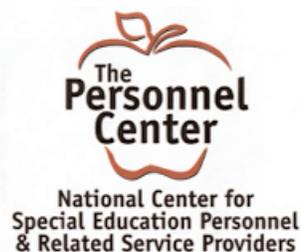




Keeping Quality Teachers

The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers

A Practical Guidebook for School Leaders Held Accountable for Student Success



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President of The University and Commissioner of Education

RICHARD P. MILLS

Chief of Staff

Counsel and Deputy Commissioner for Legal Affairs

KATHY A. AHEARN

Chief Operating Officer

Deputy Commissioner for the Office of Management Services

THERESA E. SAVO

Deputy Commissioner for Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities

REBECCA H. CORT

Coordinator, Program Development and Special Education Policy

FREDRIC DEMAY

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
Tel. (518) 474-2714
Fax (518) 474-8802

November 2004

Dear Reader:

I am pleased to introduce, Keeping Quality Teachers: The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers. Students depend on quality teachers to enable them to meet high standards. High quality experienced teachers provide the foundation for students' success. Continued staff turnover deprives students of quality instruction and can lead to poor performance. Research indicates that teachers often leave the profession due to the climate, culture and need for administrative support. This document addresses those issues by providing recommendations and strategies for administrators and others interested in retaining high quality teachers.

Several key stakeholder groups collaborated with staff from the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) in the development of this document. Many thanks to the Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change at Syracuse University (HESC), the Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC), the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) for their committed assistance in this endeavor.

I trust you will find these very practical strategies helpful in ensuring student success.

Sincerely,

Rebecca H. Cort



Northeast Regional Resource Center

LearningInnovations at WestEd



To: State Directors of Special Education, Local Administrators, and Teachers:

I am pleased to introduce you to *Keeping Quality Teachers: The Art of Retaining General and Special Educators*. The conceptualization of this project originally came from the Northeast Regional Resource Center's (NERRC's) Regional CSPD/SIG Workgroup, composed of state department of education representatives from all eight states in Region 1. Knowing the needs of their states and school districts, it is they who focused our attention on the issue of retention. In support, the State Directors of Special Education across our eight states gave us the charge of creating a document that they could use at the state and local levels to assist schools in developing the conditions and supports that would keep their quality teachers in the classroom.

The writing and production of this document represents the collaborative work of a team of exceptional individuals, all deeply committed to helping to retain and support the most valuable resource for improving educational opportunities for children with disabilities: our teachers. The team that did the research and writing for this product includes:

K. Lynn Boyer, Ph.D., Project Director, National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education,
Council for Exceptional Children

Carol Davis, former CSPD Coordinator for the state Bureau of Special Education, New Hampshire
Department of Education. and

Maureen Anderson, Consultant, Special Education Resource Center, Department of Education,
Connecticut

Phoebe Gillespie, Ph.D. Project Director of the National Center for Special Education Personnel and
Related Service Providers (Personnel Center), National Association for State Directors of
Special Education (NASDSE)

Tom Hidalgo, Program Associate, NERRC, Learning Innovations/WestEd

Karen Mikkelsen, Program Associate, NERRC, Learning Innovations/WestEd

Pat Mueller, Program Associate, NERRC, Learning Innovations/WestEd

Melissa Price & Dr. Gerald Mager, New York Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change,
Syracuse University

James and Concetta Sullivan, Partners in Sullivan Educational Associates

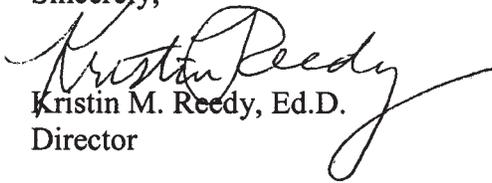
Susan Villani, Senior Program Research Associate, Learning Innovations/WestEd

20 Winter Sport Lane, Williston, VT 05495
802-951-8226 Phone _ 802-951-8222/8227 Fax _ 802-951-8213 TTY
www.wested.org/nerrc

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This document reflects several years of work and collaboration by these individuals and their organizations. The result is a product that represents diverse perspectives, the latest research, and a commitment to quality on behalf of students in schools everywhere. Our hope is that you will share our work with others and that this document will be used to build retention strategies in your state and in local school districts.

