Creativity From Necessity

A Practical Toolkit for Leaders to Address Teacher Shortages

By Nick Allen, Shirley Appleman, Anson Jackson, and Katie Vivalo Rouse

JANUARY 2023

Bellwether

Overdeck Family Foundation

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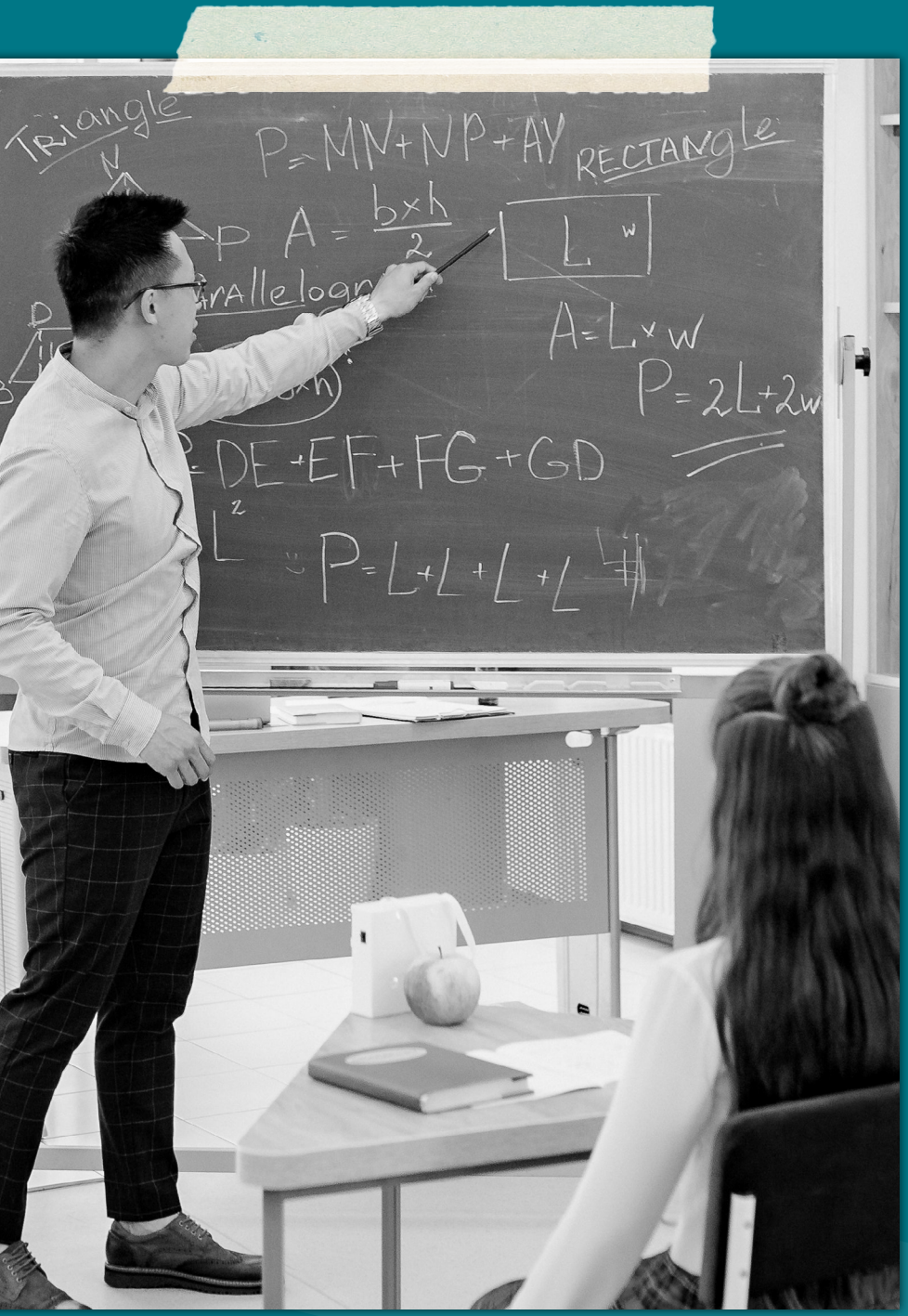
Introduction

Bellwether scanned the country for ideas and resources that leaders can use to address staffing challenges in their schools.

This curated set of tools is intended to support school leaders who have the autonomy to manage the talent life cycle in their school community and are looking for practical ideas to strengthen their ability to recruit, hire, and retain exceptional educators.



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Overview

Strategy	Trend	Tools	Effort	Cost	Timeline
Protect Teacher Time	Provide Dedicated Planning Time	Finding Time for Collaborative Planning	Low	Low	Short Term
		Collaborative Planning Practices	Low	Low	Immediate
	Reimagine Master Schedule	Case Study: How Village Tech Moved to a 4-Day Instructional Model	High	Mid	Long Term
		Unlocking Time: New and Different Ways Schools Innovate With Time	Mid	Low	Short Term
	Reduce Administrative Burden	Identifying Workload Issues: Structured Conversation	Low	Low	Immediate
		Job Descriptions for Support Personnel	Low	Mid	Short Term
Meet Teacher Needs	Elevate Teacher Voice	Empathy Interview Template	Low	Low	Immediate
		Planning Stay Conversations	Low	Low	Immediate
	Prioritize Teacher Development	Mentoring & Induction Toolkit	High	Mid	Short Term
		Career Paths and Pay in an Opportunity Culture: A Practical Guide	High	Mid	Long Term
	Provide Holistic Supports	Case Study: How One Charter Network Is Rethinking Health and Wellness	Mid	Mid	Short Term
		Teacher Well-Being in School Environments Workbook	Mid	Low	Immediate
Fill Staffing Gaps	Grow Your Own (GYO)	GYO Educators: A Toolkit for Program Design and Development	High	High	Long Term
		Case Study: How Two Districts Are Using GYO Programs	High	High	Long Term
	International and Virtual Teachers	Case Study: Sponsoring and Supporting J-1 Visa Exchange Teachers	High	Mid	Long Term
		Onboarding Strategies: Virtual or In-Person Instruction	Low	Low	Immediate
	High-Dosage Tutoring	Toolkit for Tutoring Programs	Mid	Mid	Long Term
		Launching Tutoring Programs in Partnership With Community Organizations	High	Mid	Long Term

Effort = Rough estimate of the amount of time and work it would take a leader to plan and implement a given strategy, relative to other strategies.
Cost = Rough estimate of the total cost to plan and implement a given strategy, relative to other strategies.
Timeline = Rough estimate of when leaders could implement a given strategy (immediate = weeks, short term = 2-6 months, long term = 6+ months).

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How to Use the Toolkit

Read pages 12-34 for the strategies, trends, and tools. For each of the three strategies identified, Bellwether surfaced three trends and two corresponding tools per trend. You can jump directly to each strategy:

Protect Teacher Time	Highlights strategies to guard prep time, find additional flex time, and identify teacher workload challenges
Meet Teacher Needs	Illustrates strategies to nurture teachers and create a strong foundation for healthy staff culture
Fill Staffing Gaps	Showcases creative staff and teacher recruitment strategies to fill open positions within schools

This toolkit was designed to "Build Your Own Adventure." You could:

- Read the toolkit end-to-end for ideas that might work in your context.
- Go directly to the trends and tools that align to a current schoolwide priority.

While reviewing and deciding on a tool to adopt and adapt, consider:

- Do I have the **autonomy** to change or implement this tool?
- If I do not have the autonomy, do I have the **social influence** to impact adoption?
- Who else on my team can I **collaborate** with to create **buy-in and support implementation**?
- Do I have the **funds** to change or implement this tool?
- Do I have the **capacity and skill set** to implement this tool?

Strategies Identified

Strategy	Root Issues	Essential Questions	Why It Matters
Protect Teacher Time	Low staff morale, high staff burnout	How do I leverage scheduling and/or placement of instructional personnel to maximize staffing without compromising high-quality instruction?	Educators want to impact their students' lives. To enable teachers to invest their time in ways they are passionate about AND that translate to student outcomes, leaders have a responsibility to create systems that allow teachers to focus on instruction, maximize collaboration, minimize disruptions, and eliminate low-impact tasks.
Meet Teacher Needs	Low staff morale, high staff burnout	How do I gather input from teachers about what they need and authentically engage them in decision-making? How am I building a school culture where teachers feel supported, both personally and professionally?	Job satisfaction rates for teachers are at an all-time low,[1] with alarming numbers of educators thinking about leaving the profession sooner than planned. Now, more than ever, we need to elevate teacher voice and provide holistic supports based on what educators say they need.
Fill Staffing Gaps	Staff attrition, high vacancy rates	How am I tapping into nontraditional teacher pipelines to fill vacancies with high-quality candidates? How am I adjusting recruitment efforts to find and hire teachers?	The tightening labor market is forcing leaders to think outside the box to recruit and hire staff. Many leaders are trying new strategies to fill critical vacancies and are supplementing investments in new talent pipelines with a back-to-basics approach to recruitment.

Approach

Schools across the country are struggling to fill open teaching positions.

This challenge is not new: The U.S. has long faced critical shortages of math teachers, special education professionals, bilingual educators, and teachers of color, shortfalls that are often most pronounced in rural and lower-income communities. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these existing issues, wreaking havoc on our educational system and elevating staff shortages to crisis levels in many school communities.

Solving persistent staff shortages in schools will require long-term investments, systemic changes, and significant shifts in federal- and state-level policy. **We also know that school leaders can't wait around**. Principals need solutions they can start implementing this academic year, next year, and in the future.

With this context in mind, **Bellwether scanned the country for ideas and resources that leaders can use to address staffing challenges in their schools**. Over 40 leaders with a diverse range of experience and perspectives, including leaders from a mix of urban and rural areas, large and small districts, and traditional and charter school environments were interviewed. Bellwether spoke with principals of individual schools, chief talent officers overseeing hundreds of schools, researchers with expertise in staffing shortages, and a wide range of other experts in the field.

Intention of Use

This toolkit is a set of tools, resources, and case studies designed to support school leaders to address staffing challenges. **The toolkit is intended primarily for school leaders, particularly those with the autonomy to manage the talent life cycle** — everything from recruiting and onboarding to staff development and culture building — within the school community.

