

Here's How

Leadership guidance for new principals



#6: Retaining great teachers

So, your investment in methodical hiring is paying dividends in a cadre of improvement-oriented teachers who are leading your school to new levels. You want to keep your all-star team, right? Retention of good teachers is a key tenet of effectiveness that promotes student learning, according to Professional Standards of Educational Leaders. And as seen in NAESP's *Leading Learning Communities: Pillars, Practices, and Priorities for Effective Principals*, an optimized system where talent and resources align to boost student learning and well-being helps retain teachers and equips them to grow and thrive.

Getting Started: What and How

Salaries, hours, benefits. You can't change many elements that retain—or drive away—great teachers. But you can create an atmosphere that makes them feel valued, eliminates confusion, institutionalizes systems of support, and cultivates their gifts:

1. Outline next steps. Even if your HR department handles onboarding, know the answers to questions about procedures and paperwork.
2. Provide the things needed. Teachers who walk into fully equipped rooms, and who have the budget to buy start-up supplies without dipping into their pockets, are extremely grateful.
3. Start robust induction immediately. Orient programs toward building professional capabilities and acculturation to school and faculty, while laying the groundwork for continual learning, professional growth, and retention.
4. Go long on mentoring. Ensure that formal or required programs are performing as expected, and go one step further by pairing newbies with veterans. The rookies appreciate the support, and the veterans feel flattered.
5. Check in often. Take the temperature of the situation with formal meetings and informal chats.
6. Acknowledge and encourage good work. Boost spirits by showing that you notice their efforts and results.
7. Act fast when there's a problem. If a teacher is struggling, step in immediately.
8. Promote balance. Help eager-beaver workaholics perform more efficiently and leave work behind when it's time for family and friends.
9. Watch for leadership potential in new hires, plus opportunities to build capacity. Provide professional learning experiences that strengthen weaknesses and cultivate talents.
10. Promote job satisfaction by practicing facilitated leadership that includes new hires in school decisions and improvement plans.

Research says ...

- Effective principals can leverage turnover as a chance to weed out less-effective teachers and hire those with new ideas.
- Principals who are successful at retaining teachers proactively focus on teacher growth and opportunities for collaboration.
- 96 percent of U.S. teachers agree: Supportive leadership is “absolutely essential” or “very important” for retaining good teachers.

Resources

- *You're the Principal! Now What?*
— Jen Schwanke
- *What Great Principals Do Differently*
— Todd Whitaker
- *The Principal: Three Keys to Managing Impact* — Michael Fullan
- *Leading Learning Communities: Pillars, Practices, and Priorities for Effective Principals* — The National Association of Elementary School Principals
- *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* — The National Policy Board for Educational Administration
- *How Principals Affect Students and Schools*
— The Wallace Foundation



Words of wisdom

Effort applied to retention fosters a collaborative culture, say veteran principals.

- “Dropping a thank-you note—I had to remind myself to do that. A hand-written note that says, ‘You are appreciated’ means a lot.”—*Denise Michelle Gamble, education consultant, NAESP Race and Equity Task Force member*
- “We must respond to the needs of our students and staff. Recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff is paramount.”—*Howard Fields, assistant superintendent of human resources, Kirkwood School District, Missouri*
- “When you hire and keep people who have knowledge, skills, and disposition, you’re getting the kind of people who can work collaboratively within the framework of an organization.”—*Michael Chirochello, consultant, Leadership Matters LLC*
- “The idea that you can find a replacement if a teacher’s not growing, that’s not even an option. We have to be able to support and develop the teachers who are on our campus. Having a targeted professional development plan campuswide that also meets the needs of each individual professional is an important thing to retain high-quality, highly effective teachers.”—*Christopher Bailey, Principal, Clack Middle School, Abilene, Texas*
- “Treat your teachers as professionals. Recognize their talents and provide opportunities for them to make the school better.”—*Sauna Kauffman, principal, Arnold Elementary School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Annapolis, Maryland*

Keys to success

To get respect, show respect.

- Don’t let superstar teachers become super-volunteers. Ask them to lead improvement initiatives instead of planning bake sales.
- Regularly brief new teachers on school protocols.
- Raffles, goodie carts, small gift cards—little things prevent underappreciation and promote retention.



Be the leader who retains staff: 6 tips

When teachers decide to stay, specific types of leaders factor into their decisions. These effective principals:

1. Identify and articulate high expectations for all.
2. Consult with teachers on decisions affecting them.
3. Foster communications.
4. Allocate resources judiciously.
5. Develop structures to support instruction and learning.
6. Regularly review data on student learning with teachers.