

Effective Approaches and Strategies for Educator Retention

A High-Leverage Need Across the United States and the Pacific Region

Republic of Palau



Many school systems across the United States and the Pacific Region experience challenges recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of educators to fill their open positions and provide all students with high-quality instruction.¹ In Palau, public and private school leaders are focusing on improving teacher development and retention with support from the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Pacific. This infographic describes promising strategies and practices drawn from studies across the United States that school leaders and policymakers can consider as they seek to increase educator retention.

The Palau Partnership to Support Teacher Effectiveness

Palau’s educators and school leaders are partnering with REL Pacific to access research, training, coaching, and technical support services as they build their knowledge and capacity to:

- adopt systemic instructional coaching processes for improving teacher effectiveness.
- adopt a teacher effectiveness measurement system to support, develop, and retain effective teachers.
- develop teacher recruitment and retention policies to ensure equitable access to high-quality teachers.

Defining Retention and Mobility

When studying, discussing, and making decisions about policies and practices regarding teacher retention, it’s important to define relevant terms. This can help school systems better understand which teachers to include in the calculation of mobility and retention rates. Some common terms used by the Institute of Education Sciences and the National Center for Education Statistics² are:

- **Stayers:** Teachers who remained teaching at their school (or school system) in a given timeframe.
- **Movers:** Teachers who left their initial school and went to teach in a different school (or school system).
- **Leavers:** Teachers who left their school and entered a different profession.



Building on Prior Work

The current partnership builds on the 2017–22 partnership between Palau’s Ministry of Education, Palau Community College, and REL Pacific to use improvement science methods to reimagine pre- and in-service teacher development programs and create a professional learning framework to support a comprehensive and robust teacher mentoring and induction program.



Promising Approaches and Strategies

School systems seeking to improve their educator recruitment and retention rates may want to consider these approaches, strategies, and practices.



Create a "Grow Your Own" teacher program.

Grow-your-own teacher programs recruit and train local community members and school support staff to become teachers, reducing the need to recruit teachers from outside the region. These programs are often partnerships between schools, community organizations, and teacher preparation programs, which work together to provide prospective teachers with financial, academic, and social supports to help ensure their success.³



Provide new teachers with multiple professional supports.

New teachers who are offered a combination of induction programs, mentoring, and professional development (PD) during their initial year of teaching are less likely to leave after their first year.⁴ Retention rates can also be improved when schools partner with teacher preparation programs to provide teacher candidates with tutoring, PD workshops, and job-placement assistance, and with other supports during their first years of teaching.⁵



Connect new teachers with mentors.

Having new teachers meet regularly with experienced, high-performing teachers or recent retirees to discuss instruction, classroom management, and other issues can help retention rates. A REL Central study of one mentoring program found that in their second year of being mentored, new teachers had higher retention rates.⁶ And a REL Northeast & Islands study found that teachers who received 4–9 hours of mentoring per month had higher retention rates than those who received less than 4 hours per month.⁷



Give teachers a mix of teaching and nonteaching duties.

A 2017 study by REL Southwest found that teachers in rural areas whose workload consists of a mix of both teaching and nonteaching assignments were more likely to be successfully recruited and retained than teachers whose workload includes only teaching. Nonteaching assignments can include a variety of administrative, coaching, or counseling roles.⁸



Consider increasing compensation.

Higher total compensation is positively related to teacher retention.⁹ A 2017 REL Southwest study found that even a small increase in annual compensation can lead to an increase in the probability of retaining a tenured teacher.¹⁰



Focus on positive school climate and relationships.

A supportive school environment can help retain teachers. A study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers in rural schools¹¹ suggests that retention is positively influenced by close communication and collaboration among teachers and administrators, strong personal interactions with students and families, and safe school environments.



Allow teachers to set goals in their evaluations.

There is some evidence that giving teachers opportunities to set goals in their evaluations is connected to higher rates of retention. A REL Midwest study in Michigan found that schools that did this (along with offering organized PD and providing sufficient instructional resources) had teacher retention rates that were 12.0–16.3 percentage points higher than other schools.¹²



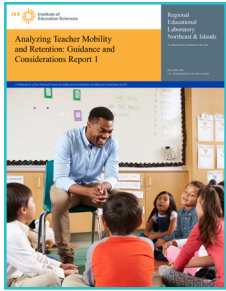
Recognize teachers' accomplishments.

A study by The New Teacher Project (Tntp) found that highly effective teachers reported they were more likely to stay at their school if, among other things, their school leaders let them know they were high-performing and gave them public recognition of their accomplishments.¹³



Additional Resources

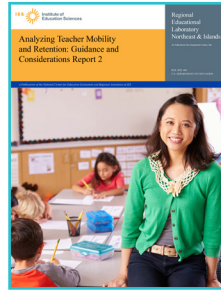
These two tools created by REL Northeast & Islands are guides for school system leaders, policymakers, and analysts interested in studying teacher mobility and retention.



Analyzing Teacher Mobility and Retention: Guidance and Considerations Report 1

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Publication/5125>

This report provides foundational information, decision points, and steps for gathering and analyzing research related to teacher mobility and retention.



Analyzing Teacher Mobility and Retention: Guidance and Considerations Report 2

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Publication/5126>

This report gives guidance on how to interpret differences and analyze trends in mobility and retention rates, and examine policy considerations.

References for Additional Reading

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