Recruiting and Retaining Special Education Teachers—A Resource Brief

This brief is part of a seven-part series on challenges related to recruiting and retaining teachers from underrepresented backgrounds or with certain certifications. This series was developed as part of the R9CC Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition project with Illinois.

Tackling the Special Education Teacher Shortage

Special education teachers ensure equitable access to education for 7.2 million public school students with disabilities. According to the January 2022 results of the National Center for Education Statistics school survey, 45% of responding schools reported that special education was identified as the teaching area with the most vacancies.

This brief provides resources that highlight examples of strategies, programs, and initiatives that help states, local education agencies, and school districts address the shortage of certified special education teachers. This brief also includes general resources related to recruiting, retaining, and supporting teachers.
## Highlighted Resources

This section highlights examples of strategies, programs, and initiatives that help states, local education agencies, and school districts address the shortage of certified special education teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educator shortages in special education: A toolkit for developing local strategies (2019)</strong></td>
<td>This toolkit is organized around the guiding principle that short-term strategies to meet immediate demand must be intentionally paired with long-term, systemic strategies to attract, prepare, and retain effective special education teachers to create comprehensive shortage solutions. The toolkit is a collaboration between the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) at AIR and the CEEDAR Center.</td>
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<td><strong>Short-term strategies for dealing with shortages of special education teachers (2020)</strong></td>
<td>Research has demonstrated that special education teachers who have gone through a full preparation program are more likely to provide effective instruction, increase student achievement, and remain in the classroom. This brief from the CEEDAR Center and the GTL Center at AIR outlines short-term strategies that, when paired with long-term comprehensive strategies, can be employed to hire, prepare, and support teachers in schools and districts facing special education teacher shortage crises.</td>
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<td><strong>Leverage points to enhance state and local efforts to attract, prepare, and retain effective personnel for children with disabilities (2020)</strong></td>
<td>This resource from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs is meant to serve as an overview and starting point for stakeholder groups as they consider and craft effective solutions to attract, prepare, and retain special education educators. Each leverage brief contains a general description and in-depth overview of the strategy; research findings related to the strategy's success; exemplars that have successfully implemented the strategy; a list of critical components for success with steps to consider before implementation (setting the stage), during initial implementation, and afterward (continuous improvement and leveraging lessons learned); considerations for related service providers and early childhood educators; and a stakeholder spotlight that provides information on a group that may not always be considered during implementation. It is also meant to inspire the forming of community partnerships and challenge the status quo through innovative thinking.</td>
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<td><strong>Solving the teacher shortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators (2016)</strong></td>
<td>This Learning Policy Institute report describes several policies that have the potential to improve the recruitment and retention of excellent educators, including teachers in hard-to-staff schools; it offers a set of recommendations, informed by a review of the factors influencing</td>
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**CC Network**

Comprehensive Center Network

**Region 9**

Illinois

Iowa
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<td>A framework for change: Investing ESSER funds to prepare and support</td>
<td>This resource brief provides an overview of strategies for preparing and teachers of students with developing highly qualified general and disabilities (2022) special education teachers, and how states and districts can invest Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to address the current shortage and growing need for educators to support students with disabilities. This brief shares challenges and outlines recommended strategies and actions for states, districts, and educator preparation programs.</td>
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**Additional Resources**

Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge across teacher subgroups. These resources offer a more general overview of strategies to combat the teacher shortage.


Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at AIR: [https://gtlcenter.org/](https://gtlcenter.org/)


https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Solving_Teacher_Shortage_Attract_Retain_Educators_REPORT.pdf

https://osepideasthatwork.org/federal-resources-stakeholders/topical-issues/attract-prepare-retain-resource-database

Other Briefs
This section includes links to other briefs in the series.

Bilingual Teachers
New Teachers
Rural Teachers
STEM Teachers
Teachers in Low-income and Low-performing Schools
Teachers of Color

Endnotes


4 https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/