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IDEAs that Work U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

Shortages in Special Education Toolkit: Attract State Education Agency (SEA), Educator Preparation Program (EPP), and Local Education Agency (LEA) Role Guide

SEA Role	EPP/Community College Role	District Role
Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs		
• Offer competitive grants to districts to establish GYO programs in shortage areas, including special education. • Secure private funding to establish statewide/ regional GYO programs in shortage areas, including special education. • Offer guidance/ resource document to EPPs and districts to advance GYO programs in shortage areas, including special education. • Convene stakeholders (EPPs, LEAs, and others, e.g., rural associations) to discuss local challenges, share priorities with each other and the SEA, and create GYO partnerships. • Ensure grants prioritize local needs or gaps by a) identifying those needs and gaps, and, b) offering priority points or similar strategy to target local needs. • Collect and share educator data that other stakeholders can utilize to inform GYO program development and changes. • Establish collateral/ marketing materials for statewide use. • Establish standards for EPPs and curricula for education and training programs (High School), with an emphasis on shortage areas, including special education.	• Provide on-site, in-district courses to paraprofessionals working toward certification in shortage areas, including special education. • Partner with districts to establish a GYO program: for current EPP students, paraprofessionals, and future educators (HS students). • Offer dual credit for educator preparation courses – and potentially other core courses – in partnership with districts to expand recruitment, matriculation, and pipeline of future teachers. • Work with districts – and the SEA, as needed – to count classroom experience as a paraprofessional as field experience in the preparation program. • Create marketing materials for use in districts that clearly define the path, costs, and next steps. • Determine if current pathway(s) meet need, what demand is, and if not – and demand is there – look to expand and/or embrace a new model.	• Work with the SEA, local business, CTE, and preparation programs to develop GYO curriculum. • Work with EPPs – and the SEA, as needed – to allow classroom experience as a paraprofessional to count as field experience in the preparation program. • Work with the EPP and community colleges to offer or expand dual credit opportunities for educator preparation courses – and potentially other core courses – to increase the pipeline of future teachers.

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Alternative Routes to Certification		
• Establish program review that focuses on the integration of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs), High Leverage Practices (HLPs) and practice-based opportunities into coursework and field experiences that align with accreditation where possible. • Conduct and provide statewide data using shortages prediction models. • Sponsor job fairs to recruit into preparation programs. • Provide program guidelines and rubrics to ensure consistency in the quality of programs. • Offer a transitional/provisional credential to individuals enrolled in an alternative program enabling them to teach full-time while completing the program. • Require funding to alternative preparation programs be targeted toward shortage areas, including special education and/or dual certification in special education. • Fund Teacher and Leader Preparation Academies.	• Offer in-district training or supplemental coursework for untrained teachers before they start teaching. • Establish strong partnership with school districts to inform alternative teacher certification design and evaluate effectiveness. • Provide strong supervision and mentoring for participants during teaching. • Recruit widely and screen and select carefully. • Offer peer support via webinars or communities of practice. • Continuously assess candidates' performance throughout the program to determine fit. • Obtain feedback from districts regarding program effectiveness. • Establish Educator Preparation Academies. • Alternative certification programs need to apply rigorous selection practices to ensure that the most qualified individuals are accepted into teacher preparation programs.	• Offer in-district training or supplemental coursework leading to certification in lieu of a full-time teacher preparation program. • Partner with EPPs to establish coursework to get emergency teachers certified. • Establish strong partnership with preparation programs. • Provide strong mentorship for participants during their teaching. • Provide principal recommendation in the application. • Provide EPP assessments of candidates' performance. • Offer paid release days to attend courses/seminars. • Establish Educator Preparation Academies.
Status of the Profession		
• Launch a public relations campaign to elevate the teaching profession, with a particular emphasis on critical shortage areas (e.g. special education). • Actively engage teacher unions and advocacy organizations in the campaign. • Partner with EPPs and districts to identify faculty and educators to "champion" the public relations campaign.	• Partner with SEA and districts to launch a public relations campaign. • Highlight diverse, effective educators that went through your program (diverse in many senses – their race, gender, ethnicity, timing of the program, etc.). • Actively engage advocacy organizations and the community.	• Recognize effective teachers throughout the community. • Establish teacher leader roles. • Partner with the SEA and EPPs to identify effective teachers to "champion" the public relations campaign. • Obtain testimonials from diverse, effective teachers as to why they stay in the profession (diverse in many ways: race, gender, ethnicity, pathway to teaching, etc.).

