

GALLUP®

Gallup's Perspective on

Understanding the K-12 Teacher Experience



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Table of Contents

02

Executive Highlights

04

Retention, Turnover and the Teacher Experience

06

What Is Your Teacher Experience?

07

Alignment With Purpose, Culture and Identity

08

The Seven Stages of the Teacher Life Cycle

09

The Core Needs at the Heart of Every Stage

12

Putting It Together: Crafting Your Teacher Journey Step-by-Step

18

Create an Exceptional Teacher Experience With Gallup

Executive Highlights

50%

of teachers are actively or passively looking for a new job.

34%

of teachers are engaged at work.

18%

of teachers strongly agree that their performance is managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work.

60%

of teachers say they left their previous job for a "career growth opportunity" (compared to 46% of non-teachers).

↑ Feedback

The more feedback teachers receive from their principal, the more engaged they are.

62%

Teachers who are engaged are 62% less likely to leave their district than teachers who are not engaged or are actively disengaged.

61% of K-12 superintendents strongly agree that “recruiting and retaining talented teachers” is a significant challenge for their district — a higher percentage than any other issue.



Retention, Turnover
and the Teacher
Experience

Many school districts are finding it difficult to attract and keep great teachers. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 48 states reported teacher shortages in math for the 2017-18 school year, with similar numbers for science, foreign language and special education. In Gallup's recently published [2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents](#), 61% of percent of superintendents strongly agreed that "recruiting and retaining talented teachers" would be a significant challenge for their district — a higher percentage than any other issue.

Fifty percent of teachers who are currently employed are either actively or passively looking for a new job. Professional development is a significant factor for teachers who change jobs:

62%

of superintendents say that teachers who leave their districts are going to other districts.

71%

of K-12 teachers say they left their previous job for job-related (not personal) reasons.

60%

of teachers say they left their previous job for a "career growth opportunity" (compared to 46% of non-teachers).

In other words, career growth matters to teachers and **teachers will move away from workplace cultures that do not support them.**

Most people agree that public education is the foundation of a thriving community. However, recent teacher protests in several states have raised public consciousness of schools as a place of work. Although many teachers are mission-driven, a passion for teaching alone is not enough to make up for workplaces that don't meet their basic career needs — both financial and psychological.

Gallup research shows that pay is a particular sore spot for teachers across the country: 28% of teachers strongly disagree that their pay is fair in comparison to people doing similar work, compared to 15% of non-teachers. In fact, pay and benefits is the second most-cited reason teachers give for voluntarily leaving their district.

28% of teachers strongly disagree that their pay is fair in comparison to people doing similar work.

However, Gallup research also shows that there are numerous other social and psychological needs in the workplace. Principals and school leaders can address many of these needs by changing the way they hire, engage and coach teachers. Not meeting these needs can result in:

- potential new teachers choosing professions other than education
- disengaged teachers resisting leadership or dropping out of the profession
- talented teachers moving to more supportive districts

Although these psychological needs for coaching, engagement and opportunities for growth may seem basic, they often spell the difference between teacher success and teacher burnout. When school districts understand what makes great teachers thrive, they can build school cultures that attract, retain and develop great teachers, leading to higher student outcomes.

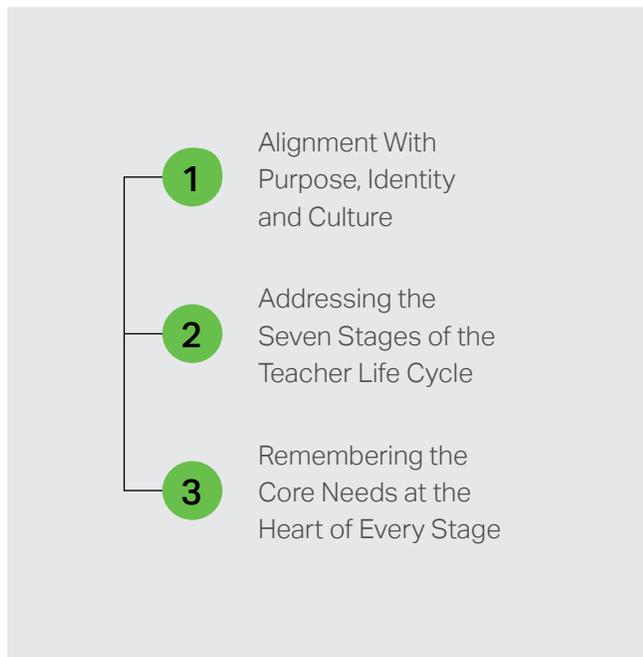


What Is Your
Teacher
Experience?

