



# Growth Metrics for K-12 Human Capital Management

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How Talent Data Can Drive Continuous  
Improvement in the Teacher Shortage Era



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# Table of Contents

Foreword.....	3
About the Institute & Acknowledgements.....	5
Part 1: Why Human Capital (Still) Matters .....	6
Successful Reforms Require Time and Fidelity .....	7
Part 2: Key Metrics.....	11
About the Data .....	12
Recruiting and Hiring .....	14
Engagement and Learning .....	19
Evaluation and Feedback.....	25
Conclusion .....	29
A Comprehensive Approach to Human Capital Management.....	30

# Foreword

by: **Candice McQueen**

Ten years ago, we had an opportunity in Tennessee to rethink how we support our teachers and school leaders. We wanted to think big and bold. We knew that tinkering at the edges would not bring the kind of lasting and impactful change we needed to grow from where we were at the time: in the bottom handful of states when it came to student achievement, and with academic standards and postsecondary readiness that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce labeled as an “F.”

What has made Tennessee successful is that we combined big and bold ideas with a smart and steady approach. We found ways to get immediate wins for kids while always remembering that creating lasting change in education is a long game.

As this report underscores, human capital can be a tough place to work. But Tennessee has stuck with its most important improvements: strengthening teacher preparation, improving our educator evaluation system and helping educators use it as a feedback tool, producing data-driven human capital reports for schools and districts, increasing state-offered supports and trainings, adding new teacher-leadership opportunities, and investing historic amounts in teacher salaries. It was not easy, especially as we were starting, but this work directly improved student outcomes and created systemic benefits to better support our teachers.

In 2012, only 38% of Tennessee teachers said that the state’s evaluation process improved their teaching. But after six years of hard

work, 72% agreed with that statement. During that same time and thanks to those teachers, Tennessee students have become among the fastest improving in the country on national student achievement benchmarks like NAEP, where we improved our ranking in all subject areas, Tennessee’s academic standards now earn an “A,” and key metrics like average ACT composite score and AP course taking and credit attainment have also risen.

Tennessee’s success through this time has only been possible because at every step, we came back to the core questions of how we were recruiting, retaining, and supporting effective teachers. From there, we were able to expand on key strategies, like adding more CTE and career pathways and putting renewed focus in areas like early grades literacy. We were building on the most critical foundation — that of having effective educators.

From my roles as a dean of a college of education, the Tennessee Commissioner of Education, and now as the CEO of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, I am more convinced than ever that teacher talent and human capital has to be at the center of all that we do. As this report mentions, it can be tempting to get caught up in the latest new reform trend or focus on pieces of this work in silos. But that’s not how we — and our students and teachers — will be most effective at improving outcomes.

What’s more: don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. In the aftermath of No Child Left Behind, when it became clear that simply setting higher proficiency standards was not enough, the field identified teachers and leaders as the next frontier of reform. A few years later, when backlash against evaluation reform was at its peak, states again stepped

back from their commitments to human capital reforms. Is it any wonder that in those states, these reforms “failed”?

(By the way, consistency is not only the key to make sure this work is successful — it is also what teachers are asking for. They want us to work through and stick with reforms, even if imperfect, and not keep changing our approach.)

While there are many aspects of education in Tennessee and in human capital that are still in need of improvement, this state’s example provides lessons to other school districts and states around the country: be rigorous about selecting and tracking the metrics that count, keep the focus on human capital, and then rigorously evaluate your data to make decisions about how to best serve the students — and the teachers — in front of you.

When it comes to the human capital reforms of the last decades, efforts were inspired by research: namely, that teachers and leaders have the highest in-school impact on student outcomes. Those research findings still stand. There is no evidence that other factors matter more in supporting student outcomes than teachers and school leaders. So, why walk away from efforts to improve the way we recruit, onboard, evaluate, and support educators? Rather than shifting our focus elsewhere, we would be well served to apply lessons from recent efforts at human capital reform to improving our systems and remaining committed to supporting educators as we should.

So be wary of the next big idea if your school board, superintendent, parents and educators have not yet given the last big idea — particularly when it involves supporting and retaining great teachers — the chance to succeed. Our teachers and our students stand to benefit from our focus as much as from our urgency. Nothing is more important. That’s what my organization, NIET, works on this every day and why my commitment to these efforts is stronger now than ever.

### **Author Bio:**

Dr. Candice McQueen has been chief executive officer of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching since mid-January 2019. A lifelong educator, Dr. McQueen served as Tennessee’s commissioner of education from January 2015 to January 2019. She has been a staunch advocate for focusing on human capital as the primary lever for change. In 2018, while McQueen was commissioner, researchers at Georgetown University pointed to Tennessee’s teacher evaluation and professional development model as laying the foundation for substantial, career-long improvement in the state’s teachers and resulting gains in student achievement. Dr. McQueen started her education career as a classroom teacher, teaching in both public and private elementary and middle schools in Tennessee and Texas.

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## About the Institute

The Frontline Research & Learning Institute generates data-driven research, resources and observations to support and advance the education community. The Institute's research is powered by Frontline Education data and analytics capabilities in partnership with over 12,000 K-12 organizations and several million users nationwide. The Institute's research reports and analysis are designed to provide practical insights for teachers and leaders as well as benchmarks to inform strategic decision-making within their organizations.

## With Gratitude

The authors wish to thank members of the Frontline Research & Learning Institute Advisory Council; Candice McQueen, CEO of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching and former Commissioner of Education for the state of Tennessee; and our respective teams at Frontline Education and Whiteboard Advisors for their expertise.

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## PART 1:

# Human Capital (Still) Matters

Over the last decade, state and school district efforts to tap the potential of human capital have been stimulated by evolving federal priorities, from Race to the Top to ESEA waivers, designed to spark investment in — and commitment to — our nation’s teachers. Unfortunately, the result has been a tepid reception to talent-related reforms. Well-intentioned efforts to focus on teachers and leaders, the most important in-school factor for student learning, instead sowed seeds of mistrust among educators and the public alike.

