

ADMIN &amp; MANAGEMENT | LEADERSHIP

# The Times They Are a Changin': How to build a resilient K12 workforce

By Dr. Dana Godek and Michael Moore November 18, 2024



There was a time when a few university job fairs and decent recruitment strategies could fill a candidate pool with qualified applicants for the K12 workforce. Those days are long gone. Today, three out of four schools report at least one teacher vacancy, and candidate pools are shrinking.

Gen Z will surpass the number of Baby Boomers this school year. Gen Z teachers are hard to come by and traditional recruitment strategies won't attract them. Proven methods like "grow your own" programs and alternative certification can help address immediate needs, but long-term success hinges on creating a more attractive, fulfilling profession.

During the pandemic, people got used to working from home, teaching from home and flexible schedules. They also craved human connection and in-person interaction. Workers still want a balance of these two things.

As the workforce landscape continues to change, districts face fierce competition from industries that offer flexibility, career mobility and inclusive environments. School districts that emphasize inclusivity, mobility and flexibility build a stronger workforce *and* a culture centered on human needs, which is embedded in every school district's mission. Here's a look at how districts can act on these priorities.

## Inclusivity: Building a culture of belonging



Inclusivity in the workplace goes deeper than recruitment quotas; it means creating environments where all educators feel valued and have opportunities to contribute. Economist Daron Acemoglu's work on resilient institutions shows that inclusive organizations adapt better and foster innovation through diverse perspectives.

**Real examples of inclusive practices include:**

- **Inclusive Hiring and Community Connections:** Utah's Provo City School District expanded recruitment to include partnerships with community centers to reach underrepresented candidates, increasing hiring rates among bilingual and culturally diverse teachers. This initiative ensures students see their cultures reflected in the classroom, enhancing both student and teacher engagement.
- **Teacher Advisory Councils:** Fremont School District in Illinois implemented teacher advisory councils where educators contribute to district decisions on issues such as diversity and curriculum changes. This approach has led to higher teacher satisfaction and retention, as staff feel heard and valued.

Studies show that inclusivity has a tangible impact on workplace success. According to a 2019 Gallup study, inclusive workplaces see 17% higher productivity, 21% greater profitability and 10% lower turnover. In education, inclusivity supports teacher retention, morale and, ultimately, stronger student outcomes.

## Mobility: Fostering growth and retention

Teachers today want job security and room to grow within their careers. Retaining high-quality educators means districts must provide professional development, cross-functional experiences, and explicit pathways to leadership. Research from the National Center for Education Statistics shows that districts offering structured career growth see significantly lower turnover rates.

**Examples of districts supporting mobility include:**

- **Career Pathways Programs:** North Clackamas School District in Oregon launched a program that allows experienced teachers to mentor new educators, fostering career growth while building leadership capacity within the district. This model strengthens both teacher retention and internal leadership pipelines.
- **Cross-Functional Roles:** At IDEA Public Schools, a charter network with locations across the country, teachers can participate in curriculum development alongside their teaching roles. This exposure to other facets of education strengthens teachers' commitment to the organization by giving them a holistic understanding of the organization's goals.

Mobility programs help build a sense of purpose and advancement. The American Educational Research Association reports that districts with strong internal mobility programs see a 25% reduction in turnover among educators who participate in career advancement initiatives. Developing talent from within reduces hiring costs and ensures stability as educators grow alongside the district.

## Flexibility: Meeting educators' life space needs



Flexible work environments are no longer exclusive to corporate settings. As professionals in education face increasing demands, flexible policies around work schedules and role structures help districts attract and retain talent. Studies by the Society for Human Resource Management reveal that 74% of professionals consider flexibility a top priority and this is increasingly true in education, as well.

#### Examples of flexibility in action include:

- **Hybrid and Flexible Scheduling:** Liberty Public Schools in Missouri implemented flexible scheduling for teachers on professional development days, allowing them to balance work with personal obligations. This approach reduces stress and fosters a healthier work-life balance that is essential for retaining staff.
- **Job-Sharing and Hybrid Roles:** North Carolina's Edgecombe County Schools introduced hybrid positions where teachers split their time between the classroom and district roles in curriculum design. By accommodating educators' career interests within teaching, Edgecombe retains talent without losing them to non-teaching roles.

The Center for American Progress found that flexible work options decrease burnout by 40% and improve retention by up to 18%. In a high-demand profession like education, flexible role structures allow districts to adapt to educators' needs, keeping them engaged and committed to the mission.

## Roadmap for resilience

Prioritizing inclusiveness, mobility and flexibility will build a resilient and competitive workforce. As the labor market evolves and demands change, these principles help districts attract and retain talented educators who are invested in their roles and will stay, grow and thrive.

## Extending Innovation Post-ESSER: The Next Era in K-12 Staffing Success

We are hosting a special webinar on strategic staffing, Monday, Dec. 9, 1:00-2:00 Eastern. Panelists will include leaders from the UVA Partnership for Leaders in Education and the Urban School Human Capital Academy. Watch for the invitation and please join us.

← PREVIOUS

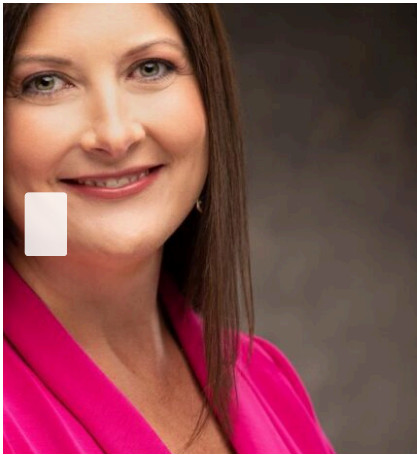
Superintendent Renee Nugent: How to truly connect

NEXT →

Boiling point: How Boyle's law predicts the post-ESSER pressure cooker in education

## YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE





### ntendent incorporated oring that produces results

2023



### Superintendent steps down from a big district as turnover keeps churning

By Matthew Zalaznick May 11, 2023



### This is what : like in one of

By Micah Ward A



**District Administration Leadership Institution** is a Premier K-12 **Membership organization** with a vibrant community of **educational leaders** committed to driving change in education and enhancing the lives of students across the nation.

#### LINKS

LEARN ABOUT MEMBERSHIP

PARTNER WITH US

ATTEND A DALI EVENT

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION



222 Lakeview Ave Suite 800 West Palm Beach FL  
© 2025 DA Leadership Institute *Part of the Arc Network*