What matters most in the education workplace? What organizational changes make the biggest difference for teacher engagement and performance?

To create a supportive workplace culture for teachers, it is important to see your organization from a teacher's perspective. Every aspect of your organization sends a message to your teachers about what you believe, what's expected of them and what their future will be like with you. These messages influence how your teachers feel about your district or school — and ultimately shape your reputation, teacher performance and student outcomes.

Based on decades of research including hundreds of organizations, Gallup has identified three key steps in defining a clear, meaningful teacher experience:



Alignment With Purpose, Culture and Identity

Creating a supportive district and school culture for teachers begins with a shared purpose and a distinctive identity. Compared to other professions, teachers show higher levels of Purpose wellbeing. Teachers often are attracted to their profession because they believe in the mission of education and when they feel connected to that mission, they thrive.

While working with a major U.S. school district, Gallup found that the district's most engaged teachers have greater alignment with its aspired purpose, brand and culture than less engaged teachers. In fact, **62% of teachers with high engagement demonstrate high alignment with leaders' vision for the ideal culture.**

When organizations attempt to change in a piecemeal way by adding new programs to patch over old problems, they are likely to create a disjointed and confusing culture. However, when leadership define a strong vision of culture and identity, their decisions and policies naturally make more sense to employees.

A well-defined culture offers a host of other benefits for your organization:

- **Culture attracts talent:** A strong culture makes your organization stand out among your competition.
- **Culture improves performance:** Gallup research shows that teams with high culture agreement perform better on internal key performance indicators.
- **Culture creates alignment:** When everybody knows and agrees on important items, it makes collaboration and execution easier.

The Seven Stages of the Teacher Life Cycle

Although teachers have innumerable interactions and experiences throughout their career, Gallup has identified seven stages of the teacher life cycle during which leaders can make a significant difference in teacher engagement and outcomes. Often chronic talent issues such as turnover and poor performance can be traced back to failures at one of these stages.

Instead of an “all of the above” approach to problem-solving, organizations can take a systemic and scientific approach to understand where along the teacher journey problems are occurring.

Each stage of the teacher life cycle impacts the others. For example, how teachers leave your district or school can have a direct impact on your ability to attract new and better teachers. An uninspiring teacher orientation can set the stage for low engagement. Or a hit-and-miss hiring process can make development more challenging. For this reason, organizations need to approach change in a holistic, objective and systematic way to affect long-term outcomes.

Questions you might ask about your own district or school based on the teacher life cycle include:

Attract

How do we attract the best teachers using our unique identity and culture?

Hire

Does our hiring process feel fair? Does our process pick stars?

Onboard

Does our orientation program help teachers experience our unique culture and identity?

Engage

Are our teachers enthusiastic about their work? Do they get to do what they do best?

Perform

Do our performance evaluations improve performance in a measurable way?

Develop

Are our professional development programs personalized to match what teachers want most?

Depart

Why do our best teachers leave? Where do they go? Do they leave with a positive impression of us?



The Core Needs at the Heart of Every Stage

In addition to the seven stages, Gallup has identified five constants in the workplace that influence the teacher experience and how teachers feel about your organization: their relationship with their principal, clarity of role, team relationships, the physical environment and how their job relates to their overall life.

Principal

A teacher's relationship with their principal is their most important relationship at work. Warm, meaningful conversations (or the lack of them) set the tone at the beginning, middle and end of a teacher's tenure at a school. Principals have a responsibility to listen to their teachers' concerns, provide helpful feedback and paint a positive vision of the future.

Role

"What is expected of me?" is a simple but foundational question for performing any task well. However, only 46% of teachers strongly agree that they have a clear job description. Orientation is an important stage for explaining a role; however, roles and expectations are ever-changing in the workplace, requiring regular communication.

Team

Teachers want to be part of a team of colleagues that they trust and respect. They also want to know what value they bring to the table. As organizations and teams change over time, teachers must redefine their position in the group and figure out where they fit in. Feeling left out or disrespected can have a negative effect on daily performance.

Workspace

Everything from windows and lighting to equipment and supplies has a psychological impact on teachers. Having clear goals but lacking the tools and resources to achieve those goals is a recipe for discouragement and burnout. Light, temperature, noise and distractions all influence how teachers feel about where they work.

