

White Paper on Teacher Recruitment and Retention



A report for the
**What's Next
Nevada Project**

February 2016

White Paper on Teacher Recruitment and Retention, by Mike Miles, Brent Husson, and Dave Berns; published by Nevada Succeeds, Jan. 2016.

Dear Advisory Group Member,

This second white paper of the What's Next Nevada Project focuses on teacher recruitment and retention. Some consider this issue one of the most important facing Nevada. Failure to address the growing teacher shortage and recruit more teachers into the profession will have long-lasting negative implications for our children and society.

This white paper outlines the context of the teacher recruitment and retention challenge, describes key concepts and parameters that may help frame some of our discussion, and makes short- and long-term recommendations. As with the white paper on school leadership, the recommendations outlined in this recruitment and retention white paper only represent the viewpoints of the three authors.

Again, we hope the ideas and concepts will provide you with some food for thought or provide a starting point for discussion. Actual recommendations to the legislature will come from your work at the Advisory Group meeting on February 9th and the other meetings of the Advisory Group.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or concerns. We look forward to active and engaging discussions about this topic and to helping our school districts and state take important next steps to improve Nevada's schools.

Brent Husson,
President
Nevada Succeeds

White Paper on Teacher Recruitment and Retention

The context

Across the country “help wanted” signs are springing up in countless school districts. As more and more teachers reach retirement age and with fewer teachers entering the profession, the national shortage of qualified teachers may become even more severe in the coming years.



Nationally, even the pipeline from alternative education programs, such as Teach for America, narrowed. Two years ago, TFA recruited approximately 6,000 new teachers from their applicant pool of 57,000; this year, the organization selected 4,100 eager teacher candidates out of a much smaller pool of 44,000 applicants.¹ Since TFA teachers hail from some of the nation’s best colleges and universities, the organization’s recruitment woes may also signal growing difficulty in attracting the best and brightest to the teaching profession more generally.

The situation in Nevada mirrors the national phenomenon. This year Clark County had more than its share of vacancies, starting the 2015-2016 school year with close to 800 teacher vacancies.² Hundreds of long-term substitutes have filled out the ranks of the teaching corps for a number of years.

The growing number of school-aged children makes the problem of having an effective teacher in front of every child even more challenging. According to the Foundation for Excellence in Education, the school-aged population in Nevada will grow by nearly 300,000 students by the Year 2030.³ So, as baby-boomer teachers retire, the grandchildren of that generation are entering schools in greater numbers than ever before, adding pressure to a system already struggling with finding enough effective teachers.

¹ *Teach for America Sees Another Big Drop in Accepted Corps Members* by Rebecca Klein, the Huffington Post, 11 August 2015.

² *Partnership formed to tackle CCSD’s Teacher Shortage* by Neal Morton, Las Vegas Review-Journal, 13 October 2015.

³ From 2010 to 2030, the number of 5 to 17 year old children will increase by 296,581 children. *Turn and Face the Strain: Age Demographic Change and the Near Future of American Education* by Dr. Matthew Ladner, Foundation for Excellence in Education, January 2015.

A changing profession

The more urgent teacher recruitment and retention challenges we face come at a time when the profession is changing in significant ways. Increasingly, school systems are looking for teachers who can personalize learning, strengthen critical thinking skills, facilitate group and team learning, and take advantage of technology to make learning more relevant. More and more school leaders are thinking about a Year 2025 workplace and are finding ways to provide students with classes in computer programming, the use of mobile devices and the Internet, or financial literacy.



Most important, teachers in the next decade will have to be flexible, adaptable, and innovative. Advances in technology will continue to impact and change access to information and the way children learn. What students have to know will also be adjusted to meet changing workplace requirements. The lines between traditional and non-traditional schools will soften and become blurred. An effective teacher will not so much impart knowledge as

facilitate learning and deep thinking. She will design lessons using multiple resources and adapt her strategies to align with an ever-changing education ecosystem.

Given the proceeding discussion, the next decade will require an even more highly skilled professional. However, the personalization of education may also allow for a host of non-traditional or highly-specialized “teachers” to support or supplement the work of classroom teachers. Imagine, for example, several small groups of students in a classroom learning computer programming from tutors in India; a district where students are given physical education credit for using the local YMCA; an Introduction to Medicine course being taught on-line by a team of medical students at UNLV School of Medicine; or a hybrid school in which home school students take choir, band, and science labs with a traditional teacher, but take all other courses with tutors hired by the parents.

