

# Teacher Shortage Survival Guide

Districts share tips to successfully hire and retain top educators in challenging times



# Introduction

## Uncovering the Truth About the K-12 Teacher Shortage

Ask any K-12 HR professional today, and they'll tell you the same thing: finding and retaining great educators is one of their toughest challenges. In some regions, meeting basic staffing goals feels nearly impossible.



According to PowerSchool's Spring Survey Insights with Project Tomorrow:

**36%** of district leaders named filling vacancies as a top priority

**29%** prioritized providing personalized professional learning

Another **29%** said modernizing their talent systems is essential

**50%** reported that low morale and ongoing staffing challenges keep them up at night

These numbers reflect real burnout, leaky pipelines, and growing instability in schools nationwide.

# So how bad is the K-12 teacher shortage?

New research from the University of Missouri estimates that there are:

AT LEAST  
**49,000**

vacant teaching positions  
across the country

MORE THAN  
**400,000**

teachers working under  
provisional or emergency  
credentials or teaching  
subjects outside their  
certification area.

In most states, these numbers are higher than in previous years.

At the same time, certification program enrollment is declining in most states, and resignation rates are climbing.

**And experts say these are likely conservative estimates.**

# What can HR leaders in K-12 do?

Innovative leaders are rethinking their approach—shifting from reactive hiring to intentional talent building by creating a connected HR ecosystem.

**That includes:**

- ✓ Creating modern, digital-first application experiences
- ✓ Streamlining onboarding and reducing paperwork
- ✓ Supporting professional growth through evaluation-aligned professional development (PD)
- ✓ Giving teachers the tools and support they need to stay

**This eBook shares their stories**—and the tools they use—to help you shift from reactive hiring to a proactive talent strategy.

## Four Proven Ways to Address the Teacher Shortage

**1**

### Build a compelling employment brand

that reflects your values and attracts mission-driven educators

**2**

### Streamline hiring with modern systems

that reduce delays and increase applicant completion

**3**

### Set up new hires for success

through structured onboarding, mentorship, and early support

**4**

### Offer personalized professional development and coaching

aligned with performance metrics and teacher goals

These four strategies are the root system of a thriving teacher workforce, starting with how your district interacts with job seekers before they click “apply.”

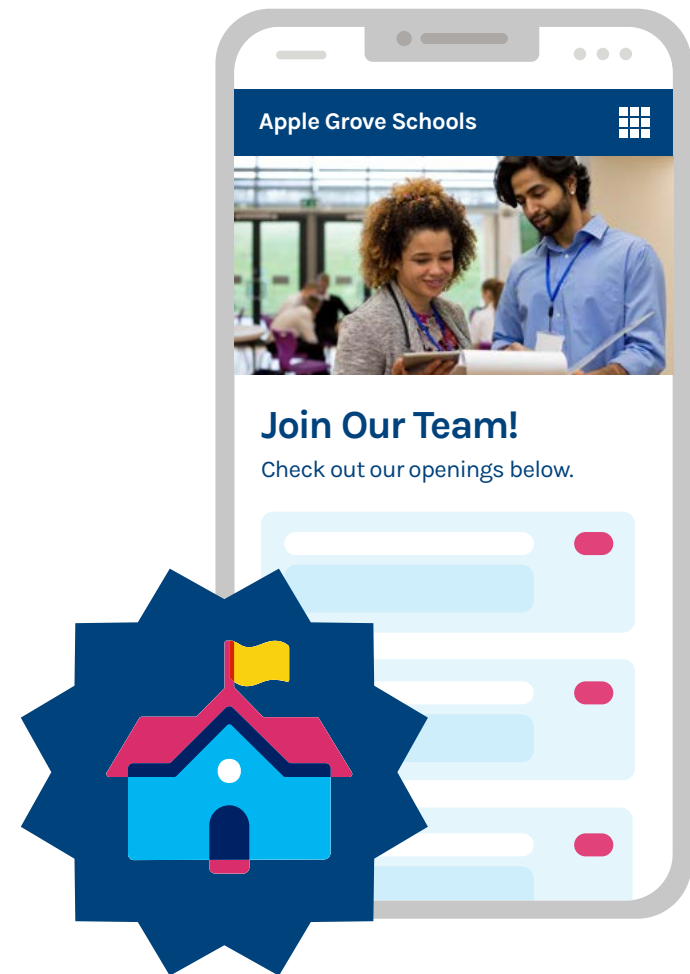
# 1

## Build a compelling employment brand

**Before a teacher sets foot in your school, they're already wondering:** Does this place align with my values? Will I be supported? Is this worth it? Your employment brand is your first answer.

### First impressions matter

For digital-native applicants—especially Gen Z—first impressions happen online, and they happen fast. Mobile responsiveness, transparency, and ease of use are non-negotiable. When job listings are clunky or applications are repetitive, younger candidates may abandon them entirely.



## A modern hiring experience at Marshall County

That's why districts like Marshall County invest in systems that make applying feel intuitive, modern, and respectful of candidates' time. Their investment in [PowerSchool Employee Records](#) and [PowerSchool Applicant Tracking](#) helped them reduce friction, modernize their brand, and build an experience that reflects the district's values: streamlined, supportive, and human.