Wellbeing

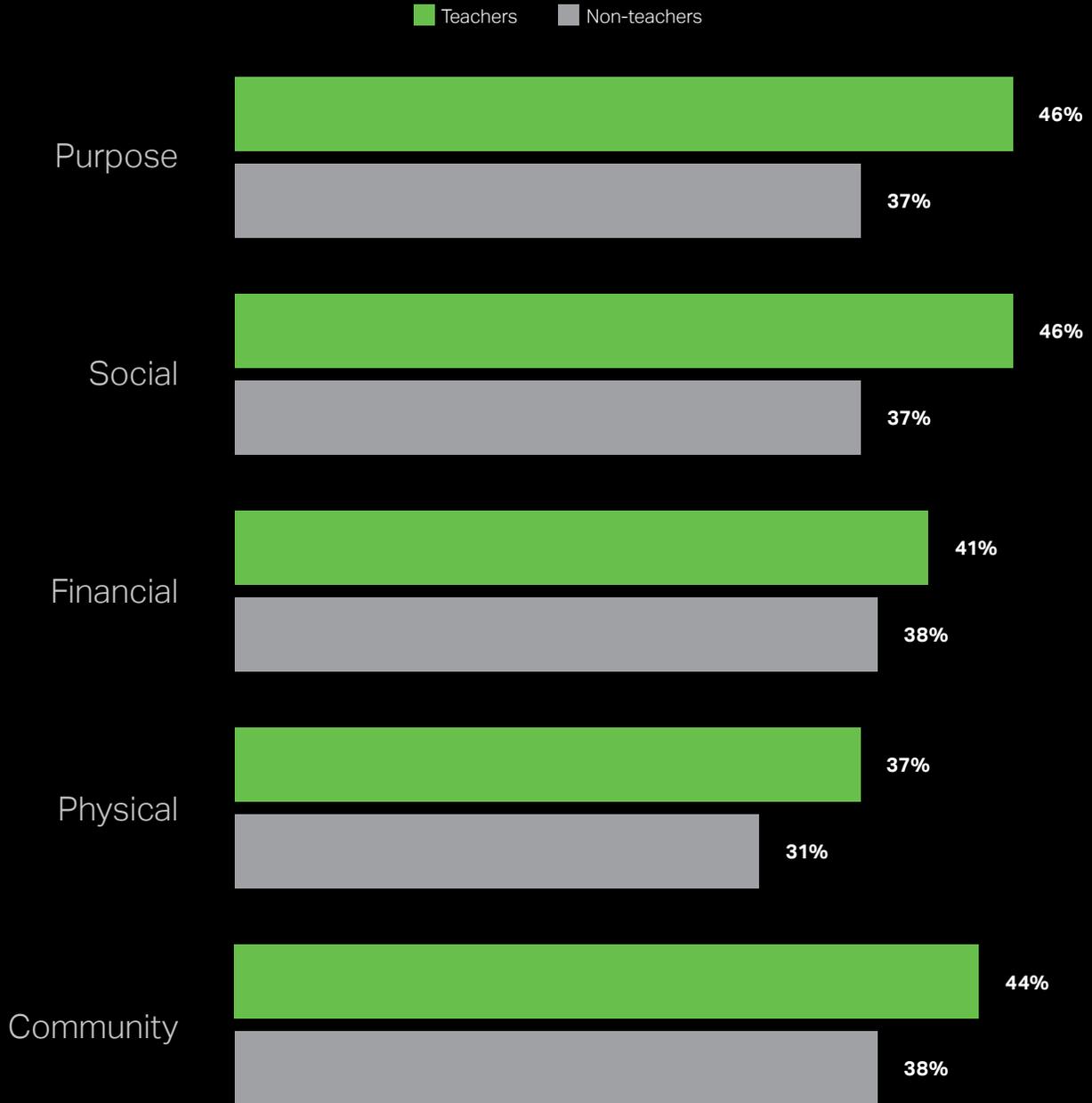
How many "good days" do your teachers have? Gallup identifies five dimensions of wellbeing that lead to a thriving life: Purpose, Social, Financial, Physical and Community.

Notably, teachers show higher levels of overall wellbeing compared to non-teachers, particularly when it comes to Purpose and Social dimensions. Teachers often are attracted to their profession because they believe in the mission of education and they love feeling connected to students. They gain meaning and energy from their work. School leaders would do well to reinforce the wellbeing aspects of their institution that make it a great place to work.

Surprisingly, teachers also typically have higher than average Financial wellbeing. This is likely a sign that most teachers have managed their financial expectations to meet their means, or that they are part of dual-income households.

