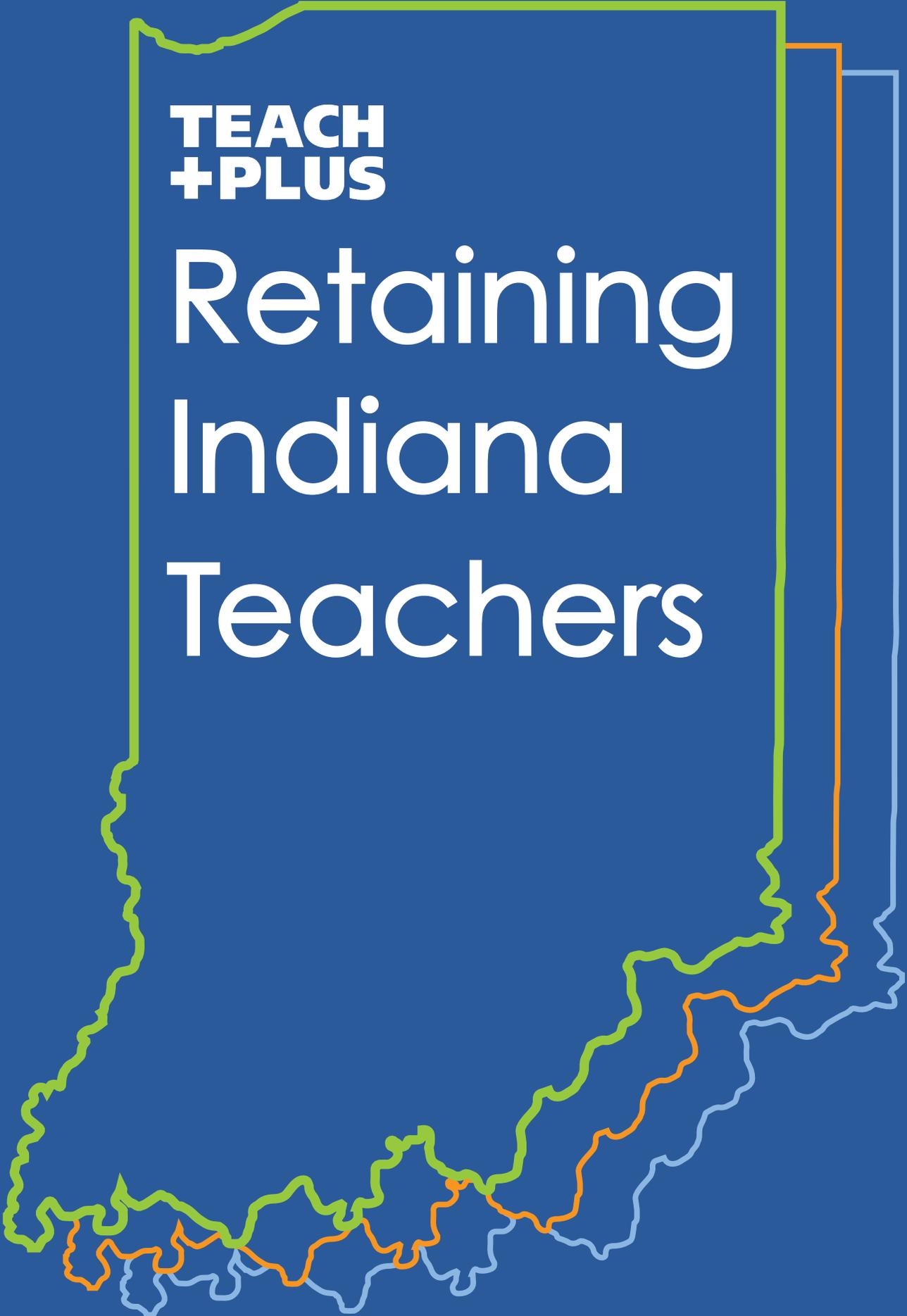


**TEACH
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Retaining Indiana Teachers



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INTRODUCTION

In 2021, 96.5% of Indiana's school districts reported teacher shortages, the highest number Indiana has seen in seven years. The top shortage areas in our state are special education, math, science, elementary education, foreign languages, and English. Indiana teachers are also retiring and leaving to start a new career. All of the reasons for teachers leaving have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