As legislators and policy-makers consider creating more opportunities and choice options for students, choices *for teachers* will also grow. Teaching positions in non-traditional, K-12 schools is likely to expand significantly over the next several years. Teachers may then have more opportunities to find the “best-fit” environment for themselves. Competition for effective teachers is also likely to grow, placing even more pressure on traditional schools to find ways to retain teachers.

Generational expectations and preferences also will continue to change the teaching profession. According to a recent Heartland Monitor survey, Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) expect to change careers more often than their parents.⁴ A Future Workplace survey found that “ninety-one percent of Millennials . . . expect to stay in a job for less than three years.”⁵ In the business world, the lifelong “company” employee is disappearing; there is no reason to believe that the education profession will not be similarly affected.



Millennials’ preferences and values has implications for retirement plans, the type of person the schools should attract, how career ladders are designed, starting salaries, professional development and other areas. Failure to take them into account may keep administrators from deriving effective solutions to handling the teacher shortage.

Problem definition

“Teacher recruitment and retention,” per se, are not new problems to most schools. Even when applicant pools have been large, many schools struggled to find high-quality or effective teachers. And some subject areas, such as math and science, have been hard to fill for a long time now. Moreover, large urban districts almost always have trouble staffing its most academically challenging schools with its most effective teachers.

Other enduring problems have plagued human resources departments. An outdated compensation system fails to reward teachers for what the organization values most – student learning. Most retirement systems were designed for a less mobile society and do not take into account the penchant millennials have for changing jobs and careers more frequently than baby-boomers. Similarly, the lack of alignment between teacher preparation programs and what schools consider effective teaching makes recruiting effective teachers even harder.

Thus the problem may not be as clear as attracting more high-caliber teachers or improving the work environment in order to retain a higher percentage of effective teachers. These may be part of the solution, but, given the changing education

⁴ *Millennials in Search of a Different Kind of Career* by Gillian White, The Atlantic, 12 June 2015.

⁵ *Job Hopping Is the 'New Normal' for Millennials: Three Ways to Prevent a Human Resource Nightmare* by Jeanne Meister, Forbes, 14 Aug 2012.

The problem is no longer how to recruit X number of teachers for Y number of students, but how to ensure every student has the teacher, facilitator, or resource she needs to meet her personalized learning goals.

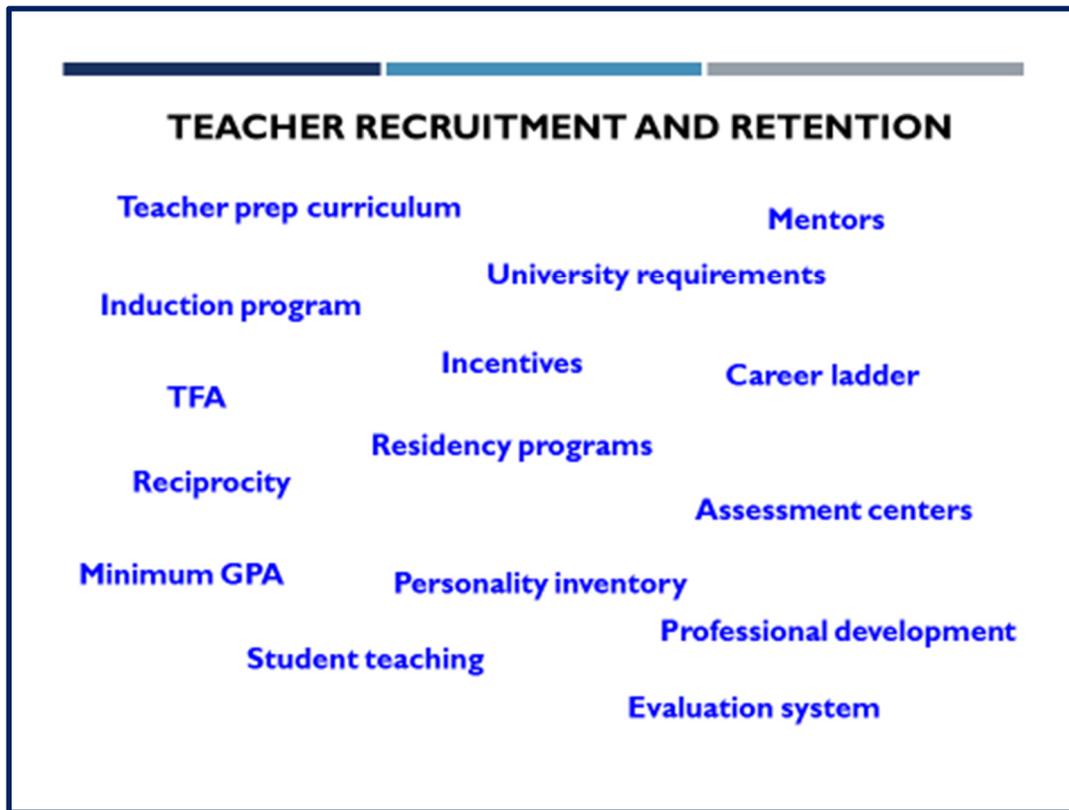
environment, perhaps it is time to re-define the problem. **The problem is no longer how to recruit X number of teachers for Y number of students, but how to ensure every student has the teacher, facilitator, or resource she needs to meet her personalized learning goals.**

