

# SREB

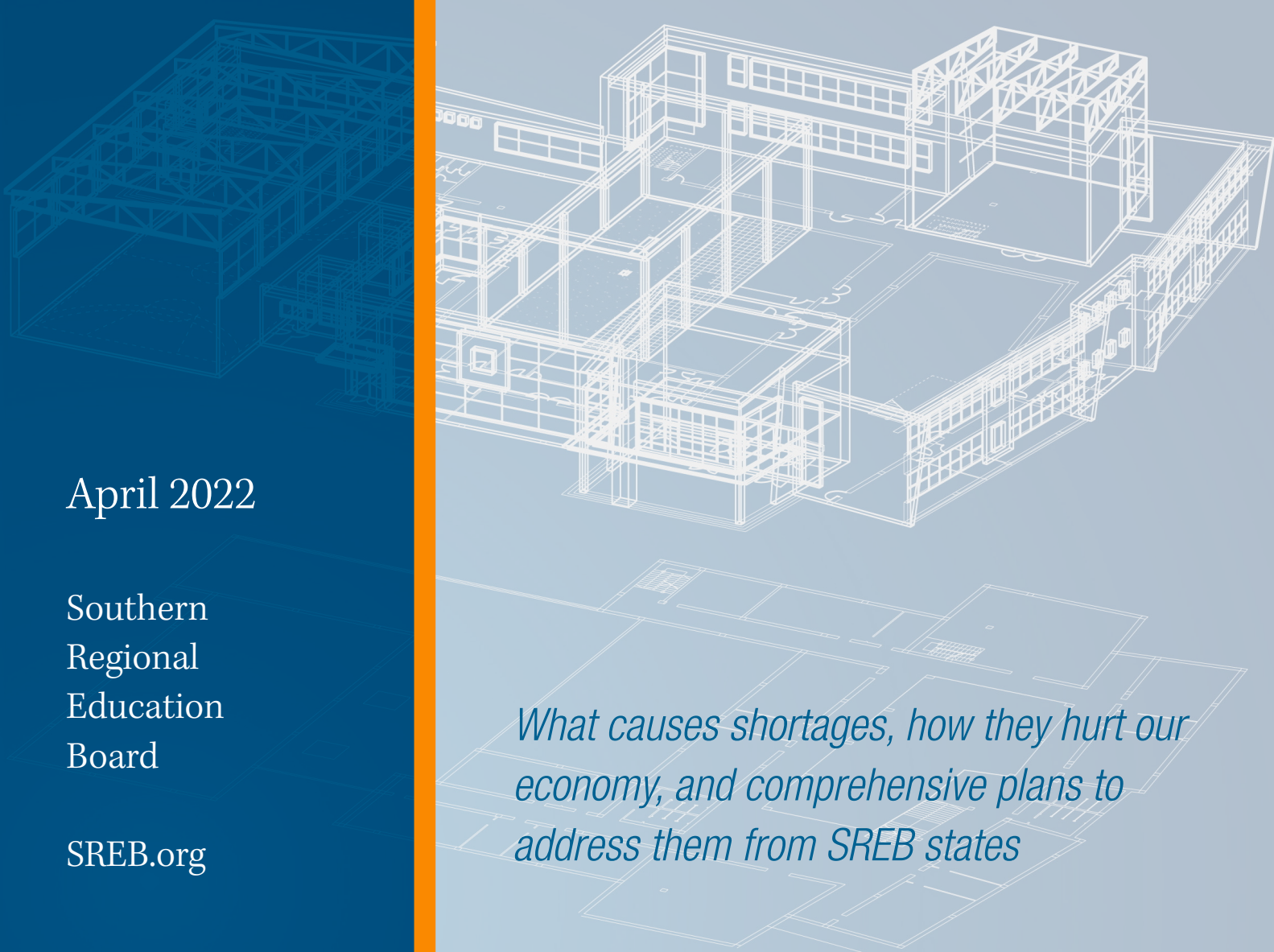
## A Blueprint to Solve Teacher Shortages