We know well that if teachers are not prepared or supported, their ability to serve students is dramatically reduced. But educators are, with good reason, skeptical of top-down policies that tend to overlook the sort of instructional preparation and meaningful professional development that we know is so critical to developing and retaining our teaching corps. Perhaps we’ve lost sight of the intent, logic, and rationale behind investing in talent in the first place.

Over the last two years, states have received approval for their ESSA consolidated plans and begun to implement them. This year, states’ first efforts to identify and support schools needing improvement began in earnest. Perhaps not surprisingly, these plans include many references to today’s most common education catchphrases — things like “personalized learning” and “whole child education”—but relatively little related to renovating and knitting together various elements of the educator talent pipeline.

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While ESEA waivers and Race to the Top plans addressed educator evaluation reforms, investments in training evaluators, and attention to coaching based upon findings from evaluations, ESSA plans focus more on diversifying recruitment and training pathways and providing professional development. Absent in most plans is either attention to clear quality metrics for each element of the human capital system or an explicit connection among the elements – like that between evaluation and professional learning – that ensures the systems can be as effective as possible. That shift is worrisome in an era when teaching is losing popularity among college students as a preferred profession, and teachers are leaving teaching faster than jobs can be filled.

But as state and district leaders consider ways to meet the need for increased support for schools and districts, they might consider the possibility that the byproduct of the last decade’s emphasis on human capital may be the makings of a new era of talent-centered strategies, such as hiring for roles earlier, improving hiring processes, leveraging improved educator evaluation frameworks, and planning for educator absences. Rather than abandon such beneficial byproducts of prior investments, ESSA provides an opportunity to build on promises that are a vestige of the top-down era. It provides an opportunity to reconsider the rationale for our work, and revisit the potential of investing in teacher talent.

## Successful Reforms Require Time and Fidelity

Efforts to improve schools have been ongoing for decades, having addressed everything from the content of curriculum (e.g., Reading Wars, New Math, more rigorous curriculum, evidence-based practices) to school format (e.g., charter schools and other nontraditional models, removal of physical walls, integration of online and blended learning) to personnel (e.g., educator evaluation and certification reforms, alternative training pathways). At the school and district level, leadership has focused most recently on devolving responsibility and flexibility

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from district to school to classroom, on the notion that the people who are closest to students will be best able to make decisions on behalf of their students. But these efforts have also been driven in part by the mechanics of formula funding, which make funds that are further from classrooms more fungible and less stable; not all educators have sufficient experience or support to implement the flexibility well.

All of that leads to a pressing question: if these efforts have not consistently resulted in improved outcomes for students, what should a school or district leader faced with ongoing challenges of educator effectiveness and resulting student achievement do to realize improvement?

In many ways, efforts at reform have demonstrated that the efficacy of any particular method is predicated on the context in which it is implemented, plus the fidelity of implementation. For example, literacy research has demonstrated that a blend of phonics and whole language works best, largely depending on context.<sup>1</sup> Experience with open classrooms has demonstrated that moving to true no-wall formats requires time and thoughtful dedication of space to quiet areas; the concept of openness is better executed in experiences outside the school than in everyday classrooms. Research on educator effectiveness has shown that while some efforts to change the way that schools run evaluations have resulted in measurable improvements in educator effectiveness (e.g., in Washington, D.C.<sup>2</sup> and Cincinnati<sup>3</sup>), others have shown limited or spotty outcomes in either educator effectiveness or student outcomes (e.g., in Pittsburgh and Memphis<sup>4</sup>).

Research and experience have also demonstrated that the time required for complete implementation with fidelity is often far longer than the periods that reforms are allotted. Program evaluations have historically been post hoc inventions that don't engage until well after implementation has begun, which makes it challenging to evaluate





consistently the elements of implementation that really matter for outcomes. Examples like Reading First — which built the findings from the National Reading Panel into the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act—went into effect in 2002, was initially implemented in 2003, and then was evaluated using data from 2003–06 in its 2008 “final” evaluation—leaving only three years to try to understand the full influence of the law nationwide.

Similarly, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s 2009 Measures of Effective Teaching study lasted only from 2009–2012, again providing only three years to gather evidence of the effects of massive changes in policy; findings from BMGF demonstrated that the efforts worked to change practice — but later reports from RAND and AIR suggested they failed to influence student achievement.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“Reading First did not have statistically significant impacts on student reading comprehension test scores in grades 1–3”, Reading First Interim Report (2008), National Center for Education Evaluation. <https://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=NCEE20084016>

<sup>2</sup> Adnot, M., Dee, J. Katz, V., & Wycoff, J. (2016). Teacher Turnover, Teacher Quality, and Student Achievement in DCPS. NBER Working Paper No. 21922. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w21922>

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, E.S., & Tyler, J.H. (2012). The Effect of Evaluation on Teacher Performance. American Economic Review, 102(7): 3628–3651. <https://faculty.smu.edu/millimet/classes/eco7321/papers/taylor%20tyler%202012.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Stecher, et al. Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching Enhanced How Teachers Are Evaluated But Had Little Effect on Student Outcomes. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB10009-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10009-1.html)

<sup>5</sup> Stecher, et al. Improving Teaching Effectiveness: Final Report: The Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching Through 2015–2016. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2242.htm](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2242.htm)



Nevertheless, there is significant urgency to make changes that will have an immediate effect on student learning engagement and outcomes. Students who are in classrooms today don't have several years to wait to test the efficacy of reforms, and teachers often lack even several days to test new strategies. As schools and districts identified for the first round of Targeted School Improvement (TSI) or Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) over the last several months look to the research to identify ways they can make effective changes to strategy, they benefit from leveraging all available data.

