

The Future of South Carolina's Teaching Profession

Addressing Teacher Shortages & Accelerating Student-Led Learning



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Highlights & Preliminary Framework

Hardly a day goes by without another headline about the challenges facing our nation's teachers. South Carolina is not alone, as it encounters [worsening teacher shortages](#) and [reports](#) of unmanageable workloads of those who teach our state's public school students. The 2022-23 school year opened with over 1,000 classrooms without a teacher – a 50% increase over last year and an 88% increase over the year before. However, the lack of good data often obscures the extent of shortages, where they occur, and why teachers leave their jobs.

Over the last 9 months a University of South Carolina research team, with philanthropic support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, worked closely with three partner school districts Charleston, Fairfield, and Pickens to assess their human capital assets and needs, some of the root causes of the teacher shortages, and their readiness to evolve South Carolina's teaching profession. Aided by [national research](#), a small group of advisors, and focus group interviews with almost 100 South Carolina teachers and principals, we formed our analysis. The real challenge, as we document more fully in [our report](#), is the *nature of the teaching job*.

"I feel like that's our responsibility (to respond to the whole child). It doesn't matter if it did not start as our responsibility. It is now. And so we either rise to that occasion or we can lay down and let it happen. And that's just it. [But] we've got to have teams of professionals to evaluate and work with these kids. We cannot do it alone."

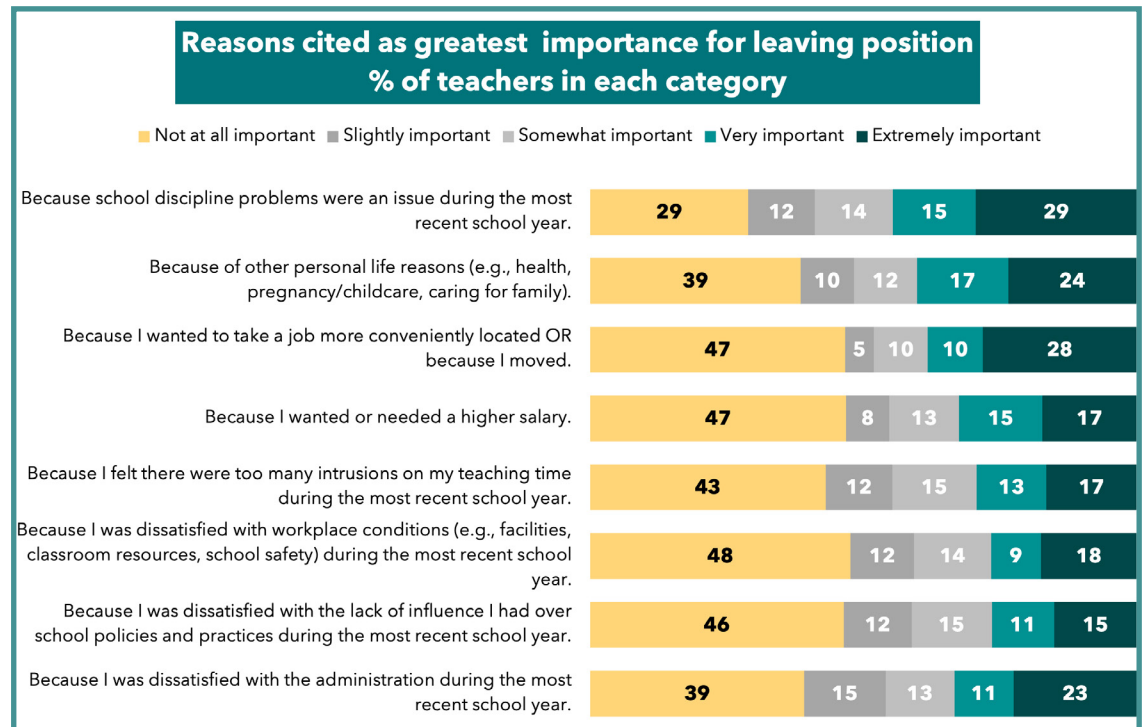
– A SC 2021-22 District Teacher of the Year

Why do teachers leave and what would bring them back?

During the 2021-22 school year, a sample of departing teachers from 8 South Carolina school districts answered survey questions about why they were leaving their current positions and what it would take to return. Importantly, about 4 in 10 teachers who left their classrooms last year moved to teach in another district – primarily for discipline or personal reasons. Teachers also identified salary and working conditions.