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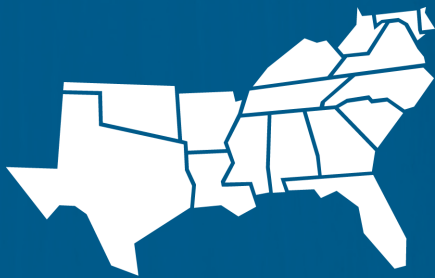
*What causes shortages, how they hurt our economy, and comprehensive plans to address them from SREB states*



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A nonprofit, nonpartisan interstate compact created in 1948, the Southern Regional Education Board works to improve education at every level, from early childhood through doctoral education.

# A Blueprint to Solve Teacher Shortages

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## *Every future begins with a teacher*

Schools full of great teachers support the common goal of having an educated population, a prepared and productive workforce, and a strong economy.

Staff shortages in key subjects, increased difficulty in filling vacancies, a significant decline in those who want to teach — all this has turned the teacher shortage into a crisis in too many areas across the nation.

The way to fix it? Renovate the profession.

## Teacher Shortages Hurt Education and the Economy

The teacher shortage is a pervasive problem across the country and especially in the South, where SREB states face shortages in many subjects, not just math, science and special education. There are now continuous shortages in all STEM subjects, career and technical education, and world languages. And we're seeing shortages in English and elementary education as well, areas where we have usually had a surplus.

The issue is one of *quantity*, with not enough teachers, substitutes, and other staff; *quality*, with fewer experienced, prepared and certified teachers; *diversity*, with the majority of teachers being white females; and *equity*, with highly effective teachers concentrated in more affluent school districts. These shortages impair our ability to prepare the next generation of workers and limit our economic productivity. In this report, we look at data on the teacher workforce and offer promising solutions to elevate the profession.



“Exhausted. Disrespected. Unappreciated. Overwhelmed. I need to get out.” This is how many teachers describe their careers in survey after survey, discussion after discussion. Teachers, and the students they serve, deserve our best efforts to elevate the profession.

## Teacher Shortages by Subject and Grade Span

SREB States, 2019-20

	English Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	Special Education	English as a 2nd Language	Career & Technical Education
Alabama	P-12	P-12	6-12		K-12		
Arkansas	P-12	P-12	P-12		P-12		P-12
Delaware	P-12	P-12	P-12		P-12	P-12	P-12
Florida	P-12	P-12	P-12		P-12	P-12	P-12
Georgia		6-12	6-12		K-12		
Kentucky		6-12	6-12	6-12	P-12	P-12	6-12
Louisiana		6-12	P-12		P-12	P-12	
Maryland		7-12	7-12		P-12	P-12	7-12
Mississippi		overall	overall		overall		
North Carolina	K-5	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12		9-12
Oklahoma	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	P-12		5-12
South Carolina	5-12	5-12	5-12	5-12	P-12		P-12
Tennessee	6-12	6-12	6-12	6-12		P-12	
Texas		7-12			P-12	P-12	7-12
Virginia	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	P-12	P-12	6-12
West Virginia	5-12	5-12	P-12	5-12	P-12		P-12
<b>Total States</b>	10	16	15	7	15	8	11

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Teacher Shortage Areas [report](#).

SREB states are preparing up to 50% fewer teachers than a decade ago, according to U.S. Department of Education data. States are employing as many as 3,000 emergency certified teachers and facing hundreds more vacancies, leaving up to 100,000 students in a state without a certified teacher in each of their classes. The share of uncertified and inexperienced teachers (those with two years or less of teaching experience) has reached nearly 30% in some states. And while student demographics are changing, teachers are still mostly white females. Some states in the region have less than 10% teachers of color. Long-term studies have shown that students of color *and* white students achieve more with diverse classroom leaders.

