

NORTH CAROLINA LEA CASE STUDY

REGIONAL SPECIFIC INCENTIVES FOR TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring that every child receives a quality education is the goal of educators, parents, and community leaders throughout North Carolina. However, increasing nationwide teacher shortages has made meeting this goal a daunting task for low performing schools. In an effort to combat the repercussions of such shortages, State and local leaders are developing new teacher recruitment and retention initiatives aimed at attracting highly qualified teachers to their districts. Differential pay and teacher bonuses are methods that have been widely used by school districts to recruit teachers into low performing rural and urban schools; however, such plans are often unsuccessful on their own because they do not account for the differences between urban and rural school districts. We recommend that state and local leaders work together to develop recruitment and retention programs that incorporate the unique characteristics of the region they are targeting.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

According to the North Carolina Rural and Economic Development Center, 85 of the 100 counties in North Carolina are considered rural. In these rural counties, 14.1% of the total population, and 18.5% of children, live in poverty. In urban counties the poverty rate is 10.3% (NC Rural Data Bank). Rural school districts have a higher percentage of children living in high poverty density areas than urban districts. Along with higher poverty levels, from 1990 to 2003, rural North Carolina experienced a 27% decrease in manufacturing due to companies moving to more urban areas or relocating overseas (NC Rural Data Bank). This decrease in manufacturing has caused people to migrate into urban areas to find jobs; consequently, businesses have been reluctant to move into rural counties for fear that they will not have a significant client base. Census data and the projections of the Rural Center indicate that the rural population age 18-44 is decreasing, and this trend is expected to continue. At the same time, the 45 and older population in rural areas is growing. A difference is also evident in income level with the average per capita income of a rural household only about $\frac{3}{4}$ that of an urban household (NC Rural Data Bank). Low income rural counties often can not provide a robust community support base, because of a lack of continuous economic development within these areas.

VARIANCES IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

Contextual factors in rural and urban areas can decrease highly qualified teachers receptiveness to working in these school districts. Children attending rural schools are twice as likely to be taught by an inexperienced teacher (Warner, 2005). Rural schools are considered hard-to-staff because they are located in isolated areas; do not offer comparative supplements; and lack amenities or high quality resources when compared to more urban districts. Remote locations of rural schools often





discourage college graduates from relocating to these areas, because the demographics of the region may not be diverse in age, race, and gender. Although attracting teachers to high needs schools in rural and urban areas may be a challenge, educators should not ignore the fundamental necessity of ensuring that highly qualified teachers are in these schools.

The North Carolina Bonus Program in 2001 was a statewide initiative aimed at recruiting teachers to low performing, economically disadvantaged, areas. The Bonus Program offered \$1800 salary bonuses to teachers at eligible schools in high needs content areas. An evaluation of the program by the Center for Child and Family Policy (CCFP) in May 2005 indicated that 80% of principals believed monetary incentives were not sufficient to retain teachers. Similarly, 72% of teachers said an \$1800 salary bonus was not enough to have a significant impact on teacher recruitment. Funding for the program was discontinued after the 2003-2004 academic year. A possible explanation for the initiatives eventual failure is that it did not address key differences in rural and urban areas, which may negatively impact teacher recruitment and retention.

There are a variety of reasons teachers leave the profession, including lack of administrative and community support, low pay associated with a high stress job, dissatisfaction with the profession, and retirement (Teacher Retention and Recruitment Committee Report, 2004). Exclusively offering teachers financial incentives does not address the key differences between teaching in rural and urban areas. North Carolina has

established a Teacher Working Conditions Survey that provides useful feedback that could be utilized in the development of geographic specific teacher retention initiatives.

RURAL TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In North Carolina, various teacher incentive programs have been offered to attract teachers to rural areas. Current programs within North Carolina offer differential pay and housing options for teachers.