Sincerely,



Kristin M. Reedy, Ed.D.
Director



Acknowledgements

Strategic Planning Workgroup Members

Carmen Alvarez and Lisa Mendel
United Federation of Teachers
50 Broadway 14th Floor
New York, NY 10004
(212) 598 9546
spedvp@aol.com

Elizabeth Arons, Chief Executive Officer
Division of Human Resources
New York City Department of Education
65 Court Street Room 707
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 935-4750
earons@nycboe.net

Nancy Brennan
New York State Education Department
Office of Teaching Initiatives
5N Education Building
Albany, NY 12234
(518) 474-4661
nbrennan@mail.nysed.gov

Caryl Cohen, Deputy Executive Director
Division of Human Resources
New York City Department of Education
65 Court Street Room 406A
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 935-2710
ccohen@nycboe.net

Paul Fields
Canisius College
Room 306 Churchill Academic Tower
2001 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14208-1098
(716) 888-3269
fieldsp@canisius.edu

Teresa Fiermonte
Rochester City School District
131 West Broad Street
Rochester, NY 14614
(585) 262-8595
teresa.fiermonte@rcsdk12.org

Aminda Gentile
Carol Haupt
United Federation of Teachers
52 Broadway 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004
(212)-475 3737
(212) 598-9522 (Carol)
agentile@ufttc.org
chaupt@ufttc.org

Ginny Gorski
Monroe 1 BOCES Teacher Center
15 Linden Park
Rochester, NY 14625
(585) 249-7021
ginny_gorski@boces.monroe.edu

Barrie Grossi
Rhode Island Department of Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 222-4600 Ext. 2312
bgrossi@ride.ri.net

Anita Hanretty
Buffalo Public Schools
Buffalo Professional and Technology Center
150 Lower Terrace Room 422
Buffalo, NY 14202
(716) 851-3048
ahanretty@buffalo.k12.ny.us

Peter Ianniello
Estella Robles
Dep. Exec. Dir., Div. of Human Resources
New York City Department of Education
65 Court Street Room 706 (Peter)

Room 312 (Estella)
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 935-4718 (Peter)
(718) 935-2574 (Estella)
piannie@nycboe.net
erobles@nycboe.net

Belinda Johnson
NY State Education Department
55 Hanson Place Room 545
Brooklyn, New York 11217
(718) 722-4544.
bjohnso2@mail.nysed.gov

Stephanie F. Leeds
Humanities, Natural Sciences & Ed. Programs
Cazenovia College Eddy 207
22 Sullivan Street
Cazenovia, NY 13035
(315)-655-7390
sleeds@cazenovia.edu

Jill Levy
Anita Gomez-Palacio
Council of School Supervisors and Administrators
16 Court Street, 4th Floor
Brooklyn, New York 11241
(718) 852-3000
jill@csa-nyc.org
anita@csa-nyc.org

Ron Linden
Buffalo Public Schools
Director of Staff Development
Buffalo Professional and Technology Center
150 Lower Terrace Room 422
Buffalo, NY 14202
(716) 851-3048 Ext. 204
rlinden@buffalo.k12.ny.us

Margaret Lyons, Principal (SAANYS)
Montgomery Elementary School
Valley Central School District
141 Union Street
Montgomery, NY 12549-1399
(845) 457-4886
mlyons@vcsd.ouboces.org

Irene Ross, SETRC PDS
Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES
200 BOCES Drive
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
(914) 248-2290
iross@pnwboces.org

Larry Waite
New York State United Teachers
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, New York 12110-2455
(518) 213-6644
lwaite@nysutmail.org

Workgroup Advisors

Fred DeMay
NYS Education Department-VESID
One Commerce Plaza Room 1624
Albany, NY 12234
(518) 486-7462
fdemay@mail.nysed.gov

Matt Giugno
NYS Education Department-VESID
One Commerce Plaza Room 1624
Albany, NY 12234
(518) 486-7462
mgiugno@mail.nysed.gov

Gerald Mager
Syracuse University
150 Huntington Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244
(315) 443-1288
gmmager@syr.edu

Melissa Price
Syracuse University
150 Huntington Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244
(315) 443-1757
macjprice@cs.com

Workgroup Facilitators

Connie and Jim Sullivan
Sullivan Educational Associates
26F Congress Street Box 229
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
(518) 580-1416
jcsul@aol.com



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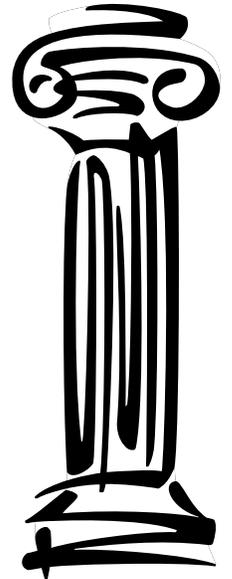
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Introduction