Defining the problem in this way focuses on the student and her personalized needs. Of course, in most cases, students may be well served by an effective teacher in a classroom with 25 students. In many other cases, however, the student may benefit from having a non-traditional instructor, facilitator, or resource. Take, for example, an on-line or a distance-learning course. Some students are able to learn even a difficult subject like math using computer-based programs such as the Kahn Academy or the School-of-One. A traditional, “certified” teacher may not be necessary in these types of classrooms; college students or on-line tutors may be able to facilitate learning and guide or support students when they get stuck. Schools may also be able to relax class-size restrictions in these types of classrooms. Just as choir and physical education classes can accommodate more students, some on-line classrooms will also be able to have a larger student-teacher ratio.

Chasing non-systemic solutions

There have been no shortage of good ideas and efforts to improve teacher recruitment and retention. Across the country most districts have invested in mentors for teachers, stronger student teaching programs, incentives for hard-to-fill areas, new teacher academies and more-relevant induction programs. Others have experimented with assessment centers, raising hiring standards, developing career ladders, and collaborating with universities to align teacher prep programs with more effective teaching.

While all of these initiatives help recruitment or retention problems to some degree, given the growing shortages and the perennial problem of finding enough effective teachers to staff schools, investing in one or two aspects of the human relations challenge will likely be insufficient to change the trend. Similarly, investing a little in each of several initiatives is likely to diffuse effort rather than achieve a significant change in recruitment or retention outcomes.

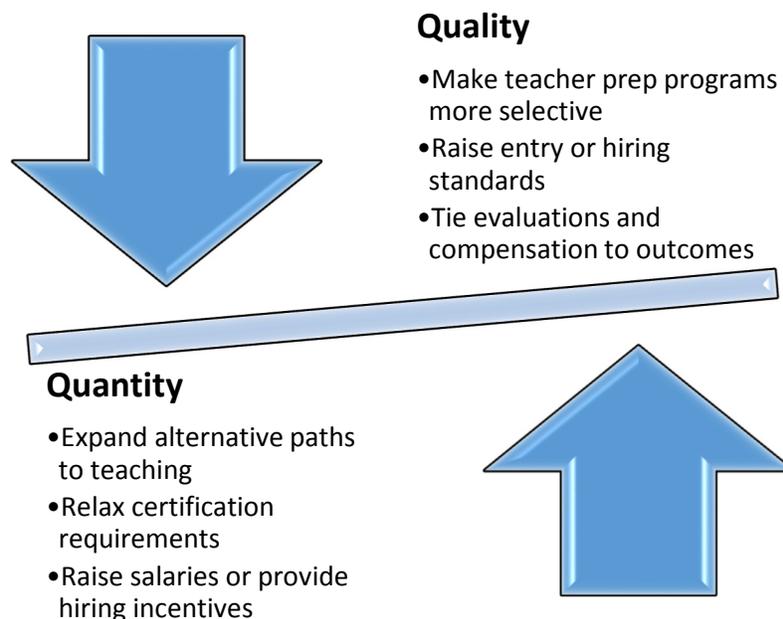


Once again the most effective solutions are likely to be systemic and address the right problem. Incentivizing teachers to stay in the profession longer without discussing the outcomes the organization expects to gain from that investment is unlikely to be an effective use of scarce financial resources. Developing a plan to strengthen teacher preparation programs in colleges must be aligned with how schools evaluate teachers and the results or outcomes the community values most.

