

“Quick Wins” for Educator Staffing



The following table lists common educator recruitment and hiring challenges alongside effective practices and suggested resources. Depending on the local context, some practices may need to involve LEA-level staff or approval. Note that this list focuses on relatively “low-lift” strategies.

<i>If it’s challenging to...</i>	<i>... then consider the following:</i>
<p>1: ... expand and improve online recruitment using little or no budget</p>	<p>Wherever you post job openings, clearly provide links to further information about your school, LEA and community (see Section 2 for more details), and vice-versa: make it easy for users to find your employment site and access job openings/descriptions. For example, if you use online job search platforms, include links in online job posts to more information, videos, social media, etc. from your school or LEA (see further suggestions in the Remote Recruiting & Hiring Toolkit about Educator Job Descriptions for Online Posts (PDF) here).</p> <p>Use a strategic and uniform approach to social media. Consider your likely job candidates and what information would most engage them. More details, including advice for paid social media posts, is available in our Social Media for Educator Recruitment Toolkit (PDF) here. Encourage current staff to share recruitment posts and emails, as detailed in pages 3-4 of our Staff Involvement in Virtual Recruiting Toolkit (PDF) here.</p> <p>Make it easy for candidates to express interest and join listservs for further information. Link from your recruitment website and materials to a short online form—such as a Google form—that collects candidates’ names, email addresses, and phone numbers.</p>
<p>2: ... recruit educators who aren’t already familiar with your school or community</p>	<p>Set your school/LEA apart. Try to “show, not tell.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which current staff members could best describe the advantages of working in your school? In your recruiting website and materials, post brief written and/or video testimonials (like this example from Pittsburgh Public Schools). You can do the same with written or recorded messages from students or families about what makes the school special. • What has your school/LEA done to promote safety and support educators during the pandemic? Provide information about how you helped staff adapt (this could be included in staff testimonials). • What notable improvements, initiatives or activities are happening at your school? For example, you could link to information about staff leadership opportunities (like this example from Denver Public Schools), student work related to SEL initiatives, or a student newspaper. • Show off the benefits of your local community – whether you’re in a larger urban LEA (like this example from School District of Lancaster) or a more rural area (like these examples from Shikellamy School District). For more ideas on how to “market” the benefits of rural communities, see this “Four Types of Rural Districts” tool.

<i>If it's challenging to...</i>	<i>... then consider the following:</i>
<p>3:</p> <p>... recruit broadly when some in-person opportunities (e.g., campus visits; job fairs) are canceled or made virtual</p>	<p>Whether held independently or as part of a virtual job fair, a virtual information session can reach a wider range of candidates while also allowing more members of your school community to join in recruiting new staff. Various staff—including leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals and substitutes—as well as students and families can participate synchronously or via recording. Any candidates for a certain position, such as special educator, could join a breakout room to learn more from a current employee with that role. For more guidance on planning an effective virtual session, see this Virtual Information Sessions Toolkit (PDF) here.</p> <p>Connecting early and often with students in educator preparation programs can expand your applicant pool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether in-person or virtually, schools and LEAs can connect with ed prep classes or programs by offering to hold Q&A sessions about working in a rural/urban/high poverty school; practice interviews; practice demonstration lessons; or panels with early-career educators who are alumni of the same program. • You may already use online job search platforms, either for free or with a paid account (see details in the Online Job Search Platforms Toolkit (PDF) here). The platform Handshake can be particularly useful for connecting with higher education students and recent graduates (see more details on page 2 of the Toolkit (PDF) here).
<p>4:</p> <p>... keep applicants interested in your school from the time they apply through the time they are hired</p>	<p>The top strategy to help keep candidates “warm”—or enthusiastic about working in your school—is usually to make the whole selection and hiring process shorter, with frequent updates for applicants. If it's hard to speed up the process in your LEA, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure that your employment website and recruitment/application materials offer clear, detailed and easily accessible information about the application and hiring process for all positions (like this example from a New York charter network). • Develop or refine a school- or LEA-level online job applicant tracking system (see details in the related Toolkit (PDF) here), using either a commercial product or a “homemade” dashboard (like this example from Seattle). As candidates move through the steps of the hiring process, send timely notifications about their status, what to expect next, and whom to contact with any questions. • Create “talent ambassador” roles for teachers and/or other positions to support recruitment. Depending on the responsibilities involved, these roles may be compensated. A “talent ambassador” role can range from being available to answer candidates’ occasional emailed questions about working in the school to actively participating in job fairs and recruitment strategy decisions. To help keep candidates “warm”, you can assign talent ambassadors to proactively contact applicants with a message about what it’s like to work for the school and an offer to answer any questions. Ambassadors could contact applicants with the same role, for example. For further ideas, see pages 1-2 of the Staff Involvement in Virtual Recruiting Toolkit (PDF) here.

