



Teacher Retention:

The Lesser-Known Key to Boosting Student Outcomes

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Unleash Your Administrative Superpower

Impact Student Outcomes






1. Name Your Nemesis
2. Identify Your Superpower: Comprehensive Mentoring
3. Defeat your Nemesis
4. Share Your Expertise



Name Your Nemesis:
Special Education
Teacher Retention



"Turnover affects all students but disproportionately affects students with disabilities. Particularly when special education teachers depart"
-Calder Center



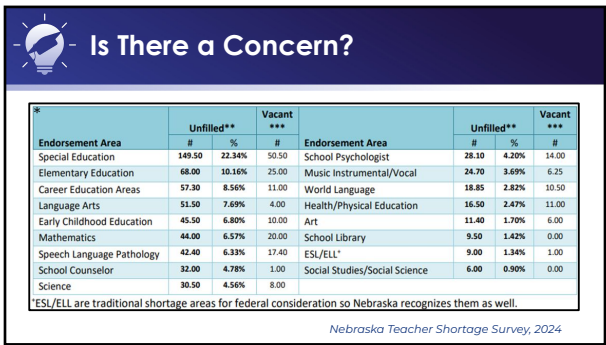
Who are we defeating?

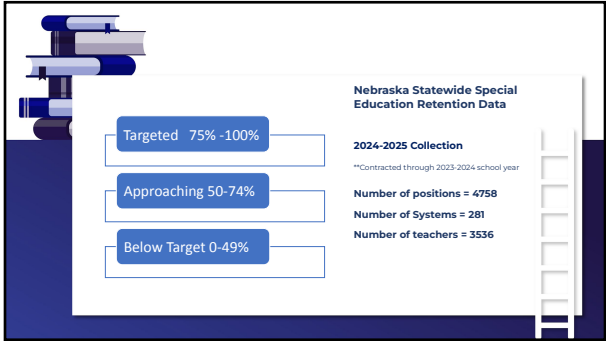


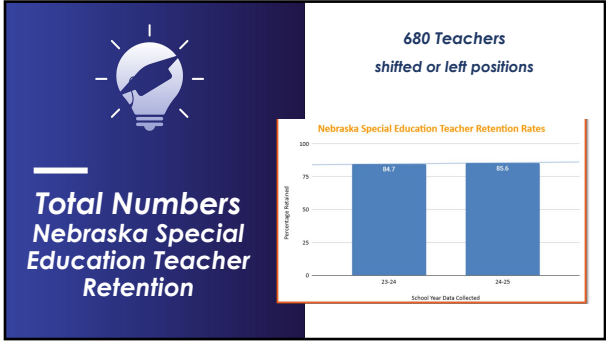
Lower
Special
Education
Retention

Lower
Reading and
Math
Outcomes



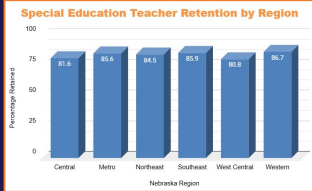






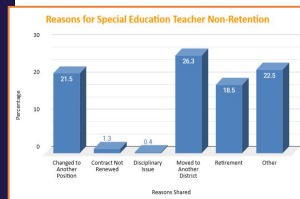


Retention Rates By Region





Reasons for Non Retention



Impact of Teacher Attrition on Student Outcomes

- Knowledge and experience leaves school or district
- Effectiveness of colleagues (Papay & Kraft, 2015)
- Increasing responsibilities and tasks=less time for support
- Reduced student engagement due to loss of connection
- Disruption to program implementation and school-wide reform efforts
- Reduction of finances due to teacher "churn" = \$9,000-20,000

(Gilmour, Mason-Williams & Barthelemy, 2003)



"High teacher turnover rates in schools negatively impact student achievement for all the students in a school, not just those in a new teacher's classroom"

-Aldeman



Current Status of Reading Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

Proficiency Rate for Students with Disabilities on the NSCAS/ACT for ELA (Indicator 3B)