Most important, the schools and districts should not address the teacher vacancy problem without solving long-term teacher quality concerns. Almost paradoxically, failure to raise the standards in the profession generally may aggravate the problem of teacher shortages down the road. If fewer people enter teaching because it is not held in high regard or if more people enter because it is easy to get a job as a teacher, then focusing on quantity and not quality will not solve the talent management problem. Not only do we need more people willing to be teachers, we need more of the best and brightest joining a profession in which they can find satisfaction working in high-performing cultures.

The shortage/quality dilemma

The challenge will be to find short term solutions that will not make solving the long-term quality goals much more difficult to achieve, and to find long-term solutions that will address both the quantity and quality concerns. Making teacher preparation programs much more selective in the very short term, may narrow the pipeline considerably. Lower numbers of teachers from the formal prep programs may be mitigated by increasing the number of alternatively-certified teachers or by relaxing certification requirements and allowing more non-traditional instructors, but that might then impact the quality of instruction. Raising entry or hiring standards or tying evaluations and compensation to outcomes are also important to improving the quality of the teaching corps, but may aggravate the vacancy rate in the short term.



Of course, high quantity and high quality are not mutually exclusive. Smart strategies and initiatives, implemented systemically and with the right timing, can meet both needs.

The way forward

Before considering specific proposals or initiatives to recruit and retain more teachers, leaders should consider the **core concepts and principles** that have undergirded past human capital practices. Many of these principles have reached “sacred cow” status and will be difficult to surrender. For example, the concept of equality or sameness has dominated the treatment of teachers – teachers have the same work schedule, get the same raises, have the same entry requirements, have the same number of days off, and

receive the same professional development. The way forward will most likely require greater differentiation of how teachers are trained, supported, assessed, and compensated.

Solving both the quantity and quality challenges will mean changing three other human capital paradigms in education. The profession must become more selective, align the talent management system to outcomes, and redefine the employee value proposition.

- **Increase selectivity.** The education profession is plagued by perceptions that “those who can, do; those who can’t, teach.” Too often, teaching seems to be the profession of last resort for those who could not get a job in another area. Education organizations in part reinforce these misconceptions, making it far too easy to get a teaching license. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, in a majority of higher education institutions “grading standards for teacher candidates are much lower than for students in other majors on the same campus.”⁶



If we are going to raise overall teacher quality and attract more top-tier students into the profession, teacher prep programs and local education agencies will have to be much more selective. Several reports document how other countries have been able to create world-class education systems by attracting top talent and being very selective. According to a 2010 McKinsey & Company report, “top

performing nations recruit 100% of their new teachers from the top third [of its graduates from college]. In the U.S. it’s 23% -- and 14% in high poverty schools.”⁷

- **Align talent management system to outcomes.** High-performing organizations value outcomes. People in those types of organizations hold themselves accountable to those outcomes and in large part measure their success in relationship to goal accomplishment. Individual goals and assessment of effectiveness are aligned with the organization’s mission and goals.

In most schools and districts there is not close alignment between individual performance and what the organization values most. Thus, most teachers receive proficient or effective evaluation ratings even when student achievement results

