

SCHOOL CULTURE TOOLKIT

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR
SCHOOL AND NETWORK LEADERS



CULTURE IS KEY

Culture is a key ingredient in any school's success. A strong culture helps schools hire, develop, and retain more great teachers; avoid challenges with staff morale; and inspire students to reach greater heights. But we've found many charter schools are unsure where to begin in understanding or improving their culture.

This toolkit contains practical resources to help school and network leaders build stronger cultures at their schools—starting tomorrow—so that they become places where the best teachers want to build long, rewarding careers. Many of the tools were created and curated by TNTP, a national nonprofit with more than two decades of experience working with public charter schools and traditional district schools.

SCHOOL CULTURE OVERVIEWS

These resources provide a high-level overview of the most important elements of a strong instructional culture.

- ▶ [*Greenhouse Schools: How Schools Can Build Cultures Where Teachers and Students Thrive*](#): A report that explains the elements of school culture that matter most to effective teachers and make the biggest difference for students. Also includes a framework for giving teachers a voice in shaping school culture via annual surveys.
- ▶ [*Greenhouse Schools in Boston: School Leadership Practices Across a High-Performing Charter Sector*](#): A case study of charter schools in one city that have successfully incorporated the elements of strong instructional cultures.

RETAINING GREAT TEACHERS

A key part of sustaining a strong school culture is holding on to outstanding teachers who embody it. These resources can help school leaders do just that.

- ✓ [*The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools*](#): A report explaining why so many schools struggle to keep their best teachers—and what they can do about it.
- ✓ [*Keeping Irreplaceables in D.C. Public Schools: Lessons in Smart Teacher Retention*](#): A case study of one large school system's success in identifying and retaining its top teachers.
- ✓ [*Teacher Retention Roadmap*](#): A overview of retention best practices, with tools to support them (such as a retention planner).
- ✓ [*Retaining High Performing Teachers*](#): A presentation that shows how several school systems have implemented best practices for retaining top teachers.
- ✓ [*Long-Term Retention Planner*](#): A template that helps school leaders create long-term retention plans for their best teachers.
- ✓ [*Teacher recognition email templates*](#): Suggestions for short emails school leaders can send to recognize their high-performing teachers—a simple step that makes them more likely to stay.
- ✓ [*Avoiding Teacher Burnout*](#): A guide to help schools create cultures that minimize teacher burnout.



COMPENSATION AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Salaries and career advancement matter to teachers as much as they matter to other professionals—and both are an important part of how teachers perceive their school’s culture. Network and school leaders can use these resources to help ensure their compensation and career pathway policies reinforce strong cultures at the school level, and give their best teachers more opportunities to shape policies and practices beyond their own classroom.

- ✓ [*Shortchanged: The Hidden Costs of Lockstep Teacher Pay*](#): An overview of the pitfalls of many traditional teacher compensation models that largely ignore classroom performance.
- ✓ [Performance Based Advancement System](#) (Mastery Charter Schools): An example of an integrated compensation and career pathway system from one charter network.
- ✓ [ProComp: Compensating Top Teachers for Performance](#) (Denver Public Schools): An example of a performance-based compensation system from a traditional public school system.
- ✓ [Teacher Career Pathway](#) (Achievement First): An example of one charter network’s career pathway for effective teachers.
- ✓ [Leadership Development Program](#) (GreenDot): Another example (from another charter network) of a career advancement opportunity for teachers.
- ✓ [Leadership Initiative for Teachers](#) (D.C. Public Schools): An example of leadership and teacher career pathways from a traditional school district.
- ✓ [Career Progression Framework](#) (Pittsburgh Public Schools): Another example (from another traditional school district) of a teacher career ladder.
- ✓ [Teacher Leader Facilitator Application](#) (GreenDot): A sample application for a teacher leadership opportunity.

HIRING TOP TALENT

Every teacher hiring decision sends a message about what a school truly values in its culture. Those new hires, in turn, help shape the school's culture for years to come. Building a selection process around a clear vision and set of expectations can help schools hire the teachers who best fit their culture—and reduce morale and performance challenges over the long run. These resources can help school and network leaders take stock of the standards they want to set when hiring teachers and implement them consistently.

- ✓ [*Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms*](#): A report showing how hiring as early in the year as possible gives schools access to the highest-quality teacher candidates.
- ✓ [*Recruitment and Selection Guide*](#): A sample blueprint for a teacher recruitment and selection process—including resources to help clarify a school's vision and expectations—that can be customized to fit any charter network and school.
- ✓ [*Creating a Selection Model for Teacher Hiring*](#): A guide—with embedded resources—for building an effective selection model for a teacher hiring process.
- ✓ [*Conducting Effective Interviews*](#): A guide—with embedded resources—for interviewing teacher candidates.
- ✓ [*Using Demo Lessons to Assess Candidates*](#): A guide to incorporating demo lessons into a teacher hiring process.
- ✓ [*Teacher Recruitment Roadmap*](#): A roadmap for recruiting a pool of highly qualified teacher candidates (with several embedded guides on marketing, job posting, and recruiting in rural areas).
- ✓ [*Sample Job Description*](#) (Uncommon Schools): An example of a teacher job description from a charter network.
- ✓ [*Tips for Pitching Your School to Teacher Candidates*](#): A short guide to help individual schools develop compelling recruitment messages.
- ✓ [*Hiring Info Sessions*](#): A guide for planning hiring info sessions.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These organizations offer other useful perspectives on building school cultures designed to attract and retain top teachers:

- ✓ [The Association of American Educators \(AAE\)](#)
- ✓ [Teach Plus](#)
- ✓ [Educators for Excellence](#)



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