An Opportunity to Invest in the Educator Workforce

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Kelly A. Acosta, CEEDAR Center, University of Florida

Lynn R. Holdheide, CEEDAR Center & Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center), American Institutes of Research

State and local education agencies have been provided $176.3 billion of funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II and ESSER III), which is a one-time funding opportunity to strengthen and support the educator workforce so that educator shortages do not continue to plague our nation's schools. In a recent letter to schools and districts Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona recommended using American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) funds to implement short and long-term strategies to address educator shortages. This brief is intended to help state education agencies and local education agencies strategically leverage the federal recovery funds to attract, prepare, and retain educators.

Tackling Persistent and Current Educator Workforce Needs

> A recent survey found that one in four teachers planned on leaving their job at the end of the 2020–21 school year (Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Shortages in the educator workforce have been a persistent problem for decades, particularly in certain teacher fields (e.g., special education, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), English as a second language); however, the pandemic has exacerbated and is expected to further exacerbate educator shortages (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Likewise, the retention of teachers has been a great challenge prior to and even more so during the pandemic. Reasons educators cited for leaving were lack of administrative support concerning challenging working conditions, stress, depression, and burnout. Additionally, more than 50% of Black teachers reported planning to leave the educator workforce (Steiner & Woo, 2021). These statistics are important because teacher attrition can have a significant impact on the academic and social-emotional success of students, particularly students with disabilities, students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, and students living in poverty (Henry & Redding, 2020; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Research suggests that small, but significant positive effects occur when Black students are assigned to teachers of their own race/ethnicity in reading and in math (Egalite et al., 2015).

Between 2009 and 2014, enrollment in teacher preparation programs declined by 35% (Sutcher et al., 2016; Partelow, 2019). In response to teacher shortages, particularly during the pandemic, state agencies have relaxed requirements for entry into the teaching profession (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], n.d.). Although these relaxed requirements may help to recruit more people into the educator workforce, many of whom have been fast-tracked through programs, these educators will require additional supports to increase both their effectiveness and retention in the profession. While these increases to the workforce may alleviate shortages, education leaders would do well to be mindful that quality is not

compromised. Now more than ever there is a need to identify the root causes for teacher shortages so that evidence-based solutions can be targeted to unique local and regional needs.

Opportunity to Support Our Nation's Educators

State education agencies and school administrators have wide latitude in how to use federal funds to support their students and educators. They can use funding to create a comprehensive approach that combines short- and long-term educator talent management strategies at all points of the educator career continuum, from attracting to preparing to retaining teachers.

Attract

The funds allow state education agencies and school administrators to use several pathways to attract top talent into the workforce.

- ***Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs.*** Through district and educator preparation program partnerships, GYO programs are specifically designed to attract local community members, paraprofessionals, and/or middle and high school students into the teaching profession. These programs have often been used with some success to recruit minorities into the field (Gist et al., 2019). Missouri and Tennessee have included GYO programs in their state ESSER plans. The following are some examples of existing GYO programs:
  - The University of Louisiana Monroe's Louisiana Pre-Educator Pathway cultivates highly skilled educators by providing young people with dual enrollment credit, beginning in high school, and providing blended coursework focused on building understanding of diverse learners, extending through college and into the profession.
  - The New Mexico Higher Education Department's Grow Your Own Teachers Act provides scholarships for educational assistants) in public schools to pursue teaching certification through an educator preparation program.
  - Delta State University in Mississippi in partnership with Hinds Community College offers a 2 plus 2 program for non-traditional students to complete their Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education. The program offers virtual learning options with courses provided after school hours. Students in this program complete the freshman and sophomore years of coursework through either Holmes or Hinds Community Colleges and the junior or senior years of coursework through Delta State University.
- ***Alternative Routes to Certification*.** From the development of partnerships between local community colleges and educator preparation programs to the creation of residency programs, states and school districts can invest in several different pathways to attract and prepare individuals into the educator workforce. Maine and West Virginia have included efforts to increase alternative pathways into the profession within their ESSER plans. The following are some examples of existing partnerships to attract and prepare educators for the profession:

Flexible Funding

Language in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act provides state agencies and local school districts authority to use funds for "any activity authorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Office of the Career and Adult Technical Education, and the Federal Homelessness Assistance Program."

