured reflection spaces and protocols to help educators collectively unpack what they experienced, imagine themselves in new roles, and understand how their students could thrive under different conditions.



“It was critical to do a lot of mindset work [with educators] to help them realize that change could happen in their space, to help them realize, ‘Your kids can do this. This is what it’ll take. These are the enabling conditions to help get them there. But your kids can do this, and, more importantly, you can do this’ ... Seeing is believing, so [it was key to give them] enough opportunities to see real examples of what this could look like.”

—LESLIE AYORKOR EDWARDS, CONSULTANT,
CITYSCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE, DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The DCPS strategic staffing pilot evaluated success through both student and adult outcomes and used results to drive continuous improvement. The central student measure was sense of belonging, which increased by nine percentage points in one year — a particular bright spot given the district’s focus on student attendance and well-being. Surveys tracked key adult outcomes from the beginning to the end of the 2024-25 school year. These outcomes included whether educators felt respected by colleagues (rising from 41% to 79%), whether they better understood student needs and could collaboratively plan next steps (a 15% increase), and whether they had greater decision-making autonomy (up 15%).

Importantly, evaluation results were not seen as a “final verdict” but as part of a continuous improvement cycle. Participating DCPS schools were encouraged to view change as ongoing and use feedback loops to refine structures annually in response to new cohorts of students and evolving staff teams.



Mountain View School

Teacher-Powered Schools • California

Mountain View School in San Diego emerged from a legacy of teacher-led decision-making and collaboration with community members. Founded as a family cooperative within a small charter network, the school transitioned into San Diego Unified School District's first pilot school in 2020, and now serves students in transitional kindergarten through eighth grade.

Mountain View adopted a Teacher-Powered Schools approach not as a departure from its roots but as a formalization of the collaborative culture that had long defined it — where teachers, families, and staff co-create the educational experience. Its Teacher-Powered Schools approach is one in which educators collaboratively design and lead all aspects of their school's operations, from instructional practices to budgeting and staffing. This approach emphasizes professional learning, distributed leadership, and co-design, enabling teachers to take on meaningful leadership roles while remaining in the classroom.

In order to implement collective teacher autonomy, the school received a waiver from the teachers union to ensure teachers were "opting in" to the model rather than being placed by the district. This ensured an alignment with Mountain View's mission and fostering a culture of shared leadership, distributed decisionmaking, and deep commitment to community-driven education.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

Stakeholder Engagement | **Capacity Building** | **Policy Environment**

Stakeholder Engagement

Mountain View School engages stakeholders in decision-making through a combination of formal structures and a deeply embedded collaborative culture. The school leverages district-mandated governing bodies such as a school site council, a site governance team, and an English Learner Advisory Committee to ensure that staff, families, and community members all have a voice in key decisions. The school site council, for example, is assembled intentionally to involve a representative group of school staff and parents and is tasked with reviewing and approving school improvement plans, budgets, and programmatic changes.

Beyond formal committees, Mountain View School leaders employ a variety of participatory techniques — including surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one conversations — to gather input and build consensus on important issues. The leadership team is committed to genuinely considering educator feedback, making sure that when input is solicited, it is taken seriously and reflected in final decisions.

This approach is underpinned by a mindset that values shared ownership of the school's direction and a belief that authentic collaboration leads to better outcomes for students and staff alike.

Capacity Building

Mountain View School builds educator capacity to engage in the Teacher-Powered Schools approach by intentionally fostering a culture of shared ownership, continuous learning, and open-mindedness. The school prioritizes hiring teachers who are philosophically aligned with its mission, believing that the right mindset is foundational and that skills can be developed through ongoing support.

Professional development is embedded in collaborative structures such as Professional Learning Communities and regular meeting schedules where teachers are encouraged to share experiences, reflect on practice, and learn from one another.

This approach helps shift mindsets from compliance-based teaching to one that values innovation, empathy, and collective problem-solving.



“The first piece that makes our model successful is culture and mindsets. This is our school. This is our community; we’re building this place together. We are all invested in this model. And it is important that this comes from the top down and bottom up.”

