



# 4 STRATEGIES TO INCREASE TEACHER RETENTION





# INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention has become a serious concern for many districts. The pandemic's negative impact on existing teacher shortages poses a serious challenge to schools' efforts to reopen in the short-term and maintain appropriate staffing levels in the future. Balancing in-person and remote instruction—sometimes concurrently—while facilitating their own children's learning has placed enormous stress on many teachers, leading some to decide against returning to the classroom entirely.

Hanover's report, **4 Strategies to Increase Teacher Retention**, outlines the following research-based strategies for mitigating attrition:

- ▶ Support teacher wellbeing
- ▶ Promote teacher engagement
- ▶ Create a supportive school climate
- ▶ Monitor teacher retention and attrition



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 2 / INTRODUCTION

## 4 / DRIVERS OF TEACHER ATTRITION

### 4 / TEACHER SHORTAGES: A DECADE-LONG DILEMMA

### 5 / 7 TRENDS IN TODAY'S TEACHER WORKFORCE

### 6 / PANDEMIC IMPACT ON TEACHER SHORTAGES

## 7 / 4 STRATEGIES TO INCREASE TEACHER RETENTION

### 7 / SUPPORT TEACHER WELLBEING

### 9 / PROMOTE TEACHER ENGAGEMENT

### 10 / CREATE A SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

### 11 / MONITOR TEACHER RETENTION AND ATTRITION

## 13 / SOURCE LIST



# DRIVERS OF TEACHER ATTRITION

## Teacher Shortages: A Decade-Long Dilemma

Teacher shortages, which emerged in the United States more than a decade ago, will likely continue as more teachers leave the profession and fewer enter. Total enrollment in teacher preparation programs fell from 940,520 students in 2010 to 604,264 students in 2018. The number of enrolled students completing teacher preparation programs also declined by 28% during the same time period. This means districts must hire new teachers from a shrinking pool of traditionally qualified applicants. A 2018 survey of superintendents found that they encountered teacher pipeline challenges in all settings, but significantly more in rural areas, cities, and towns than in suburban areas. Students of color and students in high-poverty schools seem disproportionately affected by teacher attrition, in particular, as teachers of color are among those most likely to leave the profession.

