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U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

Retention Strategies Role Guide

	State education agency role	Educator preparation program/ community college role	District role
Educator evaluation and professional learning systems	• Establish a tiered licensure system in which educators can attain higher levels of licensure based on participating in ongoing, high-quality professional development and assuming additional professional responsibilities, such as serving as a mentor, an instructional coach, or a master teacher. • Establish guidance on how to target professional learning and supports toward educators who need it the most, particularly teachers in low-performing schools and those serving students with disabilities (SWDs). • Use virtual supports, such as coaching and professional learning communities (PLCs), to deliver statewide professional learning activities that focus on high-leverage practices (HLPs). • Require districts to demonstrate alignment between educator evaluation results and professional learning as these elements pertain to supporting SWDs as a requirement for obtaining funding through Title II, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). • Require districts to demonstrate that professional learning funded by ESEA Title II, Part A is high quality and includes the essential features of practice-based opportunities. • Consider creating a statewide committee involving all stakeholder groups to make recommendations on the design and implementation of a professional growth system that considers the teaching of SWDs. • Consider developing a statewide bank of valid and reliable evaluation instruments for districts	• Collaborate with districts to obtain educator evaluation data to identify the priority needs of new and veteran teachers related to supporting SWDs. • Collaborate with the state education agency (SEA) and local districts to ensure alignment between preservice and inservice observation and evaluation systems that measure educator capacity to support SWDs. • Offer and/or modify educator preparation program (EPP) courses to align with professional development needs pertaining to supporting SWDs in district teacher evaluation systems, teaching conditions surveys, and any other district data. • Support districts in training evaluators to evaluate and deliver feedback on teacher capacity to meet the needs of SWDs. • Strengthen leadership preparation programs to ensure that leader candidates have the competencies to provide effective instructional coaching and support for teachers of SWDs. • Introduce candidates to state teaching standards that reflect evidence-based practices (EBPs) and HLPs shown in research studies to improve learning for SWDs and ensure that coursework and field experiences include opportunities to practice the standards.	• Establish a high-quality evaluation and professional learning system based on state teaching standards that includes multiple valid and reliable measures that are sensitive to educator capacity to support SWDs. • Use educator evaluation results, survey data on teaching conditions, and any other district data to inform and guide professional learning for supporting SWDs and share results with partnering EPPs. • Ensure that evaluators are professionally trained to evaluate and deliver feedback on teacher capacity to meet the needs of SWDs. • Provide differentiated professional development for teacher leaders to strengthen their capacity to help teachers meet the needs of SWDs. • Use the educator evaluation system and incentives (e.g., differentiated compensation model, performance bonus) to recognize high-quality performance of educators in supporting SWDs. • Require that all new teachers and teachers rated as ineffective in supporting SWDs participate in mentoring and induction programs to strengthen their capacity in supporting SWDs. • Leverage highly effective special education teachers to provide coaching and/or mentoring and induction to general educators identified as needing support to teach SWDs. • Use virtual supports, such as video-based coaching and/or PLCs, to deliver job-embedded professional development on strategies to