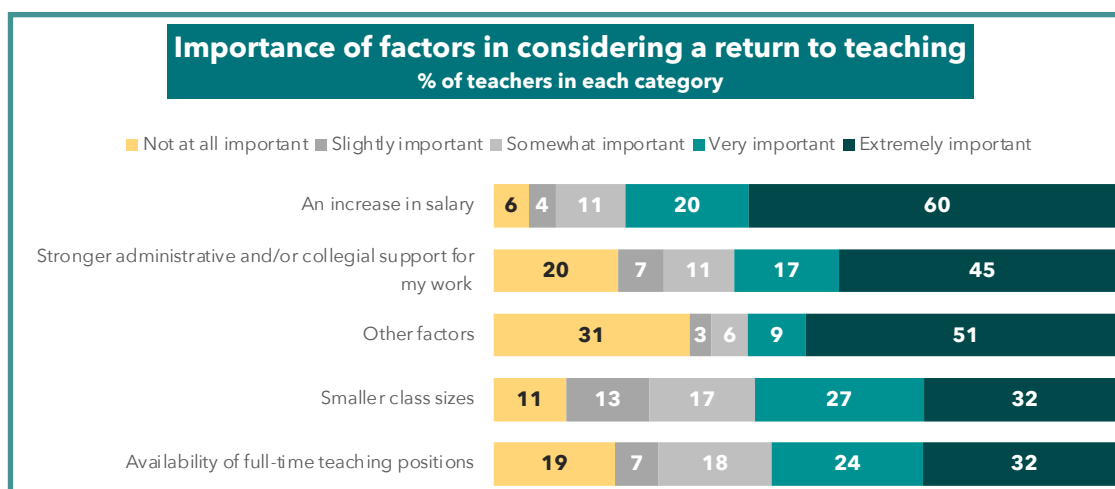
"The work we're going to have to do [to improve the teaching profession] is things outside the budget and outside of salaries."

– House Speaker Murrell Smith



Source: SC-TEACHER (2022)

For those teachers who left the teaching profession altogether, an increase in salary and stronger administrative support, support from teaching colleagues, or both, would be the main drivers for them to return to classroom teaching.



Source: SC-TEACHER (2022)

"We need more time to dive into peer observation – teachers learning from teachers in their classrooms."

– Veronica Thomas, Teacher Leader, Fairfield

Important Work is Already Underway

Fortunately, South Carolina established several signature teacher recruitment and retention programs – Teacher Cadets, Call Me Mister, Teaching Fellows, and a \$5,000 salary supplement for teachers who have earned National Board Certification. In addition, CarolinaTIP, a “whole teacher” induction and support program, is retaining 97% of new teachers serving in 8 school districts. Several school-university partnerships are experimenting with teacher residencies. These would provide a more comprehensive approach to preparing new recruits in full-year internships, similar to training doctors in a teaching hospital. However, these partnerships do not currently have sustainable ways to pay the residents and establish the necessary co-teaching arrangements.

Our partner districts have engaged in several efforts to address teacher shortages and evolve the profession of teaching: Charleston’s Acceleration Schools program to recruit teachers to high-need schools, Fairfield’s Teacher Village to address suitable housing, and Pickens’s focus on using virtual tools to spread the expertise of teachers across schools and build a partnership with the University of Oulu in Finland to accelerate teacher and school leader development that also can “put the joy back into teaching and learning.”

What Is and What Could Be

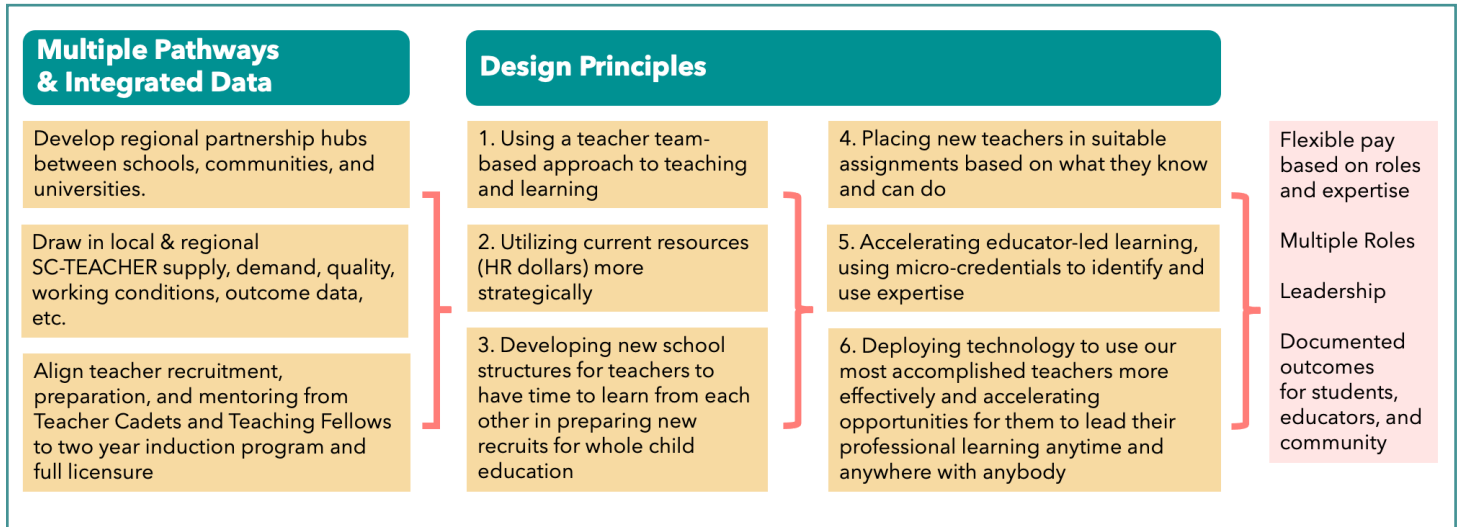
Our work with our partner districts and other South Carolina educators led us to identify a robust set of “what is” and “what could be” elements that could shape a framework for evolving the teaching profession. We highlight some critical elements – from recruitment to compensation – below.