—RHEA BROWN, PRINCIPAL, MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL, CALIFORNIA



Policy Environment

District policy has played a pivotal role in enabling and sustaining Mountain View School's strategic staffing model by providing both the structure and flexibility needed for the school to thrive. As San Diego Unified School District's first pilot school, Mountain View School has leveraged contract waivers to maintain autonomy over staffing and ensure that teachers could "opt in" to its unique model rather than being placed by district assignment — fostering a team that is philosophically committed to the school's vision.

Even as district staffing procedures have evolved, the continued emphasis on local governance and accountability through the district-mandated governing bodies has allowed Mountain View School to maintain a high degree of autonomy and responsiveness to the unique needs and aspirations of its community.

Albuquerque Public Schools

Next Education Workforce • *New Mexico*

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) district leaders and partners believe that the traditional “one teacher, one classroom” approach has stripped creativity and joy from teaching, contributing to burnout and disengagement. The district is in the initial stages of implementing Next Education Workforce’s team-teaching model in six middle schools in an effort to enhance teacher satisfaction and retention and improve student engagement during the elementary-to-middle transition period.

District leadership is grounding its implementation strategy in lessons learned from earlier strategic staffing efforts in Mesa Public Schools in Arizona, one of the most highly profiled Next Education Workforce sites.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY STRENGTHS

Strong Leadership | **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

Strong Leadership

APS' strategic staffing approach is built on foundational experiences that its leaders had in implementing the Next Education Workforce model in other districts. APS' strategic staffing effort is led by Randy Mahlerwein, APS's deputy superintendent for leadership and learning. Drawing on years of experience leading innovation in Mesa, Arizona, Mahlerwein is building a new leadership culture in Albuquerque rooted in adaptive change — one that prioritizes the creation of psychologically safe, empowered teams where ownership and innovation are valued over compliance.

Rejecting traditional top-down accountability models, APS' leadership team is deeply invested in developing human connection, trust, vulnerability, and collaboration in its team meetings and engagements around the strategic staffing initiative.

The district also has a clear focus on “building the team of the future now” by empowering assistant superintendents and school principals to take risks and provide genuine permission to others to innovate — even if it means learning from failure — all while co-creating and pursuing a shared vision of what successful implementation looks like.



“We’re in the process of building trust. As a leader, I constantly have to give my team permission to innovate, and then I constantly have to look for opportunities to prove that that permission is real ... When they try something, and it goes bad, you want to encourage and applaud the effort, not the outcome. And if you have the right person with a growth mindset, they’ll come and tell you what didn’t work and what the next steps are.”

—RANDY MAHLERWEIN, DEPUTY
SUPERINTENDENT FOR LEADERSHIP AND
LEARNING, APS, NEW MEXICO

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Evaluation of APS' efforts will be measured by quantitative and qualitative data to allow for a comprehensive view of how the initiative is succeeding against its goals and identify where adaptations are needed.

District leadership finds value in traditional outcome metrics — such as standardized test scores, attendance rates, and other quantitative data — but is also intentional about gathering and using qualitative and experiential evidence from teachers, students, and leaders — such as teacher self-efficacy reports and observations of school climate and culture.

APS leadership also emphasizes that true improvement comes from using data to inform and adapt classroom practices in real time, and they advocate for continuous improvement cycles that allow for rapid iteration and adjustments to strategies throughout the school year rather than waiting for annual results. Through these cycles, the district is working to build a psychologically safe learning culture that supports school leaders and educators in trying new things, identifying what does and does not work, and learning from failure.



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A mix of current, emerging, and enduring forces will define the next era of strategic staffing.

CURRENT



Artificial Intelligence

AI is already transforming how schools plan and deliver instruction. New tools are reshaping team structures, scheduling, and support, creating opportunities to make teaching more collaborative and efficient. But these tools are also raising questions about professional roles, data use and privacy, instructional quality, and how to ensure technology lightens rather than offloads teachers' cognitive work.

EMERGING



Measurement and Evidence

To understand what works and to scale it, systems need better ways to measure how staffing models affect instruction, working conditions, and student learning outcomes and experiences. Developing real-time, meaningful metrics is the next frontier for turning promising ideas into sustained improvement.