BONUS DIFFERENTIAL FOR MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHERS

In June 2006, a special provision was added to the state budget to create the Salary Supplement for Math and Science Teachers Pilot Program. The program was then signed into law on July 10, 2006. The pilot program was to be used for the recruitment of math and science teachers to poor, low performing, high schools and middle schools. The State Board of Education designated three school districts that would be eligible to offer a \$15,000 annual bonus for 10 newly hired teachers in each district. To qualify for the bonus, teachers must have less than four years of experience, a college degree, a clear state teaching license, a qualifying score on assessment tests in their subject area, and completed at least 24 to 30 hours in math and science in college. The counties selected were Bertie, Columbus, and Rockingham. In the first

year of the program, six teachers in Columbus County received the \$15,000 teacher incentive, two in Rockingham County, and zero in Bertie County. Although hiring results have been below expectations, the Salary Supplement for Math and Science Teachers is an illustration of a recruitment method used to attract highly qualified teachers to rural school districts.

PARTICIPANTS IN PILOT PROGRAM

Bertie County
No Participants

Rockingham County
1 Full time since the Beginning of the year
+ 1 Full time since March 7

2 Total Participants

Columbus County
1 Full time since the beginning of the year
2 50% employed since the beginning of the year
(50% middle school and 50% high school)
1 Hired November 1
+ 2 Hired January 2

6 Total Participants

8 Total Participants in 2006-2007 (as of 4/18/07)

HERTFORD COUNTY HOUSING PROJECT

The Hertford County Housing Project is another example of an initiative aimed to recruit highly qualified teachers to rural counties. On July 10, 2006 a bill was ratified authorizing the "Hertford County Board of Education to construct and provide affordable rental housing for teachers and other local government employees" (General Assembly, Senate Bill 1903). Rights to rent the property are to be exclusively given to teachers or other school professional staff. The Board has the right to establish the rental rates and may charge below-market rates (General Assembly, Senate Bill 1903).



In December of 2006, a ground breaking ceremony was held for the Hertford County Teacher Housing Development. Hertford County Public Schools partnered with the State Employee's Credit Union Foundation and Partners for Hertford County Public Schools Foundation to begin the work on the Hertford Pointe housing development. Hertford Pointe consists of 24 units that offer two-bedroom, two-bath, living room, kitchen, dining area, and laundry facilities. Expected completion of the apartment complex is August 2007. The monthly rent for each apartment will be approximately \$500 with the option of sharing units to lower teacher housing costs. The Hertford County Housing Project is a short term teacher recruitment method that seeks to attract highly qualified teachers to schools within the district.

VIRGINIA TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW

Nationally, school districts are developing new teacher recruitment programs that attract middle and high school students to teaching careers. The Teachers for Tomorrow program in Virginia is a statewide program intended to recruit high school students into the teaching profession. The program is offered to high school juniors and seniors and gives students hands-on teaching experience. To be considered for enrollment in the program students must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Have and maintain a minimum 2.7 grade point average
- Submit three satisfactory teachers recommendations; and
- Submit a brief essay and application (Teachers for Tomorrow).

The purposes of the program are:

- To identify, train, and nurture high school students interested in teaching career;
- To support the efforts of Virginia's school districts to meet hiring targets by cultivating an effective 'grow your own' recruitment program;
- To create a high school curricular experience designed to foster student interest, understanding, and appreciation of the teaching profession; and
- To attract students to teaching in critical shortage and high needs areas of the state (Teachers for Tomorrow).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School districts around the country are using innovative recruitment and retention methods to attract highly qualified teachers to rural counties. To encourage teachers to be more receptive to teaching in rural school districts, a compensation package that provides a variety of teacher incentives, such as regional housing, peer support, and a gas allowance should be considered.

