



**Data-Informed
K-12 Human
Capital Strategies**

CONTENT GUIDE:

Educator Placement

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Educator placement and equitable distribution comprises one aspect of the educator human capital system portrayed here. Local education agency (LEA) and school leaders can use this guide to learn more about:

- The desired outcomes and challenges of equitable distribution and placement of educators;
- Effective practices that LEAs can use in planning and implementing this work;
- Examples from other LEAs that have implemented strategies to address this challenge;
- How to address likely challenges, constraints or other considerations when designing and implementing strategies for equitable distribution of educators; and
- Resources to support this work in your LEA.

Context

Educator placement refers to the assignment of educators to schools, classes and students. “Equitable access” exists when students who are low income and/or students of color are assigned to quality teachers at the same or greater rate compared to other students. **Across the nation and in Pennsylvania, students from families of lower income and students of color have less access to effective and experienced teachers than do their peers.**¹ To close achievement gaps, students and schools that have a higher percentage of lower income students and students of color need to have an **equal or greater proportion of teachers and leaders** that are effective (or highly effective).

As teachers are the most important in-school factor for student learning, this gap in access to effective teachers for the students who need them most is particularly troubling. Furthermore, achievement gaps compound over time when students are assigned less-effective teachers year after year.² **The same data trends also hold true for principals; those students and schools most in need of great principals are also least likely to have them.**³

These challenges exist not only across schools, but also within schools, leading to higher teacher turnover and more exacerbated student achievement gaps. **Novice teachers are often assigned students with more challenges**—such as those who are underperforming, from low income families, who are students of color, who have disciplinary issues, etc.,—even though we know that on average novice teachers are not near their peak effectiveness. Conversely, **higher achieving students and courses tend to be assigned to more effective and experienced teachers,** and more effective teachers are more frequently assigned to “high stakes” tested grades.⁴

¹ Goldhaber, Theobald, & Lavery, 2015; Pennsylvania Department of Education Student Enrollment report and Professional Staff reports, 2019.

² Sanders, W. L., & Rivers, J. C. (1996). Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement (Research Progress Report). Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.

³ Bierly & Shy, 2013; School Leaders Network, 2013.

⁴ Kalogrides, et al. 2013; Dieterle, et al., 2015; Grissom, et al., 2017

The same holds true in school leadership. Nationally, high need schools are more likely to have a principal in their first year; less likely to have a principal with more than five years of experience; and 50 percent less likely to be led by the same principal over a six-year period. These schools also have high turnover with 28 percent of high need schools' principals leaving each year, and the schools are more likely to see a drop in student performance with principal turnover. Finally, it can take a school leader up to five years to build trust and school culture to improve performance.⁵

Because we also know that diversity matters for students of color when staffing teachers and leaders to classrooms and schools, a focus on recruiting more diverse teachers is a critical component. Teachers of color are correlated with improved student outcomes, increased achievement, decreased suspensions, and increased referrals to gifted programs for students of color.⁶ For additional research, see the [Research and Resources on Equity in HC](#).

HR's Role

As the lead in how teachers and leaders are recruited, deployed and retained, HR teams have a unique opportunity to support high need schools to address issues of educator equity and to level the playing field. However, HR teams often treat all schools the same, which forces high need schools to struggle to compete for talent.

To ensure that students and schools who need effective teachers the most are able to hire them, the HR team plays a lead role in:

- A. Understanding and defining what educator equity means** in the local context
- B. Analyzing data** on teacher and leader equity BOTH across schools and within schools and sharing this data with key stakeholders (including teacher data from the multiple measures used in PA's educator effectiveness system)
- C. Crafting and/or changing HR policies and practices** to make high need schools competitive for talent
- D. Providing additional or different supports and services to principals** in high need schools as human capital leaders

Bottom line: a strategic HR team in an LEA plays the lead role in making high need schools competitive for talent so teachers and leaders are distributed equitably.

⁵ Bierly & Shy, 2013; Doyle & Locke, 2014; School Leaders Network, 2014

⁶ [Egalite, Kisida, Winters, 2015](#); [Villegas & Irvine, 2010](#)

Finally, it bears noting that while Educator Placement and Equitable Distribution may seem contained to how teachers are assigned, **all aspects of Human Capital** play a role in inequitable distribution of teachers and as such, all of an LEA's HR functions should be leveraged to address it. Many of HR's current policies and practices may hinder an LEA's ability to place effective teachers with the students who need them most. For example, **forced placement** involuntarily assigns the newest and often least effective teachers who are surplussed from other schools to the highest need schools and classrooms. **Late hiring** disadvantages high need schools, which already have a shortage of qualified applicants, with candidates of lower quality and who are less likely to be retained. **Seniority-based layoffs** preference longevity over performance, potentially removing an effective teacher from a school or classroom where they are needed most.

