

Salem Teachers Cabinet: Recommendations for Salem Public Schools

The Salem Teachers Cabinet is a group of 10 teachers and coaches selected by Teach Plus to receive leadership training and provide feedback to Mayor Kim Driscoll, the School Committee, and the community on strategies for improving Salem schools for teachers and students.

Introduction

Between the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years, Salem Public Schools lost 36 percent of our first year teachers. That attrition rate is far too high. We recommend that Salem schools reconsider our policy around teacher retention and induction.

Teacher retention is about more than simply keeping teachers; it is about keeping the right teachers. We propose a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that hopes to maintain and support the growth of the most effective Salem teachers. The recommendations include rethinking our recruitment and hiring practices, remodeling our induction and mentoring program, retraining administrators, refining our expectations and delivery of professional development for staff, and providing leadership opportunities for teachers. This proposal serves to request a commitment both philosophically and financially to help retain Salem's most effective teachers.

Recommendations: Increasing Teacher Retention in Salem

We believe that by building teacher and leader supports and opportunities around three main levers in the District Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP), we will create conditions in which high-quality teachers are supported and engaged throughout their teaching career.

I. Recruitment

Salem Public Schools has an opportunity to build a strong system for recruiting new teachers with the many nearby colleges. Recruitment of potential candidates must begin early, preferably prior to the summer. Salem can build upon relationships already established with Salem State University to create structures in which students in the teacher preparation program are placed in all Salem schools for pre-practicum and student teaching placements.

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- *Establish a consistent hiring process and begin recruiting early.* Hiring practices vary between schools in Salem. By providing a guideline for the hiring process for each school to follow when seeking new staff members, expectations for new teachers will be consistently higher across all of the schools. For example, we recommend that Salem Public Schools establish the expectation that schools are required to have more than one round in the interview process -- and that they involve staff members and administrators in hiring. One of the interview rounds should require a performance task or model lesson. Most importantly, begin recruiting potential candidates as early as possible for the upcoming school year. (See TNTP’s report, “Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms.”¹)

- *Strengthen University partnerships.* Salem Public Schools should continue to build relationships with local institutions of higher education, most notably Salem State University, as a means to leverage the capacity to not only support novice teachers, but to provide continued training and teacher leadership opportunities to mid-career and veteran teachers.

- *Strengthen teacher preparation through a partnership with Salem State University.* Partners from Salem Public Schools and Salem State should form a team that can establish clear and consistent criteria for pairing student teachers with cooperating practitioners. This team should also work to implement the three recommendations that follow:
 - *Identify teachers who will serve as cooperating practitioners.* The quality of a student teacher’s training depends on a strong cooperating practitioner. SPS and SSU should identify rigorous criteria to identify teachers that will serve as cooperating practitioners. The selection process could include elements such as classroom observations, recommendations from administrators, and a record of student achievement. These criteria will identify strong teachers who will be able to effectively train student teachers when they enter the classroom.

 - *Create opportunities for SSU students to integrate into the SPS community.* Student teachers should shadow teachers for responsibilities outside the classroom as well as during the teaching day so they can get a true picture of all of the responsibilities the job entails. Student teachers could have a requirement that in addition to their time in the classroom they spend a designated amount of time attending other events with their cooperating practitioner such as parent conferences, open houses, Instructional Support Team (IST) meetings, team meetings, professional development workshops, etc. This would allow student teachers to fully understand the expectations of teachers’ work outside of the classroom.

 - *Build Dual Enrollment Opportunities.* Salem should build upon the Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Program (CDEP) that already exists at the high school and provide incentives for enrolled students who are interested in education degrees to attend Salem State and return to the Salem Public Schools as teachers. Some suggestions include tuition waivers,

bookstore gift certificates, support in the job application and interview process, etc. The partnership team could identify appropriate incentives.

II. Induction and Mentoring

Salem Public Schools has an opportunity to implement a system of supports for teachers throughout various stages of their professional career. Many of the recommendations below come from a model of comprehensive induction programs for beginning teachers from Saphier, Freeman and Aschheim (2011).² Teachers will benefit from an integrated approach to induction during their first three years, which includes:

- *Establish a district-wide induction sub-committee.* The cabinet will plan, implement and oversee the induction program, including members of central office, human resources, building-based leadership, the teachers union, and new and veteran teachers. The induction program could also include an orientation to the district initiatives, AIP, and expectations for the upcoming school year.
- *School Committee and community partnerships.* The School Committee can show its continued support for a comprehensive induction program by approving a teacher induction policy and make financial commitments to the effort. We must go beyond the state minimum requirements for mentoring and build a foundation of support so every teacher can have the greatest impact on student academic, social and emotional development as possible.
- *Continue the good work.* Many aspects of mentoring are in place in Salem Public Schools. Beginning teacher courses and mentoring programs are in place and should continue to be run strategically.