ENDURING



Policy and Funding

To enable and scale strategic staffing, state and local policies must evolve to provide the flexibility schools need to design and sustain new models. At the same time, systems require stable and adaptable funding structures that support long-term implementation, iteration, and growth.

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

Effective staffing depends on strong instructional foundations. Aligning staffing structures with HQIM can support more rigorous, coherent learning experiences for students, regardless of who leads the classroom.

AI, if used effectively, is a promising way to free up teacher time to focus on instructional and student supports.

AI is poised to reshape the teaching role by offloading administrative tasks, grading, and some instructional supports, freeing up teachers to focus on higher-touch work like relationship-building and small-group instruction. Using AI in strategic staffing requires clear delineation between the tasks AI takes on and the tasks teachers still need to do to promote strong instructional practices.

Master Scheduling

Investments in AI-enabled master scheduling solutions can address pain points in organizing teacher and student time. These tools can optimize schedules to better match staff expertise with student needs, increase efficiency, and free up time for instructional leadership and collaboration.

Timely

Timely offers AI-powered middle- and high-school scheduling technology

Efficiency and Instructional Practice

AI can be used to automate routine tasks for teachers, such as grading, lesson planning, and resource curation. This allows teachers to focus more on instruction and student engagement. Strategic staffing leaders have noted that teacher-facing AI use cases should prioritize time-saving and support for instructional improvement.



MagicSchool provides support with lesson planning and assessment creation



Brisk Teaching helps with routine tasks, including providing feedback on assignments

AI Agents as Team Members

Some strategic staffing innovators envision AI agents becoming members of teaching teams, supporting teachers with data analysis, personalized learning recommendations, and real-time feedback. However, educators must also consider how to maintain relationships and trust with students, as well as high-quality practices, when instruction is partially automated.

Coursemojo

Coursemojo is an AI teaching assistant that provides personalized support to students

There are potential trade-offs related to the classroom use of AI to support educators in strategic staffing models.

Strategic staffing leaders have emphasized the need to integrate AI thoughtfully, ensuring that efficiencies are captured without offloading too much cognitive work from teachers. Maintaining essential human skills — such as clarity, intervention, relationship-building, and collaboration — remains critical, even as AI is incorporated into everyday instructional practices.

Cautions for Educators' Use of AI

Human Oversight and Connection: While AI can automate routine tasks, it cannot replace the empathy and relational awareness teachers bring to the classroom. Reduced teacher-student interaction may weaken students' social-emotional learning and trust, which are central to the science of learning and development.

Equity and Access Concerns: Uneven access to devices, internet, and AI training can widen opportunity gaps between well-resourced and underfunded schools. High implementation and training costs further challenge equitable AI adoption, potentially limiting benefits for disadvantaged students.

Overreliance and Loss of Critical Skills: Dependence on AI for basic tasks may reduce educators' (especially novice teachers') opportunities to build skills, think critically, and create differentiated, meaningful lessons for students.

Teacher Role, Capacity, and System Readiness: Teachers may feel that AI tools undervalue their expertise or increase workload through steep learning curves and ongoing quality assurance demands.

MORE FROM BELLWETHER

- [Productive Struggle: How Artificial Intelligence Is Changing Learning, Effort, and Youth Development in Education](#)
- [Building AI Readiness: Actionable K-12 Insights and Investment Pathways](#)
- [Learning Systems: Shaping the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Education](#)

A lack of clear, actionable metrics limits understanding of strategic staffing's impacts on students and educators.

The field lacks consensus on how to measure the success of strategic staffing. Current indicators, such as teacher retention or satisfaction, are too limited and influenced by other factors beyond staffing design. Schools and systems also need better ways to connect staffing innovations to student learning outcomes and leading indicators of educator impact.

Adding to this challenge, early-stage evidence is sparse, definitions of strategic staffing are inconsistent, and it can be difficult to even locate sites that are innovating with teacher roles if they are not widely publicized. Experts emphasize that progress requires better data systems and clearer articulation of success metrics and key concept definitions.