Indiana is not facing this teacher shortage alone; nationwide, the teaching workforce loses about 8% of its educators due to attrition annually, most before retirement age, making it the largest contributor to our growing demand and shrinking supply of teachers.² The Great Resignation has affected many businesses and organizations, and it's put our nations' students and teachers in a difficult spot.³ Teachers leave the profession because they lack common ground with their school leadership and autonomy in the classroom and because they do not have a supportive school culture. Teachers who lack preparation leave at rates two to three times as high as those who have had comprehensive preparation before beginning their careers.⁴

We are a group of Teach Plus Indiana Policy Fellows who teach across the state and work to advance equity-focused education policies. As classroom teachers, we are deeply invested in educators staying in the profession. To better understand best practices around retaining teachers, we conducted a review of existing literature on teacher support and development. In this brief, we present our findings and recommendations for how to better support, develop, and empower teachers in order to retain them in our classrooms.

HOW INDIANA HAS ADDRESSED TEACHER RETENTION

Recognizing compensated teacher leadership is an important strategy in retaining educators in the classroom. Teach Plus, alongside the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), Public Impact, and Stand for Children, has advocated for the establishment and funding of career ladders in Indiana for over a decade. In 2017, the Indiana legislature passed HB 1449, authorizing districts to create local pilot programs to support new teachers and administrators through mentorship and career pathways, which created opportunities for formal teacher leadership roles.⁵ According to the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA), programs like those supported by HEA 1449 benefit student learning by reducing attrition, improving instructional practice, and increasing job satisfaction.⁶

While this was a win for local districts interested in implementing career ladders, no state funding was allocated to the program. In 2019, after the release of the jointly published paper, *Addressing Indiana's Quiet Teaching Crisis: A Sensible Blueprint for Progress*, Teach Plus educators, Stand for Children parents, and ISTA teachers helped successfully advocate for the creation and funding of a statewide teacher career ladder pilot program via HEA 1008 which was allocated \$3.5 million.^{7,8} After the passing of this bill, 18 school districts received funding to implement one of four career ladder possibilities:

Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), Opportunity Culture, a nationally recognized program, or a locally developed program that fell within state guidelines. In addition, three school districts received planning grants. Districts had three years to spend the dollars; the disruption caused by COVID has presented challenges to implementing the career ladders, but districts have made progress and the Indiana Department of Education will report the status of the programs in 2023.

Alongside this effort, Indiana colleges like the Indiana University School of Education further tried to combat teacher shortages by recruiting education majors from high schools across the state, creating programs where students could earn a two-year associate degree prior to transferring to IU to spend two years completing a bachelor's degree in education. State-sponsored programs, like the accelerated Transition to Teaching program, have created multiple education pathways to teaching for young professionals with bachelor's degrees, enabling them to begin teaching while still taking part in the program.⁹

METHODOLOGY

To better understand teacher retention strategies nationally, we conducted a review of existing literature and state reports. Our research was guided by three main questions:

1. What current opportunities exist to develop teachers as professionals?
2. What criteria and best practices are elevated when establishing effective teacher leadership positions?
3. What structures and systems for teacher leadership best support teacher development and the use of effective instruction techniques for new and veteran teachers?

FINDINGS

- 1. Mentorship provides effective and experienced teachers with an opportunity to impact the instructional practices of their colleagues and the success of all students in their school, and promotes their personal growth and development in the profession.**

The impact of strong mentorship is critical to teacher development. Effective mentors can help early-career teachers grow into highly effective educators, impacting the teacher retention rate in Indiana. When implemented effectively, mentorship provides teacher leaders with opportunities for growth along a career ladder framework. Mentoring is most effective when it is focused and targets skills new teachers can implement to drive student achievement and success.