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
4th Grade	23.51%	22.42%	23.86%	27.95%
8th Grade	16.02%	13.49%	23.09%	24.10%
11th Grade	10.13%	8.79%	9.65%	10.53%



Current Status of Math Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

Proficiency Rate for Students with Disabilities on the NSCAS/ACT for Math (Indicator 3B)

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
4th Grade	19.83%	19.58%	27.14%	33.46%
8th Grade	12.85%	10.56%	23.31%	20.83%
11th Grade	9.03%	9.86%	8.68%	8.38%

Specific Impacts on Reading Scores

- 100% turnover Specialist/Single Subject teacher loss equates to a reduction of .11 SD in test scores
- Less than 100% = .011 SD in test scores
- Annual 10% specific subject teacher loss = reduction .005 SD test scores

- **Increases with Math content loss**
- **Increases in schools that serves students from economically disadvantaged homes**

(Sorenson & Ladd, 2020)

Specific Impacts on Reading Scores

- A 100% loss of Special Education Teacher (SET) workforce in a school would be predicted to result in a 0.01 Standard Deviation (SD) unit decrease in ELA scores for students
- A year of complete turnover among general education paraeducators in a high performing school would be expected to result in a 0.01 SD decrease in ELA score growth
- Urban general education teacher turnover a 0.04 SD unit reduction in mathematics and ELA scores for students without disabilities, and a 0.06 SD unit reduction in ELA scores for students with disabilities.
- Rural turnover is most significant for students with disabilities and in ELA. Complete turnover of SETs or special education paraeducators is predictive of a drop in growth scores of 0.03 or 0.02 SD units

Kaler, Theobald, Jone & Bettini, 2025



- 1.Prepare
- 2.Retain
- 3.Attract





**Identify Your Superpower:**
Comprehensive Mentoring



“We have a **shared responsibility** to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that is consistent with the goals in their individualized education programs (IEP) to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.

This requires that all children with disabilities have available to them **well-prepared special educators and specialized instructional support personnel** (special education personnel) who have the **knowledge and skills** to promote **high expectations** and provide **evidence-based interventions and services** that improve their outcomes.

Valerie C. Williams
US Dept of Education, OSEP 2025





Comprehensive Special Education Mentoring

1. Relevant work orientation
2. Supportive school community
3. Strong job match
4. Deliberate role design
5. Ongoing professional development
6. Responsive mentoring



Connection
Communication
Collaboration

#1. Relevant Work Orientation

Orienting teachers to their new work location and position is vital to ensuring they are prepared for the year. Many schools provide school wide new teacher orientations but they may not have planned, directed special education orientation time.

Impact of Super Power #1

1. Provide an orientation prior to the start of the school year and encourage collaboration and connection with staff members
2. Plan the agenda to reach all staff members through a generational leadership lens
3. Share Structural and Procedural Information and Activities related to the culture of the school
4. Focus on what the new teacher may need to know in the first month of school



"Build a bridge instead of a wall."

-Tim Elmore, 2024

#2. Relevant Work Orientation

Leaders determine whether a special education teacher feels supported. This occurs in many ways, but it all begins with a culture of understanding and trust.

Impact of Super Power #2

1. Offer a collegial and friendly welcome to the new teacher
2. Value the expertise and experience of the new teacher
3. Build a culture supportive of all learners and those who support them
4. Provide a collaborative climate with time to meet with colleagues and admin
5. Plan for administrative support of special education teachers:
 - Strong special education knowledge
 - Purposeful and intentional support
 - Consistent support
 - Adequate resource support
 - Goal setting and individualized learning plans



Because they might lack extensive knowledge of special education, some school leaders need to spend more time understanding the work of special educators.

IRIS Center, 2025

#3. Deliberate Role Design

Special education jobs are often not manageable. Administrators must protect instructional and procedural minutes, encourage school wide collaboration and provide resources.