### Teacher Workforce in the South 2019-20

Averages for states reporting this data

**27%** male, **73%** female

**14%** are uncertified and/or teaching out of field

**78%** white, **22%** non-white

**10%** attrition/turnover

**16%** are inexperienced

**15,000** fewer teachers prepared in 2019 than in 2013

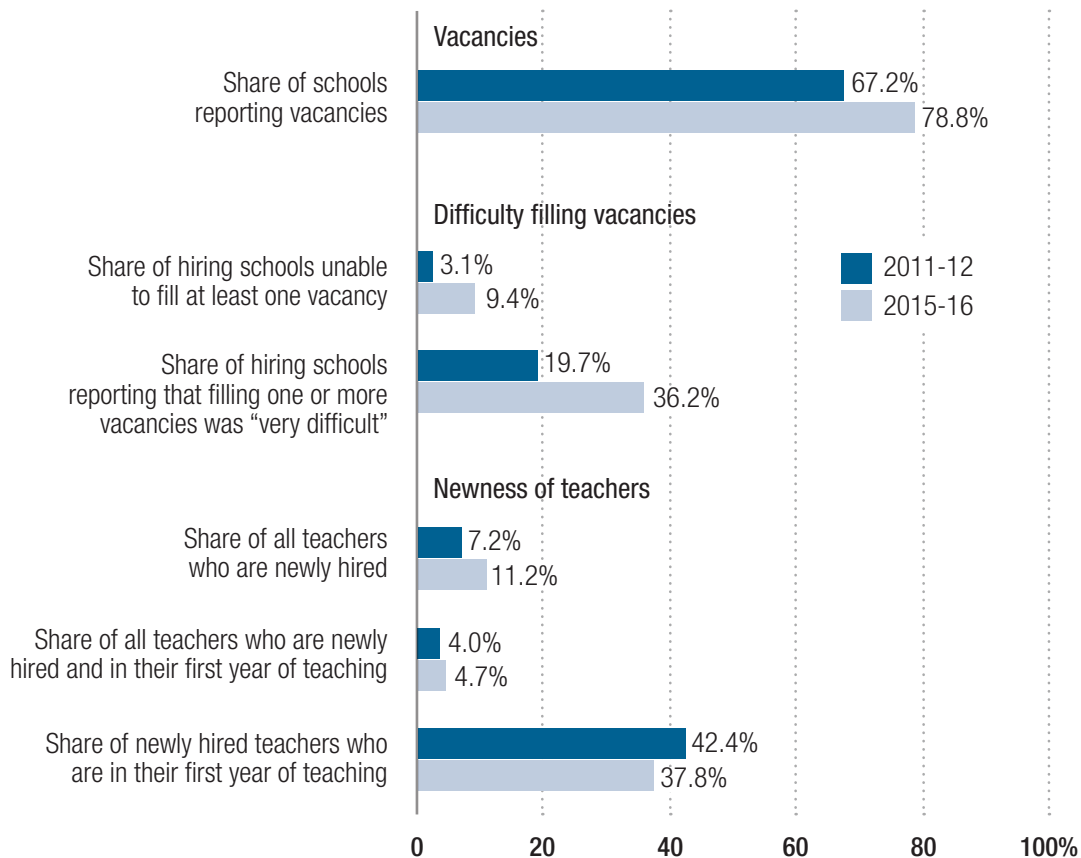
Sources: Teacher demographic, characteristic and mobility data pulled by SREB from individual state school report cards and teacher workforce reports. Teacher preparation data from U.S. Department of Education [Title II Reports](#)

Teacher turnover is increasing in certain states and regions of states. The SREB region saw an average turnover of 8% for several years before the COVID-19 pandemic, but by 2020 some states were reporting average rates as high as 19%. In some areas, such as high-poverty and rural communities, turnover reached even higher levels during the pandemic. And the turnover rate for new teachers (five years or less) is up to 45%.

Surveys by the Rand Corporation and the National Education Association consistently show that over 50% of teachers say they plan to leave the profession. Federal data shows that between January and November 2020, 800,000 resignations were handed in by employees who work in education at the state and local level — a 40% rise during that period. By comparison, retail resignations rose 27% in the same timeframe.