Key Metrics

Key data to track by individual school and to analyze by high vs. low need schools to ensure equitable distribution include:

1. Do we have enough staff? High quality staff? Where we need them?

- a. New teacher/leader performance by educator preparation program
- b. Applicants per vacancy by subject and school
- c. Timing of vacancies filled
- d. Diversity of candidate pool and of new hires
- e. Principal satisfaction with candidate pool

2. Have we deliberately deployed effective or highly effective staff (according to the multiple measures used in PA's educator effectiveness system) within and across schools to our highest need students and classrooms?

- a. All teacher performance by high vs. low need schools and classrooms (i.e., advanced vs. remedial courses; general education vs. special education classrooms)
- b. Teacher transfers in/out by high vs. low need schools
- c. New teachers by high vs. low need schools and classrooms

3. Are we keeping staff strategically, especially where they are needed most?

- a. Teacher retention by performance levels
- b. Teacher terminations
- c. Teacher absenteeism

4. Are principals satisfied with how we support the needs of their schools?

- a. Principal responses to surveys or in discussions

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *Which data do you currently track and what does it show?*
- *Where are your strengths?*
- *Where are your gaps?*

Effective LEA Policies and Practices

First, define what equity and high need schools mean in your LEA.

Clearly define high need schools in your LEA. It is best to have a common, LEA-wide understanding of which schools are the “higher need” schools. Oftentimes, LEAs have not identified which schools are the highest need to prioritize. We recommend reviewing and prioritizing those schools where students are underperforming and analyzing:

• **School and student data:**

- Higher proportions of students from low income families
- Greater numbers of students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities
- Lower student attendance
- Lower graduation rates
- Lower college and career readiness rates

• **Human capital data:**

- Higher staff turnover and mobility
- Unfilled vacancies
- Lower numbers of candidates to fill vacancies
- Increased teacher absenteeism
- Increased rates of novice teachers, novice school leaders
- Lower teacher effectiveness (as determined by the multiple measures in PA’s teacher effectiveness system), and
- Lower substitute teacher fill rates

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *Who might need to be included as you seek to define high-need schools?*
- *How does this integrate with your broader work around equity?*

Next, analyze and share key data to understand the equitable placement challenges in your district. This is not a challenge that can be solved by one office alone.

Review data by schools, and by high versus low need schools. Are the students and schools that need great teachers equally or even more likely to have them?



Seattle Public Schools uses a [Racial Equity Analysis Tool](#), which others can replicate, to lay out a clear process for collecting, reviewing and sharing data specifically related to racial equity disparities. This tool has helped clarify where Seattle will focus its efforts.

Understand that you cannot address this alone. Begin the discussion about equitable distribution of staff or equity in human capital with stakeholders beyond your HR team.

RESOURCE: Consider the [Guiding Questions for Equitable Distribution Conversations](#). These conversations can be challenging so having a protocol with clear questions can support your efforts. It's important for top leaders to support this goal, as it may require shifting how resources and time are used.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *What does your data show?*
- *Who needs to be involved in these discussions?*

Last, address any issues holistically given your context. This includes reviewing HR's own policies and services.

Address HR's own policies and practices that might be contributing to the inequitable distribution of educators. For example, review and revise transfer and forced placement policies, late hiring timelines, the predominant hiring and placement of new teachers in highest need schools, and seniority-based layoffs for their impact on teacher assignments and mobility within your district. While some practices and policies may require collective bargaining, others like moving hiring timelines earlier do not. Consider when and how you can make changes and use opportunities like contract negotiations to address equity in human capital issues.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *Which of our policies or practices might be unnecessarily exacerbating inequities?*
- *With whom will we need to work to address these issues?*

Balance equity in human capital with principal/school leader autonomy. Mutual consent hiring and assignments between a teacher and principal, rather than placing teachers in schools without direct principal consent, offers advantages. This approach engenders trust, engagement, and retention for the teacher, and gives principals authority and responsibility to make decisions based on the unique needs of their school and students.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *How can we engage principals in solving this challenge?*
- *How will we ensure we are doing this work WITH principal, rather than TO principals?*

Provide a customized suite of services to high need schools based on your unique context and challenges. Consider how you might [differentiate human capital services to schools](#).