"We don't really know that [strategic staffing] is successful. We can make some assumptions and informed guesses right now, but it's hard to provide clear evidence that strategic staffing leads to direct positive effects on student outcomes. The really nitty-gritty research questions like, 'Which types of [teacher] teams are more effective?' are still down the pipeline because we're at such early stages with this work." —EDUCATION RESEARCHER

"More research could be useful ... about other staffing approaches and whether they're effective in terms of raising student learning growth. I think more research on other approaches would be really valuable. And I think another frontier is around what works: How can we get even smarter about what elements of these models, especially in combination with other reforms like HQIM implementation, really make the difference? And does that differ in different contexts?" —NONPROFIT LEADER

Measurement improvements at the state and local levels can help to shepherd stronger data availability and use.

State Opportunities

At the state level, leaders can build stronger statewide data and measurement systems.

Educator Evaluation: Design state educator evaluation systems to permit team-based evaluation inclusive of multiple performance measurements.

Technical Assistance: Provide technical assistance that supports districts' abilities to evaluate and respond to trends in data.

Research Investments: Bolster effective and innovative staffing models happening within the state by researching and identifying exemplar sites and best practices.

Collection of Additional Indicators: Track relevant teacher data — such as turnover, demographics, satisfaction, and preparation data — to build a more comprehensive picture of strategic staffing success.

Local Opportunities

At the local level, districts and school systems can also drive improvements in measurement and data use.

Multi-Method Data Collection: Employ a variety of data sources — such as leadership feedback, teacher and student surveys, and classroom observations — to inform strategic staffing decisions and measure the impact of change.

Clear Metrics and Alignment: Align metrics and data collection protocols with the system's theory of action and strategic goals. This includes developing clear indicators for both adult and student outcomes — such as teacher satisfaction, student growth, and sense of belonging — and creating new instruments to measure those if needed.

Capacity Building in Data Use: Build educators' capabilities to use data to drive ongoing reflection, adaptation, and improvement. Creating local systems of support and professional learning communities can strengthen educators' capacity to analyze, interpret, and collaboratively act on data for sustained instructional growth.



State policy change, as well as sustainable funding, is often critical for enabling, scaling, and sustaining strategic staffing.

State laws, rules, and regulations often establish the minimum expectations that school systems must meet and simultaneously cap how far they can innovate. Creating more flexibility in those laws, rules, and regulations can make it easier to experiment with new staffing approaches.

State Policymakers Could ...	By Deciding To ...	State Example
Lower Barriers to the Profession and Strengthen Educator Pipelines	Offer loan forgiveness and licensure test fee waivers; invest in grow-your-own programs, registered apprenticeships, and educator residencies; and fund competitive minimum salaries to attract diverse talent.	In Texas , the Teacher Incentive Allotment provides funding to districts that employ high-performing educators in rural or high-needs campuses.
Modernize Compensation Structures	Remove state-mandated step-and-lane schedules; enable career ladders with pay that vary by role and responsibilities.	Wisconsin does not mandate a step-and-lane schedule and instead leaves all compensation decisions entirely up to districts. Some districts choose to implement flexible pay schemes, while others opt to continue with a traditional salary schedule.
Strengthen the Conditions for Team-Based Staffing	Make teacher-of-record rules more flexible; allow class-size caps to vary by teacher expertise; and relax rigid seat-time requirements so schools can redesign schedules.	Texas' Innovation Districts allow districts in good standing to bypass class size requirements.
Fund Innovation	Provide dedicated dollars for launching pilots and scaling models that show evidence of impact.	North Carolina's Advanced Teaching Roles program includes a competitive grant process to support districts to implement elements of Opportunity Culture®.



District policy change, as well as sustainable funding, is often critical for enabling, scaling, and sustaining strategic staffing.

With district budgets tightening, the future of strategic staffing depends on models that are financially sustainable and embedded in ongoing budgets.

