Develop and Retain Rookie Teachers

Challenge

Due to teachers leaving or moving from higher- to lower-need schools, 30% of District B’s teachers are in their first three years of the profession. At some schools, early-career teachers make up more than 50% of all teachers, so students in the highest-need schools experience more frequent teacher turnover and less schoolwide stability, and educators and families struggle to build long-term relationships.

District leaders attribute turnover to a few issues: First, teachers—rookies in particular—report feeling mostly “on their own,” receiving limited support from schoolwide instructional coaches. Second, despite strong district curricula, teachers report spending significant time preparing for lessons and have little time to for collaboration that builds skills or subject matter knowledge. Finally, experienced teachers have limited opportunities to grow professionally, beyond leaving the classroom to pursue instructional leadership roles.

“Build Toward” Vision

District B’s leaders want to stabilize school cultures, reduce turnover, and improve instruction, which they will pursue by:

- Providing early-career teachers with sheltered experiences and additional development support through observation, coaching, and mentorship by effective teachers.
- Reducing rookie teachers’ workloads to give them more time to plan, collaborate, and support students.
- Building toward a sustainable culture where rookie teachers report feeling less overwhelmed or burnt out.
- Create teams of teachers who share the work, with differentiated roles for rookies and meaningful leadership opportunities for effective teachers.
- Ensuring students are taught by a stable cadre of supported educators who deliver high-quality instruction.
“Do Now” Strategy

To build rookie teacher supports in elementary schools, District B’s leaders will:

- **Decrease rookie teachers’ workload** to free up time for planning, reflection, collaboration, and learning.
- **Increase job-embedded supports for early-career teachers** by distributing instructional leadership across teacher leaders, who will then provide rookie teachers with daily support. This will help reduce the responsibilities of the current instructional coach, who is stretched too thin by having to support all teachers at a given school.
- **Strategically assign rookie teachers** to teams that include at least one instructional content expert.

Resource Shifts

Elementary School B will serve as a pilot for these “Do Now” strategies. While the school struggles with high rookie teacher turnover, the school’s leaders are prepared to implement crucial strategic shifts. To do so, Elementary School B’s principal will:

- **Create two teacher leader roles** for expert teachers, each with a **$7,000** stipend, who provide dedicated support to rookie teachers of grades K-2 and 3-5, respectively.
- **Create six teaching roles**, each with a **$2,000** stipend, to lead science planning responsibilities.
- **Create release time for teacher leaders** to observe, provide feedback to, and co-teach with rookie teachers. Teacher leaders teach half the day, then support early-career teachers for the other half, with teacher leader A covering social studies and ELA and teacher leader B teaching math and science within one shared third-grade classroom. Teacher leaders meet in the mornings and share small-group intervention responsibilities. School B will need to hire one additional full-time teacher to ensure all classrooms have a homeroom teacher, which will cost about **$82,000** in total compensation.
- **Establish schedules with blocks of shared-content collaborative time**—ideally 90 minutes weekly—offset by stacking some specials **classes back-to-back with recess and lunch**.
- **Reduce rookie teachers’ planning loads** by shifting responsibilities so that one teacher per grade-level plans lessons and prepares materials for all science classrooms. These teachers will receive a **$2,000** stipend each to help reduce rookie teachers’ lesson preparation responsibilities.

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1 For this and every other stipend the school or district offers, leaders would also need to account for the cost of payroll tax and retirement contributions associated with the stipend, which typically ranges from 10-20% of pay.
Resource Shifts in Action

These shifts require **additional compensation** for teacher leaders, an **additional homeroom teacher**, and **redistributed responsibilities**, which will total around **$108,000**. With budget flexibility, creativity, and support from district partners, Elementary School B’s principal found resources for this investment by:

- **Reducing staff whose responsibilities are taken on by new educator roles.** The school freed up 0.5 FTE of the instructional coach’s time, or **$50,000**, by shifting to a classroom-based teacher leadership model. The remaining 21 teachers will receive support from the half-time instructional coach (nine teachers), the assistant principal (eight teachers), and the principal (four teachers).

- **Eliminating one of two clerk positions**, which allows the school team to create more teacher release time by shifting **$55,000** to one FTE homeroom teacher position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Investments</th>
<th>Total Trade-Offs</th>
<th>Net Budget Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leader Stipends</td>
<td>Reduced Instructional Coach</td>
<td><strong>Small Net Cost $3,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7,000 x 2 = $14,000</td>
<td>0.5 instructional coach = $50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Teacher FTE</td>
<td>Reduced Admin Positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 FTE = $82,000</td>
<td>1 office clerk = $55,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stipends for Lesson Planning</td>
<td>Total: $105,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$2,000 x 6 = $6,000</td>
<td>Total: $108,000</td>
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<td>Total: <strong>$108,000</strong></td>
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The District’s Role

District B’s leaders plan to scale this support model districtwide, giving all early-career teachers the support needed to grow, positively impact student learning, and stay in the district long-term. To achieve that scale and retain teachers long-term, leaders will:

- **Provide guidance on design and implementation.** This includes sample schedules; release time models; criteria for teacher leader selection; protocols for co-teaching, observing, and giving feedback; guidelines for gradual release; and clear rookie responsibility breakdowns.

Funding this model at the district-level, rather than the school-level, would cost about 2.2% of a typical district operating budget. District leaders could offset these costs by redesigning their compensation model, shifting most of the amount typically spent on advanced degrees to a model that increases pay based on career path and role.

To sustain and deepen change, district leaders can:

- **Systematize teacher leader and multi-school instructional coach roles** as part of a defined career progression by establishing standard job descriptions and performance rubrics and intentionally cultivating future teacher leaders.

- **Expand their strategy to include pre-service residents,** tailor supports to early skill development, and target supports to teachers who might be struggling.

- **Develop a strategic compensation model** that codifies increasingly higher pay for teacher leaders as part of their career paths.