We must also bear in mind the current context of teaching nationwide: teachers are too often feeling disrespected and unsupported in their roles, underpaid and overtaxed. These sentiments are making the teaching profession increasingly unappealing for current and potential future educators. In short, something must be done to turn the tide not just for students, but for their teachers and leaders as well.

In the next part of this report, we demonstrate through data covering the period of the most recent educator and school personnel-related reforms that human capital strategy refinement may be a better tactic than wholesale adoption of new strategies for improvement — and it may be a faster means to achieving better outcomes for students.

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## PART 2:


# Key Metrics

Many school and district leaders find that they have so many potential data points at their disposal – many of which often seem hard to organize effectively--that they do not consistently measure or track any one set of metrics. The challenge, then, is that it becomes difficult to either understand where growth or stagnation might be happening or dedicate the right resources to the right domains.

Tracking data related to human capital systems can provide a window into the progress that a school, district or state is making over time toward their intended outcomes for both staff and students. By identifying a few key metrics across both the human capital and student learning pipelines, leaders can establish complete theories of action, measure progress and make course corrections that ultimately lead to radical improvements.

***A fundamental shift away from strategies designed to change everything quickly toward those that change some things more slowly--but diligently keep at it--might set a better long-term course than continuously attempting moonshots.***

Of course, the urgency that most education leaders feel to make important changes for the students that they see every day can make such a shift unappealing. To help illustrate why it's possible to both set a course for long term improvement and make immediate term gains along the way, the metrics that follow provide a framework for data that can be tracked at short intervals (e.g., monthly), and addressed immediately through policy and practice. Moreover, they address human capital at each point along a lifecycle from recruitment through



ongoing professional learning. The data points are organized into three categories, including the processes surrounding recruiting and hiring of teachers; proactive and meaningful engagement and training; and high quality, timely and actionable evaluation and ongoing development. Success in each of these categories enjoins every part of a school or district system to collaborate with one another, with data at the center, to develop and track processes that ensure educators experience seamless support from recruiting to retirement. Experience has shown that simply **addressing only one element at the expense of others is tantamount to addressing nothing at all; the human capital system is in fact a complex ecosystem and all elements depend upon one another.**

Consider leveraging your own dashboard with these or other customized metrics to define your top priorities and manage toward their improvement every day.

## About the Data

The following metrics are generated from Frontline Education's database, in partnership with over 80,000 schools and several million users nationwide.

The Johns Hopkins Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) has conducted several analyses on the representativeness of Frontline Education's data versus national norms. The Johns Hopkins CRRE reports have found that Frontline's data set, because it is so vast and diverse, is "reasonably representative of the population in terms of student characteristics."

The Institute reports on aggregate and anonymous data to protect the privacy of our clients and their stakeholders, and data are included only for clients who have granted Frontline permission to use their data for this purpose.

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## Absence & Substitute Management Data - from Frontline Absence & Time

**5,371**

Organizations

**73M**

Teacher absences from  
2015-2016 to 2017-  
2018 school year

**2,458,367**

Teachers active at  
some point during the  
2015-2016 to 2017-  
2018 school year

## Applicant Tracking Data - from Frontline Recruiting & Hiring

**1,282**

Organizations

**150,424**

Teacher jobs posted  
Jan 2017 to Dec 2018

## Professional Learning Management Data - from Frontline Professional Growth

**754**

Organizations

**180,175**

Learning opportunities  
offered during the  
2017-2018 school year

**462,026**

Instructional staff  
active at some point  
during the 2017-2018  
school year

## Employee Evaluation Management Data - from Frontline Professional Growth

**433**

Organizations

**281,371**

Summative score  
evaluations for  
instructional staff from  
2013 2014 to 2017-2018

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## Recruiting and Hiring

The human capital pipeline begins with recruiting and hiring practices, which not only set the tone for a working relationship between educator and education institution, but play a critical role in the development of the workforce culture and collective efficacy of any school system. Tracking these metrics helps to ensure that the core element of your human capital system – your people – are the ones your organization needs to both teach and support your students, but also to grow and evolve your organization to meet continuously changing needs.

In today's environment, the recruitment phase is especially important to attract educators who align with your school or district's needs and values, which also helps to retain them over time.

The following are Key Performance Indicators for high-quality talent management systems, based upon the intersection of available data from school systems across the U.S., and current best practices in talent management.

## Key Performance Indicators: Recruiting and Hiring

### 1. Jobs are posted in January-March and filled no later than April.

*Ensure that the best candidates can identify open roles early and that hiring managers have a broad selection of high-quality candidates from whom to choose.*

In the most recent year, job postings were even more concentrated in May than in previous years, and hiring peaked between July and

August. Urban districts are experiencing these peaks and troughs more profoundly than suburban and rural districts, showing extreme peaks near the end of the school year on an order of magnitude greater than would be expected based upon district size. While peer groups are securing jobs three to six months in advance, educators sometimes find themselves within weeks of unemployment — a pressure that not only encourages both candidates and hiring managers to make rushed decisions, but also undermines long-term retention.