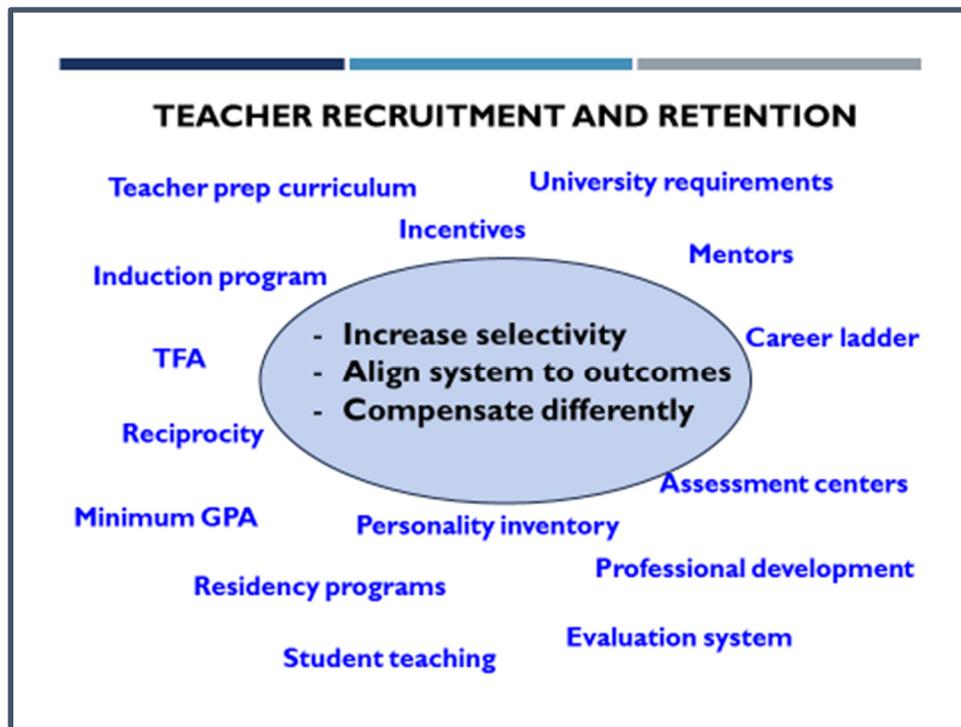
⁶*Training Our Future Teachers: Easy A's and What's Behind Them*, a report from the National Council on Teacher Quality, November 2014

⁷ *Closing the Talent Gap: Attracting and Retaining Top-Third Graduates to Careers in Teaching* by Byron Auguste, Paul Kihn, and Matt Miller, McKinsey & Company, September 2010.

decline. Similarly, while schools value high quality teaching and higher student proficiency, very few schools compensate teachers for those outcomes.

To be sure, it is difficult to quantify effective teaching and assessments of student performance cannot capture all that students have learned. However, the absence of a perfect system should not prevent organizations from including outcomes in assessment of teacher effectiveness or when determining which new teacher to keep in the profession.

Alignment to agreed-upon outcomes and the skill set or competencies most needed to achieve those outcomes will also help colleges and universities design more effective teacher preparation programs. It will aid administrators in designing more effective professional development and eliminate the PD that cannot be tied to a positive result for the school. Alignment to outcomes will also help mentors and instructional coaches provide more focused support since everyone in the organization would know what success looks like and the specific outcomes for which teachers will be assessed.



- **Compensate differently.**

Effective teachers should be paid like high-performing employees in other professions. After conducting market research on teacher salaries, McKinsey &

Company concluded that in order to significantly increase the percentage of top-tier students entering the profession, new teachers would have to be paid approximately \$65,000 with a maximum career compensation of \$150,000 annually.⁸ According to their report, such an increase in salaries would cost the average state approximately \$630 million.⁹

Given the impact of rising health care costs to state budgets and the increase in funding to schools that will be required just to accommodate increasing enrollment, a \$90,000 increase to the average teacher salary is unlikely to happen any time soon. However, differentiated compensation plans can help increase salaries for the most effective teachers.

Schools and districts will also have to redefine the employee value proposition -- they will have to consider variable compensation packages and greater flexibility in work schedules. Imagine, for example, a job-sharing arrangement of four teachers or facilitators tied to specific student proficiency

Schools and districts will also have to redefine the employee value proposition -- they will have to consider variable compensation packages and greater flexibility in work schedules.

outcomes for 70 students. Compensation could be differentiated and so could the hours each one worked. Some of the work could be done remotely. For those Millennials who place a premium on a flexible schedule and more time off, this type of arrangement may help attract and retain them in the profession even if the salary is not as high as in other careers.

While the State may not be able to increase teacher salaries significantly, it can help improve the value proposition by mitigating rising health care costs for teachers, supporting a more portable retirement system, or paying for maternity leave for teachers.