III. Administrative Professional Development

In order to ensure that Salem's most effective teachers are being valued, stay motivated and most importantly, stay in our classrooms, we must train administrators to 1) effectively leverage data to identify highly effective teachers and, 2) implement effective management strategies.

- *Identify the most effective teachers in our schools.* Half of teachers who leave the profession in the first five years are also the most effective teachers in their buildings.³ This is a direct result of negligent retention practices by administrators. It is essential that administrators have the ability to analyze data in order to pinpoint their best teachers, utilize them during school improvement, and recognize them for their work. Administrators should make it a goal to actively retain as many of these teachers as possible.

- *Engage in effective personnel management practices.* Once these teachers have been identified using a common set of indicators, administrators now need to know how to develop those employees into leaders within the school. The second part of required training would include building administrators to receive professional development in employee management and motivation training. Too often, highly effective teachers are ignored and this results in a loss of motivation and commitment.⁴ If principals could have the foundations of skillful employee management practices, they could make sure those teachers felt valued and committed to the work.

IV. Align Professional Development

Professional development (PD) should be differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers so that teachers value PD and find it relevant to their practice. PD should be aligned at the district and school level to the AIP and clearly prioritize goals each year. Currently, the school system emphasizes all priorities equally in PD, which is overwhelming and impractical for teacher improvement each year. As a result, this is prohibiting teachers from excelling in identified areas. Teachers find it difficult to create clear and focused goals and priorities for their own improvement when everything is a priority.

- *All schools should align building professional development to the AIP.* Building-based PD should be determined as a collaborative effort between the school administrators, coaches, and the school-based leadership team. Building PD must be aligned to the District priorities defined in the AIP, but can and should be differentiated based upon the teachers' needs at different grade levels or in different subject areas.
- *Differentiate district professional development for teachers.* The district PD days should be differentiated based on teachers' prior training and take into consideration gaps for new teachers. For example, on a Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA) PD day, first-year teachers could be in a session that contains info from the first year of the TLA roll out. At that same time, teachers who are in their third year of teaching would be in a session that is focused on small group instruction because they already have some of the reader's workshop structures in place.
- *Prioritize and coordinate training for all teachers.* District and school administrators should collaboratively prioritize PD so that support staff such as special education, ESL teachers, SEI teachers, specialists, and any other support staff are not scheduled to be in multiple PD sessions at the same time. There should be a system of clear communication of who makes the decision of what PD support staff attend and be explicit about the rationale.
- *Progress monitoring for targeted PD.* When targeted PD is provided at the school or district level, there could be progress monitoring through various methods. Evidence of implementation of targeted PD could be gathered during instructional rounds. In addition, student data could be tracked for achievement in classrooms where the strategies from the PD are being implemented consistently.

- *Empower teacher leaders and coaches.* Empower teacher leaders and coaches to share the knowledge they have gained by utilizing them to run PD workshops and common planning time meetings. Since the teachers and coaches know their buildings, they can craft PD that accounts for the student population and teacher needs at their individual schools.

V. Diverse Pathways for Teacher Leadership Opportunities.

- *Generate multiple career pathways.* Salem Public Schools should provide a diverse set of leadership opportunities to meet the diverse aspirations and skills of its teachers. Salem Public Schools will benefit from continuing to create multiple pathways and leadership opportunities to increase engagement and ownership of teachers.⁵

One example of such a teacher leadership opportunity is the newly created teacher leadership positions. We support Salem Public Schools and the Salem Teachers Union’s agreement to create building-based teacher leadership positions to compliment and expand the work done by coaches. The teacher leaders will provide leadership in an area of their strength, from making decisions based on data to running their grade-level common planning time meetings. In exchange for the additional responsibilities, teacher leaders will have their teaching load reduced by one course that will be covered by a coach. This work is one example of how educators can inform and make a difference in educational policy. The teacher leadership positions hold the promise of leveraging the astounding professional capital we have in each and every Salem Public School and to support teachers to continue their career in the classroom and provide every student with an exceptional teacher.

- *Partner with external organizations to build teacher leadership opportunities.* Teacher leadership opportunities should be built and created both internally and by partnering with external organizations. Two examples of this best practice are the City of Salem partnering with Teach Plus in creating a Teacher’s Cabinet to give feedback to the School Committee on key educational policy issues. The partnership with the Lynch Leadership Academy is an example of Salem partnering with an outside organization to provide aspiring and current principals in Salem with high-quality, embedded professional development. We encourage Salem Public Schools to continue to create diverse teacher leadership opportunities from internal and external organizations so that we can differentiate and individualize career pathways and ladders to meet the widest range of interests and skill sets of our educators as possible.