Impact of Super Power #3

1. Alleviate procedural demands when possible
2. Reduce the number of additional duties and monitoring
3. Encourage team collaboration for paperwork completion
4. Schedule coveted opportunities and collaborative meeting sessions
5. Schedule common planning times with key support personnel (e.g., mentor, team leader)
6. Ensure resources and curriculum supports are available and/or easily attainable.



New special education teachers are often idealistic, underestimate the time it takes to complete tasks, and overestimate their abilities. Their first teaching job might be quite different than the "ideal" version they were expecting.

IRIS Center, 2025

#4. Strong Job Match

Teachers are more likely to stay in a position when they have background related to caseload, age and grade level, content, program model, and personal preference needs.

Impact of Super Power #4

1. Candidates are matched to position related to:
 - Caseload
 - Age/Grade Level
 - Program Model
 - Content
 - Preference
2. Job descriptions are detailed and clear
3. Interviews are position focused and ask connecting questions
4. Tours are offered to allow shadowing and/or a view of the setting, student body, etc.

Teachers who are well matched to their positions are more likely to experience success and remain in the field.

(Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, & Galman, 2009; Morvant, Gersten, Gillman, Keating, & Blake, 1995)



#5. Ongoing Professional Development

Each staff member comes into the position with a beneficial skill set. Given the diversity of their caseload, they may still lack specific skills.

Impact of Super Power #5

1. Partnerships are built between the district and educator preparation programs, educational service units, and other training sources even if those programs are at a distance.
2. Beginning teachers are offered both content-specific support and basic orientation support and districts provide these supports through different methods.
3. The High Leverage Practices in Special Education, HLPs, are used to support teachers across all grades/subjects.
4. Teachers assist in training district staff in their areas of expertise.

Teachers who are well matched to their positions are more likely to experience success and remain in the field.

(Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, & Galman, 2009; Morvant, Gersten, Gillman, Keating, & Blake, 1995)



#6. Responsive Mentoring

Special education teachers need other special education teachers to guide them through their positions. When mentors are provided a mentoring program or like guidance, they are able to ensure mentees cover all required information.

Impact of Super Power #6

1. Mentors are matched appropriately with mentees (job, grade, experience, generation, etc.)
2. Protected time for mentors and mentees is offered to allow ample time for weekly communication
3. Provide support and direction for mentors in order to encourage strong conversations
4. Offer opportunities for new special education teachers to observe classrooms and to be observed by their mentor for instructional skill growth

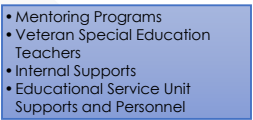
"[Special education teachers'] roles in schools vary widely... Thus, when new SETs begin teaching, one of their first—and most challenging—tasks is to 'make sense' of, or figure out, their roles."

Billingsley, 2019









State Tools

- Get SET Nebraska Induction and Mentoring Programs
- Get SET Lessons Learned Blogs
- Get SET 2025-2026 Professional Development Resources
- NDE Special Education Retention Survey Data

Get set
Nebraska

Comprehensive Special Education Mentoring

1. Relevant work orientation
2. Supportive school community
3. Strong job-match
4. Deliberate role design
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Special Education Teacher Induction & Mentorship Program

Administrative Leadership Academy

Get SET
Lessons Learned

Get SET Nebraska offers Nebraska schools data to inform critical retention decisions. The recently published Lessons Learned blogs highlight positive changes districts can implement to enhance special education teacher retention.