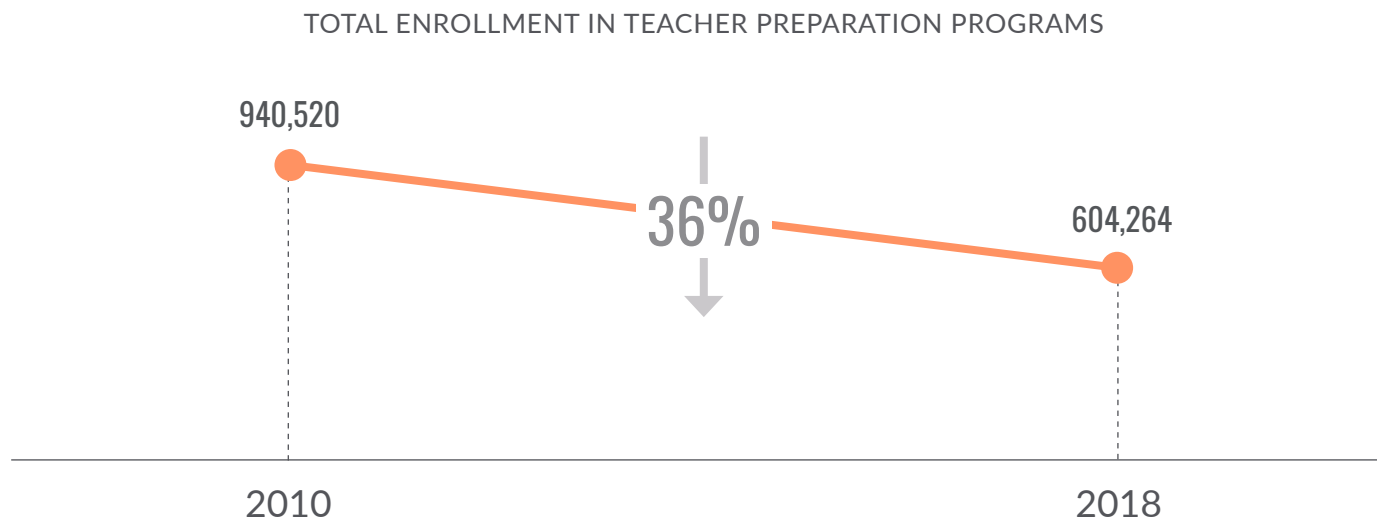


83%

of superintendents  
struggle with teacher  
recruitment and retention

From 2010-2018, the  
number of enrolled  
students completing  
teacher preparation  
programs declined by

28%



Source: Center for American Progress

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K12WP0121



## 7 Trends In Today's Teacher Workforce

1

### MORE TEACHERS HAVE ENTERED THE PROFESSION

Between 1987-1988 and 2015-2016, the number of teachers in public, private, and charter schools increased by more than three times the rate of student enrollment increases.

2

### BUT MANY LEAVE IN THE FIRST FEW YEARS

However, 44% of new teachers leave the profession within five years.

3

### TEACHER TURNOVER DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS SOME SCHOOLS

About half of all teacher turnover occurs in only 25% of public schools, with high-poverty, high-minority, urban, and rural public schools typically experiencing the highest turnover rates.

4

### TEACHERS ARE YOUNGER

At the same time, public school teachers have gotten younger. In 2007-2008, the most common age among teachers was 55 years old, whereas teachers were typically in their mid-30s to mid-40s in 2015-2016.

5

### TEACHERS ARE LESS EXPERIENCED

In 2015-2016, teachers most commonly had 1 to 3 years of experience, a sharp decline from the 15 years of experience teachers typically had in 1987-1988.

6

### FEWER MEN ARE TEACHING

Women accounted for more than 76% of public school teachers in 2015-2016.

7

### MINORITY TEACHERS ARE STILL UNDERREPRESENTED

Although hiring of minority (non-white) teachers has increased, a parity gap remained in 2015-2016, with minorities accounting for 51% of public school students and only 20% of public school teachers. Minority teachers also are among the most likely to leave the profession.