## Vacancies and New Teachers

U.S., 2011-12 to 2015-16



Source: "U.S. schools struggle to hire and retain teachers," Economic Policy Institute, 2019

## Why We're Losing Teachers

SREB has conducted focus groups with hundreds of teachers in recent years to learn about the educator experience in our states. In informal interviews and conversations in fall 2021, teachers shared that turnover may rise even higher in the upcoming school years. Feedback from teachers across the region is nearly unanimous: the 2021-22 school year was more difficult and overwhelming than the two previous years of COVID-19 school closings. The 2021-22 school year brought additional challenges such as:

- Reorienting students on how to “do” school
- Coping with increased mental health needs and pandemic-related trauma
- Helping more students with major learning gaps
- Having to fill in for vacant support roles — there aren't enough counselors, nurses, substitutes, janitors, bus drivers or cafeteria workers
- Accommodating growing class sizes or having to combine classes due to staff vacancies and absences
- Increasingly strained work environments that don't allow for collegial collaboration or class planning, with administrators stretched too thin to provide adequate support or feedback

Several surveys show that the top factors in teachers saying they will leave (or have left) the profession are 1) feeling underprepared for the job, overwhelmed with stress and spread too thin; and 2) a lack of support as professionals from administrators, peers and parents. According to an ACT survey, the top reasons high school and college students say they want to become teachers — but don't — are low pay and a lack of career advancement.

These burdens aren't getting lighter, and the shortage is worsening.

According to multiple sources including RAND, the University of Pennsylvania's education policy division and the EdWeek Research Center, numerous policy and practice hurdles contribute to the highly stressed working conditions that limit states' ability to attract and retain excellent, diverse teachers. These include:

- Limited pathways into teaching
- Inappropriate, inequitable barriers to entry and short-sighted licensure policies
- Not enough on-the-job learning for pre-service teachers
- Limited recruitment and marketing efforts



The top reasons high school and college students say they want to become teachers — but don't — are low pay and a lack of career advancement.

- Lack of quality support on the job
- Lack of esteem for the profession
- Lack of advancement in the classroom
- Low pay and benefits packages
- Issues with school culture and working conditions
- Gaps in leadership and lack of structures or incentives to build teacher leaders

## Benefits of Ending the Teacher Shortage Crisis

Renovating the profession by changing the way we prepare, pay and support our educators should mean no more shortage of confident, inspiring teachers. Students emerging well prepared for further education, for careers, for life. Invigorated state economies. Everybody wins.

Better student outcomes are what parents, educators and local and state education leaders seek. Every parent wants their children to succeed in school and career, and every student deserves a progression of life-changing teachers. When it comes to student performance, teachers have two to three times the effect of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership, according to RAND reporting.

Teacher shortages are a drain on our economy. Not only is the shortage of pre-K-12 teachers and childcare workers forcing more parents — particularly women — to leave their jobs to tend to children, but ending the crisis is critical to meet *all* workforce needs and strengthen the economy. Businesses are reliant on the education system to produce a quality workforce and often locate in areas with the best quality education. When students don't have well-trained, effective teachers, they're less likely to be ready for the education after high school that prepares them for good careers.

The Economic Analysis and Research Network's report *A Well-Educated Workforce is Key to State Prosperity* makes a compelling case that “productivity rises with investments in infrastructure and workers, with investments in education that raise educational achievement providing a major boost. Thus, investing in education is a core contribution states can make to the well-being of their residents and the national economy overall.”

Public schools are themselves among the largest employers in some regions, especially in rural areas. For instance, a 2019 study by the University of North Carolina's Carolina Demography project found that the public school system was the largest employer in 55 of the state's 100 counties. The educator workforce is key to fueling the current economy in such areas across the country and central to preparing future workers.



Educator shortages are a workforce issue, not just an education issue.