Beyond school leaders, this toolkit may also be useful for anyone who directly supports schools: district leadership, intermediary organizations, philanthropic partners, and a range of other stakeholders in the broader school community. This toolkit is intended to be:

Practical
These tools are curated to help school leaders solve real problems affecting their school community.

Intuitive
This toolkit includes resources that are easy to understand and use for busy school leaders.

Evidence-Based
Wherever possible, Bellwether summarizes and cites the relevant research studies so school leaders can readily understand the level of evidence supporting a specific practice.

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Protect Teacher Time

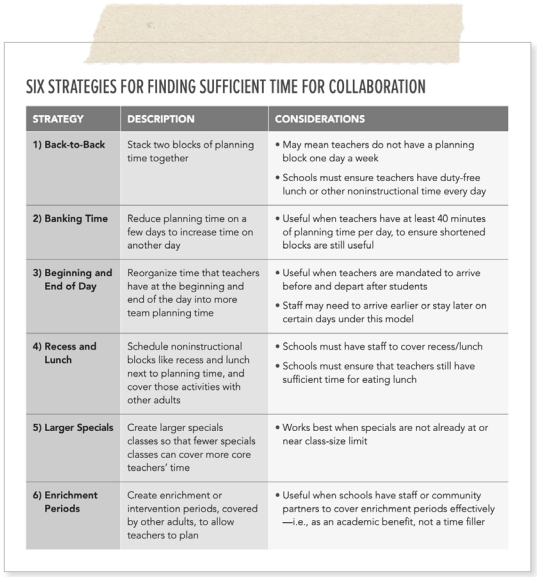
Trend	Description	What the Research Says	Tools
Provide Dedicated Planning Time	Teachers need dedicated prep time, ideally 40-90 minutes per day. The leaders Bellwether spoke to are prioritizing coverage for teachers so they have time for collaboration, curriculum internalization, and data conversations.	Researchers have observed that collaboration and prep time are correlated with teacher retention.[2] In a 2014 survey in Wisconsin, state-certified teachers endorsed planning time as having the greatest positive effect on their ability to impact students, ranking this above more money or fewer disruptive students.[3]	Finding Time for Collaborative Planning Collaborative Planning Practices
Reimagine Master Schedule	During the pandemic, many teachers appreciated the flexibility of remote working. To provide flexibility, planning time, and professional development (PD), many schools are reimagining their schedule and instructional models.	In a survey conducted by EmpowerEd and WTU, teachers reported that flexibility is the No. 1 factor that would help retain them.[4] This has also been observed in the broader job market; in a 2021 survey, respondents indicated they value flexibility over higher pay and more vacation time.[5]	Case Study: How Village Tech Moved to a 4-Day Instructional Model Unlocking Time: New and Different Ways Schools Innovate With Time
Reduce Administrative Burden	To ensure teachers are focused on high-impact instructional roles and responsibilities, many leaders are using ESSER funds and grants to hire additional staff to take on administrative, non-instructional, operational responsibilities.	Researchers have observed that teacher job satisfaction is correlated with the support they receive from their principal.[6] There are fewer studies examining how reducing administrative tasks for educators impacts teacher retention and student outcomes, suggesting this is an area ripe for future research.	Identifying Workload Issues: Structured Conversation Job Descriptions for Support Personnel

Finding Time for Collaborative Planning

Creating a master schedule is a complex process with multiple dependencies. This tool from **Education Resource Strategies** outlines six strategies for school leaders to build sufficient collaborative planning time into the master schedule.

This tool will enable you to …

- Identify six strategies for finding sufficient time for collaboration.
- Outline concrete actions you can take to protect teacher prep time as much as possible.
- Answer the question, "How do we find time for meaningful collaborative planning?"



SIX STRATEGIES FOR FINDING SUFFICIENT TIME FOR COLLABORATION

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS
1) Back-to-Back	Stack two blocks of planning time together	• May mean teachers do not have a planning block one day a week • Schools must ensure teachers have duty-free lunch or other noninstructional time every day
2) Banking Time	Reduce planning time on a few days to increase time on another day	• Useful when teachers have at least 40 minutes of planning time per day, to ensure shortened blocks are still useful
3) Beginning and End of Day	Reorganize time that teachers have at the beginning and end of the day into more team planning time	• Useful when teachers are mandated to arrive before and depart after students • Staff may need to arrive earlier or stay later on certain days under this model
4) Recess and Lunch	Schedule noninstructional blocks like recess and lunch next to planning time, and cover those activities with other adults	• Schools must have staff to cover recess/lunch • Schools must ensure that teachers still have sufficient time for eating lunch
5) Larger Specials	Create larger specials classes so that fewer specials classes can cover more core teachers' time	• Works best when specials are not already at or near class-size limit
6) Enrichment Periods	Create enrichment or intervention periods, covered by other adults, to allow teachers to plan	• Useful when schools have staff or community partners to cover enrichment periods effectively —i.e., as an academic benefit, not a time filler

Strategies in Action: Example #1

The School

The Curley K-8 School in Boston Public Schools serves approximately 900 students, nearly half of whom qualify for federal free or reduced-price lunch benefits.

The Strategy

Many Boston schools, including the Curley, have a bit of an unusual schedule—each grade-level team has **six** 55-minute blocks of planning time each week instead of five.* Principal Katherine Grassa found that 55-minute blocks were less than ideal for the deep conversation, data review, practice, and group work required to fundamentally improve the quality and rigor of instruction. So she created an extended, 110-minute planning block by scheduling two planning periods back-to-back. Students attend two specials courses in a row to make this planning time possible.

FIGURE 4 THE CURLEY SCHOOL, SAMPLE 5TH GRADE STUDENT SCHEDULE

Light green = individual teacher planning time Dark green = Team collaborative planning time

55-min periods	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:15-8:55 AM	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention
8:55-9:50 AM	Specials	Math	Math	Math	Math
9:50-10:45 AM	Math	Writing	Writing	Writing	Specials
10:45-11:55 AM	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
11:55-12:40 PM	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch
12:40-1:15 PM	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention
1:15-2:10 PM	Math	Social Studies	Specials	Specials	Reading
2:10-3:05 PM	Open Circle	Specials	Social Studies	Specials	Open Circle

* Prior to 2017-18, teachers at the Curley had five 55-minute blocks of planning time. When Boston Public Schools implemented Extended Learning Time in a subset of schools, teachers were provided with an additional planning period, which by contract has to be "teacher-facilitated" (vs. administrative team-facilitated).

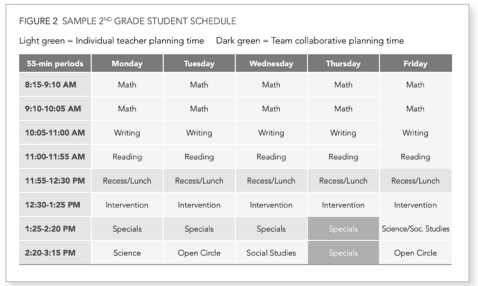


FIGURE 2 SAMPLE 2ND GRADE STUDENT SCHEDULE

Light green = Individual teacher planning time Dark green = Team collaborative planning time

55-min periods	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:15-9:10 AM	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
9:10-10:05 AM	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
10:05-11:00 AM	Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing
11:00-11:55 AM	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
11:55-12:30 PM	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch	Recess/Lunch
12:30-1:25 PM	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention
1:25-2:20 PM	Specials	Specials	Specials	Specials	Science/Soc. Studies
2:20-3:15 PM	Science	Open Circle	Social Studies	Specials	Open Circle

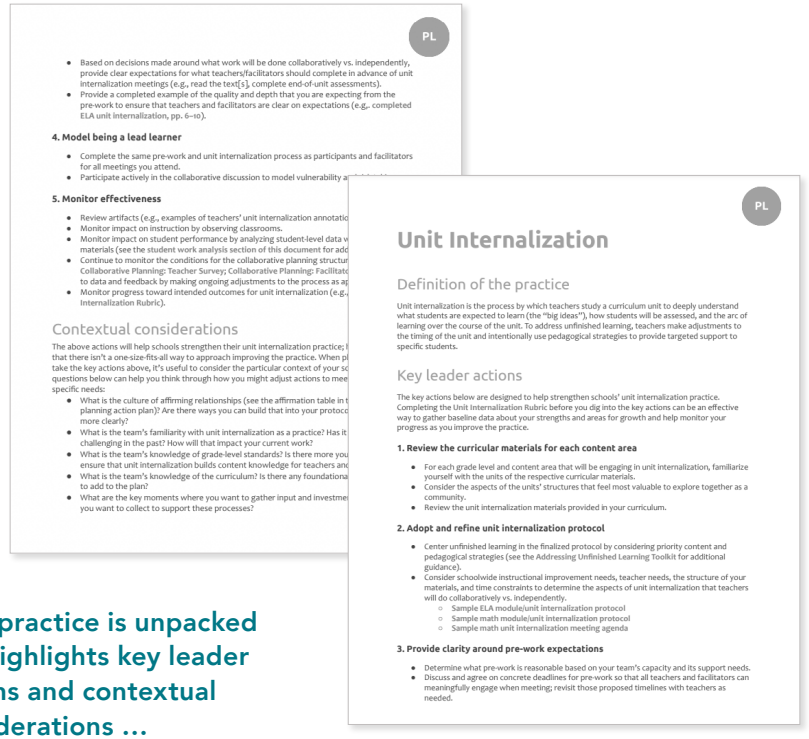
This guide provides sample schedules and case studies highlighting how schools have implemented each strategy.

Collaborative Planning Practices

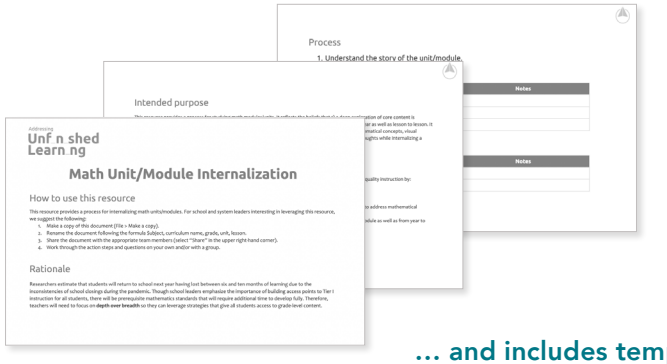
Providing guidance on how to best leverage planning time promotes teacher learning and efficacy. This tool by **Instruction Partners** offers guidance on implementing three foundational practices that can be executed collaboratively or independently: unit internalization, lesson preparation, and work analysis.

