



Opportunity Through Education

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# Memo

**TO:** Joint Education Committee

**FROM:** Laurel Ballard, Innovations Officer, Wyoming Department of Education  
Brendan O'Connor, Executive Director, Professional Teaching Standards Board

**DATE:** May 24, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Teacher Retention and Recruitment

## Current State Efforts

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) and the Professional Teaching Standards Board (PTSB) are partnering with school districts, teachers, postsecondary institutions, US Department of Labor, and the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services on the Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship. The WDE is also partnering with the PTSB to lead a Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force composed of teachers, school districts and postsecondary institutions to address teacher recruitment and retention.

## K-12 Teacher Apprenticeship Model

There are four components to Wyoming's K-12 Teacher Apprenticeship. First, all apprentices must complete an Education Preparation Program that leads to a bachelor's degree. Second, the apprentice must complete 2,000-6,000 hours of on-the-job training to demonstrate all required on-the-job competencies. Third, the apprentices receive intensive mentoring with experienced teachers. During this time, the apprentice will be working in their primary mentor teacher's classroom with a gradual increase in responsibility. Last, the apprentice must complete any other licensure requirements required by PTSB. This could include passing Praxis exams. An overview of the WTA can be found in Addendum A.

## Phased Approach

The K-12 Teacher Apprenticeship Initiative is being implemented using a three-phase approach.

**Phase 1:** The apprentice must have at least 60 postsecondary credits before starting the apprenticeship. Districts currently piloting the Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship (WTA) include Fremont #24, Laramie #1, and Teton #1. There are currently 27 apprentices enrolling in the WTA. In the Spring 2024, this phase will be open to all districts.

**Phase 2:** The apprentice must have a high school diploma or equivalent.

**Phase 3:** The apprenticeship program will work with high school students to begin their preparation to become teachers. The WTA Working Group is actively planning this phase.

Throughout the process of developing the Registered K-12 Teacher Apprenticeship, the Working and Advisory Groups created estimates of costs associated with running a program like this. The average cost to support an apprentice throughout the three years would cost approximately \$171,625. This estimate includes costs associated with mentorship, apprentice wages, and postsecondary degree attainment.

### **Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force**

The WDE and PTSB launched the Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force in February. The mission is to develop recommendations for state policymakers, district-level, and school-level staff to increase efforts to positively impact the education workforce.

The task force is composed of 26 members: three district superintendents, one personnel director, one school counselor, three principals, 10 teachers, one preservice teacher, three educators who have left the profession, one parent, two post-secondary representatives, and one industry representative. In addition, the WDE has partnered with OMNI Institute to support the work of the task force.

The task force completed a literature review summarizing findings including those from peer-reviewed and applied articles, policy guides, toolkits, and publicly available data (data dashboards). The review focused on key factors impacting teacher recruitment and retention, including devaluation, mental health/burnout, support structures, and remote locations/rural education settings. Next, the review evidence focused on four prioritized approaches to improving teacher recruitment and retention, including school climate, mentorship, and professional development/continuing education. Each sub-section details how the literature specifically relates to teacher recruitment or retention, including recommendations for improvement where available.

In addition, to better understand the challenges educators face, the Wyoming Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force administered an education climate survey. The survey armed the task force with real-time information about the challenges facing educators across the state. The results are informing the identification of actionable strategies at the state and local levels to better meet the needs of educators. The survey received 3,938 responses, of which 3,552 were considered valid. Responses included teachers from every district in Wyoming. Summarized survey results are provided in Addendum B.

The task force has begun development of recommendations to improve the education workforce. The WDE looks forward to presenting these recommendations at the August Joint Education Interim Committee meeting.

The task force will also be looking at “bright spots” methodology to identify up to three districts in Wyoming and three districts across the United States that are recruiting and/or retaining teachers with success using a mixed methods approach. Interviews and focus groups with both teachers and administrators from the districts will be conducted providing quantitative and qualitative findings that identify the practices employed, resulting successes, and lessons learned.