Jobs Filled as % of Open Job Postings (All Teaching Positions) by Month



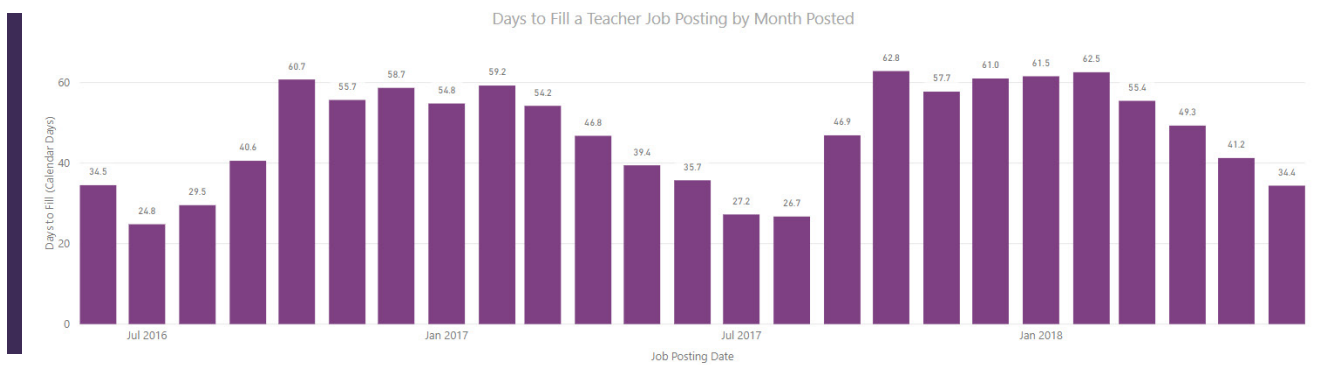
This chart includes the total number of teacher jobs that were filled in that month and year divided by the total number of all teacher open job postings for that month and year. This includes data for all teacher job postings.

**ACTION STEP:** Prioritize hiring early in the calendar year. Establish processes to identify vacancies as early as possible, and work to create smooth transitions out of and into teaching positions by hiring early from the broadest pool of applicants.

## 2. The time it takes to fill open teaching positions is brief and standardized.

*Ensure that hiring is both efficient and effective in selecting for long-term retention and educator success.*

At present, it takes the most time to fill positions posted in October (an average of about 63 days) – which raises questions about the extent to which hiring during these periods is slowed as a result of holding roles open for seniority-based hiring processes (which is often encoded in collective bargaining agreements); if so, CBA revisions to better support school district needs may be a priority for high-need organizations.



This chart shows the amount of time (in calendar days) that it takes to fill a teacher job posting that is posted in that month and year. This includes data for all teacher job postings. The days to fill is calculated as the number of calendar days between when a job is posted and when it is filled.

**ACTION STEP:** If hiring practices are regulated in your collective bargaining agreement, consider bringing data on the effects of your CBA on hiring and staffing to the bargaining table. If possible, collaborate with labor leaders to open hiring windows earlier and make roles available based upon qualifications other than seniority sooner in the year.



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### 3. Both referral and hiring sources reflect a broad diversity of origins.

*Create a wide recruitment pipeline by maximizing routes like job boards and training program partnerships, but also ensure that hiring processes do not introduce bias by hiring to match the current workforce rather than hiring to meet the needs of students.*

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics showed that in 2000, 84% of the nation’s teachers identified as white. By 2011, the number had changed to 82%.<sup>6</sup> Recent estimates suggest that number is not changing. Meanwhile, the student population is on track to reach 56% children of color within the next five years.

The benefits of diversity of educator experiences — whether they arise from racial and ethnic diversity, different types of training and access to mentorship, or geography — are well documented.<sup>7</sup> In short, teachers with diverse experiences serve as important role models for students who look like them, and who share similar backgrounds. They can make the difference between students seeing value in their education or not. To address the dramatic shortfall in educators of color in particular, school and district leaders should take a broad view of which educators they are recruiting into their pipelines, but also how they are selecting from among those candidates. Even in cases where the recruiting pool is diverse, unintentional bias can easily creep into a hiring process that prioritizes “cultural fit” or other aspects of similarity to the current teaching force rather than the evolving student landscape.

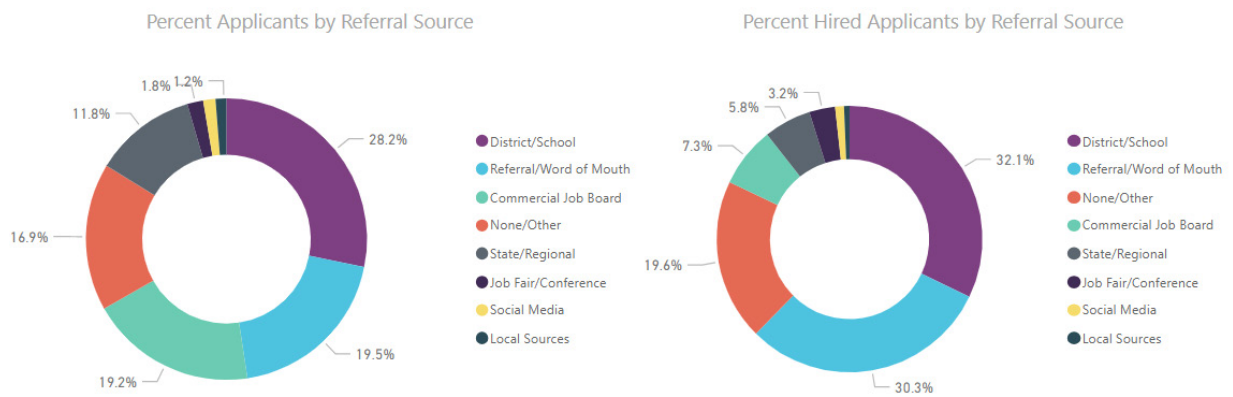
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<sup>6</sup>Data come from the School and Staffing Survey (<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/>), which transitioned to the National Teacher and Principal Survey in 2015.

<sup>7</sup>Villegas, Ana Maria; Lucas, Tamara F. (2004). “Diversifying the Teacher Workforce: A Retrospective and Prospective Analysis.” Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, v103 n1 p70-10 <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ885497>

In particular, our data suggest that while commercial job boards are a major source of candidates, relatively few of those candidates are hired. Far more candidates who come by word of mouth are hired than apply, but this finding should be considered in light of the nature of the sources – they’re applicant-reported, which means that providing a referral source as word of mouth seems to increase attractiveness of a candidate.