This tool will enable you to …

- Identify core practices to embed into collaborative planning time at your school.
- See examples and ideas for revamping collaborative planning practices at your school.
- Reflect on key leader actions to support each practice and identify areas for improvement.



Each practice is unpacked and highlights key leader actions and contextual considerations …



… and includes templates to help operationalize the practice.

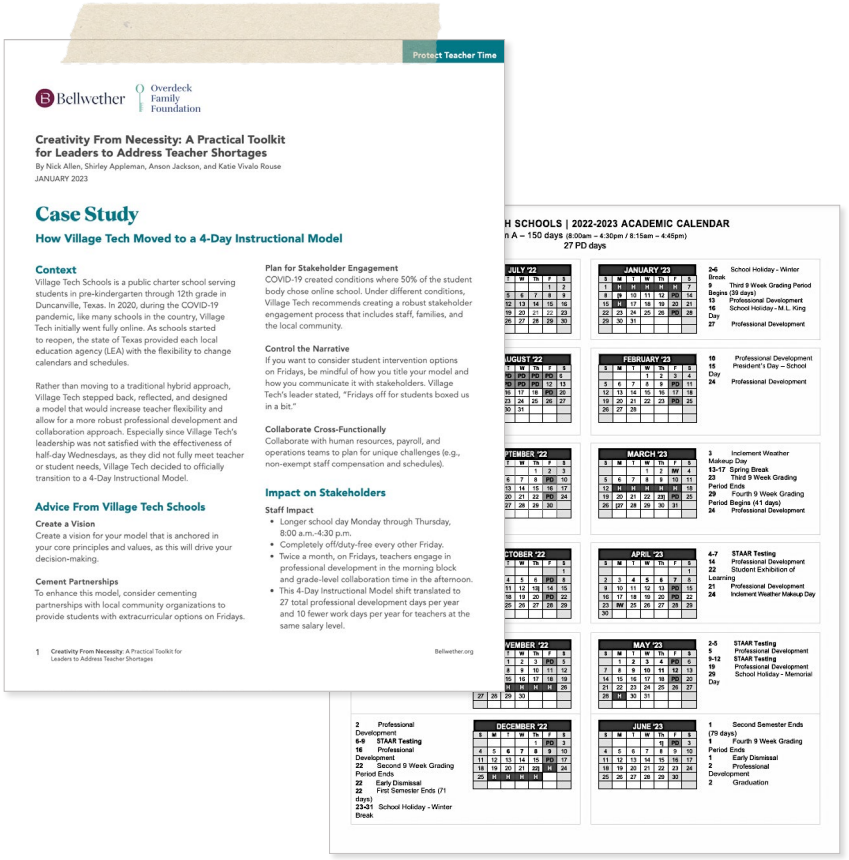
Case Study

How Village Tech Moved to a 4-Day Instructional Model

This case study highlights the approach to transitioning to a 4-Day Instructional Model from the lens of a public charter school outside of Dallas, Texas. It highlights the technical process to operationalize this model as well as the adaptive components to consider when considering this shift.

This tool will enable you to …

- Find out how one school shifted to a 4-Day Instructional Model.
- Access a sample school calendar and schedule to support a 4-Day Instructional Model.
- Learn more about funding implications of the 4-Day Instructional Model and its impact on staff.



Unlocking Time

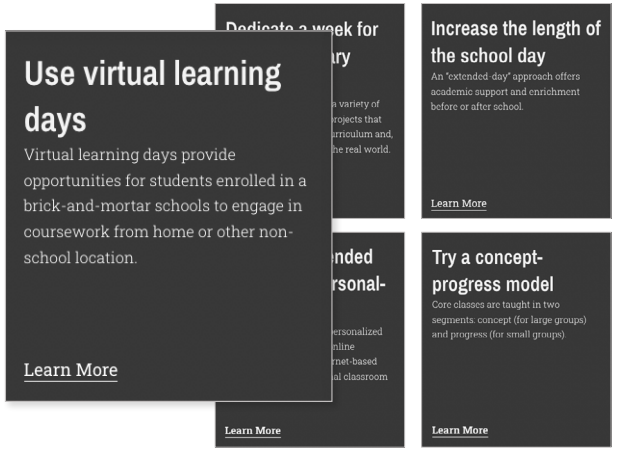
New and Different Ways Schools Innovate With Time

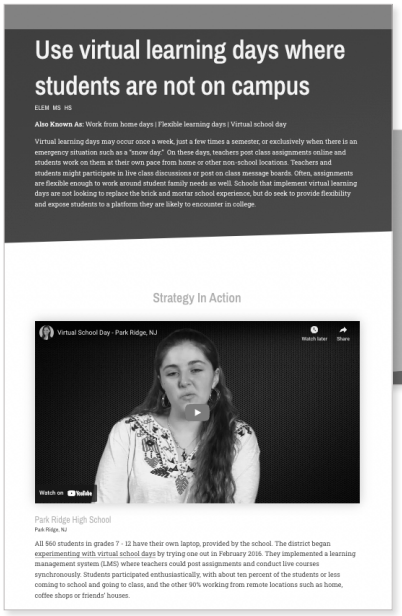
To provide teachers with additional collaboration time and flexibility, schools across the country are carving out additional time by tinkering with the master schedule and/or instructional model. An Unlocking Time tool provides options to achieve this flexibility, such as implementing an early release day or using virtual learning days.

This tool will enable you to …

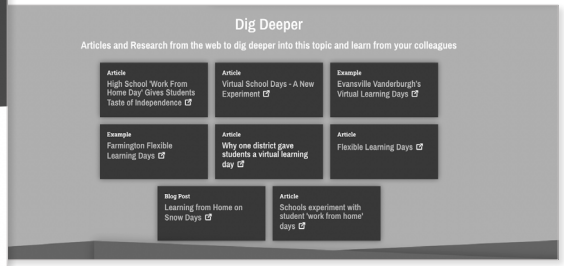
- Find ways to provide staff with additional collaboration time and/or flex time.
- See examples of how other schools and leaders have creatively unlocked time for teachers.
- Explore alternatives to the traditional bell schedule in order to better protect teachers' time.

This tool shares 27 unique strategies to innovate with time, some allowing for more teacher flexibility.





Each strategy provides a case study, highlights, and key considerations.



Unlocking Time's Dig Deeper section provides articles, research, and tools to learn more about topics.

Identifying Workload Issues

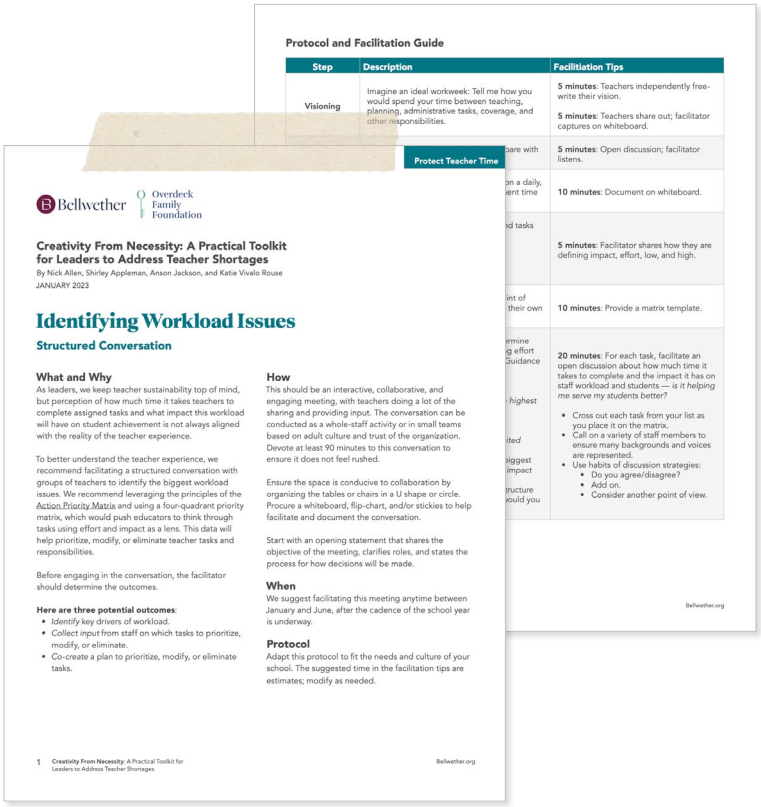
Structured Conversation

To empathize with the teacher experience, leaders can facilitate a structured conversation to gain awareness of the tasks leading to workload imbalance. With this conversation, the leader is equipped with data to better inform next steps, including modifying or eliminating tasks, or, if applicable, identifying additional roles to hire.

This tool will enable you to …

- Facilitate a structured conversation with teachers about their workload.
- Learn which responsibilities teachers find high impact and which they do not.
- Identify next steps to mitigate challenges and respond to specific staff needs.

This discussion protocol includes a description of "what" the conversation is about and "why" leaders should have it.



Protocol and Facilitation Guide

Step	Description	Facilitation Tips
Visioning	Imagine an ideal workweek: Tell me how you would spend your time between teaching, planning, administrative tasks, coverage, and other responsibilities.	**5 minutes**: Teachers independently free-write their vision. **5 minutes**: Teachers share out; facilitator captures on whiteboard.
		5 minutes: Open discussion; facilitator listens.
		10 minutes: Document on whiteboard.
		5 minutes: Facilitator shares how they are defining impact, effort, low, and high.
		10 minutes: Provide a matrix template.

		20 minutes: For each task, facilitate an open discussion about how much time it takes to complete and the impact it has on staff workload and students — *is it helping me serve my students better?*
		• Cross out each task from your list as you place it on the matrix.
		• Call on a variety of staff members to ensure many backgrounds and voices are represented.
		• Use habits of discussion strategies:
		  • Do you agree/disagree?
		  • Add on.
		  • Consider another point of view.

Protect Teacher Time

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Identifying Workload Issues

Structured Conversation

What and Why

As leaders, we keep teacher sustainability top of mind, but perception of how much time it takes teachers to complete assigned tasks and what impact this workload will have on student achievement is not always aligned with the reality of the teacher experience.

