

Strategic Staffing

Essentials for Tennessee District Leaders

What is Strategic Staffing?

Strategic school staffing is a deliberate approach to recruiting, deploying, and supporting educators based on the needs of students and school or district priorities. It goes beyond traditional hiring by allowing districts to intentionally design roles, master schedules, and support systems to better leverage current staff and recruit for critical needs, ensuring all students have access to high-quality instruction. As hiring managers and master schedule designers, school and district leaders play a pivotal role in using strategic staffing to shape both student experiences and day-to-day school operations.

Strategic staffing helps to:

- Leverage the strengths of current staff
- Recruit for critical shortage areas
- Ensure all students have access to high-quality instruction

A Comprehensive Talent Solution

Strategic school staffing addresses the full continuum of educator workforce needs, from recruitment and development to deployment and retention, in ways that are aligned with instructional goals and student outcomes. Strategic staffing, as a comprehensive talent solution, can help to:

- Improve student outcomes—yielding up to an additional half-year of learning for all students and up to 1.5 years for English Learners.¹
- Increase teacher retention and support career growth within the classroom—often by providing additional compensation for certain roles.²

¹ Public Impact. (n.d.). *Research shows results* [Web page]. Opportunity Culture. <https://www.opportunityculture.org/research/>

² National Council on Teacher Quality. (2023, February 7). *Beyond one-size-fits-all: The case for differentiated teacher compensation*. <https://www.nctq.org/research-insights/beyond-one-size-fits-all-the-case-for-differentiated-teacher-compensation>

- Reduce the cost and disruption of persistent vacancies while maximizing the return on human capital investments.³

Key Concepts of Strategic Staffing

While strategic staffing models can and *should* look different based on each district's local context, the Key Concepts provided below serve as guiding principles to which district leaders should align their strategic staffing and talent strategies:

Reimagining the Role of the Teacher

- Redefine educator roles to better align with student needs and school priorities.
- Move away from “one-size-fits-all” staffing models by leveraging differentiated roles (e.g., teacher leaders, paraprofessionals, interventionists).
- Recognize the full skill set of educators and support career progression within the classroom.
- Design innovative master schedules that support collaboration, intervention, and release time for additional teacher leader responsibilities.⁴

Tiered Staffing Structures and Staffing Models

- Implement tiered talent systems (e.g., paraprofessionals-> teacher apprentices-> novice teachers-> mentor teachers) to build internal pipelines, creating clear pathways for growth and advancement.
- Allow districts and schools to build internal pipelines, creating opportunities for growth and advancement for current staff.
- Promote team-based teaching, job-embedded coaching, and collaborative planning to optimize instructional coverage and support.
- Utilize flexible scheduling and technology to enhance learning time and broaden the impact of highly effective educators, without overburdening individuals.

Strategic Allocation of Talent

³ Learning Policy Institute. (2024, September 17). 2024 update: What's the cost of teacher turnover? [Fact sheet]. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/2024-whats-cost-teacher-turnover>

⁴ More information regarding Strategic Staffing from Tennessee SCORE may also be found here: <https://tnscore.org/assets/documents/StrategicSchoolStaffing.pdf>

- Prioritize critical shortage areas such as STEM, special education, and English as a second language.
- Ensure the most effective teachers are placed where they are needed most.
- Align human capital decisions with data on student and school needs to improve overall school performance and increase access to high-quality instruction.
- Implement differentiated compensation strategies in tandem with a strategic staffing model, leveraging staffing redesign as a vehicle to launch and/or scale compensation models that reward impact and address priority staffing needs.

Foundations for Success: Conditions for Implementing Strategic Staffing

To ensure successful implementation and long-term sustainability, districts adopting strategic staffing models should begin by aligning vision, leadership, and resources around a clear staffing strategy that supports educator effectiveness, addresses student needs, and aligns with district talent goals. Districts should begin by identifying a senior-level leader who will champion this strategy and ensure processes are consistently implemented with quality. This champion should take the lead in driving strategic staffing efforts by:

1. **Aligning Vision, Leadership, and Systems:** Establish a shared purpose, build leadership capacity, and ensure that policies and operational structures support change.
2. **Engaging People and Utilize Data:** Involve stakeholders through strategic and timely communication across the community, using data to drive decisions, monitor progress, and adjust strategies.
3. **Emphasizing, Investing, and Sustaining:** Prioritize what matters by investing in educator capacity, aligning compensation with impact, and sustaining effective practices through strategic resource allocation.

Explore More Resources on Strategic Staffing

For access to additional tools, guidance, and implementation support on strategic staffing and other human capital priorities, please contact teachready@tn.gov or visit the [TeachReadyTN webpage](https://teachreadytn.gov). Additionally, districts interested in learning more about what

strategic staffing models look like in practice should also review [Tennessee SCORE's report on strategic school staffing](#).