Districts face different challenges in cultivating a robust teacher pipeline, influenced by their geographic location, proximity to universities with educator training programs, regional economic health, and more. For more detailed analysis and recommendations on diversifying your teacher pipeline, see our report, [A Leak in the Pipeline](#).



The first chart shows the percent of applicants who applied for a job posting between January 2016 and December 2018 by the referral source that they indicated on their application. The second chart shows the percent of applicants hired between January 2016 and December 2018 by the referral source indicated on their application. This data includes all applicants, not just those who applied for a teaching position.

Making the move toward a more diverse workforce and increasing collaboration among educators can decrease isolation, improve access to strategies that work, and positively influence educators’ perceptions of their effectiveness and value in the classroom.

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**ACTION STEP:** To increase the diversity of your teacher workforce, focus efforts on diversifying both the overall recruitment pipeline and the top hiring sources. If your candidate pipeline is varied but your hiring is not, consider investigating why some sources are more trusted than others. If your pipeline is not varied, consider changing the ways you market open roles to educators.

## Engagement and Learning

Engagement of school and district staff, which includes not just the energy and enthusiasm they bring to their work, but also their willingness to come to work regularly and on time, to collaborate with their colleagues, and to engage in ongoing learning that deepens and strengthens their practice, is perhaps more important now than ever.

In today's tight labor market, educators have options that can exert even stronger forces on their professional trajectories than in times past. Educators across the nation are pointing to challenging working conditions and low pay as reasons why they might strike — or even leave the profession altogether. Even with stagnant or shrinking budgets, however, there are many ways that schools and districts can create better working conditions for educators. While the majority of educators report that they are satisfied with their work, a growing number (55%) report dissatisfaction with their compensation — a key mediator in overall job satisfaction.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Findings from Teacher Satisfaction With Salary and Current Job, Data Point, NCES (May, 2018). <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018116.pdf>

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While it may not be possible to increase pay, attending to other elements of engagement may help to both keep a finger on the pulse of the workforce and also devote investments to the highest-impact activities. The more engaged the workforce, the lower the rates of costly teacher and leader turnover are likely to be.

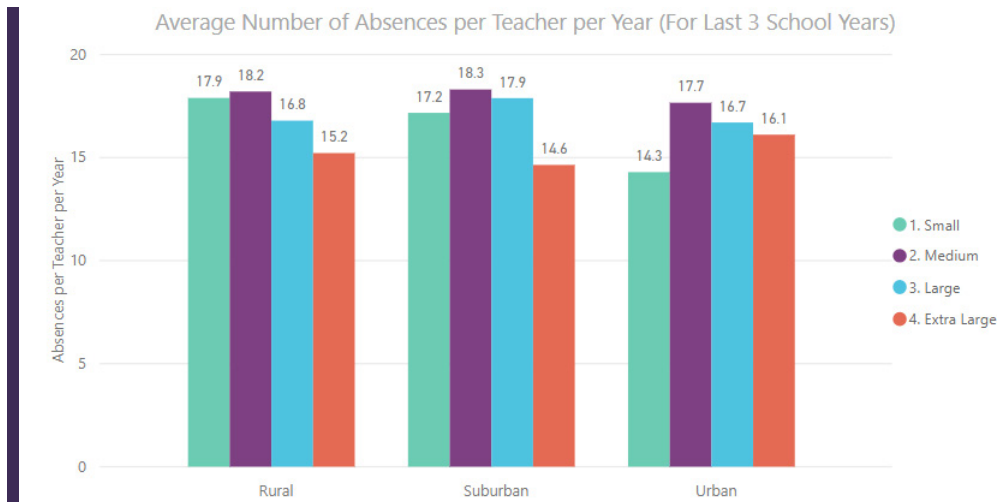
## Key Performance Indicators: Engagement and Learning

### 1. Teachers do not need to miss school for professional reasons and use time away sparingly.

*Set schedules to dramatically reduce or eliminate the need for professionally related absences from teaching duties and cultivate a healthy work environment in which educators only need to miss school for illness or emergency.*

After applicants are hired, managing their absences is a key element of ensuring students' access to high-quality learning experiences. Frequent absences may indicate that an educator is disengaged or burned out. The more frequently teachers are away from their classrooms, the less students can learn from them.

Our data show that teachers average 16.4 days absent from their classrooms — 22.5% of which are likely to be for work-related activities like professional development. By decreasing work commitments and mitigating absences, educators can have more time to work with their students and, as a result, produce better learning outcomes.



This chart shows the average number of absences per teacher per year over the last three school years (from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2017-2018 school year). This data includes absences for teachers only.

**ACTION STEP:** If teachers are frequently absent at high rates, begin by investigating why. If some absences are a matter of professional obligation, try to eliminate or reschedule those. If others are frequent sick days, look for patterns that might be causing problems (e.g., certain schools or buildings with higher absence rates) and investigate. For more information on tracking and managing these absences, please see our report, [Professionally Related Absences: Incidences, Causes & Key Findings for School Districts](#).

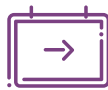
## 2. Professional development meets the minimum criteria set forth in ESSA.

*Maximize educator professional development investments and ensure that educators have access to high-quality learning opportunities.*

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Our data demonstrate that, when compared with the six criteria for quality set forth in the Every Student Succeeds Act, the vast majority of professional learning activities fall woefully short. The result is likely a massive investment in learning activities that may not be helping educators and, critically, may be wasting their limited time. When educators, who are increasingly asked to do more without access to more resources, find themselves in receipt of low-quality professional learning, it undermines their role as respected professionals and can decrease morale.

Through our report series [Bridging the Gap](#), the Institute developed and detailed ESSA's six criteria into measurable metrics:



**Sustained:** taking place over an extended period; longer than one day or a one-time workshop or without follow up support.

