

District Resources

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School districts are a foundational part of a community. Teachers are not only employed to present information to students, they are also advocates and representatives of the people in our communities. As such, they should be given the proper resources and means to meet the high expectations placed on them. As a superintendent, I would aim to provide resources that would reduce stress, offer community support, respect the time of our staff, and allow teachers to seek further personal development.

As part of the effort to reduce stress for teachers, I would reduce the problem of overcrowding by focusing part of the budget on opening more schools. Student-teacher ratios are a key part of how well a school can operate. Studies have found that a high student-teacher ratio does have a negative impact on academic success (Shirley, 2017). These conditions are detrimental to both students and teachers because it does not allow teachers to give the proper amount of attention to each of their students. Teachers who find themselves overwhelmed by overcrowding may also experience burnout, which can cause a high turnover rate. At-risk students are particularly vulnerable to these conditions as teachers will also have less time to evaluate and offer interventions that would help those students. In order to keep up with the demands of having a large number of students, teachers would be left with only the option of doing the bare minimum. The bare minimum does not foster positive learning environments that cultivate strong personal growth. For all of these reasons combined, it is best to keep the student-teacher ratio at a maximum of 20:1, as anything above that would be considered undesirable (Shirley, 2017). As communities grow, this would mean that more classrooms and more teachers will need to be provided to accommodate the growing student populations. Therefore, building more schools would not only give the teachers the space and time to do their best, it would also benefit communities by creating more jobs.

The act of benefiting the community is one that is reciprocal. It is known that parent involvement in student education has great positive impacts. It should be noted that part of what influences a student's success in that dynamic is that the student feels seen. By extension, parents and families want to feel seen as well, so that they feel that teachers have an understanding of who they are (Ridnour, 2011). This learning community, however, should not end with students and their families. In order for teachers to understand the needs of their students, they need to know the needs of the collectives they are coming from. To involve parents in education and provide jobs to the community alone is not enough. As such, another effort to improve the resources of teachers would be to establish community events that involve people from the entire community. This would aim to involve local businesses, families who are not directly involved with the district, and other professionals within the district's city. These events would not only focus on entertainment but would also serve as meeting times to discuss concerns. Through this, the community as a whole can feel listened to and can build interpersonal relationships with the teachers. Our teachers, in turn, can get to know the specific circumstances their students come from when they enter the classroom. They can then use this information to structure instruction around what the students need in order to focus, engage, and apply what they learn in class. This is especially true for classes that include community-based instruction. Overall, teachers receive support from parents and can help their students learn how to be active, positive contributors to their neighborhoods while also advocating for families as a whole.

Giving teachers an appropriate number of students and allowing them to grow with the help of these events can only be benefited from with proper training. This training should be provided by professional staff development days, but that is not the reality. Currently, administrators misuse these days more so to inform teachers on updated laws, instructions for

testing, or other information that does not pertain to improving instruction for better results (Mizell, 2010). There is also the issue of teachers using these days away from their students to catch up on work relating to them. Not only is this a misuse of time, but also a sign that teachers are not being given enough time to attend to the work required of them outside of the classroom. As such, I would seek to provide genuine professional development days that focus on how teachers can use the information gained about their students to improve instruction. Part of that training would revolve around how to assess data obtained about academic performance. Teachers must know how to analyze this information to know where the challenges lie for the students and how to adjust accordingly. Along with this, there would also be a focus on interpersonal development training. Teachers need to be able to collaborate and coordinate their curriculum with each other so as to give the students a well-rounded education. Because teachers have to work positively with coworkers, parents, and community leaders, training would be provided in order to know how to handle interpersonal conflict. Healthy communication, de-escalation of arguments, and cultural competency in conversations are all skills that will help our teachers maintain a welcoming environment that everyone can benefit from. These days would also be structured so that teachers can bring up any personal concerns of theirs in regards to the school as a whole. This would aim to address the need to use development days for work instead, or any other strain on resources that may affect the wellbeing of teachers.

Another resource that would be provided to teachers is the help of paraprofessionals. Teachers should not have to manage classrooms alone and would benefit greatly by having another paraeducator present to help with multiple tasks. It would primarily help teachers by allowing them to meet the needs of students who are learning at different levels (Mauro, 2021). This is because paraprofessionals can work with students who require more support while the

teacher can focus on students who advance at a different pace. This is especially beneficial to students with an IEP or otherwise unrecognized condition. That alone would also benefit students who would otherwise not be identified and would not otherwise receive the support they need. Accommodations can be best given when there is more than one person who is able to identify those needs. Paraprofessionals can also offer support by bringing in knowledge that a teacher may not have otherwise. In a world of rapidly advancing technology, this is especially useful. A classroom aide that is well-versed in technology can assist with setting things up, knowing how to use a digital resource, and most importantly, how to monitor student safety with technology. Many teachers are not digital natives and are unaware of how to keep students safe when it comes to internet access in particular. With a paraprofessional in the classroom, teachers can better monitor this resource while also having the ability to consult with someone that may better know how to make it safer. Another excellent benefit of giving teachers an aide would be that of potentially having a bilingual resource for English learners. It would be encouraged to seek paraprofessionals who speak languages that aren't spoken by teachers within the schools in order to serve students of those language backgrounds. This can improve communication with families as well as within the classroom. Overall, paraprofessionals help distribute the responsibility of student safety with the teacher so that the students can be better attended to.

Teachers hold many responsibilities that can become overwhelming when they do not have proper support. Providing that support would improve schools and, in turn, improve communities. As superintendent, my support for teachers includes not only the resources to learn how to grow but also methods of application. By involving communities, building strong interpersonal relationships, and providing aid, I hope to reduce the conditions that cause burnout and instead create strong learning environments.

## References

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