Recommendations

Much of the teacher recruitment and retention problem is systemic and tied to principles and concepts that have been longstanding. It will take some time to turn the situation around. Still, the teacher shortage in Nevada is urgent and will most likely get worse if some actions are not taken soon. Thus the solutions should include short term steps and

⁸ *Closing the Talent Gap: Attracting and Retaining Top-Third Graduates to Careers in Teaching* by Byron Auguste, Paul Kihn, and Matt Miller, McKinsey & Company, September 2010.

⁹ *Ibid.*

also steps that will address both the quantity and quality of the teaching corps in the long term.

Short term

In the short term, in order to address the immediate teacher shortage, Nevada will have to attract more teachers from within and outside of the state. Specifically, the State should provide a signing bonus for new teachers, begin a “Teach for Nevada” program to attract top-tier talent to the State, and relax certification requirements for secondary elective courses in certain schools.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention *Short Term Recommendations*

- **Provide a signing bonus for new teachers**
- **Begin a “Teach for Nevada” program**
- **Relax certification requirements for teachers of non-core or non-tested subjects**

- **Provide a signing bonus for new teachers.** To the extent the supply of teachers responds to increases in monetary compensation, signing bonuses will increase the number of teachers entering the profession, at least in the short term. Several other states or districts have used this strategy to help recruit teachers. In 2013, Tennessee started providing a \$7,000 signing bonus to highly effective teachers.¹⁰ In Massachusetts, exceptional new teachers are offered an additional \$20,000 over four years.¹¹

Based on the experience of other districts, if Nevada offered a signing bonus of approximate \$10,000 to be paid out over two years for new teachers, the state could increase its teacher ranks by a few hundred. Signing bonuses should be differentiated based on criteria that are highly correlated to student achievement results, critical thinking, or adaptability: high college GPA, demonstrated leadership ability, or ability to analyze data.

¹⁰ *Tennessee Department of Education to Grant Signing and Retention Bonuses to Highly Effective Teachers*, Tennessee Department of Education website, Newsroom and Media Center, 8 May 2013.

¹¹ *The Teacher Shortage, Apply, Please!* By Glori Chaika, Education World, 31 Oct 2015.

- **Begin a “Teach for Nevada” or “Governor’s 400” program.** While most of the teaching force in Nevada should be “home grown,” the state will also need to attract top-tier talent from the outside. A Teach for Nevada program would target new or experienced teachers from outside of the State. The program would seek out people with high college GPAs, proven leadership abilities, and performance results from any field or discipline. The selected teachers would serve a minimum of three years and would receive a bonus of \$24,000 over three years.

The real key with this program is not the bonus, but the selectivity. It must be as difficult to be selected for the Teach for Nevada program as with Teach for America, which selects only 10% of its applicants. If the standards are kept high, this program will also begin to address the systemic quality concerns the profession has. It can help change the percentage of top-tier students who enter the teaching profession.

- **Relax certification requirements for teachers of non-core or non-tested subjects.** While there is a shortage of traditional teachers willing to work full-time, there is likely a host of people with bachelor’s or associate’s degrees willing to teach in non-traditional settings or for part time. There are also professionals and people with requisite skills, especially in the arts or in vocational subjects that could be called upon to personalize the learning for students. Innovative leaders in the traditional schools can figure out ways to take advantage of this pool of instructors and, at the same time, expand the personalization of learning for students.



The key will be for schools to be clear about the outcomes they are trying to achieve. The following are examples of the types of innovative strategies that will achieve the same outcome that we want for students:

- A high school collaborates with UNLV School of Medicine and hires a group of medical students to teach a freshman health science class and an introduction to medical science class for juniors. The mid-term and final exams are approved by the Nevada Department of Education.
- A high school collaborates with two local communications and marketing companies to provide apprenticeships for 20 students twice a week from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. Students also work on projects for the companies, but receive no compensation.

- A middle school collaborates with the local YMCA or other fitness centers to provide membership at a much reduced rate. Students earn physical education credit after attending the fitness center for 90 hours.
- A high school enrolls 50 students in an on-line computer programming class. The school hires a computer programmer who works for a company in Nevada. The programmer works part time for the school, guiding the students and helping them with problems. The “teacher” is available to answer questions or support students from 7 to 9 p.m. four days a week.