*Keeping
Quality
Teachers*



Introduction — Meeting the Challenge

No teacher should feel alone. Every student deserves a high quality teacher who has the confidence, the ability, and the supports necessary to fulfill the expectations in those students' eyes. Every educational administrator understands that quality teachers are critical to the academic growth and social development of our youth. In a rapidly changing society where knowledge and skills are crucial for success, students are our hope for the future. Creating new technologies, developing breakthroughs in medical research and health care, working in global economies brought together through instantaneous communications are but a few of the unlimited opportunities awaiting today's students. Students with the skills developed and honed by caring and competent teachers represent our nation's aspirations for a future where hard work and dedication are rewarded with success.

Our youth need quality teachers to develop their capabilities. That need, however, does not match the realities of what is happening in schools across the nation. In spite of the best efforts of educational leaders at all levels of education, American education faces a crisis in attracting and retaining quality teachers. While the root causes of the problem are due to a variety of factors, the inescapable conclusion is that students suffer when quality teachers are not available to teach them the skills they need to be successful in school and in life. We can and we should do better. Together, we can.

Keeping Quality Teachers — The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers is a powerful tool that provides school leaders with resources to increase the awareness of the need to address retention of all teachers, especially in areas of persistent shortages of teachers including mathematics, science and special education. It contains a framework for action that includes tools that are known to support retention of quality teachers. The framework for action can be used to create a plan for retaining quality teachers or it can be used to strengthen existing plans. School leaders at all levels of education can use the resources and strategies in this document to strengthen their efforts to ensure that students learn with quality teachers. Stakeholders can better understand how their efforts and partnerships with educational institutions can support recruitment and retention of quality teachers to promote high levels of educational performance for all students.

"There I was, the very first day of school. I closed the classroom door, and turned around. There were 20 pairs of eyes looking at me. I was excited, nervous and scared — and I felt so alone."

First Year Teacher

"All students deserve competent and caring teachers, all beginning teachers deserve competent and caring mentors, and all teachers deserve competent and caring administrators."

Ellen Moir and
Garry Blum
University of California-
Santa Cruz

“More can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor.”

Fredric Cohen
Nassau BOCES-
Long Island

Addressing the Teacher Retention Issue

Recognition of the teacher retention issue and the need for school leadership to support retention initiatives are major concerns emerging across the nation to ensure a quality education for all students. The need for more effective strategies to recruit and retain quality teachers has never been higher, and new and innovative approaches to teacher retention are taking hold in diverse school settings involving a broad range of stakeholders.

A number of collaborating partners in states in the Northeast recognized that their schools are losing teachers and in particular, special education teachers, at an alarming rate. These partners have joined together to address the teacher retention issue within their respective states.

This collaborative effort is designed to provide materials to assist school leaders and a broad range of stakeholders in developing and implementing support for teacher retention initiatives in local school buildings and districts. It responds to education research that has consistently demonstrated that quality teachers are instrumental to high academic achievement. It addresses the growing concern about attracting and keeping quality teachers in urban schools where the educational needs of students are the greatest and where the working conditions often present considerable challenges.

“Although policymakers can mandate and fund recruitment and induction programs, only school leaders can foster the full range of supports that teachers need.”

Susan Moore Johnson
Harvard Graduate School
of Education

Keeping Quality Teachers – The Art of Retaining General and Special Education Teachers is a user-friendly product that was developed with the collaborating partners that can be used flexibly with a variety of audiences. It includes a series of technical assistance resource materials that can assist any school building principal, school district administrator or larger educational administrative unit in developing effective retention plans for teachers in general, with an emphasis on special education teachers. It can support local school leaders in integrating retention planning into existing or developing improvement plans, and encouraging partnerships with institutions of higher education. The following sections are designed to provide resources for educational leaders to support teacher retention initiatives at the state and local levels.

- *Section One: Making the Case for Teacher Retention* helps school districts understand why retention is such a compelling issue. It includes documentation of special education as a shortage area and research on reasons for attrition in both general and special education. It links quality teaching with high levels of student achievement and provides a rationale for why retaining quality teachers is less expensive than recruiting and training new teachers. Three strategies for building a framework for retaining quality teachers are introduced including: *Improving Working Conditions; The Role of the Administrator in Teacher Retention; and Induction and Mentoring Programs that Work*. The section concludes with a description and discussion about the importance of using appropriate data for any teacher retention initiative.