A district in Canada implemented a mentoring program for new teachers who were able to have strong teacher prep, along with ongoing practice while being mentored. *"The protege not only reaches the competency level of the mentor but grows beyond the established baseline along with the mentor."*¹⁰ The program was successful because the scope of the mentorship was defined, and the mentors did not have to guess what their responsibilities were and instead were clear about their role and pay structure.

2. The success of mentorship programs is largely dependent on the quality of the mentor teachers and their access to professional development and support.

Successful mentorship programs help both the mentor and the mentee stay in the classroom by supporting the mentee in a challenging new work environment, while allowing the mentor to impart professional knowledge and gain leadership opportunities.¹¹ However, the success of mentorship programs is largely dependent on the quality of teachers chosen to be mentors. The National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) emphasizes “that the degree of impact mentors have on pre-service teacher learning, efficacy, and effectiveness is dependent upon mentors’ capacity to teach and coach effectively.”¹² Mentors in the NCTR network programs are expected to perform in the top 30% of their school or district and achieve a year’s worth of growth (or more) for each student.¹³

In one example, NIET partnered with the Michigan Department of Education to develop a Teacher Leader Program to address the teaching shortage in the state. The teacher leaders take part in a combination of teacher-leader training and clinical experience. Upon completing the program, teachers will be able to effectively mentor their peers and earn an advanced certification from the Michigan Department of Education.¹⁴ This is an added incentive for qualified teachers to become mentors.

3. Co-teaching between new teachers and veteran mentor teachers results in more prepared and better supported teachers across the board.

Co-teaching, defined as “two or more teachers planning, instructing, and evaluating together,” has become the new collaborative approach to the student teaching practicum.¹⁵ In order to maximize the potential of Indiana’s teaching mentors, mentors’ interactions with their mentees should be more involved than just creating lesson plans, analyzing and collecting data, and having brief conversations about strengths and areas for improvement. A more effective form of mentorship can occur through co-teaching, where the mentor and mentee plan and deliver a lesson together. The mentor is present during the lesson to offer immediate support followed by a debrief post lesson between the mentor and mentee.¹⁶ An example of the effectiveness of this model comes from the Public Education & Business Coalition’s (PEBC) Boettcher Teacher Residency, a post-baccalaureate teacher residency program serving urban and rural school districts in Colorado. In this program, resident teachers earn their initial teaching license through a year of working alongside their mentor teacher in the classroom, as the program sees the classroom as the best place for new teachers to build their teaching skills with master teachers as their mentors.^{17,18} This teacher residency program has a five-year retention rate of 95% and has prepared more than 1,000 educators across the state of Colorado, making PEBC Colorado’s largest and most effective teacher residency model.¹⁹

While mentees benefit from receiving feedback from an experienced mentor, mentors benefit from learning the current innovations in teaching. Teaching in isolation does not allow either educator to experience such benefits. Diana Sweeney Consulting, a student-centered instructional coaching model, is known for putting the needs of students’ front and center. The company’s model refers to the mentor as a coach and focuses on setting goals for student learning rather than on fixing teachers, which they have found can directly impact instructional practice and student achievement.²⁰ Diana Sweeney defines co-teaching as “a dynamic process in which the teacher and coach work together to move student learning forward.” In her model, it is difficult for an outsider

to tell who is the teacher and who is the coach because both are equally engaged in delivering the lesson. Sweeney strongly advocates for coaches and teachers to co-plan and co-teach using the following strategies: Noticing and Naming, Micro Modeling, Thinking Aloud, and Teaching in Tandem, all of which provide coachable moments for new teachers that result in high-quality teaching and learning.²¹

In a review of 24 resources prepared by Michelle Kagan Gaines for OSPI Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) including scholarly articles, state standards, consulting companies and organizations, Gaines identified the 10 most frequently mentioned practices in mentoring standards. Best practice number six, co-teach and/or model teaching, and seven, co-plan and/or role play the lesson prior to teaching highlight the importance of the mentor and the mentee working as a collaborative unit.²² Co-teaching allows the mentee to observe, practice, and receive feedback on their teaching. In a four-year study of 35,000 elementary students, students who were in co-taught mentorship classrooms outperformed their peers in solo-taught classrooms in reading and math. In the same study, mentors of teaching candidates said their confidence in their capacities increased and they grew from the opportunity to learn new science and technology. Mentees reported more support, improvement in their classroom management skills, and a better ability to meet diverse learning needs. These teaching candidates said their mentorship and the opportunity to co-teach with them was a crucial part to their development as a teacher, some even expressed “the mentorship relationship the most critical in their preparation.”²³

4. Increased opportunities for career growth help ensure qualified teachers not only want to stay in the profession but are pushed to develop to their highest potential.