	What Is	What Could Be
Recruitment into Teacher Preparation	ProTeam and Teacher Cadets start students thinking about teaching as a profession, but are not adequately inclusive or sufficiently aligned with teacher education recruitment	A K-12-higher education partnership to provide a comprehensive grow-your-own approach to recruiting, preparing, and inducting from middle school through first few years of teaching
Teacher Education Curriculum	Preparation programs give teachers the basics but have scant focus on the Profile of SC Graduate and whole child education	Redefining educator preparation to include whole child and cradle to career education (Profile) strategies through funded school-university-community partnerships

	What Is	What Could Be
Recruitment	School districts have expanded and diversified their recruitment efforts, but little is known about what is working	Research and evaluation to identify and improve effective recruitment and retention policies and practices
Induction	School districts have induction programs but they are overly focused on the 4.0 evaluation rubric and have been described as “cookie cutter”	Induction more integrated into and customized to the on-going work of new teachers, time for mentoring built into teachers’ regular schedules, and use of virtual network to access expertise anytime
Professional Learning	The wide range of professional development is not always aligned with teacher needs; instructional coaches, who do not teach, may not have needed skills and “legitimacy” with teachers	Redefining professional learning that is guided by teachers and most often led by them, expanding professional learning to include routine collaboration within workdays
Evaluation	Teacher evaluations are too often experienced as compliance as opposed to growth and sharing teaching expertise	Teacher evaluation reconceptualized as a primarily formative tool for improvement and peer learning, fueled in part by micro-credentials
Leadership	No clear professional pathway for teacher advancement that includes leadership and compensation trajectory without leaving the classroom	Expanding and creating roles for teacher leaders (formal and informal) with compensation tied to advancement similar to other professions
Compensation	Single salary schedules built on tradition, not supply and demand, not aligned to cost-of living increases, and tops out before many teachers want to end their careers	Base salary competitive with those of similar professions and salary increases and supplements based on expanded roles, expertise and accomplishment

These findings led the team to identify two exemplars – one from Arizona and the [Next Education Workforce Initiative](#) and the other from [Singapore](#) – that helped inform a preliminary framework for moving forward and rethinking the job of teaching as teams of teachers with multiple career pathways.

Evolving the Education Profession in South Carolina: A Preliminary Framework



The General Assembly has made significant investments on three fronts:

- Developing a robust data infrastructure around the supply, demand, and effectiveness;
- Collecting and utilizing data on teacher working conditions; and
- Accelerating teaching residencies and a system for teacher leadership around student-led learning.

Importantly, in 2022, South Carolina lawmakers established a Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force (Proviso 1.114) to find solutions to the state’s teacher shortage crisis. The timing could not be better. Task force recommendations will be made by May 31, 2023.

Additional funding from Carnegie and What School Could Be will enable us to begin taking small steps that can lead to big change:

- Prototyping a professional learning community to scale educator-led innovations;
- Developing a sustainable teacher residency model anchored by teacher leaders and new staffing models;
- Sustaining a policy and practice learning exchange with Arizona and Singapore; and
- Evolving the teaching profession through evidence-based policy and practice

“We could use our NBCTs as leaders, including for the kinds of community schools our state needs where whole child services are provided.”

– Stephanie Johnson, teacher leader, Richland School District One, National Board Certified Teacher

Senator Greg Hembree, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, has agreed to co-lead a series of policy convenings in 2022-23, which will engage key stakeholders to look deeply at the evidence and insights to drive policy action to ensure any steps that follow lead to significant change.

As Senator Hembree said:

“ It is time to stop nibbling around the edges of school reform and the teaching profession.

Our state’s 730,000 students deserve no less than ensuring a high-quality teacher in the classroom, now and in the future. South Carolina teachers and administrators are catalyzed to evolve the teaching profession.

“We talk about losing teachers, and I feel like you’re going to win and lose some with new teachers, but we’re losing teachers who are five, six, seven years into the profession, when they should be at the height of their game. That’s the real problem... think about all the professional development, all the time that’s been invested in them. And they’re leaving... That’s why I think that professional growth, leadership pipeline is so crucial to what we do.”

– AJ Barnes, Charleston County School District, 2021-22 District Teacher of the Year

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For the full 63-page report, please visit: bit.ly/FutureofSCTeaching