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• Create clear pathways for teachers to grow professionally and move into leadership/teacher leader positions. • Actively engage advocacy organizations and the community.		• Create clear pathways for teachers to grow professionally and move into leadership/teacher leader positions. • Actively engage advocacy organizations and the community. • Create overall professional working conditions (such as effective school leadership, positive working conditions, teacher support, responsibility, induction program, and professional growth opportunities), which attract top candidates to a district.
Incentives		
• Work with state legislatures to offer loan forgiveness programs in shortage areas (like special education), or hard-to-staff schools/districts. • Work with state legislatures to offer increased compensation in shortage areas, like special education. • Promote portability of tenure across state lines. • Work with state legislatures to cover or reimburse a portion of tuition costs in exchange for teaching in high-need schools or subject areas, like special education. • Work with state legislatures to provide student assistance through service scholarships, low-interest loans, and work-study programs. • Work with state legislatures to offer state income tax credits to educators. • Work with state legislatures to offer college tuition assistance for children of teachers. • Assist districts in working with unions to ensure that teachers' salaries are sufficient to	• Identify funds to offset preparation program enrollment costs. • Partner with districts to lower enrollment costs. • Partner with districts for dual-enrollment courses at high-school level for mutually beneficial rewards.	• Evaluate and strengthen teacher compensation packages to attract stronger candidates. • Offer payment for candidates in residency programs and/or student teaching. • Lower class size for new teachers. • Align compensation systems to teachers' roles and responsibilities. • Pay teachers more for more demanding assignments (e.g., high-poverty schools, schools identified as low-performing, teaching in a shortage field). • Provide service scholarships, loan forgiveness, or housing incentives. • Allocate resources and negotiate with unions to ensure that teachers' salaries are sufficient to achieve improvements in teacher recruitment, retention, and quality so that that supply equals demand. • Actively involve teachers and other stakeholders in pay policy discussions and changes.

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achieve improvements in teacher recruitment, retention, and quality so that that supply equals demand. • Actively involve teachers and other stakeholders in pay policy discussions and changes. • Offer long-term teacher salary policies that are market sensitive, competitive and sustainable, meaning aligned with professional development, evaluation, and hiring practices.		• Offer long-term teacher salary policies that are market sensitive, competitive and sustainable, meaning aligned with professional development, evaluation, and hiring practices.
Preparation Program Recruitment & Selection Practices		
• Conduct and disseminate supply and demand studies, with particular focus on shortage areas like special education. • Work with legislators to offer loan forgiveness in shortage areas. • Use educator workforce data to identify and prioritize areas to target for pipeline development. • Increase efforts to attract diverse candidates. • Work with legislators to provide student assistance through scholarships, low-interest loans, and work-study programs.	• Increase efforts to attract diverse candidates. • Utilize supply and demand studies to modify recruitment strategies and program offerings. • Cast a wide net, including targeting high-school students, paraprofessionals and mid-career professionals. • Evaluate effects of recruitment efforts. • Ensure that the pool of teachers is competitive and demonstrate high academic achievement, among other qualifications, so that students are taught by the most qualified teachers. • Ensure that all teacher candidates have the dispositions necessary to be high-quality and highly effective teachers.	• Use educator workforce data to identify and prioritize areas to target for pipeline development. • Increase efforts to attract diverse candidates. • Offer the SEA and EPPs data on workforce needs. • Create messaging strategies to encourage individuals who are undecided about whether to return to the profession after some time out (e.g., due to maternity or paternity leave, retirement, or other reasons) to return to teaching. • Incorporate consideration of teacher leadership in the recruitment process (I.e. teacher leadership, diversity of expertise, differentiated staffing structures).
District Recruitment & Hiring Practices		
• Conduct and disseminate supply and demand studies, with particular focus on shortage areas like special education.	• Communicate with districts regarding candidates close to graduation, including those certified in shortage areas like special education.	• Establish strategic recruitment systems that engage top candidates through outreach using technology. • Simplify and streamline hiring processes.