## Big Problems Call for Bold Solutions

Imagine a world where more great people entered teaching, stayed in the profession, and got better and better. *How do we achieve this?*

**Let's make teaching an attractive career. Elevate the teaching profession — make it a rewarding, valued, appreciated position in our communities.**

Attractive career fields share some key elements. Every professional needs support, career advancement and recognition. Employees need autonomy, mastery and purpose, according to *Drive*, by Daniel Pink. Autonomy is the feeling of being self-directed, mastery is the feeling of getting better at things that matter, and purpose is knowing why we do something and what impact we can have. To elevate the profession we have to give teachers agency and autonomy, and that means improving how we prepare, advance and compensate them.

Many strategies have been employed over the decades to lessen teacher shortages, and new programs are developed every year. Many are working well at the local level: scholarships for teachers, grow-your-own programs, residencies, mentorships, personalized professional development, advanced teaching roles and more. But many of these programs have not been implemented successfully on a statewide scale.

At the statewide level, many solutions are short-term at best — marketing campaigns, licensure test waivers, emergency certifications, retiree hiring, small pay raises, one-time bonuses and the like. Some immediate response strategies, like allowing more uncertified teachers in the classroom, result in lower quality instruction for students. District policies and practices play into the equation as states navigate which short- or long-term strategies to employ. Patchwork repairs are not solving our leaky pipeline problem, nor are they attracting new talent.

***What do we do? Renovate our teacher workforce policies from the foundation up.*** SREB recommends that state leaders from all sectors collaborate to forge a comprehensive strategic plan — a state blueprint — to renovate key teacher workforce policies and allow successful programs and practices to thrive. Then put the full plan into action.

This work is complex, but major issues are not solved quickly or easily. Real change in reading performance in Mississippi required focus, planning, and feedback review for almost 20 years. Educational change can take time, but it's hard to think of anything more important than happy, successful residents and a thriving economy.



Imagine a world where more great people enter teaching, stay in the profession, and get better and better.



SREB has helped convene state education leaders, policymakers and advocates in recent years to create their own blueprints for systemic change in state policy. Four states have already convened these education human capital roundtables, and three have worked toward systemic change plans — North Carolina, Mississippi and Alabama.

In this report we share our research for those roundtables and the solutions they built. SREB's recommendations are also informed by our intensive work with schools and districts in school improvement, professional learning, and coaching and support for career-changing teachers and principals.

## A New Teacher Workforce Blueprint

To develop a new teacher workforce policy and practice blueprint, SREB recommends that leaders come together to take four essential action steps:

### *Step 1: Understand your state's specific shortage issues.*

To ensure that your state's blueprint will bring a positive return on investment, stakeholders must understand specific issues related to student success and the teacher workforce. Knowing your local issues of teacher quantity, quality, diversity and equity is essential to creating the best policies and programs to address those challenges. For this, state agencies must have a robust data collection and sharing policy that connects K-12, postsecondary and workforce information.

Delve into your district data on teachers and students.

Review data and research to answer these questions and more:

- What is your shortage statewide and in the different geographical regions of the state? What is the quality of the teaching workforce in different areas?
- What teaching positions do you need to fill now? What is the projected attrition? Which teachers are leaving more than others? Why?
- What can preparation programs do to fill these gaps? Which programs are doing better at preparing teachers whose students show the most educational progress? Why are students entering teacher preparation but not graduating — and why are so many graduates not pursuing teaching jobs?

### *Step 2: Collaborate to create a comprehensive redesign blueprint.*

An issue this big and complex cannot be fixed by a few state leaders or elected officials, one state agency, one board, one university. It can only be solved when all the stakeholders, leaders and vested interests come together to collaborate on a plan — K-12 educators, education leaders, higher education representatives from all sectors, state agency officials, elected officials, state board members, business leaders and parents.



Stakeholders must understand specific issues related to student success and the teacher workforce.

It will take this wide spectrum of perspectives and experience to yield the kind of bold, innovative plan that can renovate from the foundation up. Make sure the process isn't rushed; allow time for review and buy-in before you implement.

*Step 3: Put the plan into action. Commit to long-term systemic change.*

This isn't a plan that can be built, put into action and evaluated in a year or two. It takes time to build, to get buy-in, to show lasting results. This isn't a short-term pilot to abandon after a few years but systemic change, which requires deep commitment to ensure lasting results for our students and our future workforce.

