



A Strategic Approach to Attract, Engage, Grow & Retain K-12 Talent

School Districts Who Are Leading the Way





Research continues to show that the greatest single impact on student success lies with the educator. And yet teachers are leaving the field at alarming rates, while fewer and fewer new graduates fill their place.

With limited time, resources and funding, how can school systems address the challenges of managing employees? This challenge is not an “HR problem.” It requires the support and experience of every leader in the district. It requires a **strategic approach to attracting, engaging, growing and retaining K-12 talent.**

KEY INDICATORS OF A STRONG STRATEGY

While this looks different in every school system, some key indicators of a strong human capital management strategy emerge as you look at the successes across many districts. Look for these numbers spotlighted with each school district’s story:

1. Building and maintaining a high-performing employee culture
2. Insights-driven decision-making
3. Unified view of recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining employees
4. Cross-departmental collaboration
5. Setting goals and measuring results using data and benchmarks
6. Employee engagement, efficiency and effectiveness

THE INNOVATORS: SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHO ARE LEADING THE WAY

From making data-driven decisions to launching unique programs for employee wellness, these districts are taking innovative and strategic approaches to human capital management.

	THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:
04 - BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS	1. 2. 3. 4. 6.
06 - ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2. 4. 5. 6.
08 - GREECE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	2. 5. 6.
10 - DEERFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT 109	2. 3.
12 - ALVIN IND. SCHOOL DISTRICT	4. 6.
14 - LEXINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT 2	4. 5. 6.
16 - VIRGINIA BEACH PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1. 6.
18 - EMPORIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1. 5. 6.
20 - SAYREVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2. 5.





THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 6.

BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS

An exemplary teacher in every classroom



STUDENT
POPULATION:
22,000+

LOCATION:
**OVERLAND
PARK, KS**



CERTIFIED
STAFF: **1,848**



Learn how this high-achieving district battles the teacher shortage through a retention-first strategy.

Known for its high academic performance, Blue Valley Schools earned first place as Niche Rankings' 2017 Best Places to Teach in Kansas. They're home to the 2017 Kansas Teacher of the Year, and their students outperformed nearly every education system in the world in math and science on the PSA exam.

As Chief Human Resources Officer Bob Kreifels tells it, "The primary root of our success is in the strength of our teaching staff."

Recognizing the impact of educators on students, one of the district's strategic goals is to have an exemplary teacher in every classroom. That means not only attracting top talent, but engaging, growing and retaining them.

"With the teacher shortage, retention is very important to us, and we want to keep high-quality and exemplary teachers if at all possible," Bob explained.

The district started with gathering data. They conducted interviews with principals, surveyed their exemplary teachers and conducted both "stay interviews" and exit interviews to learn how to make the district "irresistible."

"We heard loud and clear that support and professional learning were very important to our applicants," Bob said.

Gathering the data and implementing solutions is a cross-departmental, collaborative initiative. The Human Resources, Academic Services and Professional Learning teams work together to connect their recruiting, professional learning and retention strategies. They partner on initiatives like new hire onboarding and a two-year mentorship program for new teachers.

The district also monitors employee data – including recruiting and hiring trends, employee absences, professional learning and employee evaluations – in one human capital management software platform.

As Bob explains, "Connected systems help us have a broader view... It brings our professional learning, our curriculum and instruction and our hiring and recruiting processes together. Ultimately, all of those play a part in student achievement. Now, we have that data available and that data is connected. It provides a much richer conversation and ultimately leads to better instruction and better learning experiences for our kids."

Want to learn more about what fuels Blue Valley's success?

[Check out their case study](#) ••>



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

- 2.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Insights inform an instruction-focused approach to absences



ENROLLMENT:
51,000+

LOCATION:
ATLANTA, GA



CERTIFIED
STAFF: **3,046**



Collaborating around data-driven solutions reduced absences without decreasing professional learning.

“It was a win-win for everyone.”

Atlanta Public Schools saw their average fill rate rise from 79% with their previous absence management system to 96% with Frontline Absence & Time. But to take it a step further, they compared their data to national benchmarks from the Frontline Research & Learning Institute.

“National benchmarks of K-12 data are so important to us,” says Skye Duckett, Deputy Chief HR Officer. “It gives us a little more insight into how we’re doing compared to other people, not just how we’re doing compared to last quarter or last year.”

Administrators found that they directly caused or approved 32% of employee absences — 14% higher than the national average. Those professionally-related absences could cost the district \$1.8 million in substitute wages in just one year. Even worse, the lost instructional time was estimated at over 90,000 total student days.