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End Notes

1. Levin, J., and Quinn (2003). *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classroom*. TNTP: The New Teacher Project.
2. Saphier, J., Freedman, S., & Aschheim, B. (2011). *Beyond Mentoring: Putting an Instructional Focus on Comprehensive Induction Programs (4th ed.)*. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching.
3. TNTP (2012). *The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools*.
4. TNTP (2012). *The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools*.
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Introduction

According to Dr. Richard Ingersoll at The University of Pennsylvania, “teacher turnover costs school districts more than 2.2 billion dollars per year.” Last year, in our own district, we failed to retain 14 percent of our teachers. One of the main factors in teacher attrition, according to Ingersoll, “is the issue of voice, and having say, and being able to have input into the key decisions in the building that affect a teacher's job.” Ingersoll then goes on to say, “what is interesting about this finding [is that] this would not cost money to fix. This is an issue of management.”¹

We feel as though the implementation of teacher leadership would be crucial to success in our district for both students and teachers. The teacher leader role would help to open up communication between faculty, administration, and the school community. The teacher leader role would benefit new teachers and would also allow professional growth for those teachers who would be willing to take on an active approach towards leadership. Having teacher leader positions allows for growth but also strengthens the profession. In the article “Great Teachers and Great Leaders,” found on the US Department of Education website, it recommends districts, “treat teachers like the professionals they are by providing time for collaboration...and providing on-the job learning opportunities with peers and experts linked to evaluations and to student needs.”²

Teachers in and outside of our district are yearning for opportunities that allow them to collaborate and make the best use of their interests and talents and have a sense of advancement in their career. There are many teachers within our district that have already taken on these responsibilities without being recognized or compensated for their time and expertise. We have compiled a rubric that outlines various teacher leader roles as well as the responsibilities and different compensations that we believe should come with each.

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The Vision for Salem Public School Teacher Leaders

- *Clearly defined roles for teacher leaders*
- *Accountability and the appropriateness of accountability*
- *Adequate time*
- *Teacher leader rubric for administration and teachers to follow*
- *Compensation/recognition*
- *Opportunities for advancement and on the job training as well as collaboration*
- *Increased student growth based on teacher network of support*

Next steps for Salem Public Schools

After our research and discussions, we recommend the following to the School Committee:

1. Teacher leader job descriptions have been posted by Salem Public Schools for implementation in the upcoming school year.
2. Teacher leader roles, accountability, and compensation should be clearly defined.
3. The district should provide paid opportunities for an accredited teacher leader training program.
4. A consistent mentoring program (within a two year cycle) must be in place.
5. Our district should encourage support teams for new teachers that include: a teacher leader, a mentor, an administrator, and a union representative.

Examples of Teacher Leadership Programs

The Following is a list of Teacher Leadership Programs that may be poised to train our district’s teacher leaders:

- The Lead Teacher Program in Boston Public Schools
- Teacher Leadership Endorsement
- Northwestern Teacher Leadership Program
- Brandeis Teacher Leadership Program
- Boston Public Schools/Boston Teachers Union Leadership Roles
- Leading Educators Fellowship
- Teachers 21 (T21)
- KIPP Academy Teacher Leadership Program

Proposed Teacher Leader Roles for Salem Public Schools

Role ³	Responsibilities	Time Requirements	Compensation/ Consideration
Building- Based Coach (subject specific)	An instructional specialist, subject-specific according to their licensure, who helps colleagues implement effective teaching strategies. This would include generating ideas for differentiating instruction, planning lessons in partnership with fellow teachers, and modeling content area delivery consistently. Coaches study research-based classroom strategies, explore which instructional methodologies are appropriate for the school, and share findings with colleagues.	20% of time should be spent modeling exemplary instruction in a live classroom setting that would allow peer observation. 80% of time should be spent researching, planning lessons, planning PD sessions, executing PD, and working with Lead Teachers to effectively utilize common planning time (CPT).	100% of work day is accounted for. Additional stipend for ILT time contribution.