Districts and Systems Leaders Could ...	By Deciding To ...	District Example
Modernize Compensation and Career Ladders	Replace step-and-lane pay with differentiated compensation tied to role, responsibility, subject-area need, or measured impact, with clear pathways for teacher-leader roles.	In Indiana, Indianapolis Public Schools codify Opportunity Culture's® Multi-Classroom Leader® roles in their contract, which permits additional stipends for teachers in those roles.
Enable Flexible Staffing and Scheduling	Adjust local policies and/or collective bargaining agreements to allow teacher-of-record flexibilities, variable class sizes by expertise, and protected blocks for collaboration and coaching.	In California, Oakland Unified School District allows schools to apply for flexibility from certain contract provisions, such as class size, in order to implement innovative programs.
Fund Pipelines and Early-Career Supports	Budget for paid residencies or apprenticeships; offer fee waivers or stipends for pre-service educators; and implement lighter instructional loads with in-day mentoring for novice teachers.	In 2024, the District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education launched a cost-free Apprenticeship in Teaching program, allowing the city's paraprofessionals and high school graduates to earn a bachelor's degree while being paid for on-the-job learning.



In strategic staffing, excellent instruction is enabled by the use of HQIM.

Using HQIM ensures that all students have access to rigorous, standards-aligned learning experiences. Combined with strategic staffing models, HQIM can align curriculum, teaching, and talent to drive consistent, high-quality learning outcomes across a school or system. Benefits of incorporating HQIM alongside strategic staffing include:

- **Strong Instructional Foundation:** In systems using a team-teaching model, HQIM can ensure that all educators and staff are aligned on what lessons and curriculum are being delivered and provide a common, rigorous baseline for all students. This can also reduce variation in teachers' planning load. With HQIM, staffing models can allocate more teacher time toward student-facing needs.
- **HQIM Implementation:** Aligns with many of the key elements needed for effective strategic staffing implementation by:
 - Requiring adequate stakeholder engagement to build buy-in for new curriculum and practices.
 - Necessitating robust professional development and capacity building for educators and school staff.
 - Supporting ongoing data collections, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

The Inspired Teaching Exceptional Learning initiative, funded by the Overdeck Family Foundation, is working to bring strategic staffing structures together with HQIM and professional learning, aiming for gains in instructional quality and student achievement.



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When implemented well, strategic staffing models can transform the teaching role across contexts.

Across the United States, schools and districts are experimenting with strategic staffing as a way to better meet the needs of today's K-12 students, educators, and communities. The proliferation of these approaches in recent years, and the collective energy around them, demonstrate that innovation is both possible and effective when carried out thoughtfully. Bellwether's seven-part implementation framework offers a roadmap for systems leaders interested in moving strategic staffing from idea to practice. The framework and related case studies in this report demonstrate that implementation of strategic staffing initiatives is successful when it:

- Is led by **strong leaders** with a clearly articulated **vision that is aligned** with a system's ongoing strategy.
- Involves **key stakeholders** at each step along the way.
- Provides ongoing **capacity-building** opportunities for educators.
- **Measures progress** through multiple indicators that highlight areas for **learning and improvement**.
- Is supported by effective **resource allocation** and shifts in the **policy environment**.

The next era of strategic staffing may see AI and new technologies streamlining educators' work, improved measurement systems that can connect staffing design to student learning, and policy and funding innovations that enable flexibility and sustainability. Ultimately, strategic staffing is not just one model or one initiative — it is a paradigm shift that reimagines how the field values, supports, and organizes teaching so that every student benefits from excellent and empowered educators. ✦



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Strategic staffing is a student-centered and teacher-sustaining approach to organizing people, time, and resources in schools.

Definitions of strategic staffing often focus on combating the interconnected challenges facing the teacher workforce through innovation, collaboration, and structural changes to the teacher role. As they have advanced and learned from strategic staffing initiatives, multiple organizations have come to define strategic staffing broadly as **reimagining the teaching role**. This semantic shift is designed, in part, to ensure greater resonance with educators on the ground and connect to broader debates about school redesign.

Education First

“Strategic school staffing reimagines the teaching profession by disrupting the one-teacher, one-classroom model and replacing it with innovative solutions like teaming structures, flexible schedules, new roles, and integration of technology to improve student learning outcomes and make the teaching profession sustainable.”

National Council on Teacher Quality

“Reimagining the teaching role involves disrupting traditional approaches to teaching in favor of innovative solutions like teacher teams to manage the instruction of larger classrooms, flexible scheduling, and new roles for teachers that allow them to advance in their careers while staying in the classroom, making the profession more sustainable — and ultimately leading to improved student outcomes.”