The exception is millennial teachers, who have lower-than-average Financial wellbeing. The fact that Financial wellbeing rises with each generation seems to match other research on teacher pay suggesting that teachers eventually reach parity with other professions by the end of their career.

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Teachers show higher levels of overall wellbeing compared to non-teachers.

Teachers who are engaged are 62% less likely to leave their district than teachers who are not engaged or are actively disengaged.

Putting It Together:
Crafting Your
Teacher Journey
Step-by-Step

Your Teacher Journey is a detailed description of a teacher's path through the teacher life cycle as seen from their point of view. District leaders can infuse each of these stages with their distinctive culture and identity, while principals can provide support and help address teacher concerns and questions at each stage.

1 Attract: Recruit Top Talent

1 out of 2 teachers is actively or passively looking for a new job.

What employees want from a workplace has changed dramatically in recent years. Although pay is a significant factor for younger employees, it falls below opportunities to learn and advance, quality of a manager and interesting work. In short, people want more than a paycheck. They want an engaging work environment where they can grow personally and contribute meaningfully. They want a job that fits into an overall desired lifestyle.

When looking to attract better teachers, districts should create an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) that addresses these deeper needs. They should highlight the opportunities for growth, personal relationships and a focus on strengths that have been incorporated into an authentic district and school culture.

Past	Future
My Paycheck	My Purpose
My Satisfaction	My Development
My Boss	My Coach
My Annual Review	My Ongoing Conversations
My Weaknesses	My Strengths
My Job	My Life

2 Hire: Pick the Stars

Teachers in the top quartile for talent are **2.5 times** more likely to receive highly effective ratings from their principal than those in the bottom half for talent.

Hiring for talent has a strong long-term correlation with performance. However, an effective hiring process must meet the needs of both job candidates and employers. Candidates need to feel that the hiring process is fair and unbiased. They should also receive a reasonably fair picture of what makes your school or district culture unique. For employers, a hiring process needs to be consistent, objective and predictive of real performance outcomes. It needs to evaluate candidates for culture fit, as well as natural teaching ability.

Selecting for talent is not just for teachers. Talented people like being around other talented people. Principals and support staff should also be hired for natural talent. The more your school attracts great teachers and staff, the more great teachers will feel like your school is the place for them.

3 Onboard: Affirm the Decision

Only **12%** of all U.S. employees say their organization does a great job of onboarding new employees.

New teacher orientation is about much more than filling out paperwork and learning where your room will be. It is a crucial moment when new employees decide if they made the right choice. It's also a time when schools can communicate their culture and identity in a meaningful way.

Some organizations are too cautious when it comes to investing in new hires. They take a “wait-and-see” approach to see if a new teacher “works out.” This tactic results in costly (and preventable) turnover, as well as feelings of alienation and confusion that can impact the reputation of your district.

What any new employee wants is to be known and valued, to understand how they fit into the team, and to know where they are headed professionally if they remain.

A successful new teacher orientation needs to answer the following five questions:

1) What do we believe in around here?

Orientation should communicate — preferably through example and hands-on activities — what your unique culture and values are.

2) What are my strengths?

Every teacher makes a unique contribution to the success of a school. Teachers need to know what they are best at — and they need others to know it, too.

3) What's my role?

Like any employee, teachers need to know how they fit into the big picture and why their work matters. All too often, educators are not provided a clear definition of “success” in their role. This can lead to confusion, discouragement and unhelpful performance conversations.

4) Who are my partners?

Everyone needs friends at work. Finding friends, mentors and internal resources is essential for teacher success.

5) What does my future here look like?

It's never too early to listen to the dreams and ambitions of your teachers. School leaders should not assume all teachers want the same things. Having conversations about future professional growth can make teachers feel that someone cares about them as a person and wants to see them win.

4 Engage: Build Strengths and Purpose

Teacher engagement is directly related to student engagement — which correlates with subject matter achievement, graduation rates and college readiness.

When we imagine schools and classrooms at their best, we think about energy. There's a buzz in the room. Students are asking questions, getting their hands dirty, trying new things and working together with their peers. The teachers are energized, too — positive, enthusiastic, adaptable — they are helping students discover things about their world and themselves that they never knew before.

This is the type of learning environment parents want for their children and that superintendents strive to achieve. Our research has found that parents rate student engagement above test scores and grades, and Gallup's most recent superintendents poll found that 97% of superintendents say student engagement is “very important” in evaluating teacher performance — more than any other single factor. (Only 24% said test scores were “very important.”)