**Metric:** Number of activity enrollments with greater than three meetings.



**Intensive:** focused on a discrete concept, practice, or program.

**Metric:** Average length of PD activities.



**Collaborative:** involving multiple educators, educators and mentors, or a set of participants grappling with the same concept or practice and in which participants work together to achieve shared understanding.

**Metric:** Enrollment in an activity with a collaborative format.



**Job-embedded:** a part of the on-going, regular work of instruction and related to teaching and learning taking place in real time in the teaching and learning environment.

**Metric:** Activities offered within the school system.



**Data-driven:** based upon and responsive to real time information about the needs of participants and their students.

**Metric:** Activities meeting demonstrated educator need.



**Classroom-focused:** related to the practices taking place during the teaching process and relevant to instructional process.

**Metric:** Activities aligned with InTASC standards.

## 2017 - 2018 School Year

*\*All data based on professional development opportunities (activities) offered, not activities a user has completed.*



This set of charts is all based on professional development opportunities (activities) offered, not activities a user has enrolled in and completed. This is all based on data from the 2017-2018 school year.

**ACTION STEP:** Track these metrics and set short-term targets to make small improvements over time. For more on tracking these data and actionable ideas for improvement, see our report series, [Bridging the Gap](#).

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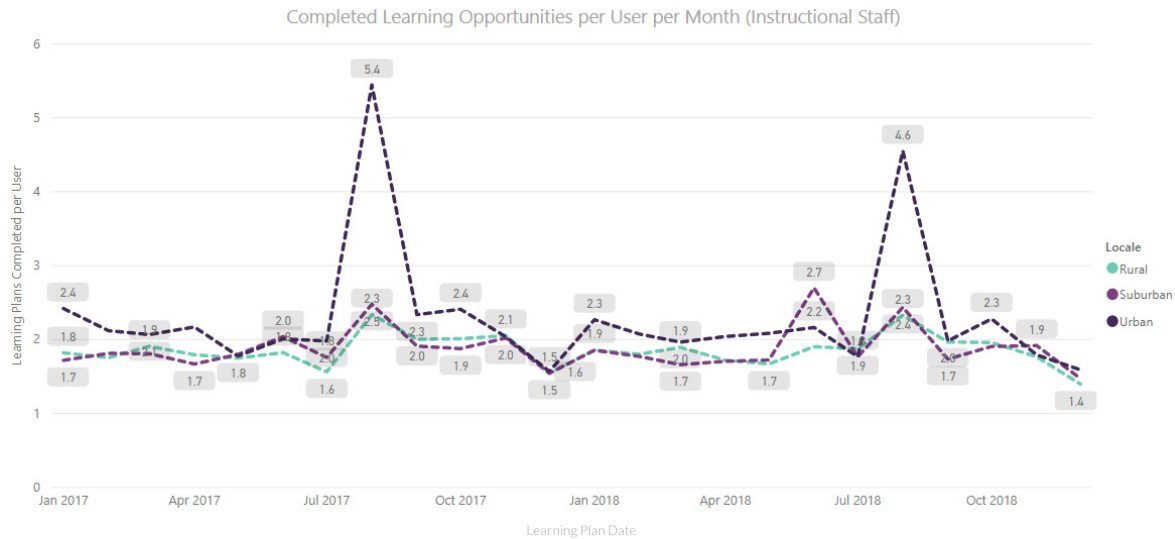
### 3. Professional learning takes place at consistent intervals throughout the school year.

*Provide a culture of continuous learning.*

Professional learning activities that are the highest quality take place throughout the school year and focus on clear and key knowledge and skills that will help educators continuously improve their practice. Tracking whether professional learning activities are indeed spread throughout the year versus being concentrated in specific periods can help diagnose potential overload of professional learning investments and provide insight into opportunities for more helpful approaches to learning.

Our data show that most professional learning activities are still taking place in August and September, likely a feature of beginning of the year training that might be better suited as smaller doses throughout the year. These practices seem especially pronounced in urban and rural districts. Suburban districts tend to show peaks in June as well. When activities are spread through the year, educators can benefit from a continuous improvement that allows them to feel growth in their careers and value in their professional learning time investments.





This chart is based on all professional development activities a user has enrolled in and completed and is a calculation of the total number of learning plans completed per user for that month and year. This includes data from all instructional users in the system.

**ACTION STEP:** Investigate the causes of concentrated bursts of professional learning. If they're happening only during training sessions at the beginning of the year, consider retooling this training to include more collaborative time, and circulate learning experiences throughout the year to help educators experience them as timely and relevant to their work.