Skye was not surprised to find that many absences were for professional development and other professionally-related

reasons. However, she was surprised by the short lead time. 55% of professionally-related absences were requested within 4 days of the absence – significantly lowering fill rates.

The Human Resources and Professional Development offices collaborated to identify solutions, including scheduling professional development opportunities for low-absence times of year. This collaboration led to a **10% decrease in PD absences**, and a **55% decrease on Mondays and Fridays**.

They also communicated the need for longer lead times to their teachers. As a result, 96% of the absences for the first PD series were entered two weeks in advance, with a **99% fill rate** across the district.

Through collaboration, benchmarking and data-driven insights, Atlanta continues to offer a high level of professional development without sacrificing educator time in the classroom.

“I am also pleased to report that our teachers really, really enjoyed the development that they received and the opportunity to collaborate with teachers on the same grade level in other schools,” Skye said. “It was a win-win for everyone.”

Want to learn more about Atlanta Public School’s PD and absence strategy?

[Read the case study >>](#)



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

- 2.
- 5.
- 6.

GREECE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Purposeful professional learning driven by data



ENROLLMENT:
11,000 +

LOCATION:
GREECE, NY



CERTIFIED
STAFF: **928**



Read how data and the district's strategic plan drive every professional learning activity.

“Our rule is to look at the data for professional learning and how we might use that to inform our work.”

A recent report from the Frontline Research & Learning Institute found that only 8% of professional learning activities are aligned to a data-driven format. But that is not the case in Greece Central School District.

“Our rule is to look at the data for professional learning and how we might use that to inform our work,” says Marguerite Dimgba, Director of Professional Learning.

At Greece Central, when proposing professional development activities, teachers must identify how those activities align to the district's strategic action plan. Then, following each activity, they're required to submit feedback.

“Anyone can count, ‘I had five people take this class for ten hours.’ That's not very meaningful data,” Marguerite says. “I wanted the whole picture. I wanted to look at the evaluation of the courses. I wanted to look at how that ties into teacher growth and professional learning.”

The work doesn't stop once a teacher completes a learning

activity. Greece Central actively works with teachers to ensure that professional development makes a difference in the classroom.

“I'm not evaluating you and your knowledge after having taken this course. I want to know, ‘Did this course have a change on your practice? Did it have any impact on student learning?’”

Because they're using an integrated software solution for professional learning and evaluations, Greece Central can provide targeted learning recommendations based on evaluations results. Plus, they can track and give credit for a wide array of learning opportunities, from staff meetings and shadow days to job-embedded collaborative learning like mentoring, professional learning communities, collegial circles, curriculum writing and group events, as well as outside learning such as conferences and college courses.

Although these types of learning aren't new to the district, Greece Central now has a way to ensure that such learning aligns with district goals.

“Professional learning must be very purposeful and tie back to our strategic plan.”

Want to learn more about Greece's data-driven professional learning strategy?

[Watch the video](#) ➔

[Read the case study](#) ➔



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

2.

3.

DEERFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT 109

Data-driven recruiting to find the best talent

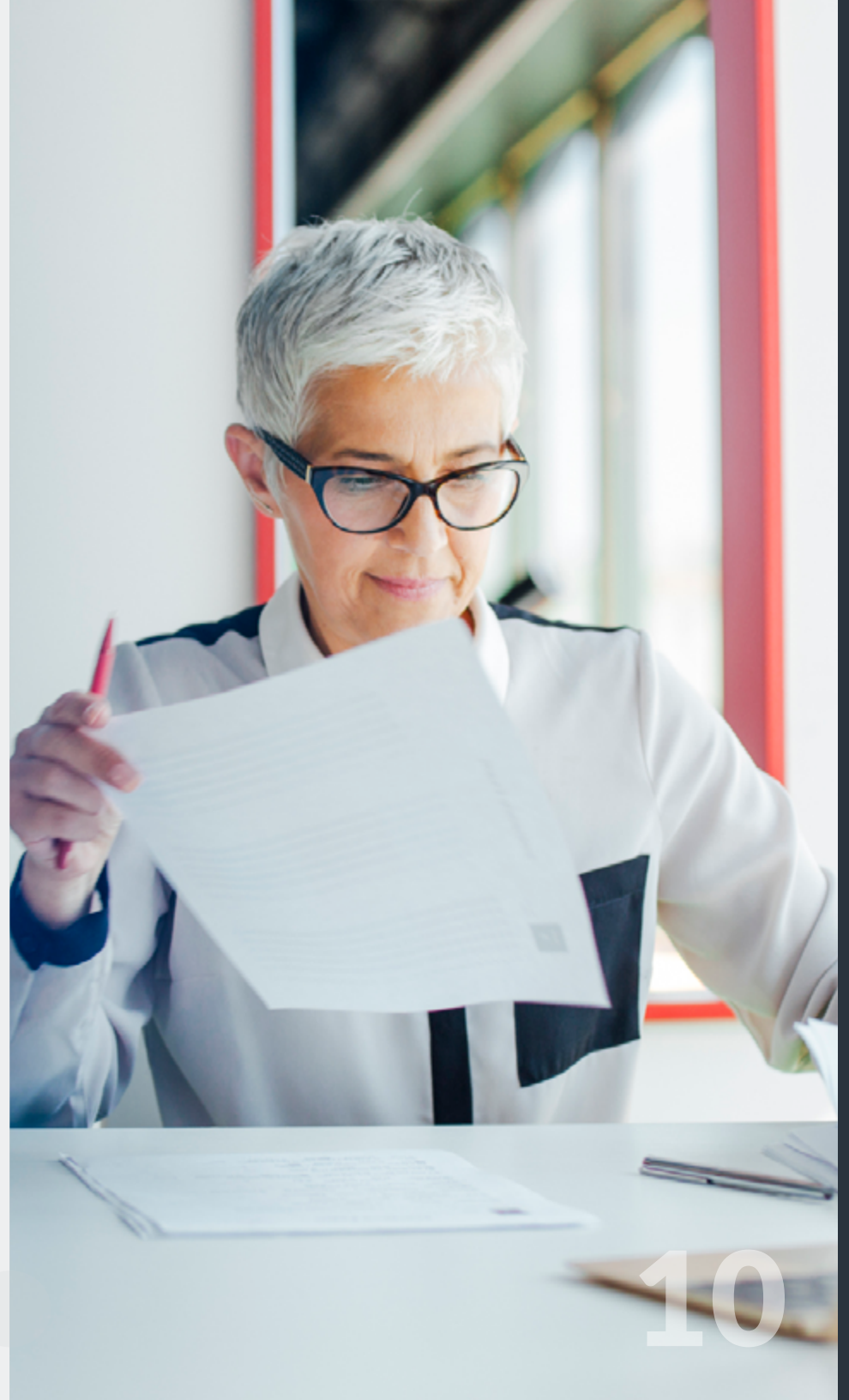


ENROLLMENT:
2,900+

LOCATION:
DEERFIELD, IL



CERTIFIED
STAFF: **248**



With easy access to data, Deerfield can make quick decisions about the best ways to reach candidates.

“We regard people as the single most important asset of our educational system.”

Deerfield Public Schools 109 has been around for more than 100 years — but that doesn’t keep them from innovating how they recruit the best educators.

Dale Fisher, the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, sees a clear relationship between student success and placing qualified educators in the classroom. And he uses data to ensure that best educators are hired at Deerfield.

Every candidate applies through Frontline Recruiting & Hiring, a web-based applicant tracking and proactive recruiting solution. That means Dale can report on trends, explore actionable insights and formulate data-driven hiring strategies.

“The data allows us to examine where our applicants are coming from. It’s helped us identify opportunities to expand.”

They’ve got it almost down to a science — and use that data to identify the best uses of recruiting time and money.

“We look at the data that’s entered into the system after we bring candidates on board. We’re able to track information in a seamless manner, look at the information we logged during the interview process and use it to help our teachers establish goals when they begin in the district.”

Using a connected platform for employee management unlocks key insights that drive District 109’s holistic strategy for recruiting, engaging, growing and retaining employees.

“We have a wealth of information that covers close to a decade now or more. All that information is at our fingertips... Now we can access that data and use it for informational purposes to guide how we educate our kids.”

Want to learn more about Deerfield’s recruiting strategy?

Watch the video [↗](#)



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

4.

6.

ALVIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Increased efficiency returns time to teaching



STUDENT
POPULATION:
22,000+

LOCATION:
ALVIN, TX



CERTIFIED
STAFF: **1,272**



Investing in electronic tools for managing special education means administrators and teachers can focus on the students.

Teachers and support staff have more time to spend on students.

Teachers are constantly challenged to do more with less. This is especially true in special education, with growing teacher/student ratios and limited resources. 74% of districts reporting a shortage say they specifically need more special ed teachers. Compound that with a 12% special ed teacher turnover rate – nearly twice that of general ed teachers – and you get a systemic challenge attracting, hiring, engaging and retaining special educators.

