

August 4, 2020

Ensuring a Strong Teacher Workforce During the COVID-19 Crisis

Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers is essential for student learning. To prepare for a variety of scenarios and contingencies, this document outlines school-level, district-level, and RESA-level measures that Georgia's local education agencies (LEAs) can consider to mitigate teacher shortages. Additional information can be found at the [Learning Policy Institute, the Education Commission of the States, and in the GASPA Toolkit for Recruitment.](#)

School-level

Mitigating Measures:

1. **Loop Teachers and Students.** Consider having teachers stay with the same class cohorts (looping) from the 2019-20 school year to ease transitions and maintain relationships among students and teachers and provide long-term knowledge of students' strengths, interests, and needs. Research and information on looping includes [The Advantages of Looping the Elementary Classroom](#) and/or [In the Loop.](#)
2. **Create Teaching Teams.** Create teaching teams so teachers share knowledge about students and families. Class sizes can be maximized in online instruction as the number of teachers assigned to the cohort increases. Suggested research and information can be found at [What Makes Effective Teaching Teams Tick?](#) and [Analysis: Through Co-Teaching, Team Teaching, and Collaboration, These Pioneering Schools Are Re-Thinking How to Best Deliver Personalized Learning for Students.](#)

Suggestions

- Pair teachers for remote teachers with face-to-face teaching to share resources and maintain maximum flexibility for instructional modalities.
 - Group students in small stations to facilitate learning. Students remain stationary and the teachers/paraprofessionals move from station to station within a small number of groups.
3. **Use Additional Substitutes.** Increase the number of people with certification for substitute teaching in the LEA.



Suggestions

- Consider reaching out to parents, retired teachers/administrators, retired district personnel, etc.
 - Reassign certified staff to be floating teachers and/or serve as substitute teachers.
 - Reassign paraprofessionals as designated full-time substitute teachers assigned to designated school(s).
 - Recruit public servants, retired military, and college students currently taking classes online.
4. **Collaborate with Georgia P-20 Partners.** Work with Georgia P-20 partners to create opportunities for student *teachers*. Work with colleges and universities to outline structures for supervision as teacher candidates complete certification requirements. Utilize any additional guidance provided by the P-20 Collaboratives. Information regarding Georgia's nine regional P-20 Partners can be found at [GaDOE Teacher and Leader Induction Guidance](#) (scroll down for P-20 Collaboratives).
5. **Create Virtual Teaching Opportunities.** Consider providing televised/online instruction, remote tutoring, and collaborative professional learning. These formats can be redelivered in traditional, remote, and/or hybrid settings. Consider combined classes/increased class size for online instruction only. Consider assigning one teacher at school or district level to moderate online instructional video lessons while classroom teachers facilitate student learning. Resources and teacher-created videos are located at [Georgia Home Classroom](#). Additional resources for instruction are located at [GPB Educational Resources](#) and [GeorgiaStandards.org](#).
6. **Prepare Emergency Work Packets.** Emergency work packets and substitute lesson plans could be prepared for two weeks of instruction in case of long-term quarantine. The Georgia Department of Education is constructing cross-curricular plans that can be used for "plugged" or "unplugged" instruction in case of emergency. Sample unit plans, sample lessons, resources, activities and pacing guides aligned to Georgia standards can be found at [Georgia Standards.org](#).
7. **Adjust Student Daily Schedules.** Consider:
- a. Staggering arrival and dismissal times to accommodate teachers' and families' schedules.
 - b. Rotating student schedules so school attendance is required 1-4 days weekly and online other days.
 - c. Splitting sessions so some students attend morning sessions and others afternoon.

Resources

- The American Academy of Pediatrics can be found at [COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry](#).

- CDC Guidelines for K – 12 Administrators can be found at [Preparing K-12 School Administrators for A Safe Return to School in Fall 2020](#).
- Review [“Scheduling the Covid-19 School Year”](#).

District-level

Mitigating Measures:

1. **Seek Educator Voices.** Seek input of teachers, and school and district personnel regarding district decisions that directly impact teaching and learning. Consider creating a chat recording for staff to leave messages, concerns, ideas, etc.
2. **Support Strong Morale.** Provide morale incentives (monetary, time toward retirement, community business incentives). Suggested research and information can be found at [14 Ways to Virtual Celebrate Teachers During COVID-19](#); [Reflecting on Teacher Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#); and [Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools](#).