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	that reflect what teachers and leaders need to know and do for supporting SWDs. • Provide technical assistance to districts on the use of student growth data within educator evaluation systems, with a lens toward the growth of SWDs. • Establish a policy of high-quality, professional learning that strengthens educator capacity to support SWDs and contributes to recertification. • Reinforce or require that evaluators are professionally trained to evaluate and deliver feedback on teacher capacity to meet the needs of SWDs.	• Offer support to districts in using educator evaluation results, teaching conditions survey data, and other district data to guide and inform professional learning. • Offer job-embedded professional learning within schools that contributes to recertification and focuses on EBPs and HLPs proven to improve learning for SWDs.	support SWDs to new general and special educators or those identified as ineffective. • Target supports (e.g., emergency certification, teaching outside certification area) to general and special educators identified as at risk of leaving the profession. • Ensure that the observation of educators supporting SWDs is an element in educator evaluation systems. • Partner with teachers' unions to consider teachers' ideas and concerns about efforts to strengthen supports for teaching SWDs.
Alignment from preservice to inservice	• Ensure that teacher and leader preparation standards, programs, and assessments align with HLPs and EBPs shown in research studies to improve learning for SWDs. • Align expectations of instructional practice from preservice to inservice, leveraging program approval and/or district Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) monitoring to reinforce educator competencies that support SWDs. • Require EPPs to provide all educators with clinical, practice-based opportunities to teach SWDs and opportunities to apply EBPs and HLPs shown in research studies to improve learning for SWDs.	• Collaborate with SEAs and districts to ensure that EPP standards and assessments align with HLPs and EBPs. • Establish partnerships with local districts to align expectations of instructional practice for SWDs from preservice to inservice. • Establish partnerships with local districts to align field experience observation protocols with inservice protocols to reinforce educator competencies in supporting SWDs. • Offer extended professional development for recent graduates to continue to collaborate across districts, particularly for special educators with limited access to other special education teachers in their school or district.	• Collaborate with SEAs and EPPs to ensure that preparation program standards and assessments align with HLPs and EBPs. • Partner with EPPs to ensure that expectations of instructional practice for educators of SWDs align from preservice to inservice. • Partner with EPPs to align educator evaluation observation protocols with inservice field experience protocols to reinforce educator competencies from preservice to inservice. • Partner with EPPs to establish expectations of leaders and cooperating teachers in supporting clinical field placements that build educator capacity to support SWDs. • After successful recruitment, establish retention targets for teachers with demonstrated effectiveness in supporting SWDs.

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Mentoring and induction	• Establish a policy that requires mentoring and induction for novice teachers and teachers who have received ineffective ratings in supporting SWDs. • Provide guidance to districts to support the design of high-quality mentoring and induction programs that focus on skills that learner-ready teachers need to support SWDs in their classrooms. • Provide districts with guidance on how to blend or braid ESEA Title II, Part A and IDEA funding to establish and implement high-quality mentoring and induction programs. • Require that districts use high-quality mentor selection criteria, where mentors have demonstrated capacity to support the learning of all students, including SWDs.	• Partner with districts to design and implement mentoring and induction programs that focus on HLPs and EBPs. • Leverage existing program curricula, materials, and assessments to develop training materials for district mentors. • Establish a partnership with districts to mentor newly hired teacher candidates and strengthen their capacity to support the learning of SWDs. • Collaborate with SEAs and districts in reviewing teacher retention targets, noting specific candidate retention rates per EPPs.	• Provide high-quality training and coaching skills for mentors to support the use of HLPs and EBPs. • Provide mentors and mentees time (within the school day) for coaching, peer observation, collaboration, and reflection that supports shared responsibility for the learning of all students. • Prioritize funding for mentoring and induction for novice teachers and teachers rated as ineffective, with specific needs in supporting SWDs. • Match beginning teachers with a mentor within the same certification area, using e-mentoring as needed. • Ensure rigorous mentor selection, training, and support that prioritizes help to novice teachers in supporting SWDs; include professional learning materials for mentors. • Provide explicit expectations for the roles of mentor, new teacher, program leaders, and school administrators to ensure that all teachers can adequately support the learning of SWDs. • Provide multiyear mentoring to novice teachers (up to 3 years) and require full participation. • Reduce responsibilities for new teachers (e.g., reduced class sizes and/or course loads, fewer responsibilities and administrative duties for teachers of record). • Establish teacher retention targets for teachers with demonstrated effectiveness in supporting SWDs.