But if we can give them the tools to be more efficient, teachers are not only more effective, but morale improves as well.

That's just what Alvin ISD did. Alvin is a rapidly growing district with enrollment increasing by well over 1,000 students annually. Paper-based systems for ELL, 504 and RTI programs were burdensome on administrators and teachers alike.

Alvin found a solution in Frontline Special Ed & Interventions, an electronic, paperless system. Using Frontline saves time for busy teachers. Since working with hard-copies has been virtually

eliminated, they no longer need to pull folders out of a file cabinet to work on student records or put them back to secure them.

Case managers can quickly input data or check students' records to make sure that all their teachers have viewed the relevant documents and send reminders when needed.

Student accommodations, goals and behavior intervention plans are uploaded to the district's student information system, allowing the general education teachers easy access to information that will help them support their students. Teachers not only know they have a student with special needs, but also have all the relevant details and history about that student.

The group that truly benefits the most is the students themselves. Because staff have immediate access to accommodations, behavior plans, assessments and evaluations, they can provide direct support. If a student is struggling, it just takes a moment for a teacher to review their records and find out what instructional strategies would be most effective.

With increased efficiency and no hardcopy paperwork, teachers and support staff have more time to spend on students. As they realize how much using the online program helps them do their jobs, staff morale continues to improve.

Want to learn more about Alvin ISD's strategy to support special educators?

[Read the full story](#) →



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

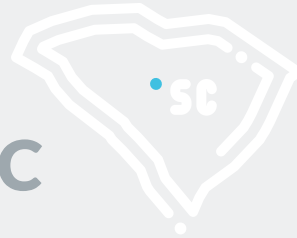
LEXINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT 2

Actionable data impacts educators and students



STUDENT POPULATION:
8,800+

LOCATION:
W. COLUMBIA, SC



CERTIFIED STAFF: **700**



By connecting instruction and evaluations to graduation rates, the district saw educator and student growth.

“By making it easier for teachers, they can focus on their students learning and growing.”

Lexington School District 2 focuses on using data to improve instruction. It shows in the launch of “MODEL” - a unique storage solution for organizing documents that allows district leaders to monitor the evaluation and growth of all teachers and principals.

Chief Human Resource Officer Angela Cooper explains: “We linked evaluation and growth of all of our teachers and principals to on-time graduation rates, which comes from getting aggregated data from instruction and then applying it to those particular teachers and the actual data in their classrooms.”

Using actionable data that connected instruction to graduation rates was a tremendous advantage. The district saw an increase in their graduation rate from 75.5% to 87.4% in four years, exceeding the 2017 state average of 84.6%.

The district also adopted the state’s new rubric, a significant shift. Because they’re using Frontline Professional Growth for both

professional learning and evaluations, they could break the new state forms into smaller pieces so that teachers can focus on their students.

“By making it easier for teachers to do, they can focus on their students learning and growing, and not going through a hoop to complete a form,” said Kevin Smoak, Coordinator for Evaluation and Effectiveness.

In the past, monitoring teacher growth for 50 first-year teachers took hours. Now, a single report shows all of that data immediately.

“It’s not a ‘gotcha’ moment,” Kevin says. “It’s about how can you learn from this and grow.”

Using a virtual learning platform, Kevin guides discussions about professional learning with teachers and their mentors across the district. Meeting virtually, they talk in small groups about the new rubric, areas of strength and ways to improve instruction.

Kevin plans to work with the Instruction department to expand the program to all teachers, providing actionable data district-wide.

Want to learn more about Lexington’s approach to evaluations?

[Read the full story >>](#)



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

1.

6.

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teacher agency, leadership and effectiveness



STUDENT
POPULATION:
70,000+

LOCATION:
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA



CERTIFIED
STAFF: **4,112**



A pioneering Design Fellows program lets teachers take the lead in their professional learning.

“The most powerful learning experiences that we can provide teachers are ones where they take an active leadership role in their own learning.”

Teacher agency, leadership and effectiveness go hand-in-hand. For educators to be effective in the classroom, they need to be engaged and empowered to drive their own learning.

A great example of this empowered learning is Virginia Beach City Public Schools. Through their Design Fellows program – a pioneering professional learning approach – they are putting teachers in the driver’s seat. The program started in 2015 with a cohort of 57 teachers, followed by 73 more the following year.