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SEA Role	EPP/Community College Role	District Role
• Offer incentives for retired teachers to return to the profession. • Enact legislation that allows flexibility in district recruitment. • Pass legislation that permits retired teachers to receive a salary without reduction in social security and Medicaid benefits. • Work with legislatures to pass legislation that provides housing assistance to public school teachers. • Work with legislatures to offer state income tax credits. • Work with legislatures to offer college tuition assistance for children of teachers. • Set state level recruitment targets based on appropriate goals, monitor progress, and use data to judge where state has been successful and where it needs to improve. • Encourage diverse partnerships between EPPs and districts. • If possible, provide state level technological support for recruitment and hiring processes, I.e. overviews of district and school characteristics, job hub, etc.	• Utilize supply and demand studies to modify recruitment strategies and program offerings. • Assess district hiring rubrics to help in program design. • Partner with districts to apply for Teacher Quality Partnership Grants.	• Set early staffing decision timelines (voluntary transfers, resignations, and hiring) to ensure selection from the strongest candidates. • Develop a recruiting and screening process to identify high quality personnel (e.g., experience with students with disabilities). • Use online recruiting and hiring options to reach a larger pool of candidates. • Hire based on fit, not word of mouth. Establish high and unyielding standards in identifying teacher candidates. • Use available tools to evaluate district hiring practices. • Develop a rubric for candidate evaluation to ensure candidates are measured toward a consistent standard and align with the fit. • Create opportunities for professional growth (e.g., teacher career ladders, teacher leadership opportunities). • Evaluate effects of recruitment efforts. • Offer incentives for retired teachers to return to the profession. • Revise timelines for voluntary transfers or resignations to identify hiring needs early. • Reduce teaching loads for new teachers. • Continuous improvement: set district recruitment targets aligned to appropriate goal, monitor progress, and use data to judge where district has been successful and where it needs to improve.
Credential Reciprocity		
• Establish reciprocity agreements across states, especially for shortage areas like special education.	• Familiarize faculty with any special requirements (e.g., additional coursework, classroom experience) in Interstate Agreement	• Provide incentives for National Board-Certified Teachers.

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SEA Role	EPP/Community College Role	District Role
• Acknowledge tenure status and years of experience worked in other states, especially for shortage areas like special education. • Establish cross-state teacher pension portability. • Join NASDTEC's Interstate Agreement. • Provide incentives to attract National Board-Certified Teachers.	and/or reciprocity agreements with other states.	• Provide documentation of teaching experience and educator effectiveness/evaluation results to licensure department.
Workforce Diversity		
• Initiate culturally responsive hiring practices within the SEA. • Understand where in the pipeline is growing or closing diversify gaps. • Cover or reimburse a portion of tuition costs in exchange for teaching in high-need schools or subject areas. • Modify admission policies and student financial aid to high-quality preparation programs making it more affordable for minority candidates. • Establish teacher residencies. • Provide on-going mentoring and support. • Provide additional funding and grants for educator preparation candidates and teachers to further develop in multicultural awareness.	• Initiate culturally responsive hiring practices. • Determine where in the pipeline is growing or closing diversify gaps. • Increase the pipeline of a diverse educator workforce. • Establish teacher residencies. • Provide on-going mentoring and support. • Establish conditional admission policies evaluating candidates using a set of special criteria. • Develop course articulation agreements with community colleges (e.g., 2+2 programs). • Conduct information sessions about educator preparation programs in a variety of settings. • Require training in multicultural awareness.	• Initiate culturally responsive hiring practices. • Understand where in the pipeline is growing or closing diversify gaps. • Increase the pipeline of a diverse educator workforce. • Provide on-going mentoring and support. • Partner with preparation programs to establish teacher residencies. • Develop relationships with additional diverse potential applicant pools and document these relationships. • Emphasize the elimination of bias. • Consider EPP, ARC, residencies, community college, and other partnerships as an approach to recruitment of diverse candidates in addition to district-EPP partnerships.

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