A significant number of educators want to stay and lead from their classrooms. According to NIET, the incorporation of various teacher evaluation systems, including TAP, across many districts in the country have resulted in an increase in teacher instruction and student achievement. The TAP system implements four interrelated key elements that drive both teacher satisfaction and student success. These elements are: Multiple Career Paths, Ongoing Job-Embedded Professional Growth, Accountability That is Instructionally Focused, and Performance-Based Compensation.²⁴ Each element is a major component to help with retaining highly effective teachers as they lean into their interests, abilities, and accomplishments to advance professionally without leaving the classroom. This opens up the opportunity for advancement into roles as a career, mentor, or master teacher.

As referenced earlier in this report, in 2019, via HEA 1008 the state of Indiana awarded \$1.25 million of the total \$3.5 million in Career Ladder Grants to NIET Partners in three community schools in the state. The Career Ladder grant program was approved through Indiana House Enrolled Act No. 1008 to give high-performing teachers opportunities to advance their careers and ensure that more students have exposure to highly effective teachers. These funds would continue to support the key elements as outlined in the TAP system for Teacher and Student Advancement. The grants released in the three cities—\$468,250 for Whitko, \$462,750 for Muncie, and \$319,640 for MSD of Martinsville—are the largest grants that were awarded in the state and these communities have been leveraging the dollars over the last three years. With the grant, the school leadership team, composed of school administrators, master, and mentor teachers, has collectively driven instruction, and determined who would lead professional development for colleagues and provide support or regular coaching to teachers.²⁵

Additional effective models that support career growth in education are The Multi Classroom Leadership Design through Public Impact and the Teacher Keys Evaluation System used in Georgia. The Multi Classroom Leadership Design used in Public Impact's Opportunity Culture allows for teachers with a record of high-growth student learning and leadership competencies to have the opportunity to impact their entire school while serving from the classroom.²⁶ This teacher leader collaboratively leads a small group of two to eight teachers. The Teacher Keys Evaluation System used in Georgia focuses on identifying, recognizing, developing, and using expert teachers as mentors, coaches, and teacher leaders necessary for a stronger and more capable teaching profession.²⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mentorship

- 1. District leaders should provide both non-monetary and monetary incentives to schools who create and implement teacher mentorship programs with integrity.**

Priorities within schools are highly influenced by the decisions made at the district level. Superintendents looking for strategies to better retain educators while also being strategic about investment of limited resources, should consider creating strategic incentives (both monetary and non-monetary) for schools who commit to implementing teacher mentorship programs with fidelity. Leveraging ESSER funding or Title II dollars, schools could use the funds distributed by the district to provide stipends for teacher leaders or for overall school support.

In addition to monetary incentives, schools implementing teacher mentorship programs in alignment with researched best practices could also receive non-monetary benefits like extra support staff to cover classrooms while mentor teachers are coaching or observing. Extended calendars or flexible scheduling could also be used as incentives to encourage schools to adopt programs in alignment with the district retention priorities. Getting creative around these incentives will ensure districts can build school buy-in for implementing effective teacher mentorship.

- 2. School leaders should ensure teacher leadership roles are clearly defined, with explicit criteria for the selection of teacher leaders and ongoing opportunities for their professional development.**

Additional pay or release time from classrooms could be motivating incentives for qualified teachers to become teacher leaders in their school. A selection process is needed to find teachers who are successful at both educating students and supporting colleagues. An eligibility pool for candidates should align with their achievement and effectiveness, according to a Teacher Effectiveness Rubric, such as the Danielson Performance Rubric. Mentor teachers should also receive regular and ongoing professional development to help support their personal growth and increase their impact on their mentees.²⁸ By implementing a career ladder framework that defines the opportunity for promotion and growth within the field, districts can effectively identify, develop, and utilize their best teachers to make a difference and improve student learning.

