

Your Question

You wanted to know what states can do to support teachers and encourage retention.

Our Response

Teacher Pipelines

Across the nation, severe [teacher shortages](#) remain in certain subject areas (math, science, special education and bilingual education) and schools with specific characteristics (urban, rural, high-poverty, high-minority and low-achieving). Variations in state teacher policies (regarding, for example, salaries, licensure requirements and teaching conditions) and other state-level impacts (e.g., quantity of preparation program providers, demographics, etc.) make for [variations](#) in the types of shortages experienced in each state.

Recruitment Challenges

According to recent data (see [here](#) and [here](#)) from the U.S. Department of Education, fewer college students in the United States are pursuing teaching careers and fewer students are completing Educator Preparation Programs. In addition to a declining candidate supply overall, many states struggle to ensure EPPs are preparing teaching candidates for [grades and subjects](#) in which vacancies exist. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) recently conducted a 50-state review of state efforts to align teacher supply and demand and provided recommendations for states [here](#).

Retention Challenges

[National data](#) from 2012-13 suggest that just under 8 percent of teachers leave the profession within five years and are unlikely to return to the classroom. Teacher attrition rates increased through much of the 1990s and 2000s but have [decreased slightly](#) in recent years.

Compensation

Teachers' salaries in the United States [do not compete](#) with the average salary of similarly educated workers, and wage competitiveness for teachers has [worsened over time](#). NEA Research provides average teacher salaries, by state, [here](#). Read more on teacher wage competitiveness, from the Economic Policy Institute, [here](#).

State Strategies

To attract teachers to high-need schools and subjects, [states are passing legislation](#) to:

- Collect and examine [teacher supply and demand](#) data.
- Provide [flexibility to districts](#) to design their own targeted recruitment strategies.
- Create [career pathways and grow-your-own programs](#) for high school students.
- Alter teacher preparation and licensure requirements and/or support [alternative certification](#) programs.
- Provide [financial incentives](#), such as scholarships/grants, loan forgiveness and hiring bonuses/[salary increases](#).
- Provide incentives for retired teachers to return to the profession.

To support quality teaching and improve retention, states are passing legislation to:

- Support high-retention preparation pathways, including [teacher residencies](#).
- Provide opportunities for high-quality [induction and mentoring](#).
- Improve teacher [professional development](#).
- Support [teacher leadership](#) and [advancement](#).

Teacher Leadership

Teacher Licensure Advancement

Many states looking to address teacher retention issues and elevate the teaching profession have considered, or are considering, supporting teacher advancement through tiered licensing systems. Advanced licenses acknowledge teachers who have obtained an established level of credibility through educational training and/or classroom experience. According to our [50-State Comparison on Teacher Leadership and Licensure Advancement](#), about 31 states have a licensing system that allows teachers to advance beyond a standard, professional teacher license.

The qualifications for entry into a tier, and advancement to the next, vary quite significantly from one state to the next. As notes in [this American Institutes for Research report](#), many states are including output measures (such as impact on student growth and performance evaluations) in addition to, or in place of, input measures (such as professional development and advanced degrees) when setting licensure tier requirements.

Teacher Leader Licenses/Endorsements

In addition to, or in place of, tiered licensure systems, many states offer separate licenses or endorsements for teachers who have had educational training and/or demonstrated skills in teacher leadership. According to our [50-State Comparison](#), about 20 states offer a teacher leader license or endorsement.

State Examples: Teacher Licensure Advancement and Teacher Leader Licenses/Endorsements

Examples of two states that encourage teacher advancement and leadership through advanced licenses and teacher leader licenses or endorsements are provided below:

- In 2009, the **Ohio** Legislature [created](#) a four-tiered certification system. According to the Ohio Department of Education, the system “provides opportunities for teachers to advance in their professional careers and serve as school improvement leaders, without leaving the teaching profession.” The [tiers](#) include: 1) Resident Educator /Alternative Resident Educator, 2) Professional Educator, 3) Senior Professional Educator and 4) Lead Professional Educator. To qualify for a Lead Professional Educator Certificate, teachers must — among other requirements — obtain 1) National Board certification OR 2) a Teacher Leader endorsement and submit a Master Teacher portfolio. According to [NCTQ](#), Ohio’s licensing system is tied to advanced steps on the career ladder as well as additional compensation.
- In 2014, the **Georgia** Professional Standards Commission [adopted](#) a four-tiered certification system to: 1) offer increased opportunities for professional growth to teachers who remain in the classroom, 2) ensure new teachers enter the classroom better prepared and 3) identify excellent teachers and recognize their accomplishments. The tiers are as follows: 1) [pre-service](#), 2) [induction](#), 3) [professional](#), and 4) [advanced and lead professional](#). To qualify for a Lead Professional license, teachers must — among other requirements — submit a passing score on the state teacher leadership assessment, which includes submitting classroom documentation and artifacts. Georgia also offers a Professional Certificate in Teacher Leadership. The state’s tiered certification system is not tied to compensation.