Regional housing could be strategically placed in key geographic areas that will place teachers in proximity of a variety of school systems along with access to more urban areas. This could decrease teacher isolation that is often exacerbated by cultural and economic factors preexisting in rural areas. Teachers with 0-5 years of experience that are employed in low performing rural school districts will have the opportunity to live in apartment style complexes. The complexes could offer approximately 20-30 two-bedroom apartment units for \$400- \$600 per month. Teachers could also have the option of sharing the apartments to minimize housing costs. To be eligible for regional housing, teachers must agree to a 10 month teaching commitment. Regional housing will provide a cohesive learning environment for teachers.

Accompanying the teacher housing concept could be the establishment of peer support groups for the newly hired teachers. The regional housing will provide a forum for social events where teachers in the program can discuss best teaching practices and classroom experiences. Monthly meetings could be held to discuss best practices for classroom instruction based on teaching experiences throughout the region. This support community is imperative to new teachers that enter into the teaching profession because it provides a support net that helps them with the everyday stresses of teaching. "The degree to which a rural teacher becomes involved in community educational and cultural programs influences his or her decision to remain; therefore, retention requires a coordinated school-community effort" (Collins, 1999). The peer group could encourage new teachers to stay in the teaching profession by creating a collaborative meeting space that will allow teachers to discuss classroom issues and provide feasible solutions.

In addition to affordable regional housing incentives, teachers may receive a gas allowance. Providing a gas allowance would be an incentive to encourage teachers that live in the regional housing developments to commute to work in low performing rural schools. In rural North Carolina 31.2% of the population commutes to another county for work (NC Rural Data Bank). This unique retention and recruitment tool considers the daily commuting efforts of teachers that work in rural school systems

that travel from surrounding districts. The gas allowance could be available for teachers living in the regional housing complex and driving a distance greater than 20 miles one way to reach their school. The allowance could be included as a stipend and paid in the teacher's monthly check. The following chart displays the amount for teacher reimbursement. Teachers may be required to inform school districts of any change of address, and requires a 10 month commitment. This compensation package addresses critical needs of teachers in rural counties.

GAS ALLOWANCE

MILES (ONE WAY)	MONTHLY STIPEND
21-30 miles	\$100
31-40 miles	\$150
41-50 miles	\$200
51-60 miles	\$250
60 + miles	\$300

URBAN TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Due to geographic variances in rural and urban areas, urban school districts use different methods to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Urban school districts that have low performing schools in high poverty areas can offer incentives that address teacher shortage within specific regions of their district.

GUILFORD COUNTY AND MISSION POSSIBLE

Guilford County Schools (GCS) educates more than 69,000 students and serves over 11,200 economically disadvantaged children in grades K-12. The changing demographics in GCS coupled with the recent conversion to neighborhood schooling has impacted the development of programs targeted at increasing student performance in low performing schools. In 2006-2007 GCS instituted "Mission Possible as a comprehensive teacher incentive plan that combines multiple approaches for attracting and retaining highly effective teachers and administrators; ultimately leading to their goal of increasing student performance in schools with critical needs" (Guilford County Schools, 2007). Twenty schools were selected in its first year of implementation based on socioeconomic factors, teacher turnover rates, ABC, and AYP goals. In the 2007-2008 school year, seven additional schools will join the Mission Possible Program.

Teachers participating in the Mission Possible program receive financial incentives and are introduced into professional learning communities with veteran teachers. Mission Possible seeks to encourage teacher expertise by requiring professional development courses that coincide with state required professional development. These courses include Anti-Racism

(Undoing-Racism), Differentiated Instruction, Foundations for Cooperative Learning, and a two week summer Math Institute. Teachers receive \$4000 bonuses for completing the two week summer Math Institute. As a recruitment and retention tool, teachers can receive \$2500-\$10,000 recruitment and retention incentives for math, reading, or language arts, English I, Algebra I, and other math areas. Additionally, teachers are eligible to receive performance level incentives that range from \$2500-\$4000, which are based on value added teacher effect on student growth. Mission Possible is evaluated by collecting feedback from teachers, skill-based training, ABC and AYP goals. The Serve Center (SERVE) organization additionally provides a summative and evaluative assessment of the program. After the instituting the Mission Possible program on September 1, 2006, 322 teachers have been assigned to the 20 Mission Possible schools. Early results indicate that the Mission Possible program has been a successful recruitment and retention effort for Guilford County Schools because it equips teachers with professional development and training specific to their region. Teachers also receive financial incentives and are encouraged to increase their level of expertise within the classroom. The Mission Possible program is a model for urban districts that have similar demographics.