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Recertification and continued licensure	• Require teachers and leaders to demonstrate effective implementation of HLPs and EBPs, shown in research studies to improve learning for SWDs, for renewal of their license and certification. • Establish a micro-credential system for recertification purposes that focuses on the HLPs and EBPs shown in research studies to improve learning for SWDs.	• Partner with districts to provide in-school professional learning and support that strengthens educator capacity to meet the needs of SWDs and that meets recertification requirements. • Partner with districts to provide support to general and special education teachers of SWDs that complies with and contributes to recertification requirements.	• Work with SEAs to leverage professional learning, classroom experiences, and/or micro-credentials to meet recertification requirements. • Partner with EPPs to provide job-embedded professional development to all teachers to strengthen their capacity to meet the needs of SWDs. • Align the district educator evaluation system with other educator talent management strategies, including recertification.
Teacher leadership	• Establish clear metrics that measure teacher leader effectiveness to meet the needs of SWDs. • Provide opportunities for teacher leaders with demonstrated capacity to help educators meet the needs of SWDs and share their voice in state policy decisions. • Establish a tiered licensure system with career pathways in which educators attain higher levels of licensure based on participating in ongoing, high-quality professional development and assuming additional professional responsibilities, such as serving as a mentor, a master teacher, or an instructional coach, in support of teacher capacity to meet the needs of SWDs. • Design performance assessments for teacher leaders that integrate their impact on teacher practice in supporting SWDs. • Establish professional learning or micro-credentials for teacher leaders in HLPs, EBPs, differentiated instruction, specialized instruction, and intensive intervention.	• Partner with the SEA or LEAs to establish professional learning or micro-credentials for teacher leaders in HLPs, EBPs, differentiated instruction, specialized instruction, and intensive intervention. • Establish a series of courses for teacher leadership endorsement that emphasize capacity to coach teachers to effectively support the needs of SWDs. • Work with stakeholders to define formal teacher leadership roles, such as a mentor or an instructional coach, and mentorship expectations that articulate supports for instructional practices shown in research studies to improve learning for SWDs. • Collaborate with districts to design performance assessments for teacher leaders to ensure that they are supporting educators successfully, leading to positive impacts for SWDs.	• Develop specific, compensated roles for teacher leaders as mentors and instructional coaches that emphasize and leverage their expertise in working with SWDs. • Develop and leverage differentiated staffing structures and pathways to teacher leadership for teachers with demonstrated effectiveness serving SWDs. • Provide opportunities for teacher leadership within PLCs to strengthen the capacity of all teachers to meet the needs of SWDs. • Work with stakeholders to define formal teacher leader roles, such as a mentor or an instructional coach who specializes in supporting SWDs. • Create job descriptions and a standardized process for choosing formal teacher leaders who exemplify required effectiveness for supporting all learners. • Design performance assessments for teacher leaders to ensure that they are supporting educators successfully, leading to positive impacts for SWDs. • Establish professional learning or micro-credentials for teacher leaders in HLPs, EBPs, differentiated instruction, specialized instruction, and intensive intervention.

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Tiered licensure	• Establish a tiered licensure system in which educators attain higher levels of licensure based on participating in ongoing, high-quality professional development and assuming additional professional responsibilities, such as serving as a mentor, an instructional coach, or a master teacher, which also provides increased compensation as teachers advance in tier level. • Collaborate with EPPs to frame and build a continuum that recognizes professional growth for educators and teacher leaders in supporting SWDs in classrooms. • Create a system of defined licensure stages or tiers to differentiate between entry-level skills and expertise acquired through experience, including in teaching SWDs. • Create performance-based assessments that align with the competencies specified in the tiered licensure system.	• Collaborate with SEAs to frame and build a continuum that recognizes professional growth and align EPPs accordingly. • Provide coursework for teacher leaders that aligns with licensure tiers for supporting SWDs in the classroom. • Ensure that faculty, teaching staff, and supervisory staff are current with best practices in teaching SWDs.	• Collaborate with SEAs and EPPs to frame and build a continuum that recognizes professional growth across the educator career continuum. • Use the tiered licensure model to strengthen educator capacity to support all learners and hire candidates with demonstrated effectiveness. • Align the evaluation system with guidelines for other educator talent management areas to reinforce skills for supporting SWDs.
Collaboration	• Ensure that collaboration competencies are included in teacher and leader standards. • Ensure that collaboration competencies are included in performance-based certification for teachers and leaders. • Provide statewide training on effective collaboration strategies for teachers and leaders.	• Teach the importance of and skill sets for general and special education teachers to collaborate effectively. • Establish general and special education teacher cohorts across programs, modeling and providing instruction and opportunities to collaborate. • Have general and special education faculty model collaborative teaching within programs. • Offer extended development for recent graduates, including teachers of SWDs, to continue to collaborate with each other across districts.	• Provide training to school leaders in how to schedule and protect deep networking and collaboration between general and special educators. • Launch late start or early release times weekly or, alternatively, regularly schedule professional development days to allow time for educator collaboration. • Emphasize and reinforce collaboration within teacher evaluation models. • Allow time for meetings and collaboration with different teachers (e.g., English as a second language, art, special education) to ensure that the needs of all students are met. • Include all teachers in PLCs. • Create a team-based school culture to mitigate teacher isolation, help teachers feel appreciated, and improve teacher retention.