## Addendum A



### High-Quality, Well-Trained Educator Professionals

The Wyoming Teacher Apprenticeship (WTA) is an educator preparation strategy focused on developing and retaining teachers from local Wyoming communities. The WTA is one of the strategies the Wyoming Department of Education and the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board are using to impact teacher shortages by effectively addressing the financial, recruitment, and preparation challenges facing Wyoming's educator workforce.

#### High-Quality Programing for Excellent Educators

At the core of Wyoming's initiative is the rigorous approach to educator preparation and development. In the model each candidate will:



##### **Streamline Essential Coursework, Earning a Bachelor's Degree**

Participants receive 2,000-6,000 (depending on previously earned hours) on-the-job learning hours while they earn their bachelor's degree.

##### **What does this mean?**

Since apprentices work full-time in the district, the WTA streamlines essential coursework and facilitates alternative schedules for online, summer, and evening classes. The model supports best practice and pedagogy, mirroring Educator Preparation Provider coursework with a candidate's real-time job experience. The WTA ensures meaningful immersion, deep understanding, and quality performance.



##### **Receive On-the-Job, Competency-Based Learning**

The WTA ensures prospective educators learn on-the-job. The federally registered model is a competency-based apprenticeship that focuses on the apprentice's ability to demonstrate skills in an observable and measurable way. Under the training and direct

coaching of a mentor teacher, apprentices move through related programming upon proficiency. To advance in the program, apprentices are required to demonstrate full proficiency in all areas of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Learning Environment; and Professional Collaboration and Growth.

#### What does this mean?

Apprentices experience comprehensive training while being paid for working full-time in the district. They receive real-time feedback and daily coaching from an assigned mentor teacher while in the classroom.



#### Experience Deep District Involvement in the Training Process

Employers are the foundation of every apprenticeship program, and with the WTA school districts play an active role to ensure that participants meet the district's needs and expectations – both during the program and for future employment.

#### What does this mean?

Apprentices train and grow in the district – and often at the school – they are ultimately hired into. Upon completion, when apprentices step into the classroom for their 'first year,' they already have years of experience to speak for.

The WTA is federally recognized, nationally approved, and state administered. The quality training, educator performance, and professional longevity of apprentice teachers is better supported by the programming and intentional design of the apprenticeship model. Ultimately, WTA educators receive stronger training and support to ensure they are best equipped to accelerate their students' academic achievement and future readiness.

#### Wyoming Department of Education

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## **Addendum B**

### **Education Climate Survey Results from Teachers**

In addition, to better understand the challenges educators face, the Wyoming Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force administered an education climate survey. This information summarizes results from Teachers who completed the Education Professionals Climate Survey, which was used to hear first-hand about the experiences of working in the Wyoming education system, with a focus on issues that are known to affect recruitment and retention. The survey included 44-items, was voluntary, anonymous, and open to all public school educators in Wyoming. A total of **3,938 responses were submitted**, the majority (90%, n = 3,552) of which were considered valid submissions after data cleaning that removed submissions that only included demographic information.

#### **Results: Teacher Perceptions**

For analyses of teacher perceptions, respondents with current positions as administrators, support staff, and other professional staff and those who only work at the district level (i.e., are not working with Pre-K through 12th grades) were excluded.

