

# Report to Holyoke School Board Attracting and Retaining Teachers and Staff



Presented by Shared  
Leadership Groups

Written by Standards of  
Excellence Committee

Tiffany Watson- Chair

## Introduction

For the 2016-2017 school year, Holyoke School Board members issued a bold charge to the DACC/Standards of Excellence Committee.

The charge is something that is on everyone's mind who is involved in schools around the state: ***In light of the teacher shortage crisis, Holyoke School Board is committed to looking at new ways of teacher and staff recruitment and retention at the district and school level in terms of policies, fiscal incentives and***

***strategic processes that allow us to still fill positions.*** While Standards of Excellence has worked on this charge, the rest of our shared leadership committees and chairmen have been focused on coming up with new ideas, innovative approaches, and solutions to help meet this charge and to ensure that our kids, our students, have the best people possible teaching and preparing them for a productive future that will not only benefit our community, but our state, our country and our world.



The recommendations coming from the Shared Leadership Committees have been researched, studied and discussed in detail. While some of these recommendations are further along the implementation spectrum, some are brand new and a threat to established, although not necessarily the best, practices conducted by Holyoke School District over the years. At the same time, these recommendations to the District are also pragmatic and achievable for the board and District administration to support and attain. This report will also be a living document that will translate into superintendent deliverables, board goals, building principal goals and shared with a variety of other stakeholder in the community such as the Chamber of Commerce, athletic booster clubs, town council and county governments.

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas regarding this report or topic, please feel free to contact Superintendent John McCleary for more information. We are also always looking for community members to sit not only on Standards of Excellence but on other Shared Leadership groups as well. For this or any other topic, please feel free to contact us at 970-854-3634. Also, to follow the progress of ideas in this report as well as a number of other exciting things, please download our new Holyoke School District app on Google Play or Apple Stores.

Sincerely:

Standards of Excellence Committee

**Contents**

Executive Summary ..... 1

Background ..... 2

Substitutes.....5

Reworking Professional Development.....7

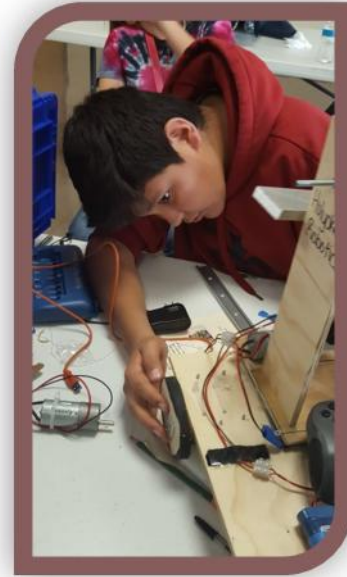
Fiscal Incentives.....9

Conclusion ..... 10



## Background

Teacher shortages are nothing new in Rural America. In some regions of America Districts have always struggled to find teachers. Furthermore, shortages have always existed in some areas while other areas often seem to have a surplus. The issue facing us now is that nearly every area in the state of Colorado has seen a decrease in teacher preparation programs. According to a recent article in the Durango Herald the “teacher shortage is becoming critical as one-third of Colorado’s 53,000 teachers will be eligible to retire in the next 5 years.” On average, Colorado is falling short of filling positions by about 1000 per year (Perkins). To compound the issue, Colorado colleges and universities are not producing nearly enough graduates to fill these upcoming and ever increasing gaps in the state’s teaching force. According to the Colorado Department of Education, program enrollments have dropped by 23% from 13,103 future educators in 2010 down to a scant 9,896 in 2016. Even worse are those who actually become teachers. The completer rate has also declined accordingly with only 3,274 actual first year potential teachers in 2010 down to 2,472 teachers in 2016.



There are a lot of factors that come into play when we talk about teacher shortages but there are a few distinct reasons that the teaching profession is in downward spiral. The bottom line is to students in college,” education careers seem difficult, low-paying and thankless. (CDE, 2016). This attitude manifests in three different areas:

**Perception:** Job is undesirable and teachers are undervalued by society.

**Compensation:** In many Colorado communities, the pay does not cover basic costs of living.

**Return on Investment:** Low salaries result in students struggling to pay back college loans.

These three factors add up to create the issue of a teacher shortage that we are facing today. With all of those challenges, however, the Standards of Excellence Committee feels that there are some specific things that Holyoke School District can undertake to ensure that we create a system that will attract and retain professionals who will have a positive impact on our children.