To better understand the teacher experience, we recommend facilitating a structured conversation with groups of teachers to identify the biggest workload issues. We recommend leveraging the principles of the Action Priority Matrix and using a four-quadrant priority matrix, which would push educators to think through tasks using effort and impact as a lens. This data will help prioritize, modify, or eliminate teacher tasks and responsibilities.

Before engaging in the conversation, the facilitator should determine the outcomes.

Here are three potential outcomes:

- *Identify key drivers of workload.*
- *Collect input* from staff on which tasks to prioritize, modify, or eliminate.
- *Co-create* a plan to prioritize, modify, or eliminate tasks.

How

This should be an interactive, collaborative, and engaging meeting, with teachers doing a lot of the sharing and providing input. The conversation can be conducted as a whole-staff activity or in small teams based on adult culture and trust of the organization. Devote at least 90 minutes to this conversation to ensure it does not feel rushed.

Ensure the space is conducive to collaboration by organizing the tables or chairs in a U shape or circle. Procure a whiteboard, flip-chart, and/or stickies to help facilitate and document the conversation.

Start with an opening statement that shares the objective of the meeting, clarifies roles, and states the process for how decisions will be made.

When

We suggest facilitating this meeting anytime between January and June, after the cadence of the school year is underway.

Protocol

Adapt this protocol to fit the needs and culture of your school. The suggested time in the facilitation tips are estimates; modify as needed.

1 **Creativity From Necessity**: A Practical Toolkit for Leaders to Address Teacher Shortages

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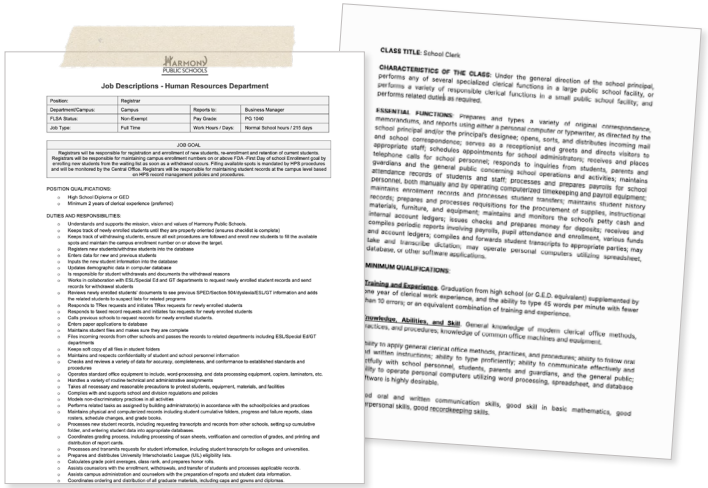
Also included is a step-by-step structure to guide leaders through the conversation with teachers.

Job Descriptions for Support Personnel

Several leaders Bellwether spoke with reported they have invested in support positions to mitigate the administrative burden placed on their teachers. To help school leaders who are interested in hiring additional support staff, we collected example job descriptions from districts across the country.

This tool will enable you to …

- Access job descriptions for administrative and/or non-teaching positions within your school.
- Find ideas for tailoring existing job descriptions to better meet the needs of your school.
- Consider administrative roles, including in your next school budget.



Harmony Public Schools	Chicago Public Schools	KIPP SoCal
Attendance Clerk	School Clerk	Expanded Learning Instructor
GYO Teacher Intern	School Clerk Assistant	In-House Substitute
Registrar	Teacher Assistant	Instructional Assistant
Teacher Assistant	Temporary Part-Time Seasonal	Registrar
Tutor	Tutor Corps Tutor	School Operations Assistant

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Meet Teacher Needs

Trend	Description	What the Research Says	Tools
Elevate Teacher Voice	Many of the school leaders Bellwether spoke with report that they are actively finding ways to gather authentic input and feedback from teachers so they can better meet their needs.	There is emerging research examining the interplay among school climate, relationships between school leadership and teachers, and related factors to understand whether and how those contribute to teacher retention.[7]	Empathy Interview Template Planning Stay Conversations
Prioritize Teacher Development	Many school leaders Bellwether interviewed said they are prioritizing teacher development by investing in training, PD opportunities, and pathways to advancement within the classroom.	National longitudinal data showed high rates of attrition among beginning teachers, with more than 44% of new teachers leaving the profession within their first five years.[8]	Mentoring & Induction Toolkit Career Paths and Pay in an Opportunity Culture: A Practical Guide
Provide Holistic Supports	Bellwether heard from leaders that, in the wake of the pandemic, they are increasingly investing in supports for teachers that go beyond traditional employment benefits to promote holistic well-being.	Emerging research from various fields, such as medicine,[9] suggests that holistic supports for employees benefit their well-being. Ecological models of development suggest the personal conditions (emotional health and well-being) of adults are a necessary precondition for equitable learning.[10]	Case Study: How One Charter Network Is Rethinking Health and Wellness Teacher Well-Being in School Environments Workbook

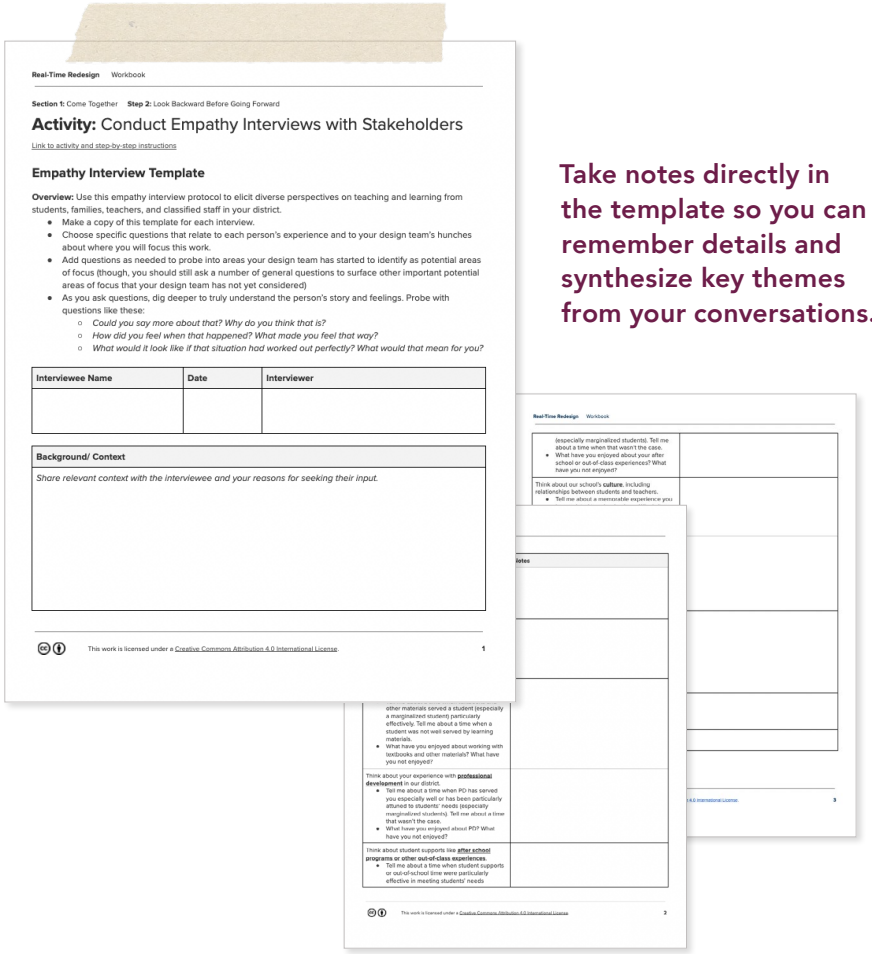
Empathy Interview Template

This template from the **Learning Accelerator** is designed to help school leaders conduct empathy interviews. Empathy interviews are an important way to begin understanding the perspectives of people in your school community who are not typically asked for their opinions, including teachers.

This tool will enable you to …

- Lead a simple interview protocol to elicit stories and lived experiences from your teachers.
- Better understand the root causes of challenges impacting your teachers.
- Deeply understand the perspectives of teachers who are not typically asked for their opinion.

The template includes simple instructions for conducting interviews, including sample follow-up questions to probe deeper.



Real-Time Redesign Workbook

Section 1: Come Together Step 2: Look Backward Before Going Forward

Activity: Conduct Empathy Interviews with Stakeholders

Link to activity and step-by-step instructions

Empathy Interview Template

Overview: Use this empathy interview protocol to elicit diverse perspectives on teaching and learning from students, families, teachers, and classified staff in your district.

- Make a copy of this template for each interview.
- Choose specific questions that relate to each person's experience and to your design team's hunches about where you will focus this work.
- Add questions as needed to probe into areas your design team has started to identify as potential areas of focus (though, you should still ask a number of general questions to surface other important potential areas of focus that your design team has not yet considered)
- As you ask questions, dig deeper to truly understand the person's story and feelings. Probe with questions like these:
  - *Could you say more about that? Why do you think that is?*
  - *How did you feel when that happened? What made you feel that way?*
  - *What would it look like if that situation had worked out perfectly? What would that mean for you?*

Interviewee Name	Date	Interviewer

Background/ Context
Share relevant context with the interviewee and your reasons for seeking their input.

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Take notes directly in the template so you can remember details and synthesize key themes from your conversations.

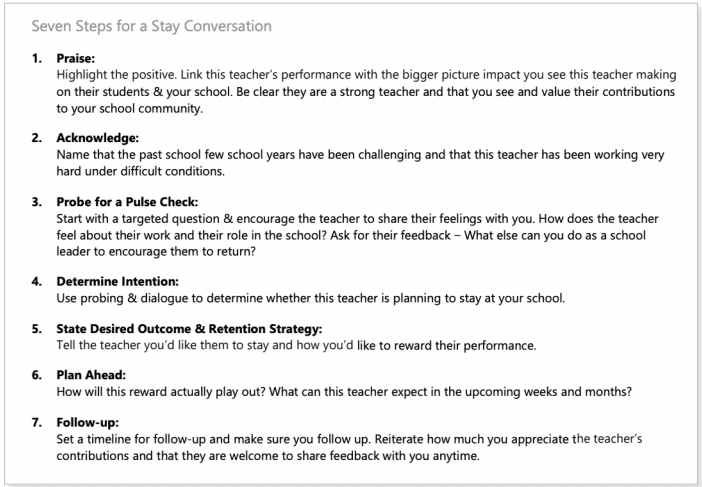
Planning Stay Conversations

Stay conversations with staff are a structured way for leaders to encourage their top teachers to stay at the school. This resource from **TNTP** provides school leaders with a simple seven-step structure for planning thoughtful conversations to learn more about what individual teachers need in order to stay.