## Evaluation and Feedback

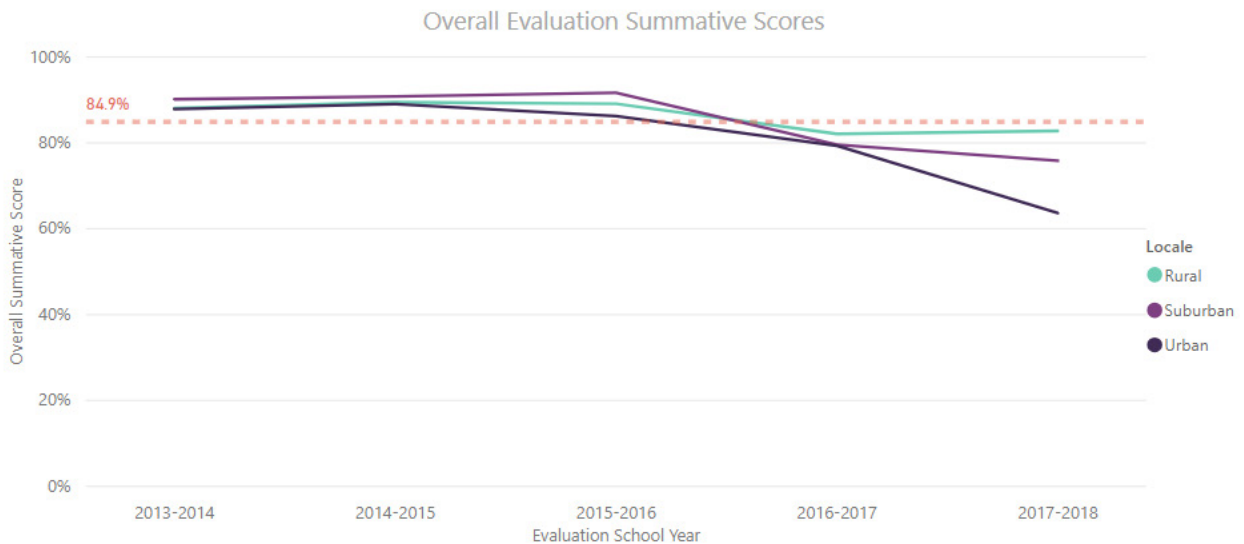
Efforts to improve educator evaluation have been predicated on the notion that evaluations should provide accurate, helpful information about employee performance. That means they should differentiate among skill sets and provide actionable information about strengths and areas for improvement. If evaluations aren't directly linked to feedback and professional learning, they lose a fundamental purpose and turn into compliance exercises. And while compliance may be a goal, a strong evaluation and feedback process can engage, excite and ignite continuous improvement for educators. For the newest generations of educators, opportunity for growth at work has been a consistent motivator to enter and stay on a career trajectory.

# Key Performance Indicators: Evaluation and Feedback

## 1. Summative performance evaluations show differentiation that is aligned with educators' demonstrated skills.

*Accurately identify areas of strength and growth opportunities.*

Some critiques of old educator evaluation systems noted that they did little to provide helpful information to educators. After many evaluation systems were revamped to incorporate more specific data, those systems were critiqued for a “Lake Wobegon” effect in which nearly everyone was rated in the top two categories. Our data suggest that as evaluation systems have matured, however, they may actually be providing more accurate, differentiated data that educators and their coaches can use to improve performance. Accurate evaluation data lays the groundwork for actionable feedback, which begets real improvement.



This chart contains the overall evaluation summative scores for instructional staff over the last 5 school years. The overall evaluation summative score is calculated as the sum of the total score received divided by the total maximum score received. There is one evaluation summative score per user per school year. The 84.9% represents the overall evaluation summative score for all instructional staff for the last 5 school years.

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**ACTION STEP:** If your evaluation data are showing “inflation” or other inaccuracies, review the raw data and examine whether the aggregation process might be overshadowing highly valuable performance information that educators could be using to improve.

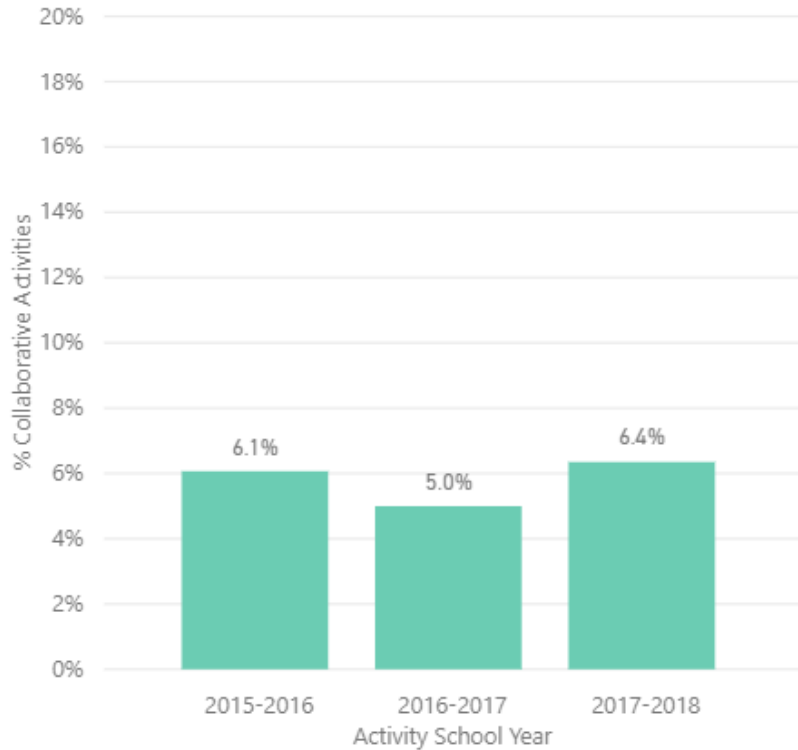
## 2. Educators regularly collaborate with other educators in their subject areas, grade levels and across the curriculum.

*Cultivate open and honest feedback that is delivered in a safe and productive way. Educators should find feedback plentiful and actionable, and mentors, coaches and evaluators should see improvement as a result of their feedback to educators.*

Collaboration allows for educators with varying degrees of experience and different types of training to come together and share expertise and insight from working with other students in the same school or district. Establishing cohorts can result in safe environments where teachers can learn from each other. Research on group performance (e.g., Tuckman’s team stages) and on professional learning communities in education specifically (e.g., DuFour’s PLC model) suggest that group performance can far exceed individual performance when properly executed. The results for students can be significant. Moreover, high levels of collaboration can help to combat isolation, a feature of individual classroom teaching that can lead educators to faster burnout or fatigue that inspires departure from teaching or even leaving education altogether.