The Standards of Excellence Committee recommends the following goals and considerations to the Holyoke Board of Education for the upcoming school year with a target on implementing some of these goals as soon as possible- Substitute Teaching, Professional Development and Financial Incentives and Compensation.



## Substitutes

**Recommendation:** Promote and expand substitute efficacy through compensation, support, and other strategies.

Reasons for Recommendation:

1. Substitute teaching not only impacts the instructional program of our schools but also greatly affects overall student achievement and success.
2. In order for our students to be productive it is necessary that we, as a District, set teachers (including substitute teachers) up for success.
3. It is also important that Holyoke Schools attract and retain quality substitute teachers.



### Pay for substitutes:

Holyoke Schools recently upgraded the substitute pay schedule. We feel at this time that the policy is acceptable as it stands with the addition of a \$25.00 stipend given as compensation to teachers who cover classes for other teachers for each class period that they cover not to exceed the current substitute teacher rate.

1. Handbooks and Possible Mentoring Programs:  
We are asking the board to consider and explore each school having a sub coordinator who will have time at the beginning of each day to serve as a contact person for subs working that day. He/she would also serve as a mentor for any questions the sub might have and would provide a central contact area for picking up materials at the beginning of the day and returning them at the conclusion of the day. Furthermore, we are proposing that a Substitute Teacher Handbook be created for the purpose of assisting subs in finding answers quickly to questions that may arise in both schools including job expectations, professionalism, classroom management procedures, the discipline matrix, attendance, safety procedures, drill information and end of the day reporting. The current substitute teacher policy and pay scale will also be included as will an evaluation sheet to be

completed by both the classroom teacher and the substitute teacher and ultimately returned to the building principal.

2. Professional Development for Substitutes:

Professional Development sessions will be held at the beginning of each semester and will not exceed more than a half day. Included in those sessions will be discussion surrounding expectations, classroom management, schedules, etc. Each substitute teacher will also be given a Substitute Teacher Handbook to serve as a guide to being successful. The content will be arranged to assist subs in finding answers quickly to questions that may arise in both schools. At some point through the semester there will be an informal opportunity for subs to engage in a question/answer meeting with other subs and full time teachers as well.



*Holyoke School District teachers want to attract and retain substitute teachers so that we can make sure to have time to work on curriculum, with outside entities and collaborate with each other.*

*US teachers take off an average of 9.4 days each during a typical 180 day school year. By that estimate the average child has substitute teachers for more than six months of his/her educational career.*

## Reworking Professional Development

Recommendation: To build a District-wide curriculum that will be vertically aligned, clear, and be ready to hand new teachers that enter the District.

### Reasons for Recommendation:

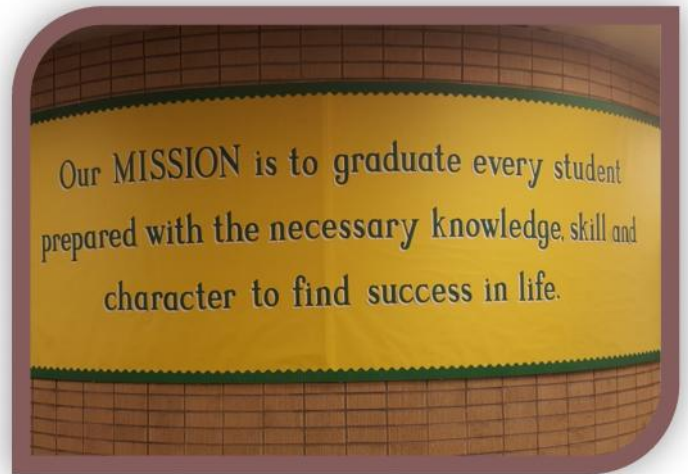
1. We do not have a District-wide curriculum currently
2. New teachers are left scrambling trying to learn what to teach and resources
3. Vertically align with Elementary, Jr. High, and High School to help fill gaps in student learning from one building to another

1. **Curriculum Advisor:** We need someone who can first reach out to the Core classes in the district and show how to build a curriculum. What does a curriculum look like, what goes into a curriculum, and how do you build it are all things we as a district need helping answering. We are currently looking at the Southeastern BOCES and Engage New York curriculums to determine which one may be best for us as a district.