		In addition, coaches should sit on any Instructional Leadership Team/Committee formed at their respective school.	
Teacher Leader	Teacher leaders will facilitate peer visits across their own teams. Leaders incorporate new teachers into the culture and expectations of the school. They support PD delivered by the building-based coach and model classroom management strategies for peers within their building.	80% of time should be spent modeling exemplar instruction in a live classroom setting that would allow for peer observations. 20% of the time should be spent analyzing data as part of the school’s ILT and data meetings, facilitating grade level CPT, collaborating with the coach, and supporting new teachers with standards-based instructional planning and classroom management.	100% of work day is accounted for. Additional stipend for ILT time contribution and outside teacher leadership training.
Curriculum Specialist (STEM and Literacy)	Curriculum specialists must have deep understanding of content standards, how various components of the curriculum link together, and how to use the curriculum in planning instruction and assessment. Curriculum specialists lead teachers to agree on standards, follow the adopted curriculum, use common pacing charts, and develop shared assessments. Teachers help their colleagues by sharing instructional resources. These might include web sites, instructional materials, readings, or other resources to use with students. They might also	Time is spent attending current PD sessions and developing delivery to teaching staff with the assistance of Building Coaches and Teacher Leaders. Time should be devoted to keeping Atlas maps updated and notifying staff at large of changes. Time should be devoted to developing and maintaining district-wide common assessments that will enhance teaching and	Full time job, salary determined by the district.

	share such professional resources as articles, books, lesson or unit plans, and assessment tools.	not hinder time on learning. Time will be spent sharing instructional resources that will lead to strength and consistency in instruction across the district. Some time should be devoted to visiting classrooms across the district to follow up on consistency and reflect on the effectiveness of their own work.	
Mentor	Mentors serve as role models; acclimate new teachers to a new school; and advise new teachers about instruction, curriculum, procedure, practices, and politics.	<p>A number of hours in mentoring is required by the state for a first year mentee. This would be performed by the mentor in addition to regular work day duties.</p> <p>A number of hours in mentoring is required for a second year mentee. This would be performed by the mentor in addition to regular work day duties.</p> <p>Attend six mandatory, after-school Mentor trainings as well as attend training on 8/18/15 from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The mentor will also be responsible for documenting and</p>	<p>50 hours x \$35=\$1,750 \$1,750-33%=\$1,172.50 Rounds to \$1,000</p> <p>Next step on pay scale.</p>

		completing the mentor log.	
School Leader	Being a School Leader means serving on a committee, such as a school improvement team; acting as a grade-level or department chair; supporting school initiatives; or representing the school on community or district task forces or committees. A school leader shares the vision of the school, aligns his or her professional goals with those of the school and district, and shares responsibility for the success of the school as a whole.	Time commitments may vary according to committee.	Stipend will vary according to committee.

*ILT/DLT should become one team of Building Coaches and Teacher Leaders.

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End Notes

1. R. Ingersoll (NPR, March 30, 2015).
2. U.S. Department of Education. *Great Teachers and Great Leaders*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/great-teachers-great-leaders.pdf>
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Introduction

Recall an unproductive meeting. Minds wander, people doodle on agendas and others sneak a peek at the many emails they have waiting to be answered. Maybe you thought, “If only this meeting was better organized and they included me in the conversation...” Teachers often feel the same way about **common planning time**.

Common planning time among educators is a powerful component to the success of a school. It must be sacred time. Common planning time is a period of time that is scheduled during the school day for multiple teachers, or teams of teachers, to work together. Ideally it is a form of professional development that is collaborative in nature. Instruction improves when teachers are afforded the time to collaborate on best practices, look at student work, create curriculum, and discuss children. Kassissieh and Oxley state, “collaborative teams, in which teachers share planning time and a common group of students, have been correlated with better school culture, more effective parent communication, higher student achievement, and increased teacher motivation and job satisfaction.”¹

As Fullan & Miles noted, research has proven that proper instructional planning prevents poor performance within a school.² Schools need to provide a solid block of common planning time, with a consistent cycle run by a teacher, teacher leader, or coach. This is not the current practice in all Salem schools. We believe that time, consistency and effective leaders could help schools move toward a better plan for the implementation of common planning time. Therefore, we make the following recommendations:

1. All schools should strive for at least 45 minutes of common planning time a week.

According to Fullan & Miles a “fundamental lesson learned in the past decade of school reform efforts is that far more time is required for professional development and cooperative work than is now available. In fact, time has emerged as *the key issue* in every analysis of school change appearing in the last decade.”³ We propose the district make a concerted effort to provide all teachers with a minimum of 45 minutes per week of common planning time with their peers.

Teachers are expected to deeply understand the Common Core State Standards and change their practice accordingly. In addition, teachers need to stay abreast of new instructional techniques, assessment practice, and data analysis in order to be highly effective educators. Teaching is a complex task, and substantial time is

required for educators to research new ideas, implement them, adjust their approaches, and then assess for mastery.