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Empowerment and extending the reach	• Include teacher voice and teachers of SWDs in policy decisions. • Support "Teach to Lead" summits. • Provide potential funding or presentation opportunities at the state level to teachers who participate in action research. • Involve teachers and EPPs in teacher standards revisions and design processes. • Actively involve teachers and other stakeholders in policy discussions and decisions regarding pay.	• Ensure that faculty integrate strategies to implement distributive leadership models within leader preparation programs and EPPs. • Provide candidates with exposure to action research. • Provide teacher and leader candidates with content and practice opportunities in advocating for the profession.	• Include teacher voice, teachers of SWDs, and other stakeholders in policy and practice decisions. • Send teachers to "Teach to Lead" summits. • Establish distributive leadership models that provide teachers with opportunities for leadership roles. • Connect beginning teachers with professional associations and organizations specific to their teaching assignments (e.g., National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Council for Exceptional Children, National Association for the Education of Young Children). • Provide teachers with opportunities to lead or participate in action research.
Leadership	• Require inclusive practices within leadership preparation program approval requirements. • Include experience supporting SWDs in classrooms and school buildings as a requirement for administrator certification. • Provide training for leaders on facilitating inclusive classrooms and collaborative practices. • Garner feedback from district leaders and teachers when establishing or approving leadership academies.	• Ensure that leadership preparation coursework and field experiences incorporate knowledge building and practice opportunities with special education teachers, SWDs, and families of SWDs. • Establish partnerships with districts to garner feedback and input on the leadership preparation program.	• Provide opportunities for leader and administrator candidates to gain experience in special education and in supporting SWDs. • Align leader evaluation systems with the knowledge and skills to establish and maintain inclusive buildings and classrooms. • Provide professional learning and support to leaders on how to provide high-quality instructional coaching in HLPs and EBPs. • Hire effective principals and assistant principals with demonstrated capacity to establish and maintain inclusive buildings and classrooms.