This tool will enable you to …

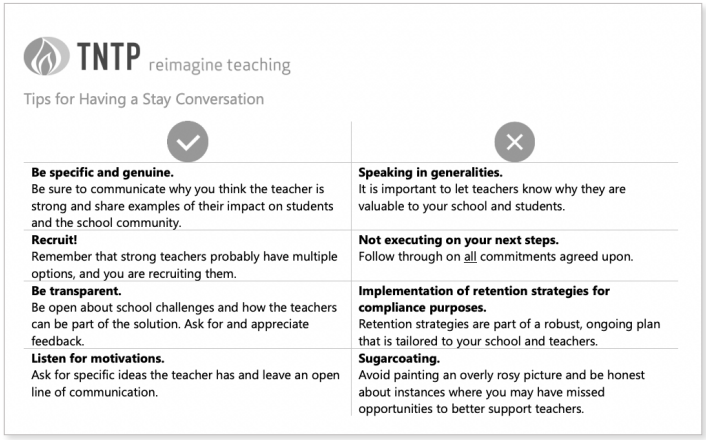
- Understand what stay conversations are and why they can be an effective tool for teacher retention.
- Plan and lead thoughtful conversations with teachers you want to retain.
- Access example sentence stems to use in stay conversations with your staff.

This resource follows a simple seven-step process for having a stay conversation and includes helpful tips about what to do and what not to do.



Seven Steps for a Stay Conversation

1. **Praise:**
   Highlight the positive. Link this teacher's performance with the bigger picture impact you see this teacher making on their students & your school. Be clear they are a strong teacher and that you see and value their contributions to your school community.
2. **Acknowledge:**
   Name that the past school few school years have been challenging and that this teacher has been working very hard under difficult conditions.
3. **Probe for a Pulse Check:**
   Start with a targeted question & encourage the teacher to share their feelings with you. How does the teacher feel about their work and their role in the school? Ask for their feedback – What else can you do as a school leader to encourage them to return?
4. **Determine Intention:**
   Use probing & dialogue to determine whether this teacher is planning to stay at your school.
5. **State Desired Outcome & Retention Strategy:**
   Tell the teacher you'd like them to stay and how you'd like to reward their performance.
6. **Plan Ahead:**
   How will this reward actually play out? What can this teacher expect in the upcoming weeks and months?
7. **Follow-up:**
   Set a timeline for follow-up and make sure you follow up. Reiterate how much you appreciate the teacher's contributions and that they are welcome to share feedback with you anytime.



TNTP reimagine teaching

Tips for Having a Stay Conversation

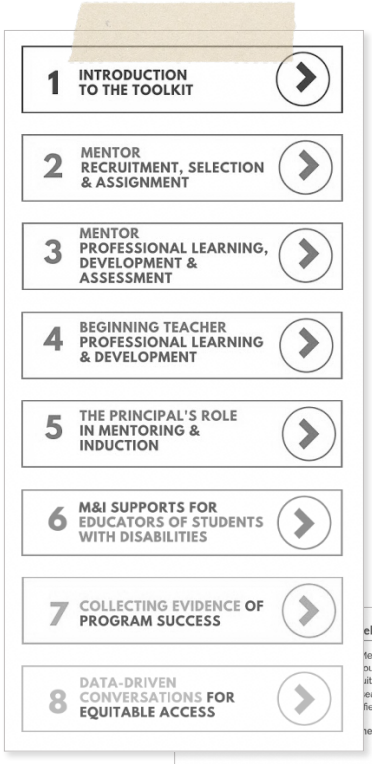
✓	✗
Be specific and genuine. Be sure to communicate why you think the teacher is strong and share examples of their impact on students and the school community.	**Speaking in generalities.** It is important to let teachers know why they are valuable to your school and students.
Recruit! Remember that strong teachers probably have multiple options, and you are recruiting them.	**Not executing on your next steps.** Follow through on all commitments agreed upon.
Be transparent. Be open about school challenges and how the teachers can be part of the solution. Ask for and appreciate feedback.	**Implementation of retention strategies for compliance purposes.** Retention strategies are part of a robust, ongoing plan that is tailored to your school and teachers.
Listen for motivations. Ask for specific ideas the teacher has and leave an open line of communication.	**Sugarcoating.** Avoid painting an overly rosy picture and be honest about instances where you may have missed opportunities to better support teachers.

Mentoring & Induction Toolkit

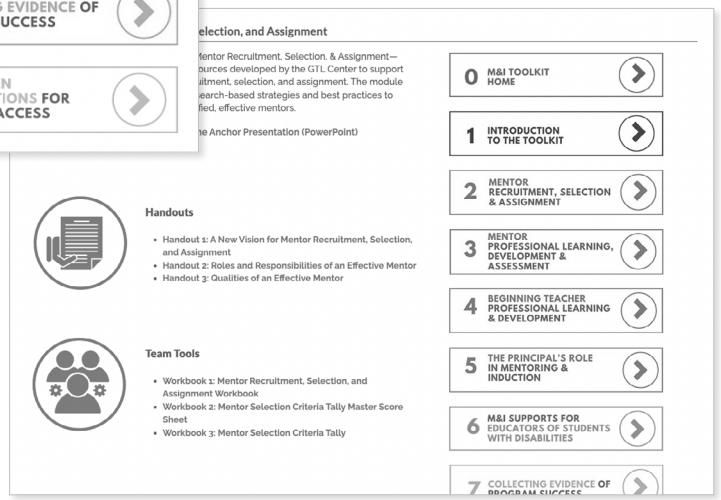
Mentoring for novice teachers improves teacher effectiveness and retention. This Mentoring & Induction Toolkit from **AIR** defines the critical features of a comprehensive mentoring program. After creating a vision, jump into module 2 to learn about the mentor recruitment, selection, and assignment process.

This tool will enable you to …

- Develop plans to create a mentor teacher program or improve an existing program.
- Outline mentorship roles and responsibilities for mentors, teachers, and principals.
- Structure and plan data-driven conversations to embed in your mentoring program.



The toolkit is divided into eight modules, allowing the entry point to be differentiated based on where you want to focus.



Each module includes a presentation summarizing best practices, handouts that support content, and tools to facilitate implementation.

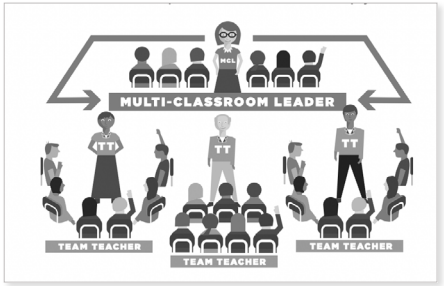
Career Paths and Pay in an Opportunity Culture

A Practical Guide

This guide from **Public Impact** gives an overview of teacher career paths within the Opportunity Culture model, a school model that leverages multi-classroom leaders (MCLs) who reach more students with excellent teaching and earn a higher salary within a school's current budget.

This tool will enable you to …

- Identify ways to create professional pathways that keep your best teachers in classrooms.
- Learn more about the Opportunity Culture school model and MCLs.
- Understand options to differentiate pay for teachers in a budget-neutral way.



The guide outlines the role of MCLs, and other key teaching positions to execute the Opportunity Culture model …

FIGURE 6. Flat Career Structure

Role	Example Supplement of Average Pay*
Multi-Classroom Leader	25% of average pay
All Other Teachers	0%

FIGURE 7a. Modestly Differentiated Structure

Role	Example Supplement of Average Pay*
Multi-Classroom Leader	25%
Master Team Reach Teacher**	12%
All Other Teachers	0%

FIGURE 7b. Modestly Differentiated Structure—2 MCL Levels

Role	Example Supplement of Average Pay*
Multi-Classroom Leader II	35%
Multi-Classroom Leader I	25%
All Other Teachers	0%

FIGURE 8. More Differentiated Structure

Role	Example Supplement of Average Pay*
Multi-Classroom Leader II	35%
Multi-Classroom Leader I	25%
Master Team Reach Teacher**	12%
Team Reach Teacher**	3%
All Other Teachers	0%

FIGURE 9. Highly Differentiated Structure

Role	Example Supplement of Average Pay*
Multi-Classroom Leader II	35%
Multi-Classroom Leader I	25%
Master Team Reach Teacher II**	15%
Master Team Reach Teacher I**	8%
Team Reach Teacher II	5%
Team Reach Teacher I	2%
Classroom Teacher	0%

… and includes options for differentiating responsibility and pay structures for MCLs and other new teaching roles in ways that are budget neutral for schools and districts.

Case Study

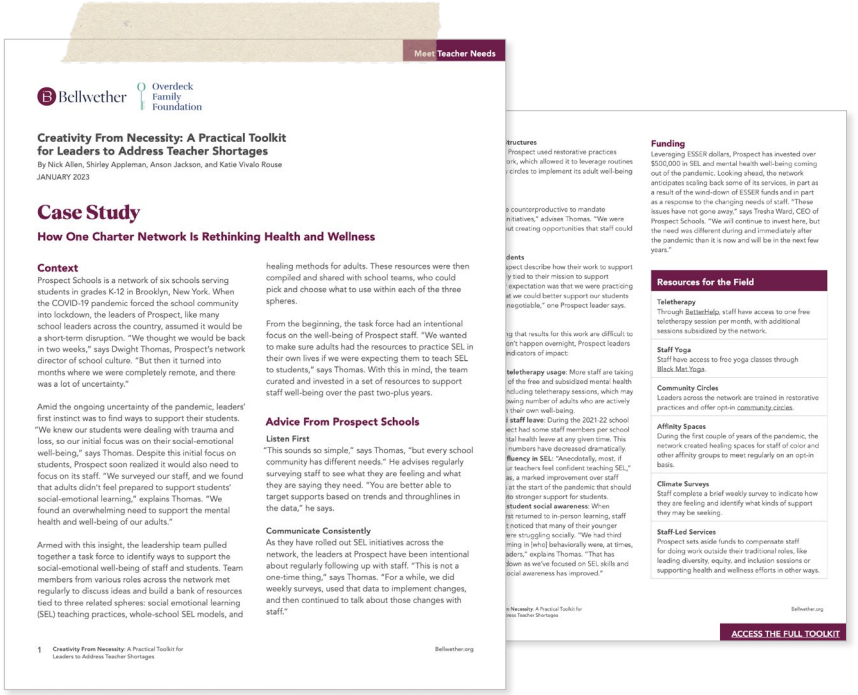
How One Charter Network Is Rethinking Health and Wellness

This case study profiles the efforts of New York's **Prospect Schools** to support the health and well-being of its staff members during and immediately after the pandemic. Learn more about its investments in health and wellness for adults across its school network.