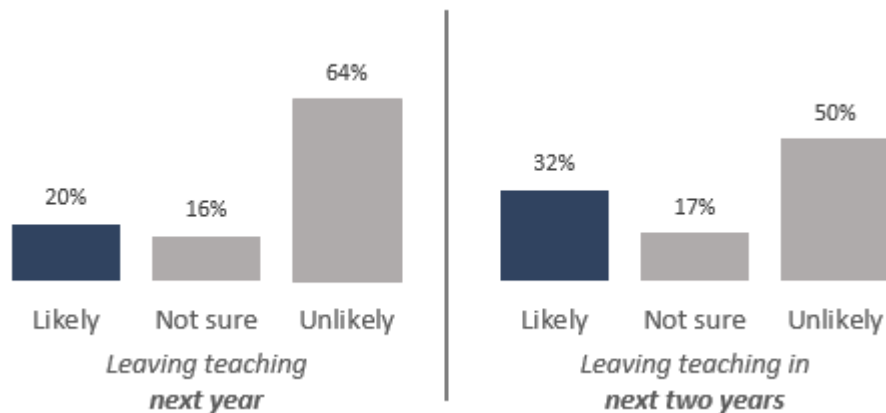
#### **Demographic & Professional Characteristics**

The demographic data from the 3,008 teachers who responded to the survey included a majority of teachers identified as White (88.7%), had either a bachelor's or master's degree (94.1%) and worked as full-time teachers (93.8%). The average age of responding teachers was 43. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of teachers worked full-time (93.8%). Most are mid-career (6-20 years; 55%), but have been with their school district for less than 10 years (55%). Of the teacher respondents, 51% teach in elementary schools (grades pre-K-5), 34% in middle school (grades 6-8) and 33% from high school (grades 9-12).

#### **Teachers from all 48 school districts in Wyoming are represented among respondents.**

There is great variability in the number of teacher respondents from each district (ranging from 6 to 483), and the number of respondents generally reflect the size of districts. The lowest number of respondents are from Weston County School District #7 and Uinta County School District #6, and the highest number are from Laramie County School District #1 and Natrona County School District #1.

1 in 5 teachers report being likely to leave teaching in the next academic year, and about 1 in 3 report being likely to leave in the next two academic years. Most teachers intend to stay in their roles over the new two years.



### Experiences with Preparation and Recruitment

About one in three teachers (37%) indicate that their teacher training prepared them adequately.

For new teachers, recruitment experiences were more intimidating, obscure, contentious, slow, and disorganized than welcoming, transparent, friendly, fast, and organized, as indicated by average ratings below the midpoint (3) of the scales among teachers who are new to the profession (1-3 years).

The survey asked teachers to identify the most effective way to attract new teachers to the profession. Several overarching recommendations emerged, including:

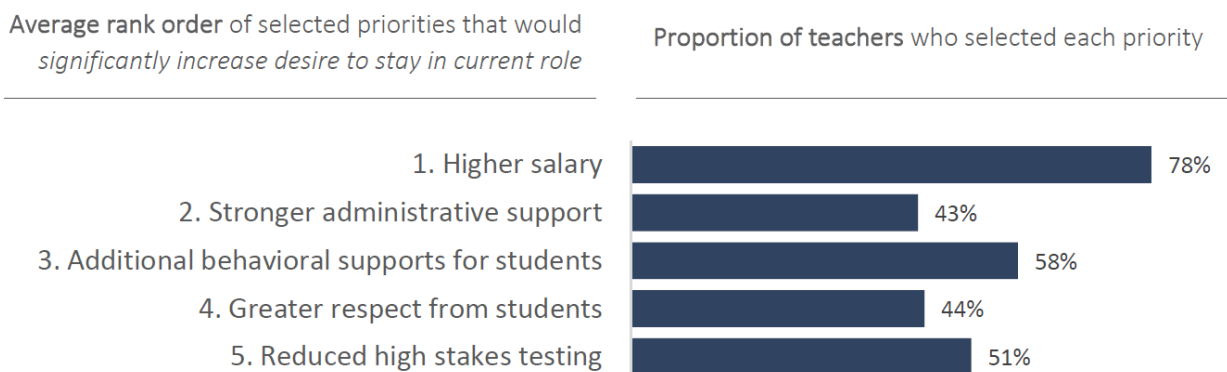
- Demonstrate that teachers are valued by increasing teacher salaries and benefits.
- Have administrations and communities show more respect towards teachers to show they appreciate teachers and to validate their hard work.
- Invest more time in professional development and training related to student behavior management to ensure teachers feel confident and prepared.
- Offer more resources both within the classrooms (ex. educational materials) and the community (ex., childcare and housing).
- Ensure teachers' voices are heard and offer opportunities for leadership and impact; Respondents linked leadership opportunities to the desire for teachers to have their voices heard, earn higher salaries, and positively impact the educational system.