THOMASVILLE CITY SCHOOLS

Guilford’s Mission Possible program has encouraged surrounding counties to be more competitive with financial incentives. In April 2007, the Thomasville Board of Education voted to offer a supplemental pay plan to recruit and retain new teachers into the school system. The supplemental pay plan will be offered to newly certified and highly qualified teachers for the first time in the 2007-2008 school year. Math, Science, Exceptional Children, and English as Second Language

teachers will be eligible for a \$7500 supplement (initial \$2500 lump sum bonus with the rest to be spread over the 10 month salary period), and highly qualified and newly certified teachers in other subject areas will be eligible for as much as \$1500.

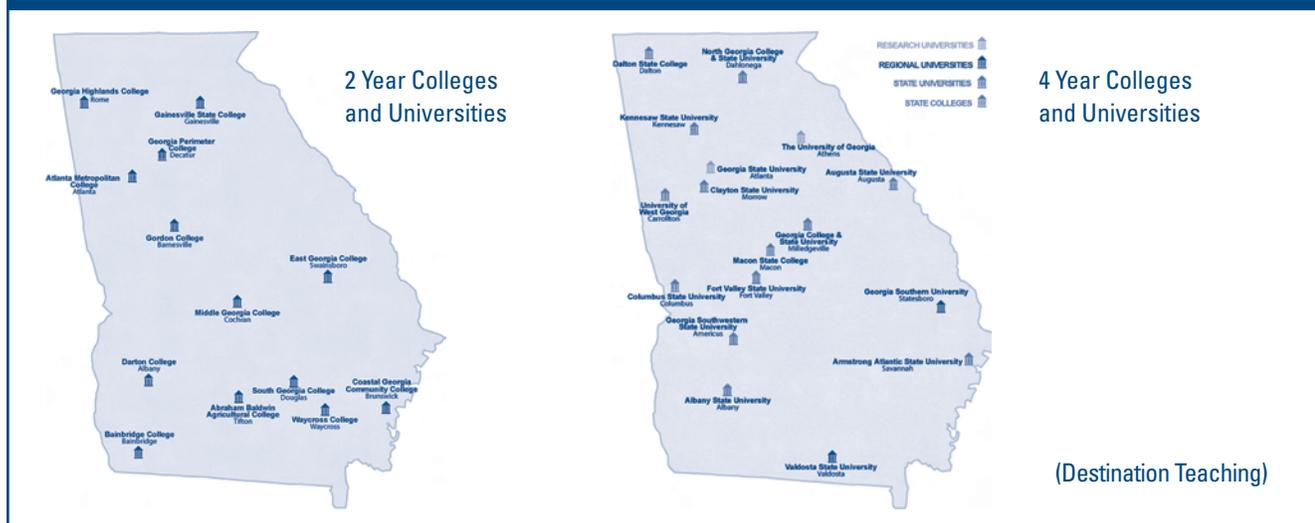
GEORGIA: ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Along with salary bonuses and training, states are developing new programs to recruit teachers into low performing urban school districts. The University System of Georgia has established the Destination Teaching program that has a teacher career center which prepares teachers for high-needs urban schools. The following maps identify the 13 two-year colleges and the 17 four-year universities that offer the initial teacher preparation programs to people at various stages in life.