Source: University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education

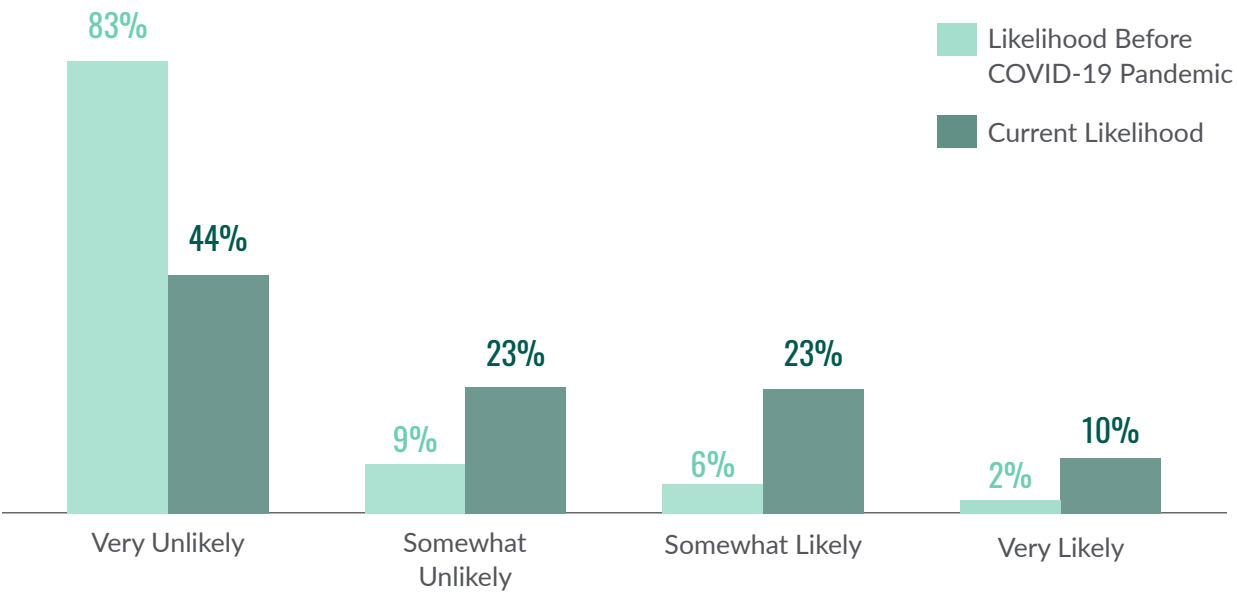
# Pandemic Impact on Teacher Shortages

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing teacher shortages. Now, one-third of teachers are somewhat or very likely to leave the profession, compared with only 8% prior to the pandemic. Turnover rates are expected to be highest among teachers over 55, who represent 17% of public school teachers. The loss of these teachers will further reduce the level of experience in many schools and

classrooms. The teachers who remain face increasing workloads and express lower levels of workplace satisfaction. A November 2020 survey by the Horace Mann Educators Corporation found that 77% of surveyed teachers, administrators, and support personnel were spending more time working and 60% were enjoying their jobs less in 2020 than 2019.

Amid these shortages, districts may also need additional teachers to implement social distancing, reduced class sizes, and staggered scheduling as schools reopen. Since many districts are limited in their capacity to offer financial incentives to entice teachers and support staff due to budget uncertainty, these safety protocols may worsen these shortages even further.

LIKELIHOOD OF TEACHERS LEAVING THE PROFESSION BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19



Source: Education Week

33%

of teachers are now somewhat or very likely to leave the profession

8%

of teachers were somewhat or very likely to leave the profession prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

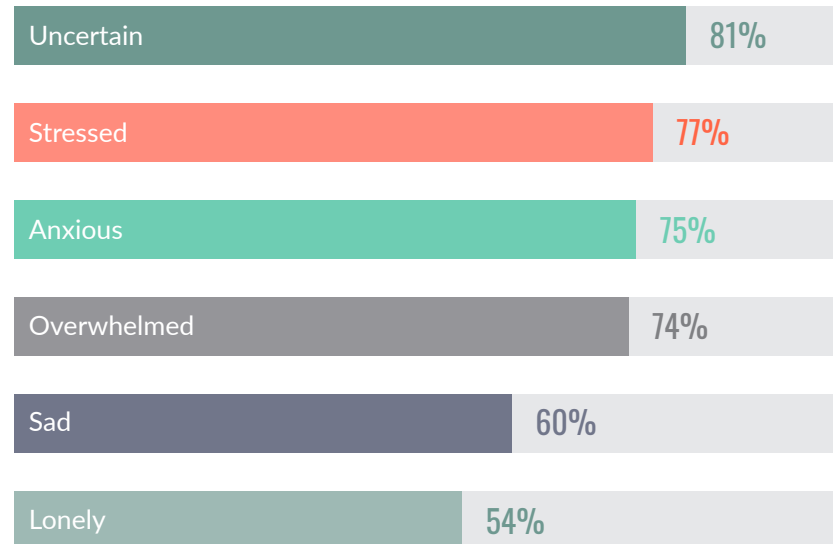
# 4 STRATEGIES TO INCREASE TEACHER RETENTION

1

## Support Teacher Wellbeing

Districts must address teacher burnout by promoting teacher wellness. A majority of teachers feel stressed, anxious, and uncertain, and this emotional and psychological distress can result in teacher burnout, and ultimately, attrition. District and school leaders, as well as teachers themselves, should look for and be able to recognize signs of teacher burnout, such as high rates of absenteeism, issues with sleep and fatigue, changes in behavior (e.g., withdrawal from social interactions), and changes in physical appearance. Districts can reduce the likelihood of teacher burnout and support teacher wellness by providing wellness programs, school-wide wellness policies, mental health-focused professional learning, and self-care strategies.

