

In June 2024, the University of Nebraska at Kearney’s Nebraska Department of Education Teacher Shortage Grant Committee convened a diverse group including teachers, parents, administrators, college professors, representatives from the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the Nebraska Education Association. The committee met to explore strategies and ideas for addressing the teacher shortage. They discussed how various stakeholders—such as parents, school boards, administration, service organizations (e.g., churches, Rotary, YMCA), foundations and nonprofits, school-based practices, and businesses/economic groups—can contribute to supporting efforts to alleviate the shortage of teachers. The goal was to gather information to support communities in their efforts to promote education during the current realities of the educator shortage. These are those results.

Original Grant Team Members include:

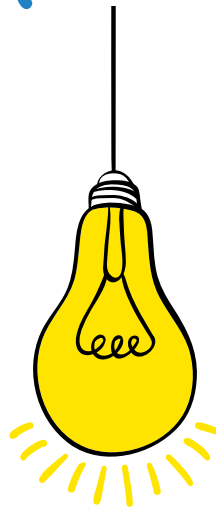
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Ideas to address...

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Created together by:





SCHOOL BOARDS IDEAS TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE

Elevating Standards:

Positive School Culture: Set a clear and positive tone for the entire school district, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Attracting Top Talent:

Quality Recruitment: Be a leader in responsible recruitment practices, actively seeking high-caliber educators.

Competitive Compensation:

Salary and Benefits: Engage in open and transparent discussions about competitive salary schedules and attractive benefits packages.

Teacher Flexibility: Explore innovative salary structures that offer new teachers flexibility and growth opportunities.

Paid Student Teaching: Consider offering paid student teaching positions to attract future educators.

Investing in Professional Development:

Lifelong Learning: Continuously educate yourself on the latest best practices in recruitment and retention.

Collaboration for Success:

Committee Engagement: Actively participate in relevant committees to gain a deep understanding of recruitment and retention needs.

Community Advocacy: Be a strong public advocate for your school district, highlighting its strengths and accomplishments.

Bridging the Gaps: Build bridges between the business and education communities, fostering collaboration for mutual benefit.



SUPPORT IN ACTION

The Mapleview Board of Education took a proactive approach to combat the teacher shortage by stepping out of the boardroom and into the classrooms. Recognizing the value of firsthand experience, board members began scheduling regular visits to schools across the district. These visits allowed them to observe the challenges and successes of daily life in education, from bustling kindergarten classrooms to advanced high school STEM labs. Board members actively engaged with teachers and students, asking thoughtful questions and taking notes to better understand the support educators needed. The visits not only deepened the board's appreciation for the hard work of teachers but also built trust and communication between educators and district leadership.

To amplify positivity and morale, the board introduced a new initiative during their monthly meetings: a dedicated time for teachers to share highlights from their schools. Educators were invited to speak during public comment periods about achievements, creative projects, or moments of connection that made a difference in their classrooms. Stories of students excelling in innovative programs or the success of a teacher-led mentorship group energized both the board and the community members in attendance. These efforts fostered a culture of recognition and collaboration, showing teachers that their voices mattered and their contributions were celebrated. By prioritizing school visits and highlighting positive experiences, the Mapleview Board of Education not only improved teacher retention but also strengthened the community's faith in its public schools.



ADMINISTRATION

IDEAS TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE

Investing in Our People:

Mentorship Matters: Implement a robust mentoring program that pairs experienced teachers with early career educators, providing valuable support and guidance.

Building Connections:

Culture of Collaboration: Foster a culture of connection and strong relationships between teachers, staff, and administrators. This creates a supportive network for everyone.

Supporting Success:

Navigating the Job: Equip teachers and staff with tools and resources to address the complex challenges of the educational profession.

Spreading the Word:

Social Media Savvy: Leverage social media platforms to tell a positive and engaging story about your school district, attracting talented new teachers.

Grow Your Own: Target and maintain positive relationships with students who show potential for future careers in education.

College Connections: Actively participate in college and university recruitment events to connect with future educators.

Partnerships for Progress: Develop collaborative partnerships with colleges and universities to create seamless pathways for aspiring educators.

Onboarding Excellence:

Mentoring & Onboarding: Streamline a comprehensive onboarding process that includes mentoring support for new teachers.

Public Advocacy:

The Power of Storytelling: Engage in public outreach initiatives to share the unique and compelling story of your school district. Be proud of what you offer!

Setting Expectations:

Behavior Management: Provide clear and consistent expectations for student behavior, creating a positive learning environment for all.

Positive Culture is Key:

Cultivate Positivity: Continuously work to build a positive school culture that fosters collaboration, respect, and inclusivity.

Open Communication:

Effective Communication: Establish clear and consistent communication channels with staff and the community.

Embrace Feedback: Utilize communication tools to spread positive messages about your schools. Regularly survey staff and be receptive to constructive feedback.

Instructional Leadership:

Lead by Example: Serve as an instructional leader who inspires continuous improvement and professional growth.