This tool will enable you to …

- Hear how Prospect Schools invested in adult health and wellness supports.
- Learn more about the initial results and indicators of the impact of this work.
- Gather recommendations to keep in mind when undertaking similar work in your school context.

PROSPECT SCHOOLS


Meet Teacher Needs

Bellwether | Overdeck Family Foundation

Creativity From Necessity: A Practical Toolkit for Leaders to Address Teacher Shortages

By Nick Allen, Shirley Appleman, Anson Jackson, and Katie Vivalo Rouse

JANUARY 2023

Case Study

How One Charter Network Is Rethinking Health and Wellness

Context

Prospect Schools is a network of six schools serving students in grades K-12 in Brooklyn, New York. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the school community into lockdown, the leaders of Prospect, like many school leaders across the country, assumed it would be a short-term disruption. "We thought we would be back in two weeks," says Dwight Thomas, Prospect's network director of school culture. "But then it turned into months where we were completely remote, and there was a lot of uncertainty."

Amid the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic, leaders' first instinct was to find ways to support their students. "We knew our students were dealing with trauma and loss, so our initial focus was on their social-emotional well-being," says Thomas. Despite this initial focus on students, Prospect soon realized it would also need to focus on its staff. "We surveyed our staff, and we found that adults didn't feel prepared to support students' social-emotional learning," explains Thomas. "We found an overwhelming need to support the mental health and well-being of our adults."

Armed with this insight, the leadership team pulled together a task force to identify ways to support the social-emotional well-being of staff and students. Team members from various roles across the network met regularly to discuss ideas and build a bank of resources tied to three related spheres: social emotional learning (SEL) teaching practices, whole-school SEL models, and healing methods for adults. These resources were then compiled and shared with school teams, who could pick and choose what to use within each of the three spheres.

From the beginning, the task force had an intentional focus on the well-being of Prospect staff. "We wanted to make sure adults had the resources to practice SEL in their own lives if we were expecting them to teach SEL to students," says Thomas. With this in mind, the team curated and invested in a set of resources to support staff well-being over the past two-plus years.

Advice From Prospect Schools

Listen First

"This sounds so simple," says Thomas, "but every school community has different needs." He advises regularly surveying staff to see what they are feeling and what they are saying they need. "You are better able to target supports based on trends and throughlines in the data," he says.

Communicate Consistently

As they have rolled out SEL initiatives across the network, the leaders at Prospect have been intentional about regularly following up with staff. "This is not a one-time thing," says Thomas. "For a while, we did weekly surveys, used that data to implement changes, and then continued to talk about those changes with staff."

1 **Creativity From Necessity:** A Practical Toolkit for Leaders to Address Teacher Shortages

Bellwether.org

Funding

Leveraging ESSER dollars, Prospect has invested over $500,000 in SEL and mental health well-being coming out of the pandemic. Looking ahead, the network anticipates scaling back some of its services, in part as a result of the wind-down of ESSER funds and in part as a response to the changing needs of staff. "These issues have not gone away," says Tresha Ward, CEO of Prospect Schools. "We will continue to invest here, but the need was different during and immediately after the pandemic than it is now and will be in the next few years."

Resources for the Field

Teletherapy
Through BetterHelp, staff have access to one free teletherapy session per month, with additional sessions subsidized by the network.

Staff Yoga
Staff have access to free yoga classes through Black Mat Yoga.

Community Circles
Leaders across the network are trained in restorative practices and offer opt-in community circles.

Affinity Spaces
During the first couple of years of the pandemic, the network created healing spaces for staff of color and other affinity groups to meet regularly on an opt-in basis.

Climate Surveys
Staff complete a brief weekly survey to indicate how they are feeling and identify what kinds of support they may be seeking.

Staff-Led Services
Prospect sets aside funds to compensate staff for doing work outside their traditional roles, like leading diversity, equity, and inclusion sessions or supporting health and wellness efforts in other ways.

ACCESS THE FULL TOOLKIT

The case study includes example services that Prospect Schools provide to teachers, with advice for school leaders interested in investing in health and wellness initiatives for their staff.

Teacher Well-Being in School Environments

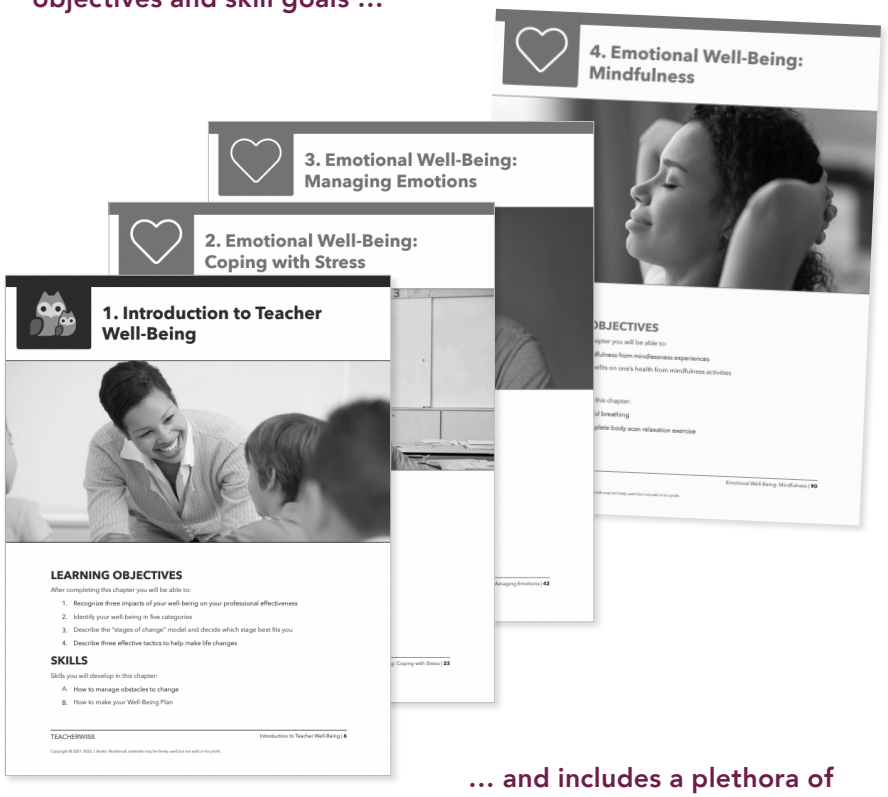
Workbook

This resource from **WISE: MedStar Georgetown Center for Well-Being in School Environments** in Washington, D.C., is a comprehensive workbook filled with tools designed to help teachers develop their own personal well-being plans. Content is tailored for teachers and covers topics tied to emotional, physical, social, occupational, and intellectual well-being.

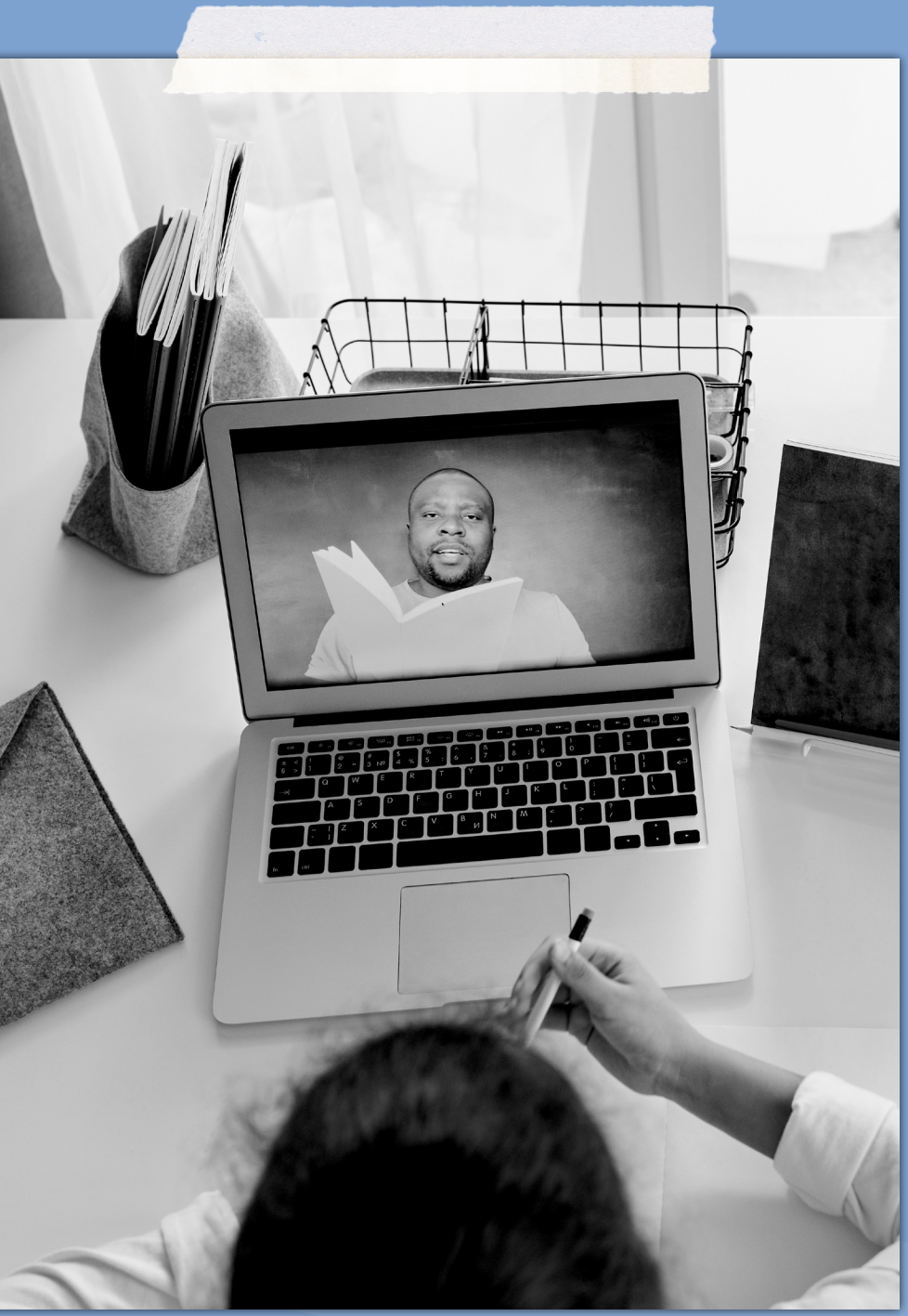
This tool will enable you to …

- Support teachers to develop their own personal well-being plans.
- Access wellness-related resources and activities to incorporate into trainings and PD sessions.
- Find ideas for how to build skills and mindsets to enhance your teachers' well-being.