Opportunities for Co-Teaching and Coaching

3. Educator preparation programs and districts should partner to establish stronger student teaching supports that integrate co-teaching models as a best practice, with funded teacher mentor roles to help retain current teachers.

Co-teaching not only positively impacts incoming new teachers, but also acts as a strategy to retain our most effective teachers. In our analysis of multiple co-teaching models, we learned that implementing co-teaching into mentor-mentee pairs is most effective when the following needs are met by school administration:

- + Working alongside a mentor teacher for at least one year before earning a teaching license will help build skill sets and increase productivity of new teachers while providing mentors with the opportunity to learn about their profession and practice their leadership skills.²⁹
- + Prep periods are scheduled throughout the week for mentors and mentees to plan and analyze data for co-taught lessons.³⁰
- + Mentor and mentee partnerships should own the responsibility of student goals, which will in return benefit the further development of veteran teachers and teaching candidates.³¹

Career Ladders

4. School leaders should leverage the federal stimulus funds to invest in the initial infrastructure of career ladders and establish incentives for schools in their implementation.

The dollars invested in K-12 as a result of the federal stimulus packages are time-limited and do not lend themselves to ongoing payout. Thus, it becomes imperative to leverage these funds more effectively to improve our current infrastructure and build out systems and capacities both for our students and educators.

Districts can utilize career pathways and differentiated compensation models to build their workforce in new ways that benefit both teachers and students. Schools must consider the various models and what they need to do to implement them. Creating supportive, professional pathways is critical to ensuring that teachers can share their expertise and continuously develop it throughout their careers in order to help every child reach their goals. If we want to improve the quality of teaching, we must also invest in developing the capacity of teachers.³²

Effectively using expert teachers to improve the professional practices of colleagues allows for teachers to continue to grow in the profession. Most importantly, a career ladder program builds the internal capacity of the school district to positively affect student achievement by using its most underutilized resource: its people.³³

Programs in various states across the country have been creating programs that will sustain beyond the federal funding received since the pandemic. The New Haven Federation of Teachers program and the Baltimore Teachers Union applied the concept of choice and opportunity by providing teachers with what the district describe as “self-

paced learning," where teachers take control of their professional career through the accrual of "achievement."³⁴ Through professional development and annual evaluations, districts can clearly articulate their priorities and incentivize their teachers to move toward those goals. Teachers in hard-to-serve schools receive additional compensation. This differentiated pay system is aimed at retaining teachers and increasing the professionalism of the job that educators do every day to serve students.

CONCLUSION

To do what is best for our students, we must do what is best for our teachers. With 8.5% of Indiana teachers exiting the profession for a reason other than retirement, something needs to be done to improve the satisfaction of Hoosier teachers in their jobs, lest more money will be wasted from district budgets and student achievement will be compromised.³⁵ Instead of policymakers trying to find new ways to recruit teachers to the profession to address teacher shortages, they should focus their efforts on increasing levels of retention. Implementing effective mentorship programs in Indiana schools is one way policymakers could raise the standards and increase incentives for Hoosier teachers. A strong mentorship program in Indiana schools should include professional development opportunities for both mentees and mentors, opportunities for mentors and mentees to co-teach, and career pathways that elevate the expertise of mentor teachers. Receiving mentorship from expert teachers during the first year of teaching, along with a reduced teaching load and shared planning time, could ensure that Indiana teachers are entering the workforce prepared and competent and that they remain in the profession to serve students.

ABOUT TEACH PLUS

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success. Since 2009, Teach Plus has developed thousands of teacher leaders across the country to exercise their leadership in shaping education policy and improving teaching and learning, to create an education system driven by access and excellence for all. teachplus.org



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