

## Recognizing teachers as instructional leaders

Under NCLB, teachers became more and more disheartened and demoralized. While teachers say that they still strongly desire to work with children and help them grow to their full potential, our recent survey shows that almost 70 percent would not recommend teaching as a career choice. Some 90 percent say they are discouraged by the amount of time spent doing paperwork mandated for the sole purpose of proving their own worth. A staggering 96 percent say that their instruction is driven by a testing schedule. And 67 percent say they do not feel respected as educational leaders.

As Ohio develops an ESSA plan, steps must be taken to ensure that the elements of the plan will attract quality people to the profession and retain the quality teachers already in the system.

Guidance from the American Federation of Teachers shows how best to support effective instruction ([http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/essa\\_teachers.pdf](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/essa_teachers.pdf)) and the importance of maintaining the role of paraprofessionals ([http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/EDU\\_International\\_final\\_v3.pdf](http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/EDU_International_final_v3.pdf).)

"No Time to Lose - Building a World-Class Education System State by State," a new report from the National Council of State Legislators, is a helpful resource. [http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/essa\\_paras.pdf](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/essa_paras.pdf)

To ensure that the educational system supports, attracts and retains the best professionals to the work, Ohio must focus on the following:

- Modify OTES so that it drives professional growth and is not a compliance checklist.
- Delink testing from evaluations so that the emphasis is on teacher performance.
- Create time and pathways for teachers to be mentors and to be involved in peer review.
- Use existing state-level committees, such as Committee of Practitioners and Educator Standards Board, to help shape education policy.
- Create career ladders where teachers can take on leadership roles that allow them to use their expertise to improve teaching and learning.
- Promote working environments that give teachers time to collaborate, work with data to make informed decisions, and be involved in guiding the instructional decisions of the school.

Questions to ask:

- How does the state/district plan involve teachers in setting the policy and/or making instructional decisions?
- How does the state/district plan give teachers the tools, time and trust to meet the needs of their students?
- How does the state/district plan provide opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles that allow them to use their expertise to improve teaching and learning?
- Does the state/district plan require teachers to prioritize testing and test prep?
- Does the evaluation process help teachers continue their professional growth and align with the needs of the district?

While recognizing teachers as instructional leaders, states and districts must also look at how they elevate the role of the paraprofessional. ESSA supports paraprofessionals by maintaining the paraprofessional certification requirements.

To support and elevate paraprofessionals, Ohio should:

- Expand professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals.
- Create pathways for paraprofessionals to become teachers if they desire.

Questions to ask state and district decision makers:

- How will the state/district expand professional development opportunities for our paraprofessionals?
- How can the state/district create pathways for paraprofessionals to enter the teaching field?