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission is responsible for teacher certification, licensure, and educator testing. All teachers certified through this program are guaranteed, so if a school district is not satisfied with the effectiveness of a teacher after two years, they can be sent back to the Teacher Career Center for additional training and preparation at no additional cost. Once students have completed teacher preparation, they will teach in Atlanta Public Schools. The program is part of the Urban Teacher Recruitment/ Retention Initiative and the first students entered into their coursework in 2003.

Other programs in Georgia include Reach to Teach and Teach Georgia. Reach to Teach offers incentives for affordable housing, loan forgiveness, and professional development opportunities. Teach Georgia was established in 1997 as a means to consolidate the public and private teacher recruitment efforts, and to attempt to put a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. Teach Georgia works with colleges, universities, and state education officials to attract new teachers to the profession (Teach Georgia).

GEORGIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Considering economic differences between rural and urban areas, urban school districts can offer a comprehensive incentive package to teachers.

Teachers in urban areas could be given the opportunity to enroll in Master of Education programs at state funded universities at no cost. The average master's program is approximately 39 semester hours, which would take between 3 and 5 years to complete while working full time as a teacher. Teachers would be able to work with nearby universities to take online or night courses on a part time basis in order to complete the degree requirements while continuing to teach during the day. Upon completion of the master's degree, the teachers would be eligible for the 10% salary increase already in place.

In addition to earning a master's degree, teachers could receive local discounts from restaurants within their school district. Local restaurants would be asked to participate in this program to provide a percentage (5-10%, at the discretion of the restaurant) discount off meals purchased by teachers. The discount applies only to teachers and does not include family members. Teachers could show their school identification badges at the time of the meal purchase in order to receive the discount. This incentive provides teachers affordable dining options, and seeks to increase community support within the district.

As a way of recruiting new teachers (0-5 years of experience) to urban low performing schools, new teachers can be offered a monthly housing stipend of \$500. This stipend would alleviate difficulties associated with finding affordable housing in urban areas, and provide an incentive for new teachers to work in

the school district where they teach. This is important for new teachers because they are more likely to be recent college graduates or people moving into an area for the first time, so housing could be an important part in their decision to teach in a particular area.

For experienced teachers (more than 5 years of experience) housing is less likely to be an issue, because the teachers are often established in the region where they teach. In order to provide the best education in high risk urban schools, experienced teachers will receive differential pay if they agree to teach at a high risk school in their area. Experienced teachers will receive a \$2000 signing bonus, and will be eligible for annual bonuses based on student performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RURAL AND URBAN

Although rural and urban areas have established geographic variances, both face similar problems with teacher recruitment and retention. Home grown initiatives and specified regional professional development can alleviate teacher shortage within these areas by increasing exposure to the teaching profession, and equipping teachers with skills needed to be successful in these districts.

HOME GROWN TEACHERS

A home grown teacher initiative could be used to enhance the recruitment and retention of teachers in urban and rural areas by introducing students to the teaching profession at an early age. Home grown initiatives seek to attract high school students interested in the teaching profession, and hopefully encourage them to return to their "home district" to teach after



they have finished school. “Effective ‘grow your own’ strategies implement a career education program to encourage students to consider teaching as a career and to think seriously about returning to their home communities once they have received their credentials” (Lemke, 1994). A program that is centered on creating a home grown student to teacher pipeline would require collaboration between state officials, universities, school districts, and the greater community.

A two year home grown initiative seeks to attract high school sophomores that have expressed a keen interest in the field of education. Students can be exposed to the teaching profession through innovative online teaching preparatory courses, hands-on experience, and facilitated interaction with university professors in education programs. Students can be nominated by teachers, or can apply to the program. Based on submitted applications, approximately 10- 25 students from diverse backgrounds would be selected after successful completion of the interview process. The program will begin during their junior year.