Janene Gorham, the Director of Teacher Leading and Learning, noted that empowering teachers was deliberate: “We brought in a group of teachers and said, ‘You’re going to be the leaders. You’re going to be the ones helping us set the direction.’”

Using principles of design thinking, design fellows were given freedom to innovate, try new ideas (sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing) and share results, all in a safe environment. Since 2015, the design fellows have helped Virginia Beach flesh out their definition of personalized learning and come up with specific strategies for how to implement it in the classroom.

The amount of ownership the design fellows took on surpassed the district’s expectations.

“They really, truly felt empowered and excited. Last year, we had them on a panel talking about their experience. Most of them said that this was probably the most profound learning experience they ever had.”

Want to learn more about Virginia Beach’s innovative approach to Teacher Leadership?

[Read the full story](#) >>



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

- 1.
- 5.
- 6.

EMPORIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Investing in employee wellness for greater retention



STUDENT POPULATION:
4,500+

LOCATION:
EMPORIA, KS



CERTIFIED STAFF: **403**



18

An employee wellness program reaped huge rewards — from increased retention to lower absence rates.

“What we heard was that they felt like we valued them as employees...”

According to Gallup, teachers have the second most stressful job, behind medical professionals like nurses and doctors. And as we all know, teacher shortages make it increasingly crucial to find new ways to recruit and retain educators. Emporia Public Schools decided to focus on employee wellness.

“Emporia is a middle-sized school district in the middle of east central Kansas,” shares Dr. Andy Koenigs, now Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources at Derby Public Schools. “It’s not an easy place to recruit people and so we started looking at ways that we could engage employees and let people know that we care about them as employees.”

A committee of interested employees led the research into an employee wellness program, surveying employees across the district. They found that employees really wanted a well-rounded program that touched on physical health, mental well-being, financial fitness and healthy eating — so they developed a program that met those needs.

Dr. Koenigs gathered district leadership support — and a budget of \$20,000 — by emphasizing the importance of investing in employees, as well as the potential savings. They launched the program with incentives for employees and lots of communication.

To track the results, the district collected a variety of data, including health risk assessments, insurance usage, staff survey feedback and employee absence rates. The results?

- 63% of employees exercised more regularly
- 31% of employees reported losing weight
- A decrease in high-cost insurance claims after just one year
- Total absenteeism rates decreased by 16%
- Absences due to illness decreased by 30%
- **A 2% reduction in employee turnover**

They saw an even greater reduction with first-year teachers: **retention went up from 69% to 86%** in the program’s first year alone.

And after requesting feedback, Emporia Public Schools found that employees were extremely satisfied with the wellness program.

“What we heard was that they felt like we valued them as employees.”

Want to learn more about Emporia’s wellness program?

[Read the full story](#) >>



THEIR STRATEGIC KEYS:

2.

5.

SAYREVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Leveraging benchmarks to measure results



STUDENT
POPULATION:
6,200+

LOCATION:
SAYREVILLE, NJ



CERTIFIED
STAFF: **377**



The superintendent and his team use national and state-level benchmarks to know how their district compares.

“Sometimes we can lose perspective, and the national comparison gives us perspective that we definitely need.”

Most school systems are talking about using data to drive employee-based decisions. But knowing what the data means and deriving actionable insights is a challenge all its own.

Sayreville Public Schools is stepping it up a notch by benchmarking their district’s employee absence data against not only their own data, but data in neighboring districts and even across the country.

“That comparison speaks volumes about staff attendance and really helps me in talking to my collective bargaining units,” says Superintendent Dr. Richard Labbe.

Dr. Labbe accesses these insights by leveraging the Institute Report in Frontline Absence & Time. This report aggregates data from more than 5,000 educational organizations, validated by the

Center for Research & Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins.

With benchmarking data at his fingertips, Dr. Labbe can see how Sayreville stacks up against other districts on everything from the number of employee absences, to the percentage of non-working substitutes, to their average fill rates.

Dr. Labbe believes these insights are critical because they enable his team to have critical conversations with building leaders, department heads and even the board.

“Particularly in a school district, the more your teachers, who are the most important factor in learning, are there with their students ultimately results in a greater amount of learning.”

Want to hear more about how Sayreville uses benchmarking?

[Read Dr. Labbe’s feedback](#) ➔



Get more stories of strategic human capital management in our Resource Hub at:

FrontlineEducation.com/StrategicHCM >>

Looking for a data-driven solution to help you attract, hire, engage and retain K-12 talent?

Learn more about the Frontline Insights Platform at:

FrontlineEducation.com/InsightsPlatform.