A Picture of Retention 2024 & 2026

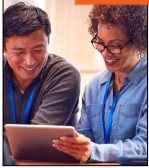
Stress, Responsibilities and Extra Duties

Job Satisfaction and Stress

Program Quality

Visit our Blogs link on the website:
www.getsetnebraska.org

Updated Program
and Options



Registered 2025-2026 Teams
Receive FREE Professional Development Materials

In addition to FREE access to the Get SET Nebraska Induction and Mentoring program, EACH 25-26 team member will receive the following support resources:

Mentees

- The Special Guide for New Special Education Teachers (SEITs)
- Implementing Professionalism in Special Education and Inclusive Settings
- High Leverage Practices in Special Education, 2nd Edition
- The Practical Guide to High Leverage Practices in Special Education: How to Develop Classroom Routines
- High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Settings: Practitioner's
- High Leverage Practices for Teachers
- High Leverage Practices and Strategies with Extreme Support Needs

Mentors

- High Leverage Practices in Special Education: The Basics
- High Leverage Practices in High Leverage Practices in Special Education: How to Develop Classroom Routines
- High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Settings: Practitioner's
- High Leverage Practices and Strategies with Extreme Support Needs

Administrators

- 40 Minutes to High Leverage Practices
- A Principal's Guide to Special Education: 4th Edition

Register by accessing materials at www.getsetnebraska.org



getsetnebraska.org

National
Tools

- LEAD IDEA Center
- IRIS Vanderbilt University
- CEEDAR Center High Leverage Practices

Principal Navigator:
Special Educator
Retention



<https://lead-idea.org/>

Strategy A: Recognize and utilize the specialized

Short-Term Solutions

Addressable general and special education strategies to address gaps in basic collaboration and resources in supporting students with disabilities.

Resilient Actions

- Collaborate with general and special education professionals to address gaps in basic collaboration and resources.

Medium-Term Solutions

Facilitate collaborative planning and special education's input and expertise roles in the life of students.

Resilient Actions

- Foster a collaborative environment by providing special education input and expertise in planning.

1

Who's responsible?

Who's responsible? (SEITs, Mentors, Administrators, etc.)

2

What's the goal?

What's the goal? (e.g., increased collaboration, improved student outcomes, etc.)

3

How to measure success?

How to measure success? (e.g., student outcomes, teacher retention, etc.)

4

How to sustain success?

How to sustain success? (e.g., ongoing communication, professional development, etc.)

1

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

IRIS+ School & District Platform

How can school leaders provide effective, affordable professional development for large numbers of school personnel? The answer is IRIS+ School Platform.

IRIS+ is a new flexible, flexible online tool that helps school leaders organize and track their ongoing IRIS+ professional development activities. Educators benefit from the same high-quality IRIS+ modules available on the IRIS+ website, but with the added benefit of which they can access embedded throughout the module. School leaders benefit from an administrator dashboard that provides quick summaries of module completion rates, post-test scores, and more.

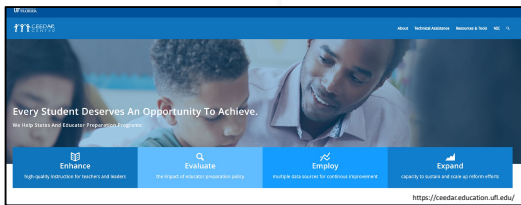


Districts can secure parking access to customized bundles of IRIS+ modules. Bundles may be assigned to all educators or different groups of personnel, depending on the school's needs. Early release pricing is \$100 per teacher, plus a \$200 setup fee.

Through our custom-tailored IRIS+ School & District Platform, school leaders can:

- Facilitate professional learning by target class of focus
- Easily assign and monitor IRIS+ module use for large numbers of staff
- Track and monitor IRIS+ module completion rates
- Send reminder emails to individuals or groups of educators
- Track the progress of their education and learning as a module
- Sort and filter results
- Organize your school or district professional development in one convenient, user-friendly online hub
- Export and promote data for accountability purposes

Even better, personnel can access their assigned IRIS+ modules anytime, anywhere, using any tablet, phone, or computer. Educators who complete a module, work through the module's main content, and finish with a post-test can download or print a certificate to verify their effort. Our most popular modules are currently available, and more are added all the time.



Share Your Expertise
Attraction and
Retention Survey

Attraction and Retention Survey







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Thank you for attending

Unlock Your Superpower!

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