Additional examples can be retrieved from [this interactive database](#).

Other Supports for Teacher Leadership

Outside of licensing systems, state policymakers are creating structures and providing dedicated funding streams to support teacher recognition, leadership and advancement in the classroom. Examples include:

- Adopting teacher leadership standards (in many cases adopting or adapting the [Teacher Leader Model Standards](#) developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium).
- Providing opportunities for teachers to serve as peer observers, coaches and mentors; participate in school vision-setting; and participate in teacher advisory councils, etc.
- Removing statutory and regulatory barriers to allow for local policies that advance professional learning and teacher leadership.
- Providing professional development for teacher leaders. Teacher leader networks and seminars aim to improve the skills of teachers who are leaders in their schools.
- Providing incentives for [National Board certification](#).

State supports for teacher leadership are well developed in some parts of the country and are only beginning to surface in others. Examples of programs well underway include:

- The **District of Columbia's Leadership Initiative for Teachers (LIFT)** initiative, established in 2012, "is a five-stage career ladder that provides high-performing teachers with opportunities for advancement inside the classroom, as well as additional responsibility and increased recognition and compensation." The system is designed to recognize, reward and retain high-performing teachers in classrooms, with special incentives for teachers in high-poverty schools. Compensation and bonuses are tied to effectiveness ratings, school poverty levels and the career stage in which teachers have been placed. For more information, see the [2018-19 LIFT Guidebook](#).
- **Iowa's Teacher Leadership Compensation System**, established in 2013, rewards effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay and attracts promising new teachers with better starting salaries and more support. Districts are given the flexibility to design systems meeting state-prescribed goals, which include offering competitive starting salaries, professional development and leadership opportunities, supplemental pay tied to leadership and effectiveness, opportunities for teacher collaboration and improved student achievement through strengthened instruction.

Many states have expressed interest in growing their teacher leadership systems in the coming years. In their [ESSA plans](#), states like **Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma** and **Tennessee** — among others — detailed their plans to promote teacher leadership. Below are a few examples:

- In its [ESSA plan](#) (p. 76, 92), the **Delaware** Department of Education committed to "work with school districts to develop teacher leadership career pathways, including a statewide pilot." The department noted that it is supporting districts in creating teacher-leader pathways through its [Teacher-Leader Pilot Program](#) and [Delaware Talent Cooperative](#) and by providing a Teacher-Leader Toolkit and other support to districts for improving compensation, incentives and leadership opportunities. Delaware's Committee to Advance Educator Compensation and Careers, established by [legislation](#) in 2014, continues to work to improve career pathways and compensation for teachers.
- In its [ESSA plan](#) (p. 74), the **Indiana** Department of Education committed to use Title IIA funds to "adjust staffing structures to integrate career pathways and leadership development opportunities to advance and retain excellent educators." The department has committed to using tools developed by the Regional Educational Laboratory to help teachers and school leaders create and support teacher leadership roles. The department has also committed to convening a teacher leadership summit. Re-envisioning career pathways and leadership opportunities was one of eight recommendations provided in 2016 by the [Blue Ribbon](#)

[Commission on the Recruitment and Retention of Excellent Educators](#). In 2017, Indiana passed [legislation](#) providing grants to school districts for programs that include, among other things, teacher recognition and advancement through performance-based compensation and career paths.

- In its [ESSA plan](#) (p. 47, 153), the **Oklahoma** State Department of Education noted that it would use ESSA Title IIA funds to “ensure implementation of the teacher-leader career ladder, [established in state law](#) to elevate teachers who take on responsibilities of mentor, model and lead roles while receiving additional compensation.” The teacher leadership model was one of many strategies recommended by the state’s Teacher Shortage Task Force in 2015 and 2016. (See [Preliminary Report](#), p. 17 and [Final Report](#), p. 25).