Professional Development:

Engaging Learning: Offer high-quality professional learning opportunities that are positive and beneficial to staff.

Building Relationships:

Relationships Matter: Prioritize building strong relationships with all stakeholders – teachers, staff, students, parents, and the community.

Creating a Positive Environment:

Fun & Connection: Implement initiatives like breakfast clubs, school-wide fun days, and teacher/staff lunches to foster connection and boost morale.

Childcare Considerations: Explore options for school-based childcare solutions to support the needs of staff with families.

Positive Parent Engagement: Cultivate positive relationships with parents through effective communication and engaging activities.

School Culture Activities: Organize regular school culture building activities to foster a sense of community and shared purpose.

Mentorship is Key:

Investing in New Teachers: Implement a strong mentoring program for new teachers, providing them with the support they need to thrive.



BUSINESSES/ECONOMIC GROUPS

IDEAS TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE

Addressing Key Needs:

Housing & Childcare Conversations: Facilitate open conversations about supporting teacher housing needs and access to childcare options.

Housing Solutions:

Beyond Spec Homes: Explore alternative housing solutions beyond traditional spec homes to offer a wider range of housing options for educators.

Community Tours: Organize community tours for new teachers to showcase neighborhoods, parks, and other desirable aspects of your community.

Promoting Remote Work:

Broadband Boost: Advocate for increased broadband internet access to facilitate remote work opportunities for educator spouses.

Connecting New Teachers:

Young Professionals: Actively engage with young professional organizations to connect new teachers with social and networking opportunities.

Community Engagement:

Plan Community Events: Organize events that introduce new teachers to local attractions, restaurants, and cultural experiences.

Community Partnerships: Forge strong partnerships with community organizations to offer resources to schools, such as meal programs and memberships.

Highlight Resources: Proactively promote available resources to local schools, such as teacher discounts and business memberships.

Supporting Spouses:

Employment Opportunities: Communicate with local businesses about educator spouse job needs and explore options for hiring spouses with relevant skill sets.

Building a Supportive Network:

Teacher Appreciation Programs: Implement teacher discount and business incentive programs to show appreciation.

SUPPORT IN ACTION

In the face of a teacher shortage, Brookhaven School District realized that attracting and retaining educators required addressing challenges beyond the classroom. Many teachers cited rising housing costs and limited childcare options as significant barriers to staying in the community. To tackle these issues, the district initiated Housing & Childcare Conversations, a series of forums designed to gather input from educators and collaborate on practical solutions. Administrators, teachers, local housing authorities, and childcare providers came together to brainstorm ways to support teachers' needs. Through these discussions, the district partnered with local landlords and developers to secure affordable housing units specifically for educators, offering reduced rental rates and streamlined application processes.

On the childcare front, the district worked with community organizations to expand access to quality childcare. They negotiated discounted rates for teachers at local childcare centers and explored the possibility of opening an on-site childcare facility at one of the schools. These initiatives were coupled with a listening campaign, ensuring teachers could voice their concerns and ideas throughout the process. The result was a stronger sense of community and support for educators, many of whom expressed gratitude for the district's efforts to address their challenges. By focusing on housing and childcare, Brookhaven not only alleviated stress for its teachers but also reinforced its commitment to making the district a place where educators could build both their careers and their lives.

Affordable education. Powerful results.

The University of Nebraska at Kearney offers a comprehensive range of academic opportunities, including 81 undergraduate majors, 32 graduate majors, 23 preprofessional programs, 7 undergraduate certificates and 4 graduate certificates across dozens of disciplines. Whether you're interested in science, technology, business, arts, social sciences, humanities or education, UNK provides the programs to jumpstart your future and position you to enter your career with less debt and more experience.

Power of the Herd

At UNK, we thrive on collaboration. Turning individual strengths into collective triumphs and coming together for a bigger purpose.

Here, your ideas are important. You won't just follow the path; you'll blaze new trails. You'll be an innovator, a leader, and community builder.

You are strong, capable and ready to face the world. But you don't have to face it alone. Because together, we're not just a group. We're a movement. Creating a brighter future for all.

While one can be strong, together we are unstoppable. That's the Power of the Herd.



College of Education

UNK began preparing teachers in 1905 and the reputation of the College of Education as the premiere institution in Nebraska for future teachers is more true today than ever! Our five departments prepare talented young people from around Nebraska and the region to become athletic trainers; family scientists; early childhood, elementary, middle or high school teachers as well as offer opportunities in recreation and event management, exercise science, health and physical education, sports management, and communication disorders.

In addition, our graduate programs offer pathways to careers in speech-language pathology, clinical mental health counseling, school psychology, counseling, and higher education student affairs.

Departments & Programs

Communication Disorders

Counseling, School Psychology and Family Science

Educational Administration

Early Childhood Inclusive Family Science

Kinesiology and Sport Sciences

Teacher Education

Transitional Certification Program





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