A MAJORITY OF TEACHERS  
FEEL “SOMEWHAT” OR “EXTREMELY”:



Source: *THE Journal*





Teacher self-care can play an important role in not only reducing stress, but also identifying additional physical, mental, and emotional needs. Self-care should be a consistent—and ideally daily—practice that enables teachers to alleviate tension, acknowledge feelings, recognize needs, and plan for additional supports. When district and school leaders encourage teachers to engage in self-care, they should remind teachers of their importance and the linkages between their and their students' wellbeing. District and school leaders also should take steps to destigmatize mental health concerns and engage in self-care themselves in order to care for their own mental health while leading by example.



### SPOTLIGHT:

The School District of Newberry County (SC)

The School District of Newberry County in South Carolina supports teacher wellness by designating Wednesdays as virtual learning days for all students and allowing teachers to leave school at 1:00 p.m. While the district uses this time to deep clean school facilities, Paige Graham, Director of Accountability, Assessment, and Professional Development, emphasizes that “teachers have commented time and time again how wonderful this [time] has been for them to renew and plan for the upcoming days. Our school board has been supportive of this, as everyone agrees it allows us to honor the professionalism of our teachers and staff.”

## SELF-CARE ACTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

WHAT TEACHERS CAN DO	WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO
Increase their knowledge and awareness of the effects of trauma and secondary traumatic stress (STS).	Educate staff about the effects of trauma, STS, and related conditions and provide regular opportunities for staff to address potential issues related to STS.
Assess their current level of burnout, STS, and vicarious trauma.	Identify and monitor STS and related conditions among staff.
Stay connected to other people and groups that are supportive and nourishing.	Encourage and develop formal strategies for peer support and mentorship.
Identify and incorporate specific self-care strategies for promoting resilience and maintaining a healthy work-life balance (e.g., exercise, good nutrition, supportive networks).	Create a culture that fosters staff resilience that includes fair leave policies, adequate benefits, a physically safe and secure working environment, sufficient supervision, support, resources to do the work, and processes for shared decision-making.

Source: National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

## 2

## Promote Teacher Engagement

Districts can reduce teacher burnout by communicating with teachers transparently and engaging them strategically. To engage teachers more effectively, districts should include them in key communications and value their contributions to district and school decision-making and initiatives.

### TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE TEACHER ENGAGEMENT

- **Communicate early and frequently.** Districts should be transparent, proactive, and timely in their communication to include teachers in vital conversation as valued voices.
- **Communicate initiatives and processes clearly.** Communications should explicitly outline teacher expectations, project timelines, and dedicated resources that impact teacher-related initiatives.
- **Set community-impacting targets.** Districts should establish goals that address the needs of all school stakeholders, including teachers, students, and the community.
- **Maintain a professional culture.** A collaborative, professional culture that promotes mutual respect among all stakeholders should permeate the school working environment.
- **Align strategic initiatives.** Districts should align initiatives with other major school concerns to address the priorities of multiple stakeholders efficiently and proactively.
- **Keep initiatives realistic.** Goal, target, and initiative design should be sustainable and continue to impact school stakeholders and the school environment long-term.

Source: Grantmakers for Education

DISTRICTS ALSO CAN ENGAGE TEACHERS BY:



### Building Teacher Self-Efficacy and Autonomy

Teachers who feel a strong sense of self-efficacy and autonomy in their professional lives indicate higher levels of engagement. When teachers feel competent in their professional abilities and have the freedom to exercise their competence, their overall job satisfaction improves.



### Giving Them a Voice

Engaging and retaining teachers requires districts to allow teachers to feel their voices and opinions have value and are heard. Districts may positively impact teacher engagement by allowing teacher input on decisions that may impact them at the school level.



### Recognizing Their Contributions

Districts are more likely to retain teachers who feel recognized for their contributions. Recognition can include monetary rewards, work-life balance improvements, career pathway development, and direct response to upward feedback.