### What Teachers Need

Teachers were asked whether their community resources meet the needs of their families, and those who felt that they did not have adequate community resources were asked to indicate where there was unmet need from among eight different categories.

their family. Among them, over half indicated that mental health, healthcare, and food/shopping were areas of unmet need. Teachers were also asked what would significantly increase their desire to stay in their current role from among 20 different categories, and were subsequently asked to rank order the importance of those categories that they selected.

Higher salary, stronger administrative support, additional behavioral supports for students, greater respect from students, and reduced high stakes testing were the five most highly ranked items when teachers were asked to prioritize what would keep them in their role. These factors were also all endorsed by at least 40% of respondents.



More leadership opportunities, receiving greater mentorship, and providing mentorship to other educators were the lowest ranked items, and endorsed by the fewest proportion of teachers.

**Salary.** Higher salary was both the most highly ranked priority in terms of its relative importance for keeping teachers in their current role, and the most commonly selected priority (78%). Related to teacher compensation, nearly half (48%) of teachers do not think the pay structure is equitable. Open-ended responses showed a link between salaries and feelings of value, respect, and appreciation within the community.

**Stronger Administrative Support.** Stronger administrative support was ranked second in priorities, and was selected by 43% of teachers, suggesting that those who selected this priority also consistently ranked it very highly. Open-ended responses focused on the need for support from the administration related to student behavior management and mentorship.

**Behavioral Supports for Students.** Additional behavioral supports for students was the third most highly ranked priority, and was selected by more than half of teachers (58%). Additionally, 68% of teachers agreed that student behavioral issues make their jobs more difficult. The open-ended responses further identified teacher shortages and large class sizes contributing to student behavior management challenges.

**Respect.** Desire for greater respect was also prevalent, with greater respect from students and greater respect for parents being chosen by 40% or more of teachers, and being ranked in the

ranked as a lower priority overall (16th). Interestingly, only 12% of teachers report not feeling valued by students, and 15% report not feeling valued by parents, suggesting that while many teachers feel respected, there is further room for improvement. Respect was one of the most discussed themes in the open-ended responses, including reasons for staying and ways to attract individuals to the profession. Demonstrations of respect requested by teachers were in the form of compensation, incentives, training, support, gestures of appreciation, and validation of the challenges they endured.

**Reduced High Stakes Testing.** Reduced high-stakes testing was ranked the fifth most important priority, and was selected by more than half of teachers (51%). Relatedly, 85% of teachers agree that there is too much emphasis on standardized testing.

### Confidence in Systems & Feeling Valued

The majority of teachers have strong local support structures. 58% feel they can get support when they need it, and 69% are comfortable going to their supervisor with questions and concerns. The majority of teachers report positive working environments in their schools. 72% report their work environment is somewhat collaborative or collaborative, and 80% report that their work environment is somewhat respectful or respectful. Additionally, many teachers who completed open-ended responses indicated that, in spite of the challenges, they really enjoy their roles as a teacher and the communities and students they serve.

Teachers tend to have stronger relationships with their local schools than their districts and the state, feeling more valued by and having greater confidence in school than district leadership structures, and feeling like their decisions are more strongly considered at their local districts than at the state level.

**19%** of teachers do not feel valued by their *school* administration

**38%** of teachers do not feel valued by their *district* administration

**27%** of teachers reported a lack of confidence in their *school* leadership

**42%** of teachers reported a lack of confidence in their *district* leadership

**53%** of teachers do not feel their perspectives are considered in decision making by their *district*

**57%** of teachers do not feel their perspectives are considered in decision making by the *state*