Suggestions

- Improve school/workplace climate
 - Consider ways to create more flexible work environments.
 - Maintain frequent virtual check-ins with teachers.
 - Educate school-level leaders on ways to increase teacher morale with non-monetary rewards.
2. **Retain Teachers.** Create incentives (monetary, time toward retirement, community business incentives) to encourage eligible teachers to remain with the system past retirement age and to retain quality teachers in the classroom/remote learning. Please vet any proposals with your legal and human resources professionals prior to implementation. Suggested research and information can be found at [Solving the Teacher Shortage: How to Attract and Retain Excellent Educators](#) and [GaDOE Teacher Retention Infographic](#).

Suggestions

- Provide annual signing bonuses.
 - Create opportunities for mortgage assistance.
 - Develop loan forgiveness programs.
 - Finance merit pay incentives.
 - Offer travel reimbursement.
 - Provide childcare.
4. **Retain Substitute Teachers.** Customize a substitute incentive plan. Consult with human resource and legal staff.

Suggestions

- Offer bonuses for completing several assignments.
- Offer full-time substitute positions.
- Develop a competitive pay with neighboring districts.
- Partner with community businesses to offer incentives.

5. **Reassign Teachers.** Reassign staff to grade levels, content areas, and schools based on shortage needs. To increase the pool of available teachers, certification waivers could be utilized.
6. **Develop a Recruiting Campaign for New Teachers.** Increase in-state and out-of-state recruiting efforts by investigating ways to overcome barriers such as transportation, childcare, loan repayment, and housing. Reach out to Human Resources professionals to address local concerns. Consider recruiting teachers from out-of-state. For virtual instruction, those teachers would not have to physically move to the district but could teach remotely from wherever they are. Suggested research and information can be found at [DC Voices: Teacher Recruitment and Retention During the Pandemic](#) and [GaDOE Recruitment Best Practices Infographic](#).

Suggestion

- Offer attractive signing bonuses.

7. **Develop a Recruitment Campaign for Substitute Teachers.** Customize a substitute recruitment campaign (social media, search engines, etc.) and consider increasing substitute pay. Suggested research and information can be found at [Substantial Subs and Addressing Shortages of Educators in an Uncertain COVID-19 Landscape: Viewing Teacher Candidates as Assets](#).

Suggestions

- Recruit undergraduate and graduate students in education from nearby institutions of higher education as substitutes.
- Collaborate with your local RESA to increase the number of TAPP candidates.
- Recruit retired military.
- Reimburse undergraduate and graduate students with stipends.
- Consider having “permanent” substitute teachers work in the same location each day.
- **Consider using temporary staffing firms.**
- Create a Grow Your Own program.

8. **Streamline the Substitute Hiring Process.** Review the application process to ensure expediency. Consult with human resource and legal staff.

Suggestions

- Conduct virtual interviews.
- Use an online application process for substitute teachers with specific questions that will categorize applicants according to location, experience, interests, and availability.
- Prioritize retired teachers, retired military, public servants, and those with college degrees priority attention.
- Respond to applicants in a timely manner.

9. **Offer Virtual Training for All Substitutes.** Virtual training provides the flexibility for substitutes to complete the training in alternative settings at their own pace.

10. Collaborate With P-20 Partners Regarding Student Teachers. Work with P-20 partners to create opportunities and plan ways for student teachers to fill positions. Consider some positions that could support teachers in their online instruction such as instructional support specialist, media/instructional video creators/curators, etc. Work with colleges and universities to outline structures as teaching candidates complete certification requirements.

Suggestions

- Ask the institute of higher education to share information that identifies teacher candidates with specific skills to help match them to openings.

RESA-level

Mitigating Measures:

1. **Modify the TAPP Process.** Make the process more attractive for prospective TAPP teachers. The current process requires a prospective educator to meet specific criteria in the following areas: education (minimum of a BA required), examinations (passing score on the GACE Basic Skills or equivalent exam), and experience (attain a job in a participating Georgia School system).

Suggestions

- Allow candidates to begin the program before admission requirements are met (conditional enrollments) due to test site closures.
 - Administer program admissions assessment online.
 - Increase cohort sizes.
 - Seek funding sources for TAPP candidates' costs.
 - Develop an aggressive recruitment campaign.
2. **Update Professional Learning Opportunities.** Educational stakeholders currently need professional learning opportunities to ensure that effective teaching and learning occurs amid the pandemic.

Suggestions

- Provide remote learning opportunities.
 - Increase technology use for online presentations and content delivery.
 - Support ongoing, differentiated, job-embedded virtual personalized learning.
 - Create virtual professional learning communities.
3. **Create Professional Learning for Substitute Teachers.** Substitute professional learning courses can focus on district-wide initiatives and current LEA needs. Create a library of webinars.