### Supporting Their Professional Growth

Constructive, actionable, and timely feedback helps teachers feel directly engaged through productive discussions that focus on their professional development. Feedback providers can coordinate their messages to teachers for organizational consistency and overall message effectiveness.

Sources: Gallup, TNTP, Carnegie Foundation, Harvard Business Review, National Education Association

## 3

## Create A Supportive School Climate

Establishing a positive school climate and supportive working environment also increases teacher retention, perhaps to an even greater extent than offering financial incentives. Aspects of teachers' working conditions that districts and schools can improve include:

### Sociological features

that shape how teachers experience their work, including their roles, status, and the characteristics of their students and peers

**Cultural features**, such as values, traditions, and norms, that influence teachers' interpretation of what they do and their commitment

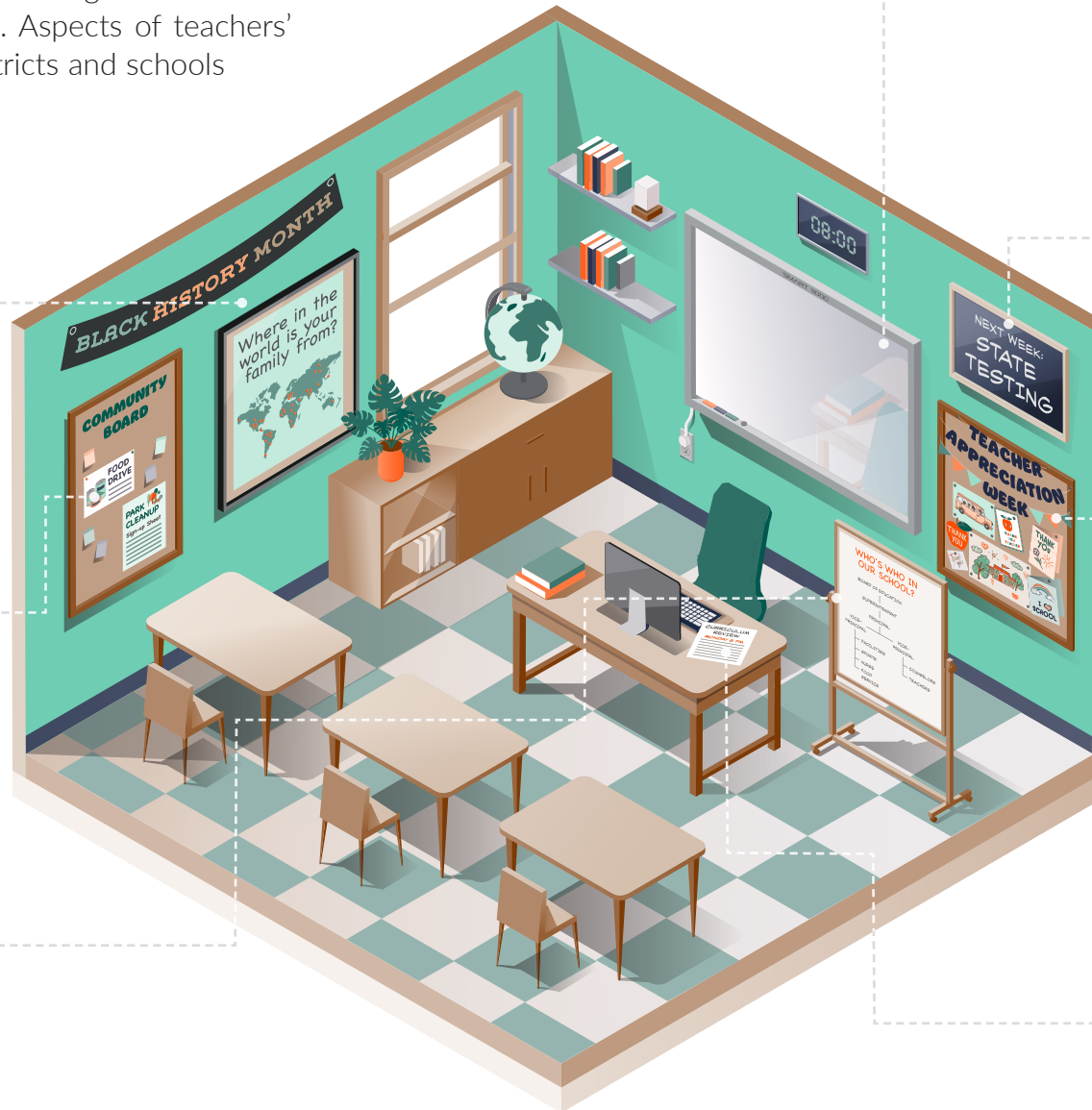
**Organizational structures**, such as lines of authority, workload, autonomy, and supervisory arrangements, that define teachers' formal positions and relationships with others in the school