"We've reorganized our team because of how streamlined records and applicant tracking are now," says **Amanda Henderson, HR Director at Marshall County Schools**. "We're able to focus on customer service—quick responses, easy digital forms, and no more filling out your name 25 times," she says.

The hiring process became dramatically faster and more consistent using PowerSchool's digital systems. "We can hire someone on Monday and have them ready to work by Thursday," she says. "It's that quick—and the only holdup is typically waiting on a background check."

"They can apply at midnight in their pajamas, and principals can review applications the same way. That accessibility is huge."

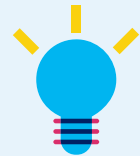
Feedback from employees has been overwhelmingly positive. "They love it. It's convenient. They don't have to print out forms, bring them in, or write the same thing over and over. It's a better experience for everyone."



“We're able to focus on customer service—quick responses, easy digital forms, and no more filling out your name 25 times.”

Tip:

### Show off your full digital infrastructure



**These digital tools signal to educators that your district is where teachers can expect modern, supportive systems.**

If your district already uses modern classroom tools—like learning management systems or student engagement platforms—consider including those in your recruitment messaging. When candidates see they'll be equipped to do their best work, your district becomes a much more attractive place to teach.

# 2

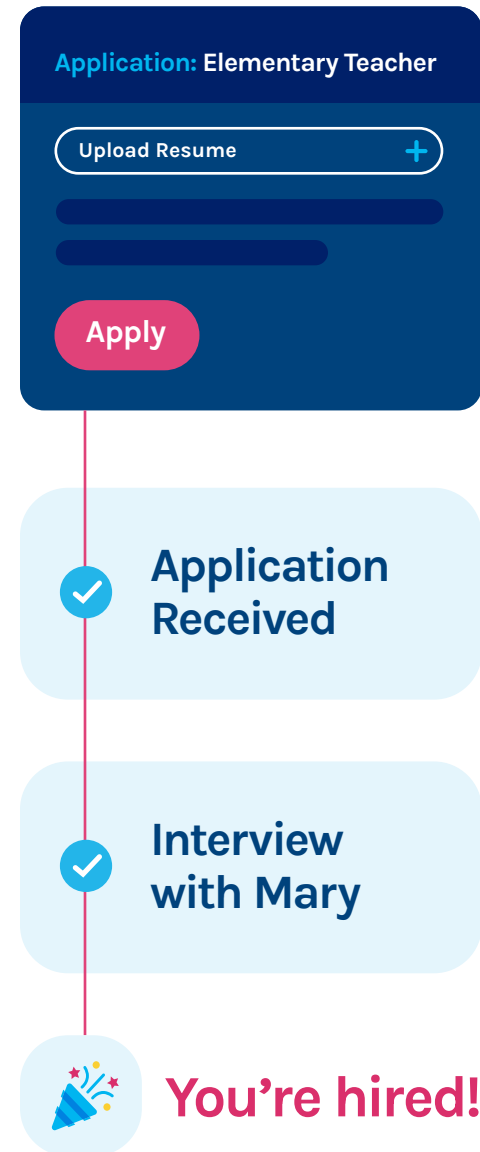
## Streamline hiring with modern systems

Finding the right teacher is one of the most important drivers of student success. But for many districts, it's also one of the most time-consuming. In a competitive talent market, speed matters.

**Candidates—especially digital natives—expect seamless, fast-moving application experiences. When they don't get them, they move on.**

### Speed is your competitive edge

Gen Z expects a fast, frictionless experience with clear communication every step of the way. They've grown up with on-demand everything, and when your hiring process feels outdated, they might assume your classrooms will be too.





## How Savannah-Chatham shortened its hiring timeline

At Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, [PowerSchool Applicant Tracking](#) helped their HR team eliminate bottlenecks and radically improve their hiring speed.

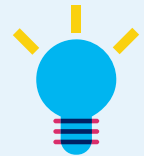
The system's ease of use has made a notable difference for applicants. "Once you've completed a profile, it's easy to go back in and apply for multiple jobs without retyping your information," says **Dr. Michel Pantin, Executive Director of Talent Services at SCCPSS**. "We've definitely seen an increase in applications."



“PowerSchool helps us reduce vacancies by showing us things like time-to-fill and where applicants are coming from. **That data supports our decision-making.**”

Tip:

### Let data guide your next move



**With the right tools, districts can reduce delays, increase completion rates, and ensure the best candidates don't slip through the cracks.**

“PowerSchool helps us reduce vacancies by showing us things like time-to-fill and where applicants are coming from. That data supports our decision-making.”

Streamlining hiring creates the right conditions for great teachers to join—and stay—in your district.

