National Council on Teacher Quality

Reimagining the Teaching Role

How Virginia's state policy can help or hinder the implementation of strategic staffing models

Our classrooms haven't kept pace with innovation. The Ford Model T represented breakthrough technology in its day—more than 100 years ago—but it wouldn't serve us well today. Likewise, our traditional classroom model from the same era doesn't work well for far too many students and teachers. **In fact, as a result of this outdated model, it is more difficult for schools to find and keep great teachers, which ultimately hurts student learning.**

NCTQ's latest report, *Reimagining the Teaching Role*, highlights innovative approaches some states are taking to give school districts more autonomy and flexibility in designing and organizing their workforce. These restructuring efforts are often referred to as "strategic staffing models."

Unfortunately, few states seem to promote strategic staffing models, despite promising early results. Studies show these models not only boost teacher retention but, in one model, can lead to an extra half year of learning for students.[1]

What does it mean to reimagine the teaching role?

Often used interchangeably with terms like "strategic staffing" or "strategic school staffing," reimagining the teaching role involves disrupting traditional approaches to teaching in favor of innovative solutions like creating teacher teams to manage the instruction of larger classrooms, implementing flexible scheduling, and developing new roles for teachers that allow them to advance in their careers while staying in the classroom, making the profession more sustainable— ultimately leading to improved student outcomes.

The stakes for students and teachers in Virginia

Virginia needs to attract and retain great teachers for great results for kids. Right now only **32%** of Virginia's fourth-grade students read proficiently, and that number falls precipitously for Virginia's underserved population. So how can Virginia design roles that attract and retain the best teachers and improve results for students?

Only 25%

of teachers in the *Southern* region of the country agree that the teaching profession is dynamic, meaning it has role flexibility, with opportunities for growth and leadership.[2]

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1   Kirksey, J., Gottlieb, J., & Gore, J. (2024). (rep.). Opportunity culture update and program evaluation. Ector County School District. https://meetings.boardbook.org/Documents/WebViewer/1406?file=85d90391-a392-499f-b02c-e4460df99831

2   E4E. (2024). Voices from the classroom: A survey of America's educators. https://e4e.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-Voices-from-the-Classroom-Report-V2.pdf

State Policy Actions

NCTQ identified 10 evidence-based policy actions states can take to seed innovation, remove barriers, and give districts an opportunity to reimagine the teaching role. These actions are divided into two categories: seeding innovation and removing barriers.

Is Virginia seeding innovation to help districts reimagine the teaching role and implement strategic staffing models?

Compensation	The state financially supports teacher leader roles beyond mentoring (through salary, stipends, etc.). **Teacher compensation is a local control driven system in Virginia*.	✖
Grant Opportunities	The state provides grant opportunities that could be used to innovate with strategic staffing models.	✔
Opportunity for Waivers	The state has a provision for an "innovation zone" where districts can request waivers of policies that inhibit strategic staffing models.	✔
Support for the Teacher Pipeline	The state financially contributes to differentiated pay for residents, apprentices, or other types of not fully certified teachers who are training to become teachers.	✔
Flexible Funding Model	The state's education funding formula permits districts the flexibility to use state-allocated funds for various types of positions (teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.).	✔

Is Virginia removing barriers to help districts reimagine the teaching role and implement strategic staffing models?

Class Size or Student-Teacher Ratio Waivers	The state allows districts to request a waiver for class size or student-teacher ratio policies, or the state does not have a policy in this area.	✔
Teachers as Observers	The state permits or does not restrict teachers from formally observing other teachers.	✖
Restrictions on Teacher Time	The state permits districts and schools to determine how teachers use their planning time, allowing it to be used for collaboration.	✖
	*While teachers are permitted to collaborate, the policy restricts any supervisory duties during this time, which could limit teacher leaders serving in certain roles.	

✔ Yes   ✖ No

Roles of Support Staff	State policy permits or does not restrict paraprofessionals or teacher's aides from supporting instructional activities under the supervision of a licensed teacher.	✔
Team Outcomes	The state permits or does not restrict districts from attributing team outcomes to teacher evaluation.	✔

Recommendations for Virginia

- Provide funds that districts can access to supplement pay for teacher leader roles, particularly if the state funding formula is restrictive or not flexible regarding how personnel funds can be used.

- Establish a state policy allowing teachers to observe other teachers or allow districts to seek a waiver if they are implementing a strategic staffing model.

- Allow districts to apply for a waiver on the use of teacher collaboration time so the districts can implement more creative, flexible scheduling, provided that they have a strategic staffing plan approved by their board.

- Require and fund research and evaluations to study the outcomes of strategic staffing models.

- Leverage district networks to support implementation.

- Connect the dots among multiple initiatives across the state so districts can see how strategies such as strategic staffing, academic initiatives, and pipeline programs could all be working together to improve working conditions for teachers and student outcomes.

Questions? Contact NCTQ Chief of Policy Shannon Holston at shannon.holston@nctq.org.