Parents and superintendents are on to something: A student's level of engagement at school is a significant predictor of academic achievement. Our 2009 study of 160 schools across eight states found that every one-percentage-point increase in a school's average student engagement was associated with a six-point increase in reading achievement and an eight-point increase in math achievement.

But the reality is that most teachers do not arrive at work each day energized about their tasks or feel supported enough to be creative and innovative in their work. They are simply going through the motions.

What makes for an engaged teacher?

Based on decades of research across multiple industries, Gallup has identified 12 elements that drive high engagement in organizations:

Q01

I know what is expected of me at work.

Q07

At work, my opinions seem to count.

Q02

I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

Q08

The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.

Q03

At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.

Q09

My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.

Q04

In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

Q10

I have a best friend at work.

Q05

My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

Q11

In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

Q06

There is someone at work who encourages my development.

Q12

This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

5 Perform: Drive Expectations

Only **18%** of teachers strongly agree that their performance is managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work.

Gallup's research has shown that regular attention, feedback and coaching is a requirement for high performance at work. Yet teachers often do not have a principal who regularly listens, gives feedback or provides support. Generally, teachers receive less feedback from school leaders compared to other professionals — some receive no more than an annual performance review. They also receive less regular recognition.

This is an area in much need of improvement, as our research shows that **the more feedback teachers receive, the more engaged they are**. The more principals coach their teachers — listening, providing feedback and recognizing great work — the better those teachers perform.

Selecting Great Principals

Just as great managers play a key role in the engagement and performance of individual contributors, principals are essential when it comes to great teacher experiences. Gallup research has found that *schools that hired talented principals, based on an objective talent assessment, were 2.6 times more likely to have above-average teacher engagement.*

Talented principals have three common attributes:

- 1) Strong determination to overcome adversity in achieving performance outcomes
- 2) Ability maintain order and accountability in their schools
- 3) Talent for building great relationships with teachers, students and parents

6 Develop: Coach Career Growth

60% of teachers say they left their previous job for “career growth opportunity” (compared to 46% of non-teachers).

Traditionally, teacher development has been reduced to a few factors: tenure and certifications leading to increased base pay with optional volunteer opportunities for supplemental pay. In most districts, a non-teaching, administrative role is the only way “up” for experienced teachers.

Unfortunately, this one-size-fits-all approach does not differentiate between high performing and low performing teachers, which ultimately discourages self-improvement. Principals may be able to identify their best people, but they don't have a career pathway that rewards better performance. The result is a culture of career stagnation and mediocrity.

It's time for schools to break down this model and create personalized development paths that reward genuine improvements in classroom performance.

7 Depart: Positive Exit Experience

Teachers who are engaged are **62%** less likely to leave their district than teachers who are not engaged or are actively disengaged.

When a school district loses a talented teacher, it loses more than just an employee. Teacher turnover can mean added recruitment and hiring costs, decreased morale, a loss of institutional knowledge and potential damage to your district's employer brand.

A Gallup study of employees who recently left their organization found that over half of employees said that their manager or organization could have done something to make them stay. Notably, over half also said that they had *no meaningful conversation with a manager or leader in the three months prior to their departure.*

It is possible for school leaders to stop teacher turnover before it occurs, but it requires regular conversations during which teachers can express their desires and needs in an open way. Even if a teacher appears to be happy and flourishing, principals can initiate “stay conversations” — discussions about why they stay and what would keep them longer.

Create an
Exceptional
Teacher Experience
With Gallup

Attracting, developing and retaining great teachers begins with understanding the education workplace from the teacher's perspective. Teachers are looking for meaningful work where they can use their talents every day. They want to know what's expected of them, and they want genuine opportunities to advance their career in a way that makes sense to them.

When supported and coached by an engaging principal and surrounded by a coherent, distinctive culture, teachers thrive.

When teachers receive regular feedback and feel connected to their team, they become more engaged at work — which has a direct impact on student engagement and performance.

For decades, Gallup has worked with some of the largest U.S. school districts to bring our world-class research on the science of human potential to organizations like yours.

Connect with Gallup to learn more about how we can help you:

- Develop an aspirational culture and measure your current district identity

- Select talented superintendents, principals and teachers

- Survey your students on topics related to hope, engagement and social connection

- Improve your teacher performance and development systems based on the science of performance psychology

- Identify the causes of teacher burnout and turnover and recommend practical, targeted solutions

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