**Physical features** of buildings, equipment, and resources, which serve as a platform for teachers' work

**Instructional features**, such as curriculum and testing policies, that may enhance or constrain what teachers can teach

**Psychological features**, such as the meaningfulness of what they do day to day or the opportunities they find for learning and growth, that may sustain or deplete them personally

**Political features**, such as whether teachers have opportunities to participate in important decisions



Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching



## 4

## Monitor Teacher Retention And Attrition

To identify the factors contributing to teacher attrition and then implement targeted responses, districts should monitor trends in teacher retention at various levels. Districts can use the types of data and information outlined here for this purpose, looking for changes in teacher retention over time and updating stakeholders periodically on trends at the classroom, school, and system levels.



### FACTORS TO MONITOR AT THE TEACHER LEVEL

FACTORS	EXAMPLE MEASURES	RATIONALE
<b>Demographics</b>	Age, race/ethnicity, gender	To monitor changes in diversity
<b>Pre-Service Experience</b>	Type of teacher preparation program attended	To assess potential differences in teachers' retention from different programs
<b>Qualifications</b>	Certification type, additional certifications	To assess differences in teachers' retention by types of qualifications
<b>Experience Levels</b>	Teaching experience within the profession, district, and school	To determine whether beginning or more experienced teachers are leaving
<b>Performance Ratings</b>	Teacher evaluation ratings, teacher observation ratings, student growth measures	To gauge the extent that high and/or low performers are staying, moving, or leaving
<b>Psychological Factors</b>	Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job embeddedness, and turnover intentions	To predict teacher retention and turnover and identify potential solution strategies

Source: U.S. Department of Education



FACTORS TO MONITOR AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

FACTORS	EXAMPLE MEASURES	RATIONALE
School-Level Demographics	Student demographics, grade ranges, locale	To monitor potential inequities in teacher retention and turnover across schools
School Climate	Climate surveys, student discipline	To assess the influence of school climate on teacher retention and turnover
Performance Levels	Achievement scores on standardized assessments	To evaluate the influence of students' performance levels on teacher retention and turnover
Administrative Support	Leadership surveys, principal evaluation ratings	To consider the influence of school leadership on teacher turnover and retention

FACTORS TO MONITOR AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

FACTORS	EXAMPLE MEASURES	RATIONALE
Demographic Characteristics	Enrollment and enrollment change, student poverty level, percentage of minority students, percentage of bilingual students	To account for the extent that changes in student enrollment levels may influence teacher turnover; To assess how changes in demographics over time may be associated with teacher retention and/or turnover
Compensation Policies	Overall compensation levels, stipends for hard-to-staff schools	To determine to what extent changes in salary levels may influence teacher retention or turnover
In-Service Policies	Induction programs, peer assistance and review	To evaluate whether in-service policies are influencing teacher retention and turnover

Source: U.S. Department of Education

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributions to this publication were made by the following Hanoverians:

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# ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

Our data-driven insights help school districts of all sizes develop the programs, allocate the resources, and implement best practices to optimize student outcomes.

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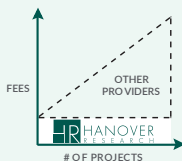
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