As with most major changes in personnel practice, it is prudent to start slow and pilot the change or do a partial implementation. With this in mind, we recommend relaxing certification requirements for teachers of elective courses in secondary schools in the top 50% of Nevada schools based on student academic achievement. This strategy will allow creative leaders to hire non-traditional teachers, facilitators, college tutors, and on-

line instructors to teach appropriate students in their schools.

Nevada has approximately 200 secondary public schools; so, approximately 100 schools could take advantage of this pilot. If, on average, each of those schools hired two non-traditional teachers, the program would “free up” 200 teachers in the system to move to schools with shortages. Money saved from these innovative practices and personalizing the learning in this fashion can be used to provide higher salaries or bonuses to traditional teachers.

If school administrators do not have a process for vetting non-traditional hires, there is the potential for abuse or hiring people who cannot deliver on the desired outcomes. Schools will still need to conduct background checks and performance interviews with any potential instructor.

The standard certification process, however, should be relaxed or differentiated. Currently, teacher certification provide very little information on which teachers will be effective. Since certifications are not based on outcomes, but on course completion and time served as a student teacher (which also includes a typically perfunctory evaluation), the holding of a certification does not predict success. Meanwhile, parents and communities are looking for teachers, facilitators, or resources that can get results and raise the proficiency of their children.

While some minimum level of content knowledge and credentials should be required, certification requirements can be differentiated. In the short term, they can be relaxed in several areas: beyond at least two years of college and a background check, the State could leave it to the principal's or HR director's discretion as to which person or supporting organization can achieve the learning outcomes the school and parents value.

Long term

The short term strategy of relaxing certification requirements for instructors of certain courses will also help in the long term. As education becomes more personalized or differentiated, with students receiving educational services and instruction from multiple sources, teacher certifications or endorsements can also be differentiated. On-line instructors, for example, should demonstrate competency in making the material relevant and helping students to think critically. In most cases, they will not need to be assessed in classroom management. A communications or marketing firm that agrees to take on 20 high school apprentices may only need an endorsement from the Better Business Bureau and also achieve the outcomes the school defines.

In every non-traditional or atypical educational setting, the clear definition of student proficiency outcomes and holding every type of instructor accountable for achieving those outcomes will ensure the quality of a child's educational experience.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Long Term Recommendations

- **Raise professional standards**
 - **Increase selectivity to schools of education**
 - **Change certification process to attestations of specific competencies**
- **Increase salaries for most effective teachers**
- **Align the teacher talent management system**
- **Create a “West Point” for teachers**

In order to solve both the quantity and quality problem over the long term, Nevada should raise professional teaching standards, tie compensation to effectiveness and increase salaries for the most effective, align the teacher talent management system, and create a “West Point” for teachers.

1) Raise professional standards.

The relaxation of teaching requirements in specific circumstances should be accompanied by the strengthening of standards for professional classroom teachers. Over time, the profession must become much more selective and attract predominantly top tier college graduates.

First, the schools of education should raise entry requirements. The minimum composite ACT score should be set at 24 and gradually increased to 28. Candidates should demonstrate high competency in data analysis and critical thinking. They should also demonstrate leadership skills.

The certification process should be replaced with an “attestation” process whereby teachers receive attestations of various skills or competencies. These attestations should be based primarily on demonstrated ability to achieve specific results or outcomes.

Teachers have to earn a minimum number of core attestations in order to be eligible to enter the profession. Additional attestations, again tied to demonstrated competencies and student proficiency outcomes, lead to higher levels of effectiveness and promotions.



2) Increase salaries for the most effective teachers.