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Diversity, equity, and inclusion	• Provide grant opportunities for local education agencies (LEAs) to develop and implement plans to increase the number of diverse educators in the pipeline. • Hold career fairs designed to recruit a diverse educator workforce. • Establish educator networks focused on the unique experiences of diverse educators. • Establish loan forgiveness or incentive programs to recruit a diverse educator workforce. • Ensure that culturally responsive practices are a requirement within teacher and leadership preparation programs. • Review diversity internally and offer professional learning to help staff reflect on their own experiences, racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.	• Create camaraderie through networks, clubs, or alumni groups for diverse educators. • Integrate culturally responsive practices into coursework and field experiences. • Offer training for EPP staff to build understanding of the need for culturally responsive practices, diversity, racial equity, and inclusion. • Review diversity internally and offer professional learning to help faculty reflect on their own experiences, racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. • Integrate diversity and implicit bias training into leadership preparation programs.	• Encourage trust and collegiality among and between teachers and school leaders. • Provide support for newly hired, diverse educators to acclimate into the community. • Provide diversity and implicit bias training to district administrators and human resource officers. • Regularly collect feedback from diverse educators regarding district hiring and evaluation practices. • Monitor the hiring and retention of diverse educators. • Ensure ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for all school staff, faculty, and leaders.
Social and emotional learning	• Provide grant opportunities for LEAs to design and implement school safety and social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies. • Infuse SEL into leader and teacher preparation program approval requirements. • Assess leader and teacher capacity to teach social and emotional competencies as part of certification requirements. • Provide statewide professional learning on SEL. • Describe the role that SEL plays in successfully integrating current education initiatives.	• Integrate SEL training into leadership, general, and special education preparation program coursework and field experiences. • Establish district partnerships and garner feedback on teacher and leader needs in school safety and SEL. • Demonstrate how to integrate SEL into academic learning within programs.	• Assess educators' capacity to implement teaching practices that impact student's social and emotional competencies (using the Center for Great Teachers and Leaders [SEL Self-Assessment](#)) and use that data to develop and provide high-quality professional learning. • Integrate SEL into academic learning and curricular resources. • Connect SEL to other school policies and procedures, such as school climate, a school's vision and mission, or service-learning programs. • Help teachers assess students' social and emotional competencies in the classroom. • Connect SEL to existing evaluation and professional learning networks. • Promote a culture that encourages students to take responsibility for the school (e.g., student leadership, student buy-in, community service, incentives for clean rooms and halls).

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Working conditions	• Work with legislatures to provide LEAs with sufficient resources to hire enough teachers and other school personnel so that teachers have manageable caseloads and can focus on every student's achievement. • Use and/or enforce paperwork reduction policies. • Conduct a statewide working conditions/teaching conditions survey to provide data to inform improvements. Disaggregate the results for teachers of SWDs to make data-driven decisions and target supports. • Develop policies to address working conditions (e.g., professional development, mentoring and induction, and PLCs). • Work with legislatures to allocate resources to modernize older buildings and facilities so that schools are comfortable learning centers where 21st century skills may be best developed. • Establish leadership standards that include competencies to address working/teaching conditions (e.g., mentoring and induction, time allocation for collaboration, scheduling, managing student conduct/schoolwide positive and behavioral intervention, distributive leadership). • Provide statewide professional learning for leaders to strengthen their capacity to address teaching/working conditions (e.g., mentoring and induction, time allocation for collaboration, scheduling, managing student conduct/schoolwide positive and behavioral intervention, distributive leadership).	• Provide training to general and special education teachers and leaders on how to engage students and promote positive behavior. • Teach and provide candidates opportunities within coursework and field experiences in evidence-based prevention strategies, such as tiered supports, to promote positive behavior. • Teach about the role that local mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies can play in improving working conditions. • Include leadership competencies to establish positive teaching/working conditions within leadership preparation programs (e.g., mentoring and induction, time allocation for collaboration, scheduling, managing student conduct/schoolwide positive and behavioral intervention, distributive leadership).	• Provide regular professional development and supports to all school personnel, including teachers, principals, support staff, and school-based law enforcement officers, on how to engage students and support positive behavior. • Provide professional development and support for district and school leaders to strengthen their capacity to address teaching/working conditions (e.g., mentoring and induction, time allocation for collaboration, scheduling, managing student conduct/schoolwide positive and behavioral intervention, distributive leadership). • Prioritize the use of evidence-based prevention strategies, such as tiered supports, to promote positive student behavior. • Collaborate with local mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies. • Be aware of and maintain school building conditions, which can influence teachers' ability to teach and students' ability to learn, send a message about the value of school and learning, and affect teacher retention. • Strategically consider the number of teachers, specialists, and support staff needed to fully staff every school, with teachers' working conditions in mind. • Reduce the bureaucratic burden on teachers by providing sufficient administrative support to allow teachers to devote more time to meeting students' individual needs. • Allot and protect time for PLCs that support teachers in the effective instruction of SWDs. • Build community support by providing opportunities to involve parents and community members in influential decisions. Provide consistent two-way communication between schools and parents. • Offer professional learning to teachers as needed to effectively communicate with parents.