*Step 4: Make a continuous investment in your state's future.*

Redesigning complex state systems takes real commitment and real investment. But it is important to understand that it's not simply an investment in teacher salaries, or in hiring more people. In fact, this is not just about education.

**This is an investment in a profession that prepares your children, and their children, and your neighbor's children and grandchildren, for the future:** for further education and careers, for their livelihood. It's an investment in a well-prepared workforce for a changing economy, and in a stronger state and region for the next 10, 20, even 50 years.

## Elements of the Teacher Workforce Renovation Blueprint

To renovate our policies and practices to attract and retain an ample, high-quality and diverse teacher workforce and ensure our educational and economic futures, four main elements require redesign:

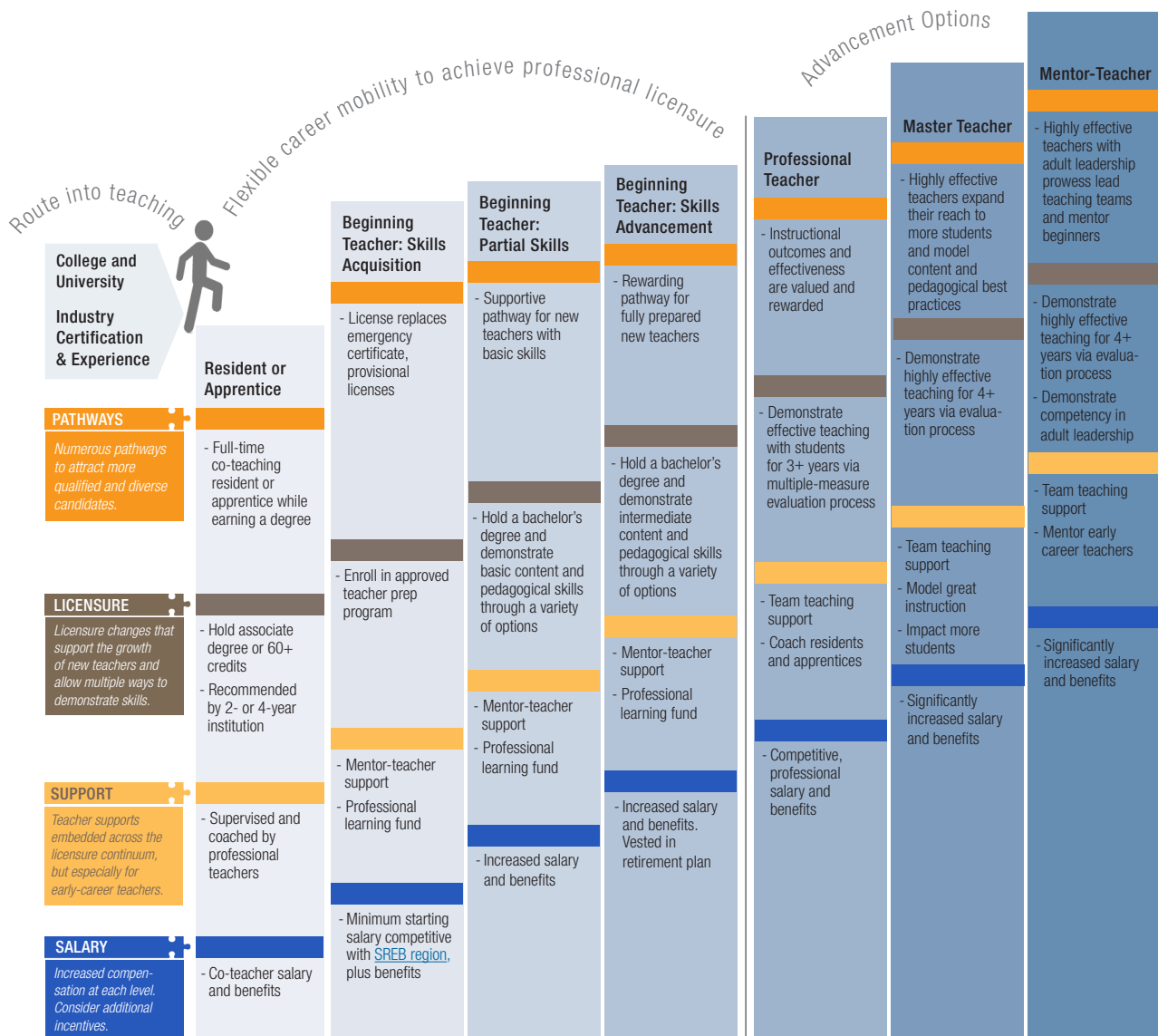


Each element is complex and dynamic on its own, and it might seem that finding solutions would require addressing them separately.

But as with other complex systems, the elements should not be studied in a vacuum but researched, debated and redesigned as one seamless, inter-dependent whole. Changing teacher licensure policies alone will not affect great change, for instance, nor will simply increasing compensation. It takes all four elements together, and all stakeholders working together, to invigorate the teacher workforce and elevate the profession.



## Blueprint to Elevate the Teaching Profession



# The Elements in More Detail

## Pathways and preparation

- Open more pathways into the profession and offer quality options for teachers to prove their skills, knowledge and competencies. Include 2+2 pathways, apprenticeship, residency, quality alternative programs and traditional pathways.
- Hold all teacher candidates — no matter their pathway into the profession — to the same standards. Provide different levels for entry but require each teacher to meet the same standards as they approach professional licensure.
- Offer multiple options to prove skills instead of just a PRAXIS test or completion of a course that may not correlate with great teaching. Think micro-credentials, demonstrations in classrooms or edTPA.
- Clearly outline the expectations for successful preparation — make sure that programs (traditional, alternative, grow-your-own, apprenticeships, residencies) are preparing teachers for top needs like classroom management, pedagogy, science of reading, social-emotional learning and cultural diversity.