Our data show that most activities taking place throughout a school year are not collaborative in nature. Rather, they take place in isolation and don’t lend themselves to observation and productive feedback. Over the last three academic years, the percentage of collaborative activities reported by districts ranged from 5% to 6.4%. This is despite steady rates of professionally related absences, suggesting that while educators are missing valuable teaching time for their professional learning activities, they are not actually doing so in a way that maximizes the value

% Collaborative Activities by School Year



This chart is based on professional development opportunities (activities) offered, not activities a user has enrolled in and completed. The measure is calculated as the number of activities that have a collaborative format divided by the total number of activities that have a format.

**ACTION STEP:** Many educators report that the biggest impediment to collaboration is prohibitive scheduling. If your teachers don't have sufficient time to collaborate, look at the schedule for opportunities to bring teachers together at least twice a week to talk about practice and plan for instruction.

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## Conclusion

While no effort has proven effective in every setting, many of the human capital reform efforts of the last decade still retain significant promise. Much of what schools and districts implemented in the early 2010s never actually reached its full potential — sometimes because implementation was not fully realized, or because other factors impeded their ever being fully adopted in the first place. Rather than starting over, district and school leaders should be thoughtful about reinvesting in efforts with a promising start — this time, minus reliance on politics and hype, and plus the benefits of several years of peer implementation data.

Our data suggest that many human capital related reforms could still offer major performance improvements, and perhaps have greater promise now that much of the politics surrounding the reforms have dissipated. Based upon our analysis, school and district leaders could begin to realize these benefits in the immediate term by identifying key metrics for growth and building dashboards that they can track on a regular basis. Setting growth goals for those targets and managing toward their improvement may just be an effective strategy in developing an approach to human capital that truly honors educators as professionals and finally provides them with the targeted support that they need to succeed as educators in a continuously evolving education landscape.

By making these shifts, school and district leaders can begin to turn the tide away from negative perceptions of teaching that increasingly make the career path unappealing and toward a new identity for teachers that is characterized by respect, professional organization and support, and continuous growth that leads to constantly increasing effectiveness.

# A Comprehensive Approach to Human Capital Management

## Key Performance Indicators to Measure for Maximum Impact

### Recruiting & Hiring

#### Jobs are posted in January-March and filled no later than April.

Ensure that the best candidates can identify open roles early and that hiring managers have a broad selection of high-quality candidates from whom to choose.



#### Metric:

Jobs filled as a percent of job openings by month

#### The time it takes to fill open teaching positions is brief and standardized.

Ensure that hiring is both efficient and effective in selecting for long-term retention and educator success.



#### Metric:

Percent of candidates and those hired by referral source

#### Both referral and hiring sources reflect a broad diversity of origins.

Maximize pipeline sources while ensuring that hiring processes do not introduce bias by hiring to match the current workforce rather than hiring to meet the needs of students



#### Metric:

Days to fill open positions by month

### Engagement & Learning

#### Teachers do not need to miss school for professional reasons and use time away sparingly.

Set schedules to dramatically reduce or eliminate the need for professionally related absences from teaching duties



#### Metric:

Average number of days absent per year

#### Professional development meets the minimum criteria set forth in ESSA.

Maximize educator professional development investments and ensure that educators have access to high-quality learning opportunities.



#### Metric:

Extent to which professional learning is sustained, intense, collaborative, job embedded, data driven & classroom focused

#### Professional learning takes place at consistent intervals throughout the school year.

Provide a culture of continuous learning.



#### Metric:

Completed professional learning opportunities by month

### Evaluation & Feedback

#### Summative performance evaluations show differentiation that is aligned with educators' demonstrated skills.

Accurately identify areas of strength and growth opportunities.



#### Metric:

Distribution of summative performance ratings

#### Educators regularly collaborate with other educators in their subject areas, grade levels and across the curriculum.

Cultivate open and honest feedback that is delivered in a safe and productive way. Educators should find feedback plentiful and actionable, and mentors, coaches and evaluators should see improvement as a result of their feedback to educators.



#### Metric:

Percent of collaborative learning opportunities

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# About the Authors

## Elizabeth Combs

is Managing Director of the Frontline Research & Learning Institute. She began her career as an elementary school teacher and Director of Administrative and Instructional Technology at Patchogue-Medford School District before moving to Imperial Software Systems, a professional learning services company, where she eventually served as President. She then held positions at My Learning Plan, Inc. as President and Chief Strategy Officer. Ms. Combs holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from State University of New York at Geneseo, a Master of Arts in Technology in Education from Teachers College, Columbia University and a professional diploma in Education Administration from Hofstra University. She also holds certifications and licenses to serve as a teacher, school administrator and supervisor.

## Sarah Silverman

is Senior Vice President and Chief Talent Officer at Whiteboard Advisors where she advises companies and organizations on strategy related to education, workforce and wellness. She has worked with states, school districts, and leaders of organizations of all sizes to understand and develop strategies to improve their organizational and talent strategy. Silverman has advised on the development of state policies that transform teacher and leader preparation, evaluation and training; led development of a national birth-through-workforce data dashboard; and facilitated coalitions to advance bipartisan policy solutions. Her prior work includes managing the Pre-K-12 education portfolio at National Governors Association Education and consulting with states and districts on performance management and teacher evaluation policy reform at TNTP as well as serving as the Director of Evaluation & Assessment and Chief Information Officer for See Forever Foundation. Dr. Silverman holds a master's degree in educational psychology and a doctorate in educational policy and leadership from The Ohio State University. Her research and writing have focused on the impact of state and national policy on social justice activism, teacher beliefs and ethics of education.

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# Learn More

For more insights into K-12 education, visit

**[FrontlineInstitute.com](https://FrontlineInstitute.com)**

## About the Institute

The Frontline Research & Learning Institute generates data-driven research, resources and observations to support and advance the education community. The Institute's research is powered by Frontline Education data and analytics capabilities in partnership with over 12,000 K-12 organizations and several million users nationwide. The Institute's research reports and analysis are designed to provide practical insights for teachers and leaders as well as benchmarks to inform strategic decision-making within their organizations.