Where We Agree

“Strategic staffing takes various forms, but each reimagines the roles of adults in schools to move beyond traditional one-teacher, one-classroom models. These approaches aim to create a system that is both more appealing to teachers and more effective for students.”

TEAM STRUCTURES

Team structures involve organizing educators into collaborative groups with differentiated roles, where teachers and support staff share responsibility for planning, instruction, and student success.

EXTENDED TEACHER REACH

Extended teacher reach strategies redesign roles, schedules, and class sizes so that the most effective teachers can improve learning for students.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability strategies mean designing supports that prioritize teacher well-being, collaboration, and work-life balance.

National Strategic Staffing Model



Arizona State University's **Next Education Workforce** model replaces traditional classrooms with educator teams of two to six teachers who collectively support a roster of 50 or more students. Rather than relying on the traditional “one teacher, one classroom” approach, educators take on differentiated roles aligned with their strengths and work collaboratively to meet the unique needs of all students.

This structure provides teachers with opportunities for specialization and professional growth and also allows them to share responsibility for a larger group of students. By distributing expertise and responsibilities across a team, the model extends the reach of highly effective teachers, ensures that learners receive more individualized support, and creates a more sustainable and rewarding teaching environment.

Next Education Workforce has been adopted by 43 school systems across 16 states including Arizona, California, Colorado, New York, Minnesota, and Michigan, reaching more than 27,000 students in the 2024-25 school year.

COMPENSATION STRUCTURES

Differentiated compensation structures provide competitive pay that varies by role, responsibility, and performance.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Distributed leadership strategies empower educators with meaningful opportunities to lead, influence decision-making, and grow in their careers while continuing to teach.

National Strategic Staffing Model

OPPORTUNITY CULTURE® An Initiative of Public Impact®

The Opportunity Culture® Initiative helps districts and schools to design career paths and compensation structures around their model of Multi-Classroom Leader® teaching teams. By offering higher pay for teachers who take on advanced roles, Opportunity Culture® design creates clear pathways for career advancement without requiring educators to leave the classroom.

These leadership roles come with authority to guide instructional practice, provide coaching, and share accountability for student learning, ensuring that strong educators can directly influence more students and support colleagues' growth. At the same time, team-based structures distribute responsibilities across multiple teachers and paraprofessionals, reducing isolation and workload while making teaching more collaborative.

Opportunity Culture® models have been adopted by more than 80 school systems across the District of Columbia and 17 states including North Carolina, Texas, Arkansas, Maryland, and Virginia, reaching 225,000 students in the 2024-25 school year.

TEACHER PIPELINES

Teacher pipeline strategies create clear, supportive pathways into teaching by recruiting diverse candidates, leveraging nontraditional and entry-level roles, and providing structured opportunities for growth.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development strategies provide differentiated and comprehensive opportunities that build teacher expertise, leadership, and well-being through ongoing learning, collaboration, and feedback.

National Strategic Staffing Model



US PREP works to strengthen the educator pipeline by integrating teacher preparation, school staffing, and leadership development in a single ecosystem. Through strong partnerships between universities and school districts, US PREP creates residency-style preparation programs that embed aspiring teachers in classrooms for extended, practice-based learning under the guidance of skilled mentors. This approach not only increases the readiness and retention of new educators but also aligns preparation programs with the real demands of local schools.

US PREP provides ongoing professional development for teacher candidates and faculty, building a culture of continuous improvement that elevates instructional quality systemwide. Together, these strategies drive more effective staffing, improve student outcomes, and create lasting change in how districts grow and sustain their educator workforce.

US PREP has been adopted by 36 universities and school partners across seven states including Texas, Arkansas, California, and New York, reaching over 33,000 teachers and 750,000 students annually.



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About Bellwether

Bellwether is a national nonprofit that works to transform education to ensure young people — especially those furthest from opportunity — achieve outcomes that lead to fulfilling lives and flourishing communities. Founded in 2010, we help mission-driven partners accelerate their impact, inform and influence policy and program design, and bring leaders together to drive change on education's most pressing challenges. For more, visit bellwether.org.

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