- Actively study preparation program graduates and their instructional competencies and classroom impact — use data to help figure out where the best teachers are coming from and why.
- Incentivize candidates to use the most effective pathways into teaching through a redesigned licensure system that allows for the best-prepared candidates to enter with a higher salary.

### A Kentucky Program to Support Policy

Kentucky was plagued with high turnover of career and technical education teachers. The state implemented SREB's Teaching to Lead preparation program to provide professional development and coaching to new teachers with business and industry background but no teaching degree or experience. Teachers built solid instructional skills and gained confidence, and the state went from 62% of CTE teachers staying in teaching after four years to 90%.

## Licensure policies

- Move away from licensure based mostly on measures such as academic degrees, content-only licensure tests, and years in teaching. Some states are moving instead toward multiple measures — such as observations, student surveys, and a variety of assessments — that can more accurately identify teachers' skills, competencies, instructional growth and impact with students.
- Create tiered licensure systems that advance teachers as they grow skills and increase positive engagement and impact with students. Set multiple entry points, by skill level, from apprenticeship to a fully prepared beginning teacher with all relevant content, pedagogy and instructional standards achieved; a professional level of licensure that ensures positive student engagement and impact based on multiple measures of assessment with teachers and students; and multiple levels of advanced roles for those exceptional teachers and teacher leaders to model to help colleagues grow their capabilities.
- Tie preparation, pay and incentives, and supports together in this redesigned licensure system so your state has a connected, congruent policy structure that attracts, retains and grows great teachers.

### A North Carolina Policy Blueprint

The North Carolina Education Human Capital Roundtable submitted a proposal for systemic change, called the Pathways to Excellence for Teaching Professionals, in early 2021. The plan introduced improvements to teacher preparation, teacher supports and career advancement, licensure and compensation — all interlinked purposefully to uplift the teaching profession. The proposal is being refined by over 100 educators, researchers, leaders and state staff to submit to the State Board of Education for approval in summer 2022, then to the state legislature for policy and budget changes in early 2023. SREB supported the roundtable work with research and meeting assistance.