- The University of Delaware Master's Plus Certification Program supports candidates to earn a teaching degree and certification while they are concurrently employed in public schools as full-time paraeducators.
- The Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board's Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Grant supports efforts to diversify the educator workforce by expanding alternative educator preparation programs.

Highlighted Resource: Grow Your Own: A Systemic Approach to Securing an Effective Educator Talent Pool

Prepare

State education agencies and school administrators can use funds to strengthen the way in which educators are prepared to support all students learning, especially students with diverse learning needs and students in need of additional social-emotional support due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ***Educator Preparation Program and District Partnerships.*** In many cases educator preparation programs and districts have leveraged partnerships to ensure teacher candidates receive high-quality field experiences to hone their practices (e.g., lengthening clinical experiences, residency programs). Pennsylvania and Kansas have included efforts to strengthen the preparation of teacher candidates in their ESSER plans. The following are some additional examples:
  - The Louisiana Department of Education's Believe and Prepare initiative supports efforts to increase teacher readiness by providing yearlong residency programs for all candidates.
  - The National Center for Teacher Residencies model blends a rigorous full-year classroom apprenticeship for preservice teachers with academic coursework that is closely aligned with the classroom experience.
- ***Incentives*.** States have implemented incentive programs (e.g., tuition assistance, loan forgiveness) to strengthen the preparation of teachers in high-need areas. Georgia's and Nevada's ESSER plans indicate they are leveraging ESSER funds to strengthen the preparation and retention of teachers. The following are some additional examples:
  - The Colorado Rural Teaching Fellowship offers a $10,000 incentive to teacher candidates who complete their clinical experience in a rural school district.
  - The Kentucky Department of Education's Traineeship Program for Special Education allocates federal professional development funds to provide tuition assistance for special educators and preschool teachers to obtain certification.

Highlighted Resource: Planning Guide: Developing Quality Fieldwork Experiences for Teacher Candidates

Retain

Many states, districts, and educator preparation programs are partnering to develop strategies to retain teachers, especially teachers of color, through mentoring and induction, career advancement, and the improvement of working conditions.

- ***Mentoring and Induction.*** Mentoring and induction is an effective strategy to retain teachers. Both North Carolina and the District of Columbia have included expanding mentoring and induction programs in their ESSER plans.

  - The Oklahoma State Department of Education's Teacher Induction Program supports early-career educators by pairing them with extensively trained mentors during their first years in the classroom and provides both the novice teacher and mentor with ongoing professional development.
  - The Corona-Norso School District's Teacher Induction Program assigns first- and second-year participating teachers with individualized one-on-one weekly mentoring and support during their first 2 years participating in the induction program.

- ***Career Advancement*.** To support professional growth and teacher retention, states and districts are establishing programs to facilitate career advancement.
  - The Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) System promotes retention by rewarding effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay.

- ***Working Conditions.*** Strengthening working conditions and providing teachers with training on trauma-informed practices and supports for both students and teachers is a focus in several states' ESSER plans.
  - The New Mexico Public Education Department's Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE) aims to support in-service teachers by empowering educational leaders to establish and monitor plans to create conditions for effective teaching in New Mexico schools.
  - The Illinois State Board of Education dedicated $50 million in ARP ESSER funds for competitive grants to schools and community-based organizations to create community partnerships to support the social emotional and mental health needs of students and staff.

Highlighted Resources: GTL Center's Mentoring & Induction Toolkit 2.0
GTL Center's Teacher and Leading With Trauma-Informed Care Webinar Series
National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments School Climate Improvement Package

Preparing for Sustainability

Teacher shortages are likely to plague the nation for some time. It is important for states and districts to use this funding opportunity to foster innovative, long-term transformation resulting in sustainable policy and practice shifts that strengthen the educator workforce and benefit all students. States, districts, and communities must act now to not only leverage funding sources but to assess the effectiveness of programs, determine return on investments, and plan for sustainability.

Highlighted Resource: The CEEDAR Center, in collaboration with the GTL Center hasdeveloped this Shortage Toolkit to support state education agencies, districts, and educator preparation programs in their efforts to mitigate shortages. Within the Shortage Toolkit is a Strategies Funding Guide to help link recruitment and retention strategies with appropriate sources of funding.

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