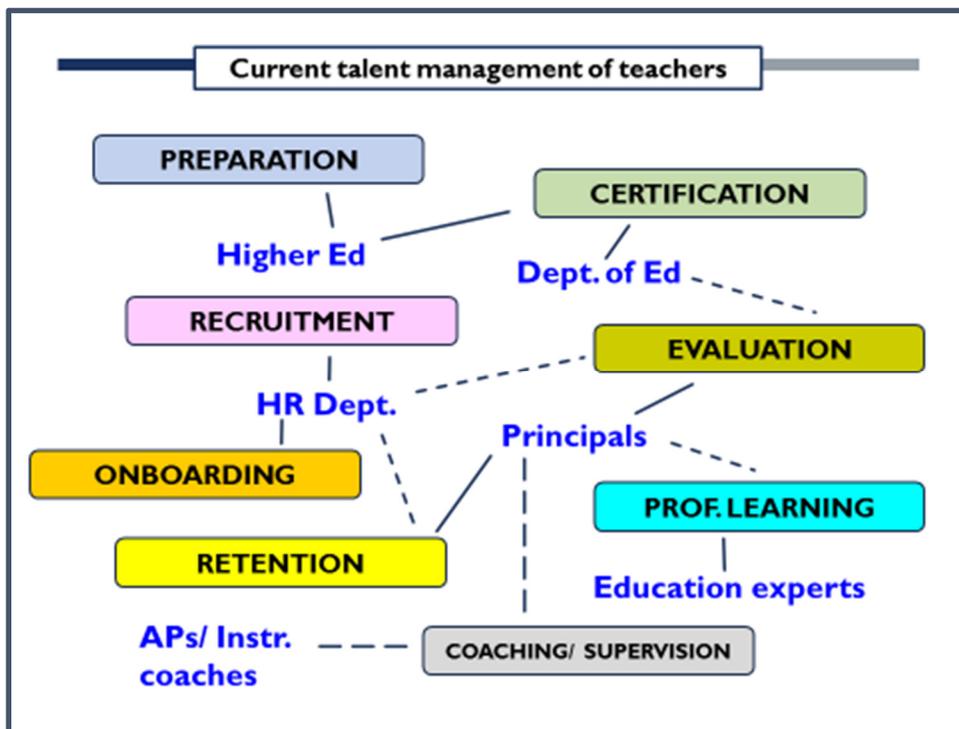
While there may not be sufficient funding to increase salaries to the level of other critical professions, overall salaries for teachers will have to be increased to attract and retain teachers. Allowing for “non-certified” instructors and facilitators in specific subjects may result in a savings to the overall budget (since districts would not have to pay them as much as a professional teacher, nor have to pay for benefits in many cases). These dividends could be used to increase professional teacher salaries.

Another way to increase salaries without overwhelming the budget is to differentiate compensation based on effectiveness. This requires evaluations to be accurate and rigorous and a shift in how teachers perceive “fairness” in awarding salary increases. Instead of 100 percent of the teachers receive the same two or three percent increase, salary increases should be tied to demonstrated improvement in performance and the accomplishment of defined outcomes. The lowest performing teachers would not receive a salary increase while the most effective teachers would receive a sizable (six to eight percent) raise. In the 2014-2015 school year, the Dallas Independent School District with 10,000 teachers was able to substantially differentiate its teacher salaries without any additional revenue to the overall budget. In that year, approximately 30% of the

teachers stayed at their current salary, allowing for four percent increases for the average teacher and up to ten percent increases for distinguished teachers.

3) *Align the teacher talent management system.*

Just as with the selection, development, and retention of principals, the teacher talent management system is incongruous and does little to strengthen the profession. This is so because so many different actors are involved in the talent management of teachers from preparation to retention. Each actor has different responsibilities and often different standards for teachers. There seems to be no unifying vision or concept of what great teaching looks like.



Misalignment of the talent management system makes it much harder to grow teacher capacity and assess quality. Conversely, if the system were aligned, districts would be able to recruit and hire the right people, differentiate professional development and coaching, and use evaluations to differentiate compensation and reward people for achieving the outcomes the district and community value most.

The best way to align the talent management system is to identify the specific competencies teachers need to have and the specific outcomes the school and community value. All groups that play a role in recruiting, developing, evaluating and retaining teachers could then align their work to those competencies and outcomes.

4) Create a “West Point” for teachers.

Nevada will compete with other states for the best and brightest talent. Part of the solution is to compete for talent from other states. Another part of the solution is to grow and develop young teacher leaders in the state. An elite teacher college – one that would establish the highest bar for effective teachers in a Year 2025 environment – could attract both in-state and out-of-state students.



The state would pay the tuition for the students in return for a commitment to serve in a Nevada school for at least three years. The school would produce approximately 800 graduates a year who would excel at Year 2025 skills and who would be the best trained leaders in the country (perhaps with the exception of military academy cadets). If done correctly, it would be as hard to get accepted to this college as it is to get accepted to MIT.

Eventually, these graduates would raise the “level of play” – the level of professional practice -- for all of the teachers in Nevada and in the United States.