To ensure all students have access to highly effective teachers and leaders, especially students in our highest need schools, HR teams can give a mix of competitive advantages—or “edges”—to high need schools so they can better compete for talent. These advantages go beyond the base-level of high quality services HR should be providing to all schools and fall into the categories described below. Strategies utilized should match the challenges your district experiences with getting staff to your highest need schools and classrooms:

ADDED/MORE SUPPORTS	DIFFERENT POLICIES & PRACTICES	REDUCED BARRIERS TO ENTRY/SWITCHING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated pipelines • Lower staffing ratios • Added support to document low performers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered from forced placement • Different rate of pay for teachers and subs • Longer induction period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation grace period • Principal’s able to bring cohort of effective teachers to new school


In each area of HR’s key work, they can provide these “edges.”

- To assess the current edges your organization offers, take the [Edges in HC Assessment](#).
- For various strategies and ways to implement the edges, see [The Edges in HC Strategies Tool](#).

Some examples include:

- Give the highest need schools an early look and pick of candidates.
- Track and work to limit the hiring of novice teachers and leaders in the highest need schools.
- Where possible, hold harmless high need schools from involuntary transfers/placements.
- Where needed, instead of making teacher assignment decisions behind closed doors, hold meetings with all principals (elementary together; middle and high together) whenever forced teacher placements are necessary, and make teacher placement decisions in collaboration with all principals. Union representatives can be invited for transparency.

- Add additional HR support to school leaders who are supervising low performing teachers; help the principals sequence the documentation, stay on track for further observations, log the assistance provided to low performers, arrange for legal consultation as needed, etc.

 North Carolina's Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools developed the **Strategic Staffing Initiative** to move teams of administrators and teachers to specific schools in need of improvement. This initiative helped place teachers into the highest need schools.

For more ideas about how to work with principals, without infringing upon principals' autonomy, see **Supporting Equity in HC at the School Level**.



QUICK HITS

There is no silver bullet to address challenges related to equitable distribution. Multiple factors must be addressed. For short-term, high-leverage approaches, LEAs can:

- **Analyze your key data** to understand recruitment and retention trends, as well as to understand where you've found your most effective teachers for high need schools.
- **Speak with or survey** the teachers and leaders in your system to understand why they teach and lead in higher need schools.
- **Focus HR and staffing support** first and foremost on highest need schools.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *Which schools and subjects are your highest need?*
- *What criteria are you using to differentiate HR's limited resources?*
- *What base level of human capital services do you want to provide to every school?*
- *What human capital services can you provide to your highest need schools?*

Considerations and Resources for Planning & Implementation

Leaders can explore the following resources for additional information, guidance and tools.

How to Start

It is essential as an LEA to understand how you may want to focus your resources on supporting equitable distribution and educator placement. LEAs should use data to drive their decisions, beginning by tracking the key metrics outlined on pages 5-6. Seek feedback from the staff in your highest need schools to understand why they stay or leave, using an [Educator Stay Survey](#) and [Exit Survey](#) as starting points. Additionally, [Engaging Teacher and Principal Voice](#) in any strategies or initiatives created is essential for long-term sustainability and success. There are a variety of ways to engage teacher and leader voices based on how much buy-in and time you will need.

Key Partners

Ensuring all students have effective teachers and leaders, especially in high need schools, is a collaborative effort. Leadership teams should work with key stakeholders, including principals, principal supervisors, and unions/professional associations. For ways to engage partners, see [Working with Partners Towards Equity in HC – Top Tips](#).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *With which partners do you have a particularly strong relationship?*
- *Where do you want to improve your relationship?*
- *Who else might be a partner to you?*

Barriers to Proactively Address

Ensuring all students have access to an effective teacher and leader is an important goal to close student achievement and opportunity gaps. Inevitably, a prioritized focus on some schools may practically and realistically mean less time and resources for others. It is essential to communicate the “why” behind this work from the superintendent and school board level, as well as ensure a strong basic level of human capital support for all schools.

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Pennsylvania's System for LEA/School Improvement
Lancaster-Lebanon IU13
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