- **Section Two: Building a Framework — Improving Working Conditions** draws on considerable research regarding why teachers leave schools to go to other teaching positions or leave the teaching profession altogether. Important working conditions for teachers including appropriate work assignments, sufficient curriculum guidelines, efficient discipline systems, sharing ideas and resources with colleagues and other conditions are identified and discussed. A companion self-assessment tool is provided to help school leaders and leadership teams determine the working conditions present in their schools that support teacher retention, as well as those factors that could be improved for ensuring higher retention of teachers over time.
- **Section Three: Building a Framework — The Role of the Administrator in Teacher Retention** provides potential strategies for administrative support at the district and building levels to enhance retention of all teachers and special education professionals. It highlights the crucial role of the principal and school leaders in providing instructional leadership and fostering collegiality and collaborative relationships that cultivate a positive school climate where teachers are valued and feel supported in their work. Professional development resources that support effective teaching and learning are discussed to promote continued development of instructional leadership skills for school administrators.
- **Section Four: Building a Framework — Induction and Mentoring Programs that Work** provides a series of model programs and practices that have proven helpful in supporting teachers in diverse school settings. Induction programs for new teachers are described for welcoming new professionals to their schools and helping them build their teaching skills through reflection and continued emphasis on improving their teaching practices. Mentoring programs for both new and veteran teachers are identified as ways to foster discussion among teachers about effective teaching practices, to enable teachers to share ideas among colleagues in a collaborative setting, and to learn from other teachers. Data highlighting the positive impact of induction and mentoring programs on teacher retention is included.
- **Section Five: Promoting Linkages — Partnerships Between Schools and Higher Education** articulates the key role played by institutions of higher education in supporting recruitment and retention of quality teachers in local school districts. Information is presented about partnerships of teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities with school districts to support teacher retention. Models for partnerships and real-life examples of existing partnerships including Professional Development Schools highlight the types of efforts that can be reviewed for potential application within specific local school building and district settings. In addition, practical implications for the types of coursework that postsecondary school students need to be successful as teachers in today’s schools are identified and discussed.
- **Section Six: Bringing It Together** provides potential strategies for states to use for statewide training to implement teacher retention

"We should have been focusing on improving working conditions in the school, having greater career opportunities for teachers, having the right pay for them, showing the right kind of appreciation."

Jim Hunt
National Commission on
Teaching and America's
Future

"A stronger partnership between higher education institutions and school districts is essential for recruiting and retaining teachers."

NYS Education
Department
A Call To Teaching

initiatives in local school districts. Schools simply cannot do it alone. This section addresses key components within the three strategies proposed for recruitment and retention of quality teachers introduced in Section One. This section, developed in collaboration with a broad-based group of diverse stakeholders including state and local education agencies and institutions of higher education recommends ways to pilot teacher retention strategies at the local level; proposes potential partnerships that will support implementation of teacher retention strategies; and offers a design of a model evaluation that includes components that can be used by states and local school districts.

Each section has a series of resources and a list of references to support teacher retention efforts in states and local school districts.

Using the Teacher Retention Product

New higher learning standards; the changing needs of today's students who need greater knowledge and skills to function effectively in a more complex society; and the future success of our nation in a global economy dictate that all school leaders and the greater school community need to be concerned about recruiting and retaining quality teachers. The teacher retention product is designed to provide the resources and strategies to assist educational administrators to meet that goal in the following ways.

- State education agencies can use the document to focus attention and resources on the need to ensure a cadre of quality teachers to help all students achieve new higher learning standards.
- Local school districts can use the strategies and tools in their schools and local communities to gain awareness and public support for comprehensive teacher retention initiatives designed to keep the best teachers in the classrooms.
- Principals and school leaders can use the resources to develop school-based efforts designed to address the major issues affecting teacher retention in their schools.
- Institutions of higher education can encourage and promote partnerships with schools to support new teachers in their initial, critical years of teaching, as well as providing resources and expertise to foster continuous professional development for strengthening teachers' skills.
- The greater educational community can use the document to gain awareness and a better understanding of how the teacher retention issue affects student academic achievement, and how public support can promote high quality schools with quality teachers.

Quality teacher preparation followed by strong, consistent support for teachers when they pursue their careers in schools can create an environment for enhanced student achievement and reduce high teacher turnover rates that impose heavy costs on students, schools and the community.