Corcoran supports this idea, stating that teachers “need more time to work with colleagues, to critically examine the new standards being proposed, and to revise curriculum. They need opportunities to develop, master, and reflect on new approaches to working with children.”⁴

Currently, the Salem School District is inconsistent in its approach to common planning time. The table at right shows that while some grade level teams are provided the opportunity to collaborate weekly, others are only allocated monthly time with their peers.

School	Current Common Planning Time
Bates Elementary	90 minutes per week
Bentley K-2	40 minutes per week
Bentley 3-5	40 minutes twice per week
Bowditch Elementary	40 minutes per week
Collins Middle	60 minutes per six day cycle
Horace Mann Elementary	30 minutes per week
Salem High School 9-10	60 minutes per two day cycle
Salem High School 11-12	90 minutes per month
Saltonstall	45 minutes per week
Witchcraft	40 minutes per week

II. Schools need to build a consistent cycle.

Effective common planning time can take on many different forms. Teachers need to identify weaknesses by analyzing data, looking at student work and discussing common misconceptions. Teachers then need to plan lessons to address those weaknesses and reflect on the implementation of those lessons. Some teams may address aspects of all three of those items in an hour, while other teams may spend an entire meeting on one aspect. Right now there are schools that have a highly unbalanced approach.

Teachers will be more receptive to participating in common planning time if they know the time will be used to prepare for the classroom. Teachers engage more in the process if the conversations during the meeting are meaningful and relevant – and if meeting facilitators plan the time so as to maximize time together. This time should not be used to complete school business, such as planning assemblies or making announcements. A focus on student learning and teacher practice during meetings would strengthen the performance of both teachers and students.

Frequently, schools use common time in a reactive way, completing paperwork, inputting data, grading, or holding student support meetings. Instead, schools should be proactive about that time. Common planning time needs to be thought about with the end in mind, much like a trajectory for a unit of study. It is important to schedule time for those topics of discussion. Teams of teachers can decide on a cycle to follow at the beginning of the year. The cycle should be supported by administration. The cycle would include time for miscellaneous duties that are bound to appear. Until teachers are given the freedom to determine what work needs to be done and the time to do it, they will not be able to reach their potential as a collaborative, productive team.

III. Meetings should be run by teachers, teacher leaders or coaches.

Consistent, dedicated common planning time allows teachers to collaborate and bring about positive change to their instructional practice. Teachers are tasked with everything from analyzing data, to creating action plans, to implementing new school-wide and district initiatives. In some Salem schools, this work is still being led by an administrator. By creating a teacher leader- or instructional coach-led common planning time model, Salem can foster a culture in which teachers are empowered to take on more responsibility in this important work. Teachers should be empowered to tailor meetings to meet the relevant, real-time needs of the classroom, which would in turn lead to teachers being better prepared to address the needs of their students. Creating a safe, teacher leader or coach-led environment during common planning time would foster greater professional collaboration and ultimately lead to greater student achievement and success.

To support teacher leader development in this regard, Salem should include teacher leaders in the professional development cycle already provided to instructional coaches and administrators by the district. By including the teacher leaders in the ongoing initiatives at the district level, the district would not only ensure cohesion with the central vision, but would also infuse a flexibility to meetings that can often feel

The Value of Professional Learning Communities

I love planning with my Professional Learning Community (PLC). I share ideas, discuss potential student pitfalls, and determine the best teacher moves to help students just enough to get them back on the path of success without taking away the triumph of accomplishment. When I have a particularly difficult student or class to manage, my PLC is there to listen and offer constructive criticism. When I have a great day or a breakthrough with a student, my PLC celebrates with me as if it were their own accomplishment. Who is a part of this outstanding community? One teacher lives in New York City, another in Los Angeles, still others are spread across the world. My PLC is online. I would love to have this level of collaboration with the teachers down the hall, but there isn't time at school. Instead, I spend my evenings and weekends talking to my global math department. Wouldn't it be great if teachers in all our schools had this same level of support as I have in my PLC?

-- Tina Cardone

stilted and out of touch with building or team-level needs. As meetings became more purposeful, teachers could begin to operate in the collaborative fashion of professional learning communities.

Creating and communicating a clear vision for common planning time initiatives at the beginning of the year and then involving teacher leaders in the process of disseminating this information would create a more responsive and more productive culture for common planning time.

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End Notes

1. Oxley, D., & Kassissieh, J. (2008). From comprehensive high schools to small learning communities: Accomplishments and challenges. *FORUM: For Promoting 3–19 Comprehensive Education*, 50(2), 199–206.
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3. Fullan, M. G., & Miles, M. B. (1992). Getting reform right: What works and what doesn't. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73, 745-752.
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