<p><i>If it's challenging to...</i></p>	<p><i>... then consider the following:</i></p>
<p>5: ... predict how many job openings you'll have next school year (or at a later point this school year)</p>	<p>Depending on the size of the school and the capacity of school leaders, approaches for learning about staff members' future plans can be uniform or individualized. Some schools/LEAs use a digital survey. In others, leaders have check-ins with each staff member to express the reasons the employee's work is valued in the school, ask how the school can support the employee in the future, and learn about plans for the next school year. Conversations can occur multiple times during the school year. For details on making retention conversations effective, see this Retention Conversations with Educators Toolkit (PDF).</p> <p>During retention conversations, staff may not yet have decided on their plans for the next year, or may not want to share their plans yet. Consider whether your policies can change to offer encouragement/incentives for early reporting of resignations. For example, when educators report their resignation in the spring, can they retain their insurance benefits through the summer? See further strategies to boost earlier resignations here – and note that the advice about examining recent resignation timing is not as applicable during pandemic years.</p> <p>If not already in use, consider offering early contracts in your school/LEA, especially to educators in high-demand roles.</p>
<p>6: ... recruit and train a sufficient pool of substitutes</p>	<p>Increasing substitute pay often seems like the first step to recruiting more substitutes. Doing so can help with recruitment and retention, though over time national trends suggest that only a substantial, competitive pay increase helps fill recruitment needs. When schools and LEAs have already tried this approach, or can't afford a further pay increase, they might try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or expand full-time substitute positions within a school or LEA (see details in the presentation by Substantial Classrooms (PDF) here). This approach—highly recommended by national experts—helps attract substitutes with the guarantee of daily work, and results in substitutes who are more familiar with your school's culture, expectations and students. When they are not covering a class, these full-time substitutes can provide tutoring or other school support as needed. • Simplify and clarify the substitute application process. Some schools' substitute applications include questions or processes that are only relevant to full-time classroom teachers. Ensure that information about openings and the application process are easily available on the school website (including when accessed on a phone), as well as in regular communications shared with the school community (see this example from Palm Beach County). • Expand your recruitment outreach. Be sure to include school families; community organizations that you work with; retired educators; educator preparation students (see details in the Empowering College Student Substitute Teachers (PDF) here); and career-changers entering education. For more detailed recruitment suggestions, see the Strategy Brief for Building Strong Substitute Programs (PDF) here. • Advertise opportunities for career development, such as participating in professional learning or being “priority” applicants for other part-time work in the school year or summer. In the long run, consider a program to support substitutes who are working toward teacher certification.

If it's challenging to...	... then consider the following:
<p>7:</p> <p>... recruit paraprofessionals</p>	<p>Because paraprofessionals' tasks can vary, be sure your recruitment materials are clear and detailed about the specific role/s available, as well as the required qualifications.</p> <p>Recruit broadly from the community, including school families; community organizations; recent alumni of your school/LEA; higher education students; retirees who may work part-time; and existing LEA staff who may want to move into the classroom, such as clerical staff or after-school staff. Paraprofessionals with roots in the local community are likely to stay longer in your school. Ensure that information about openings and the application process are easily available on the school website (including when accessed on a phone), as well as in regular communications shared with the school community. For more recruitment suggestions, see the Strategy Brief on Recruiting & Retaining Paraprofessionals (PDF) here.</p> <p>Expand and advertise opportunities for professional learning and career development, such as taking on increased responsibilities or training new paraprofessional staff (see this example from Osceola County). For more ideas, explore the Strategy Brief on Induction and Ongoing Professional Learning for Paraprofessionals (PDF) here. As a longer-term strategy, consider a program to support paraprofessionals who are working toward teacher certification, especially those with some college credit or an undergraduate degree.</p>
<p>8:</p> <p>... recruit staff for summer programs</p>	<p>For teaching roles, if it's difficult to attract effective core content teachers, allow some of them to work part-time or for a shorter portion of the summer – or even virtually while other staff are in-person with the students. Also seek retired educators and educator preparation program instructors (who may still be certified teachers). To provide teaching support in classrooms, recruit from teachers in other subjects, and/or educator preparation students.</p> <p>For enrichment or support staff, recruit from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school-year support staff such as paraprofessionals or substitutes • school families • higher education students, such as those who work in their campus tutoring center • recent graduates of your school/LEA • retirees • community organizations • high school students <p>To broaden interest in summer positions, have all educators and support staff respond to an online form indicating whether they are interested in various summer roles – and do this months before summer begins. Promote what makes the summer program special, such as enrichment activities, field trips, smaller class sizes, more flexibility in the classroom, etc. For further suggestions on recruitment, see the Strategy Brief for Recruiting Staff for Summer Academic Programs (PDF) here, and this slide deck on Staffing for Extended Learning Opportunities (PDF).</p>