The workbook is a free curriculum that is divided into 10 units, each with clear learning objectives and skill goals …



… and includes a plethora of tools and activities, such as an inventory to help teachers identify sources of stress.



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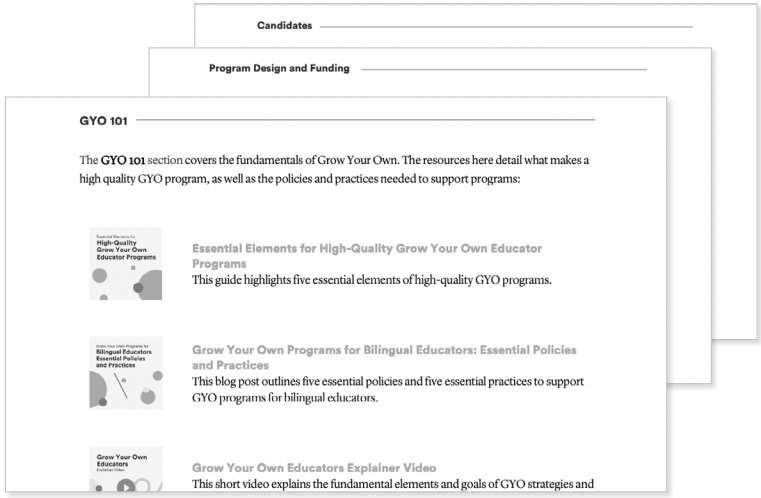
Fill Staffing Gaps

Trend	Description	What the Research Says	Tools
Grow Your Own (GYO)	The leaders Bellwether spoke with reported they are increasingly investing in efforts to recruit and prepare members of their local school community (e.g., parents, alumni, paraprofessionals) to enter the teaching profession.	Preliminary evidence suggests that GYO initiatives can help diversify the teaching workforce. It is not yet known whether or how these programs affect teacher retention or student learning outcomes.[11]	GYO Educators: A Toolkit for Program Design and Development Case Study: How Two Districts Are Using GYO Programs
International and Virtual Teachers	To fill hard-to-staff roles, more leaders are turning to international and virtual teachers. Whether staffing in-person or virtual classes, leaders need to know how to recruit and effectively support these teachers.	Virtual classrooms exploded during the pandemic, and the growth in international teachers is an emerging trend in the field. According to the U.S. State Department, over 4,200 international teachers were employed by U.S. school districts in 2021, an increase of nearly 70% since 2015.[12]	Case Study: Sponsoring and Supporting J-1 Visa Exchange Teachers Onboarding Strategies: Virtual or In-Person Instruction
High-Dosage Tutoring	High-dosage tutoring models can both mitigate staffing challenges and accelerate student learning by enabling schools to attract a cadre of adults to regularly support students in individual or group settings.	High-dosage tutoring is a promising strategy for improving student outcomes with a growing research base; however, not all tutoring programs have been shown to improve student achievement. Leaders should choose specific models backed by evidence of impact on important outcomes.[13]	Toolkit for Tutoring Programs Launching Tutoring Programs in Partnership With Community Organizations

GYO Educators

A Toolkit for Program Design and Development

This toolkit from **New America** features a comprehensive collection of user-friendly research, policy, and practice resources for GYO practitioners and policymakers. The toolkit is divided into five sections aligned to different phases of the GYO development process.



This tool will enable you to …

- Understand how GYO programs can help diversify your teacher pipeline.
- Learn how to design a GYO program that fits the context of your school community.
- Strengthen current GYO initiatives in your school or district.

If you are new to GYO, Bellwether recommends starting with New America's explainer video and exploring from there.

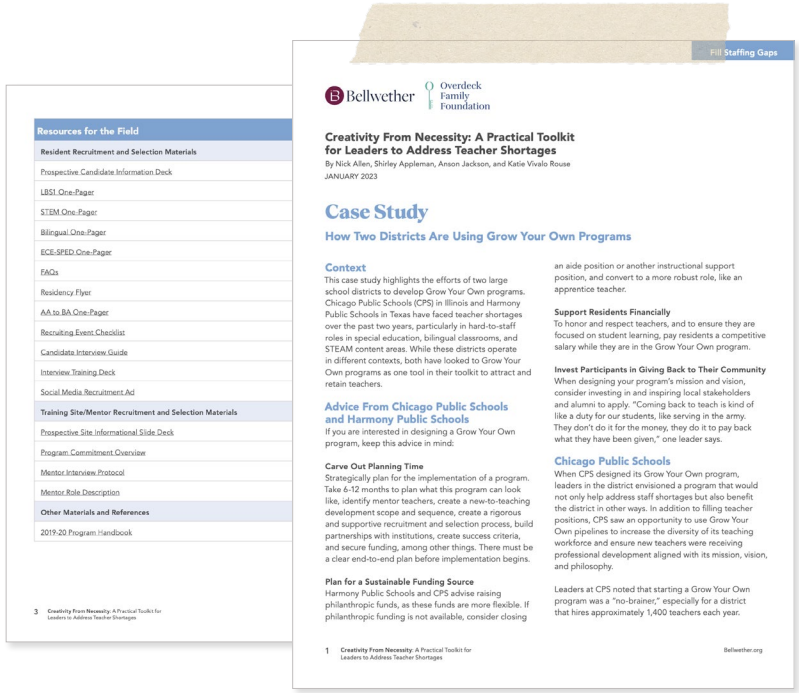
Case Study

How Two Districts Are Using GYO Programs

Bellwether profiles efforts to develop and launch GYO programs in a large urban district in Illinois (**Chicago Public Schools**) and a large network of charter schools in Texas (**Harmony Public Schools**). Hear directly from leaders about why they invested in GYO, what the work looks like, and early outcomes from their efforts.

This tool will enable you to …

- See how two districts implemented GYO programs.
- Understand the rationale behind these districts' investment in GYO.
- Learn more about what we are beginning to discover from implementation of these GYO programs.



The case study includes direct links to resources these organizations used to set up and run their GYO programs.

Case Study

Sponsoring and Supporting J-1 Visa Exchange Teachers

In this case study, Bellwether outlines the work of **YES Prep**, a charter network in Texas with a growing number of teachers on J-1 visas. It includes an overview of their work to date, along with advice for school leaders who are interested in hiring and effectively supporting teachers from abroad.

This tool will enable you to …

- Learn more about how a district in Texas recruits and supports teachers on J-1 visas.
- Consider advice for designing and implementing a J-1 visa exchange program at your school.
- Understand key elements of working with J-1 visa-sponsoring organizations and recruiting partners.

yes prep PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This brief case study provides an overview of YES Prep's nascent J-1 visa program, along with advice for leaders who are interested in setting up their own program.

Onboarding Strategies

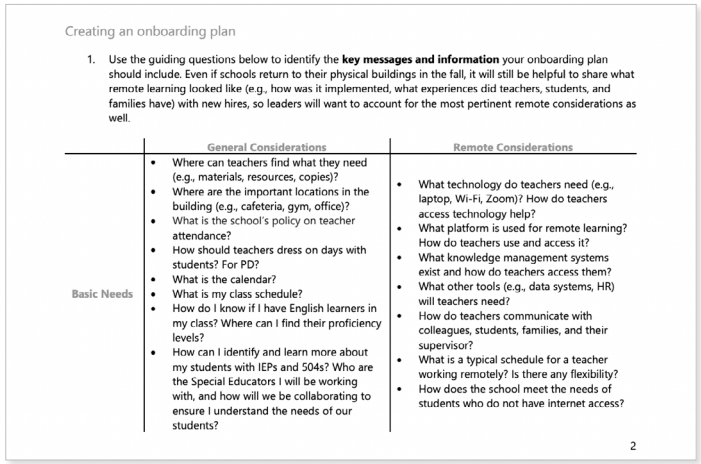
Virtual or In-Person Instruction

This virtual onboarding guide from **TNTP** "shares key considerations for crafting strong onboarding experiences, whether they will take place in remote or in-person settings, and shares best practices for engaging new hires." It is a great resource for developing effective onboarding processes for all school staff.

This tool will enable you to …

- Find ideas to create flexible onboarding plans for staff.
- Incorporate considerations for remote instruction in your onboarding plans.
- Strengthen your current onboarding practices more generally.

TNTP's guide explicitly outlines "remote considerations" that can be applied to onboarding for virtual instructors.