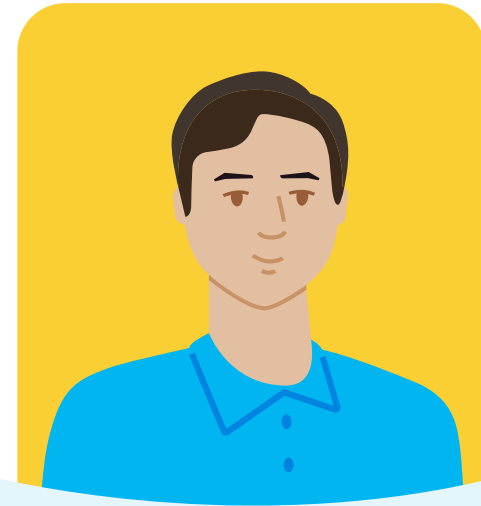
# 3

## Set up new hires for success

### Belonging starts with onboarding

You only get one chance to make a first impression. In today's competitive talent landscape, that moment matters more than ever. [Research from the Society for Human Resources Management](#) found that employees who attend well-structured onboarding programs are 69% more likely to remain at their jobs for three years.

Yet first-year teachers are often left to navigate their roles in isolation, uncertain about expectations, undersupported, and at risk of early burnout.



Welcome, James!

#### Onboarding: Day 1

- ✓ Meet your manager
- ✓ Tour of the school
- ✓ Lunch with the team

#### Onboarding: This Week

## Gilroy Unified's relationship-first approach

Creating a modern, intentional onboarding experience helps prevent that. When teachers feel seen, supported, and confident from day one, they're more likely to stay and thrive.

At Gilroy Unified School District, onboarding has become a relationship-first experience thanks to [PowerSchool Employee Records](#).

"Traditionally, onboarding meant a 9:00 AM meeting in a conference room, where a new hire's first experience was filling out tax forms. It was dry, impersonal, and not reflective of our values," says **Dr. Paul Winslow, Assistant Superintendent at Gilroy Unified School District**.

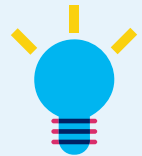
“Now, with digital onboarding, when someone walks through our doors, **we can focus on them**. We can ask about their family, their interests, and their excitement about joining Gilroy. It's a human experience. And that's exactly what Gen Z and Gen Alpha are looking for—**authentic, personal connections.**”



By streamlining routine tasks and centralizing forms, Employee Records helped Gilroy transform its entire HR model from compliance-heavy to human-centered. This builds culture, deepens trust, and frees up time for more meaningful conversations with new staff.

Tip:

### Create clarity early to prevent burnout



#### New teachers don't leave because they lack passion—they leave because they lack clarity.

They're unsure what's expected, don't have time to collaborate with peers, and struggle to find feedback that helps them grow. That's where intentional systems make all the difference.

As new hires settle in, PowerSchool Perform picks up where onboarding leaves off, offering real-time evaluation tools, progress visibility, and actionable feedback that support early-career growth. That's the clarity new teachers need to stay engaged and the structure administrators need to guide development and prevent burnout.

# Offer personalized professional development

## Personalized PD is the best PD

Investing in ongoing teacher development is both a retention and student success strategy. When PD is personalized, aligned to real goals, and backed by coaching, it helps teachers grow faster, stay longer, and deliver better outcomes.

But to be effective, professional learning can't happen in a vacuum. The most effective PD is integrated with performance evaluations and guided by actual classroom data.



A **Harvard study** examining Tennessee’s tenure system found that connecting performance evaluations—especially classroom observations and student-growth metrics—to tenure outcomes significantly improved early-career teacher effectiveness.

Novice teachers anticipating tenure decisions accelerated their development twice as fast as those with existing tenure, resulting in gains equivalent to an extra 1-2 weeks of instruction per year.

With PowerSchool Perform, district leaders can move beyond compliance and turn evaluations into meaningful feedback loops. Coaches and principals can use real-time observation rubrics and student data to guide targeted, individualized development plans. That alignment ensures teachers move beyond one-size-fits-all modules and receive support tied directly to their growth areas.

## Coaching that’s built into the workday

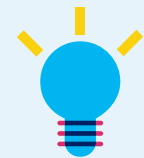
Mentorship also becomes more effective when it’s grounded in shared expectations. When mentors and mentees work from the same performance frameworks, feedback becomes more specific, relevant, and likely to move the needle.

With PowerSchool Coaching & Mentoring, districts can embed personalized growth directly into daily practice. The platform connects mentors and teachers, tracks progress, and supports goal-setting—all within a cohesive system that aligns PD, evaluation, and retention.



**Tip:**

## Shift from generic to goal-oriented growth



**When coaching, curriculum, and evaluation come together, PD shifts from reactive to proactive.**

Instead of scrambling to close performance gaps mid-year, you’re supporting teachers early, setting them up for tenure, long-term success, and deeper engagement in the profession.

# Conclusion

## Build a more stable, resilient teacher workforce

Solving the teacher shortage won't happen overnight, but it starts with district leaders' choices today.

Thriving districts build an intentional talent lifecycle where every interaction with a teacher, from recruitment to coaching, supports long-term growth and student success.

PowerSchool's integrated talent solutions are designed to support every step of this journey. Each tool is part of an ecosystem built to help teachers thrive and to help districts make the stable, supported teams their students deserve.



Ready to build your HR ecosystem?

PowerSchool Talent Solutions can help you build a stronger educator pipeline.

[Learn More](#)



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