2. **District:** Starting with the Core classes (Math, Science, Social Studies, English), we as a district need to build a curriculum so they know what their targets are and show how they are accomplishing them. Once Cores classes are done, we can move to electives and “special” classes. A clear set curriculum will give direction and allow teachers to focus on how to teach content rather than focusing on what needs to be taught.

There are gaps in our students learning currently, and if we vertically align our curriculum we can fill those gaps from grade to grade. We will know what the students previously will have been taught and build our curriculum off of that. Those gaps will diminish and allow for a whole child educational experience.

3. **New Teachers:** Currently, when new teachers come in they do not have a set curriculum to follow. They are left picking up the pieces from their predecessors





and making do with what they can. They often waste a year building out lesson plans, and learning what to teach. As a district, if we build out a curriculum for each class we teach, we have something to hand new teachers when they come in day one. The burden of hustling to learn what to teach is not there and they can focus on personalizing lesson plans, how to teach certain units, and configuring classroom things.

*“As a new teacher 3 years ago, I felt like I was thrown to wolves and left to fend for myself. I spent countless hours before and after school building lesson plans with little to no knowledge of really what I was doing. Having a set curriculum that I could be handed if I were new is a nice recruitment tool as well as a big stress reliever for new teachers to the district.”*

**Holyoke High School Teacher**



*Teaching takes a lot of time and is not just a normal work day. Many teachers spend countless hours at Holyoke giving our students the best education and experiences possible.*

## Fiscal Incentives

We recommend offering more fiscal incentives to enhance recruitment and retention at the district and school level.

The reason for this recommendation is to stay competitive with the minimum wage increase, attract new teachers, and continue to keep the quality of teachers we have.



The steps to use to achieve this recommendation involve

1. Continue to review the salary schedule for certified staff to keep up with increase of living costs
2. Maintain the 13 month teacher contract to help teachers new to the district transition financially
3. Revise the salary schedule of classified staff with the potential to incorporate health benefits
  - Increase paraprofessional salaries when they cover a class for a day in the role of a teacher. Currently paraprofessionals only receive an extra two dollars an hour for performing the task of a teacher. This is far below what the District pays for a teacher at an hourly rate.
  - Consider differing salaries based on experience and certification
4. Develop additional incentives (even if they are not fiscal)
  - Loan forgiveness/reduction programs
  - Incentives for certified staff to continue their education
  - Housing funds/assistance
  - Incorporate a cadet program to encourage students to enter the teaching field with opportunity for scholarship
  - Work with a rural education coordinator from Colorado colleges to encourage graduates to teach in a rural area
  - Set up a funded student teacher program with a commitment to teach upon graduation for a certain number of years
  - A loan forgiveness program could also help encourage younger teachers to stay with the district for longer periods of time. For example, the district could pay a certain amount on loans per year if a teacher remains in the district.

*We know of specific qualified and effective paraprofessionals who have changed jobs due to lack of benefits. For example, Holyoke School District lost an ESL paraprofessional at the junior/senior high school for three years. She was a wonderful asset to our school and students, but because of the low pay and lack of benefits, she took a job which she was offered at a local bank.*

### Conclusion

We would encourage the school board to continue to look at new opportunities to attract and retain high quality educators and that this will be even more critical for the upcoming year when the school district faces the challenge of hiring a new high school principal. Everyone knows that the role of a principal is dynamic, critical and stressful. We encourage the board and administration to seek out individuals who can balance the demanding complexities of the job as well as the need to make positive connections with students, parents and staff. We believe that a principal will directly impact the quality of work, instruction, curriculum alignment and personnel and job satisfaction.



Working in a school is a difficult and rewarding job. We believe that the recommendations presented to you are not the only strategies you may want to consider but they are the recommendations from our Standards of Excellence and reflect not only the culture of Holyoke but a lot of thought and dedication on the part of our committee. The challenges all school districts face in the upcoming years will present a variety of issues that will differ from District to District. However, by implementing innovative and competitive strategies now, we will be able to overcome the potential teacher shortages.