During their junior year, students would enroll in teaching education courses partnered through North Carolina Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS) online program. NCVPS could offer challenging student centered courses and engaging enrichment programs that address critical educational needs. Students would take classes in pedagogy, special topics in education, and managing diversity within the classroom while being provided with a structured learning community. Teachers would aid in student learning by using the Socratic Method as a tool of encouraging active communication. Students could gain key strategies that would create a foundation for teaching through exploratory thinking and enhanced academic support.

In the last year of the program, students could gain extensive practical experience through the application of learned teaching methodology within the classroom. 3 days a week, students would serve as teacher assistants and tutors at local elementary and middle schools. They would practice effective lesson planning, time management, teaching diverse learning styles, and how to progressively build student-teacher relationships. The coordinator of the program would be responsible for placing each student in the program. During the other two days of the week, the program coordinator could arrange in class discussions, visits from local universities, and guest speakers. During their senior year, participants in this program would hopefully put into practice the strategies they learned during their junior year.

Teachers participate in this program by being actively engaged in student mentoring. In addition, universities would have academic scholars and admission counselors to speak in classrooms throughout the year to recruit students to teaching education curriculums. In *Attracting and Retaining Teachers*



in Rural Areas it is also noted that the US Department of Education suggests that “colleges should recruit aggressively in middle and high schools, exposing students to peer tutoring, camp counseling, role modeling, and classes in education theory” (Collins, 1999). Participation statewide from universities and local school districts is essential in attracting students to the teaching profession.

This program creates an expanded pipeline from high school to university education programs to placement in North Carolina’s public school system. Urban and rural school districts will have a long term recruitment strategy that should increase the number of students entering the teaching profession.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AND URBAN SCHOOLS

Coupled with the home grown initiative, specified regional professional development would provide teachers with the tools needed to enhance student growth and academic success. Rural and urban school districts have distinct cultural dynamics and often teachers lack the adequate preparation and skills needed to address the fundamental differences. To address these cultural dynamics, rural and urban school districts could offer specialized training in teaching diverse learning styles while emphasizing the use of modern technology within the classroom. This training would seek to close the gap between the teachers and students by addressing the individual needs of students.

Rural areas can provide professional development that teaches cultural awareness, how to increase parent and community involvement, and how poverty affects student performance. Cultural awareness provides a foundation for the understanding of the differences between what teachers perceive and what students actually experience on a daily basis. Teachers should be actively involved in collaborating with parents and members

of the community to build a support system for enhancing academic performance. Specialized training that examines the effects of poverty on student behavior and achievement should also be emphasized in rural districts.

Comparatively urban districts should have professional development focused on the needs of the students in their geographic region. Workshops and seminars could be offered to provide teachers with techniques for integrating a multi-cultural curriculum into the classroom. A multi-cultural curriculum would prepare teachers for educating at-risk youth in a diverse urban environment.

Professional development would benefit all teachers, regardless of location or years of experience. Regional specific professional development could coincide with required state professional development, and would benefit new teachers entering urban and rural school districts.

CONCLUSION

Statewide school districts can develop techniques to recruit and retain teachers in rural and urban areas by providing specific incentives that address geographic variances. Differential pay and salary bonuses are just one method that can be used for recruitment. Providing regional incentives including affordable housing and specialized professional



development will not only recruit teachers, but will provide a foundation for teacher retention. The home grown teacher initiative is an effort to encourage students to go into the teaching profession, and is a long term teacher recruitment effort. Professional development will additionally help retain teachers by providing them with opportunities to learn from their experiences and provide a strong professional community. Regional specific incentives will help with recruitment and retention by providing benefits and establishing teachers within their communities. Recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and providing the best environment for teaching will help alleviate the teacher shortage, and also help meet the overall goal of increasing student achievement.

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The Financial and Business Services Area established the Research Intern Program in FY 2006-07. The Program is designed to help build a quality research program within DPI to supplement and supply data for discussions related to procedural, process, and policy changes. The inaugural program includes five graduate students from four area universities. The intern program is managed by Jackson Miller (919) 807-3731 | jmiller@dpi.state.nc.us.

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