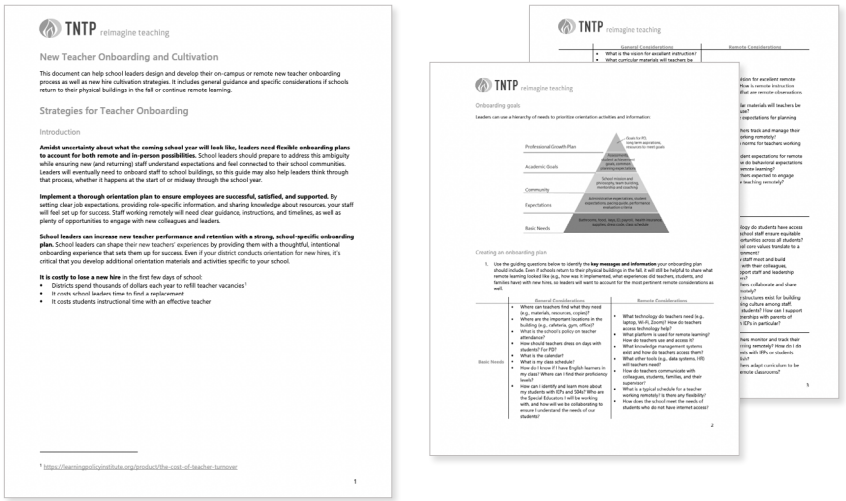


Creating an onboarding plan

1. Use the guiding questions below to identify the **key messages and information** your onboarding plan should include. Even if schools return to their physical buildings in the fall, it will still be helpful to share what remote learning looked like (e.g., how was it implemented, what experiences did teachers, students, and families have) with new hires, so leaders will want to account for the most pertinent remote considerations as well.

	General Considerations	Remote Considerations
Basic Needs	• Where can teachers find what they need (e.g., materials, resources, copies)? • Where are the important locations in the building (e.g., cafeteria, gym, office)? • What is the school's policy on teacher attendance? • How should teachers dress on days with students? For PD? • What is the calendar? • What is my class schedule? • How do I know if I have English learners in my class? Where can I find their proficiency levels? • How can I identify and learn more about my students with IEPs and 504s? Who are the Special Educators I will be working with, and how will we be collaborating to ensure I understand the needs of our students?	• What technology do teachers need (e.g., laptop, Wi-Fi, Zoom)? How do teachers access technology help? • What platform is used for remote learning? How do teachers use and access it? • What knowledge management systems exist and how do teachers access them? • What other tools (e.g., data systems, HR) will teachers need? • How do teachers communicate with colleagues, students, families, and their supervisor? • What is a typical schedule for a teacher working remotely? Is there any flexibility? • How does the school meet the needs of students who do not have internet access?

2



TNTP reimagine teaching

New Teacher Onboarding and Cultivation

This document can help school leaders design and develop their on-campus or remote new teacher onboarding process as well as new hire cultivation strategies. It includes general guidance and specific considerations if schools return to their physical buildings in the fall or continue remote learning.

Strategies for Teacher Onboarding

Introduction

Amidst uncertainty about what the coming school year will look like, leaders need flexible onboarding plans to account for both remote and in-person possibilities. School leaders should prepare to address this ambiguity while ensuring new (and returning) staff understand expectations and feel connected to their school communities. Leaders will eventually need to onboard staff to school buildings, so this guide may also help leaders think through that process, whether it happens at the start of or midway through the school year.

Implement a thorough orientation plan to ensure employees are successful, satisfied, and supported. By setting clear job expectations, providing role-specific information, and sharing knowledge about resources, your staff will feel set up for success. Staff working remotely will need clear guidance, instructions, and timelines, as well as plenty of opportunities to engage with new colleagues and leaders.

School leaders can increase new teacher performance and retention with a strong, school-specific onboarding plan. School leaders can shape their new teachers' experiences by providing them with a thoughtful, intentional onboarding experience that sets them up for success. Even if your district conducts orientation for new hires, it's critical that you develop additional orientation materials and activities specific to your school.

It is costly to lose a new hire in the first few days of school:

- Districts spend thousands of dollars each year to refill teacher vacancies[1]
- It costs school leaders time to find a replacement
- It costs students instructional time with an effective teacher

[1] https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/the-cost-of-teacher-turnover

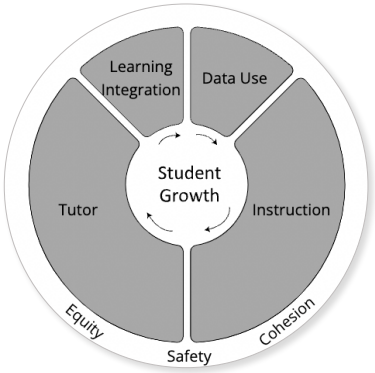
1

Toolkit for Tutoring Programs

This resource from the **National Student Support Accelerator** is designed to support educators in either launching a tutoring program or improving an existing one. The toolkit is organized across seven elements of tutoring programs, divided into two sections: Program Design and Program Implementation.

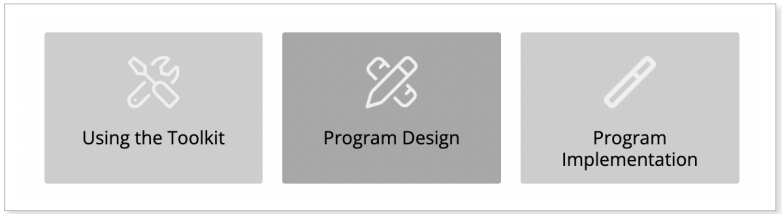
This tool will enable you to …

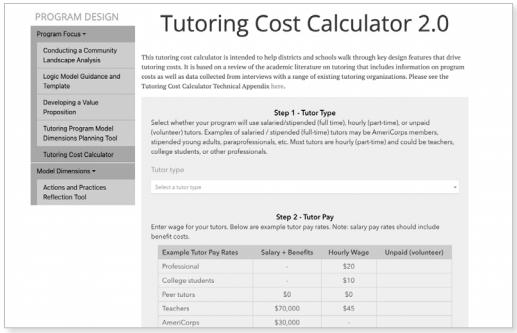
- Strengthen an existing tutoring program within your school or district.
- Estimate potential costs for a new tutoring program.
- Learn more about core elements of high-impact tutoring programs.



The toolkit outlines seven elements of high-impact tutoring programs.

Navigation links take you to a "how-to" guide for using the toolkit or directly into sections on Program Design or Program Implementation.





The Program Design section includes a simple cost calculator for tutoring programs.

Launching Tutoring Programs in Partnership With Community Organizations

This resource from **Chiefs for Change** is a robust guidebook for leaders interested in building a tutoring program in collaboration with a community partner. It outlines an eight-step plan to establish a local program and includes sample criteria for identifying potential tutors along with sample tutoring schedules.

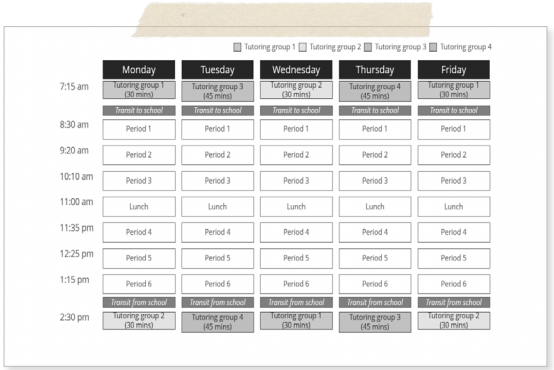
This tool will enable you to …

- Develop a comprehensive plan to work with external partners to launch a tutoring program.
- Access ideas and resources for improving a current tutoring program.
- Find examples of how other districts have implemented their tutoring programs.

The guidebook is designed around eight steps for building a successful tutoring program with a community partner (see page 5).

Overview: Eight steps for building a successful tutoring program in partnership with a community partner

1. **Analyze district needs, informed by data**
   Includes interactive tool for choosing which students, subjects, and grades to tutor
2. **Estimate total tutor capacity needed and identify potential community partners to work with the district**
   Includes template and accompanying resources for defining district needs and organizations that could serve as partners; capacity calculator for determining total number of tutors a partner will need to supply
3. **Evaluate and decide which community partner(s) to work with**
   Includes interactive tool and accompanying resources for developing a rubric for selecting a community partner
4. **Co-create the collaboration and implementation approach tutoring program**
   Includes workbook for plan development, including: roles and responsibilities, funding, scheduling, other logistics, instructional materials, tutoring staff, data sharing for continuous improvement, day-one implementation plan, ongoing communication and collaboration
5. **Set up the tutoring program team for collaboration**
   Includes template and accompanying resources for developing the organizational structure that will support the tutoring program
6. **Communicate with families and enroll students in the tutoring program**
   Includes interactive tool and accompanying resources for developing a plan to engage and communicate with families to enroll students in the program
7. **Create and communicate tutor groups**
   Includes interactive tool and accompanying resources to develop tutorial groupings
8. **Implement continuous improvement procedures**
   Includes template and accompanying resources for gathering performance data, establishing a performance monitoring cadence, and course correcting, as needed, based on results



Tutoring group 1 | Tutoring group 2 | Tutoring group 3 | Tutoring group 4

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:15 am	Tutoring group 1 (30 mins)	Tutoring group 3 (45 mins)	Tutoring group 2 (30 mins)	Tutoring group 4 (45 mins)	Tutoring group 1 (30 mins)
	Transit to school	*Transit to school*	*Transit to school*	*Transit to school*	*Transit to school*
8:30 am	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1
9:20 am	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2
10:10 am	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3
11:00 am	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
11:35 pm	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4
12:25 pm	Period 5	Period 5	Period 5	Period 5	Period 5
1:15 pm	Period 6	Period 6	Period 6	Period 6	Period 6
	Transit from school	*Transit from school*	*Transit from school*	*Transit from school*	*Transit from school*
2:30 pm	Tutoring group 2 (30 mins)	Tutoring group 4 (45 mins)	Tutoring group 1 (30 mins)	Tutoring group 3 (45 mins)	Tutoring group 2 (30 mins)

Resources include sample tutoring schedules for schools (see page 33).

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Endnotes

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About Bellwether

Bellwether is a national nonprofit that exists to transform education to ensure systemically marginalized young people achieve outcomes that lead to fulfilling lives and flourishing communities. Founded in 2010, we work hand in hand with education leaders and organizations to accelerate their impact, inform and influence policy and program design, and share what we learn along the way. For more, visit **bellwether.org**.

About Overdeck Family Foundation

Overdeck Family Foundation was established in 2011 by John and Laura Overdeck, with the goal of providing all children the opportunity to unlock their potential. The Foundation focuses exclusively on enhancing education, funding efforts both inside and outside of school in the areas of early childhood, informal STEM education, and K-9 programs that include supporting educators and student-centered learning environments. For more, visit **overdeck.org**.

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