## Professional supports

- Scale teacher leadership roles — specifically trained and competent mentor-teachers — to supply mentors to all beginning teachers in their first three to five years of teaching.
- Scale highly effective teachers to support and lead learning communities, employ team-teaching models, and become content experts in a school building.
- Financially support access to quality professional learning experiences, courses and micro-credentials.
- Require planning times and appropriate class sizes — smaller classes for beginning teachers with more time to plan and work with colleagues.
- Invest in more support staff like counselors, nurses and teacher's assistants. Assist districts with successful practices to ensure that ample transportation, food service and janitorial staff are employed.
- Be sure districts have the flexibility they need to improve working conditions.

### SREB Programs to Support Policy

To help states put more well-prepared teachers in classrooms, SREB has designed teacher residency and beginning teacher induction programs for traditional or alternative-certified teachers in science, math, career and technical education, English and social studies. These multi-year programs all include researched-based methods to grow four essential teaching skills: instructional planning, engagement strategies, classroom culture, and assessment and feedback. Each program includes intensive professional development and coaching support.

## Compensation structure and packages

- End step and lane salary schedules — which are based on degree level and years of service, which do not consistently result in stronger teaching competency or impact.
- Create a new salary structure tied to the levels of the new licensure and advancement system. Establish minimum levels of pay, coordinated to the new licensure system, to reward improved teaching skills, knowledge and competencies, as well as positive impact on students after professional licensure. Embed cost of living raises and licensure renewal raises so wages do not stay stagnant at any level.
- Don't stop there. Reward teachers' growth, impact and leadership — give advanced teachers an increased base level pay that incentivizes highly effective instructional capabilities and taking on more responsibility with students and colleagues.
- Improve the professional compensation package — don't just increase base pay and institute cost of living raises. Examine your state's health and retirement benefits to find improvements. Always keep an eye on take-home pay for teachers, making sure that premiums and retirement contributions are affordable and still leave teachers with a living net wage.

### Maryland's Policy Blueprint

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Act of 2021 is a comprehensive plan to address many issues in education, including supporting teachers and leaders. It provides \$2.8 billion to fund a significant increase in pay to teachers, including starting pay of \$60,000 by 2026. The Blueprint also raises licensure standards, adds career ladders, and improves teacher preparation and induction.

### Data Tool to Inform Policy

SREB's Teacher Compensation Dashboard can help leaders reflect on their states' compensation outcomes including average salaries, health benefits, retirement and take-home pay.

## *Every student deserves a great teacher*

To renovate the teaching profession and rebuild the pipeline of great teachers for all students, states must improve both policy and programs in a connected, purposeful way that provides teachers what they tell us they need:

- Elevate teaching as an esteemed profession
- Provide more support, both during preparation to become a teacher and in the first three to five years while teachers are learning their craft
- Empower incoming and current teachers with flexible paths to enter, grow and advance in their careers while staying in the classroom
- License and compensate teachers based on their instructional skills, abilities and competencies. Reward gains in professional skills, impact on students, and leadership responsibilities.

The structure this blueprint envisions will elevate the teaching profession by attracting great teachers, then offering the support they need to climb to the top of their profession and the respect and compensation they deserve. With a view toward an educated population, a productive workforce and a vigorous economy, this is a structure that lifts us all.



Let's elevate the teaching profession — making it a rewarding, valued, appreciated position in our communities.

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For nearly 75 years, SREB has worked with states to improve education. SREB helps states focus on what works in both policy and practice.



## SREB is here to help

Research on teacher preparation, licensure, shortages, compensation and effectiveness:  
[SREB.org/TeacherWorkforce](https://www.sreb.org/TeacherWorkforce)

For help with creating your state blueprint to elevate the teacher workforce,  
contact [Stephen.Pruitt@SREB.org](mailto:Stephen.Pruitt@SREB.org).

To pilot or implement SREB's teacher induction, support  
or professional learning programs, contact [Dale.Winkler@SREB.org](mailto:Dale.Winkler@SREB.org).