

State Policy Levers to Cultivate High

Capacity, Forward-Thinking Educators



Redesign teacher preparation to be competency-based and practice-embedded



Establish clear and consistent criteria for high-quality induction and mentoring systems



Incentivize educator leadership and personalized, competency-based practice



Launch digital systems to track educator growth and career pathways



Expand distributed leadership and team-based professional learning



Build flexible pathways for industry professionals to enter the educator workforce

Redesign teacher preparation to be competency-based and practice-embedded

Utah adopted new 2025 Teacher Preparation competencies, launched new Educator Preparation Program (EPP) reviews, and is scaling microcredential-based PD across disciplines.

The state is expanding microcredential-based professional development across disciplines, rolling out scalable content-specific pathways (like mathematics and science coaching), content-endorsement stacks, and badges through its statewide platform, to integrate competency-based PD into initial licensure, ongoing training, and license renewal.

British Columbia (Canada) restructured teacher prep to align with a redesigned curriculum through collaboration between universities and practicing teachers.

Universities collaborated closely with teachers to make courses and tools relevant to the new curriculum design.

Estonia updates teacher prep frameworks every 5 years and enables 50% of teachers to gain credentials while actively teaching.

Recent priorities included better supporting candidates in their practicum and requiring teachers to specialize in at least two subjects to better develop cross-cutting competencies.

Establish clear and consistent criteria for high-quality induction and mentoring systems

In 2022, **New Mexico** enhanced its teacher residency program to improve support, increase stipends, and promote diversity among candidates.

New Mexico expanded its teacher residency program, which ensures/mandates that aspiring teachers complete at least one year of residency before certification. The new legislation raised stipends for teacher residents, introduced stricter selection criteria, and provided professional development for mentor teachers.

Delaware: All new teachers participate in a multi-year induction program with trained mentors and leadership roles embedded in state policy. [4-year induction program](#)

The program's goals are to improve educator retention, enhance professional practice, support growth and reflection, and ultimately elevate student outcomes, with defined responsibilities at both state and local levels to guide coaches, coordinators, school leaders, and new educators.

Estonia standardized mentor training through universities and provides yearlong induction support for new teachers.

The two main teacher preparation institutions collaborated to design a unified training program for teacher mentors, ensuring consistent quality across the country. All mentors working with new teachers are trained through this program, creating a shared foundation of skills and expectations. Once in schools, new teachers receive a full year of structured induction support from a trained mentor.

Incentivize educator leadership and personalized, competency-based practice

Allegheny County, PA is working with educators and officials to redesign its early childhood system, focusing on smoother transitions to K-12 and a stronger ECE workforce.

Educators, administrators, and principals are working alongside district and state leaders to conduct a detailed benchmarking process that maps out the current landscape, evaluates strengths and challenges, and identifies areas for impactful change. Importantly, educators are not only helping shape this vision, but will also play a central role in putting it into action.

New Mexico launched a Career Lattice and wage subsidy program to support and retain early childhood educators through clear advancement paths and higher pay.

The lattice includes six levels based on specific credentials and core competencies. Once educators earn a certificate or associate's degree, they can pursue one of three specialized pathways: teacher, program administrator, or infant family studies. As they gain experience, their wages increase accordingly. To ensure competitive compensation, the state's Early Childhood Education and Care Department established a grant program funded by two permanent revenue sources, helping providers raise wages from a median of \$9.66 per hour to between \$15 and \$23 per hour.

New South Wales, Australia launched free, self-paced online PD for early educators with a leadership track rolling out in 2025.

The New South Wales Department of Education is partnering with TAFE, an Australian CTE provider, to provide the free program to every ECE educator.



Expand distributed leadership and team-based professional learning

Long Beach, CA collaborates with CSU Long Beach to align teacher preparation and induction with district priorities.

Long Beach has established a partnership with California State University, Long Beach to create a seamless connection between clinical teacher preparation, induction programs, and the specific needs of the school district. This collaboration ensures that teacher candidates receive practical, district-relevant training and support during their transition into the profession, enhancing teacher readiness and retention while addressing local educational goals.

In **Finland**, to support efforts in leading change, the government gives autonomy to school principals and encourages bottom-up innovation through a distributed leadership model.

Rather than relying on centralized control, the Finnish education system is designed to function on trust, granting schools and municipalities significant autonomy. Principals are therefore empowered to lead pedagogical changes that reflect local needs and values, supported by collaboration with teachers and local education authorities. The system allows principals to manage their schools' budgets, staffing, and curriculum adaptations to align with the national core framework while meeting the needs of their communities.



Build flexible pathways for industry professionals to enter the educator workforce

New Jersey's alternative teaching route allows CTE teaching candidates to establish their eligibility through a combination of verified employment and formal education experiences.

Teachers are then hired by school districts on a provisional license, complete a minimum of 50 hours of teacher training, and participate in a school-based training program to earn their full teaching credential.

Launch digital systems to track educator growth and career pathways

Boston Public Schools uses a market-based platform to track educator growth

BPS' evaluation and professional development (PD) platform. Currently, teachers, administrators, and some managerial employees use it for evaluations. All staff can browse PD opportunities, track in-district credits or submit to host a course.

Reflecting on the Levers

- Where do you see alignment between current Montana policies and these levers/examples?
- What levers and examples seem new or novel? What insights are you taking from them?
- Which examples might help you address the system challenges you've identified?

State Policy Levers to Join Forces to Ensure Learners Thrive





**Build cross-sector
partnerships to
identify and
develop
employability skills**



Switzerland students in apprenticeships take on real job responsibilities, submit final projects to industry panels, and progress to higher wages and degrees.



Switzerland operates what many consider the world's most effective apprenticeship model, with over two-thirds of students pursuing paid, career-connected pathways. Students split their week between work-based learning and school, developing real skills under trained mentors while earning wages that grow with responsibility. The vocational diploma is nationally recognized and opens pathways to both employment and applied or research universities.

Singapore introduces career counseling at age 12 and offers internships, immersive experiences, and industry-designed technical education through its Institute for Technical Education and polytechnic system.



Singapore's career pathway system integrates work-based learning, modular credentials, and future-oriented workforce planning through a highly centralized structure. At the Institute for Technical Education (ITE) and polytechnic institutions, students gain hands-on experience in simulated workplaces, from retail cafés to airplane hangars. Curriculum is co-designed with industry, and instructors complete regular externships to stay current.



**Expand access to
affordable,
high-quality
childcare to support
early readiness**



Washington, D.C. enacted pay raises to bring early childhood educator salaries in line with K-12 teachers.

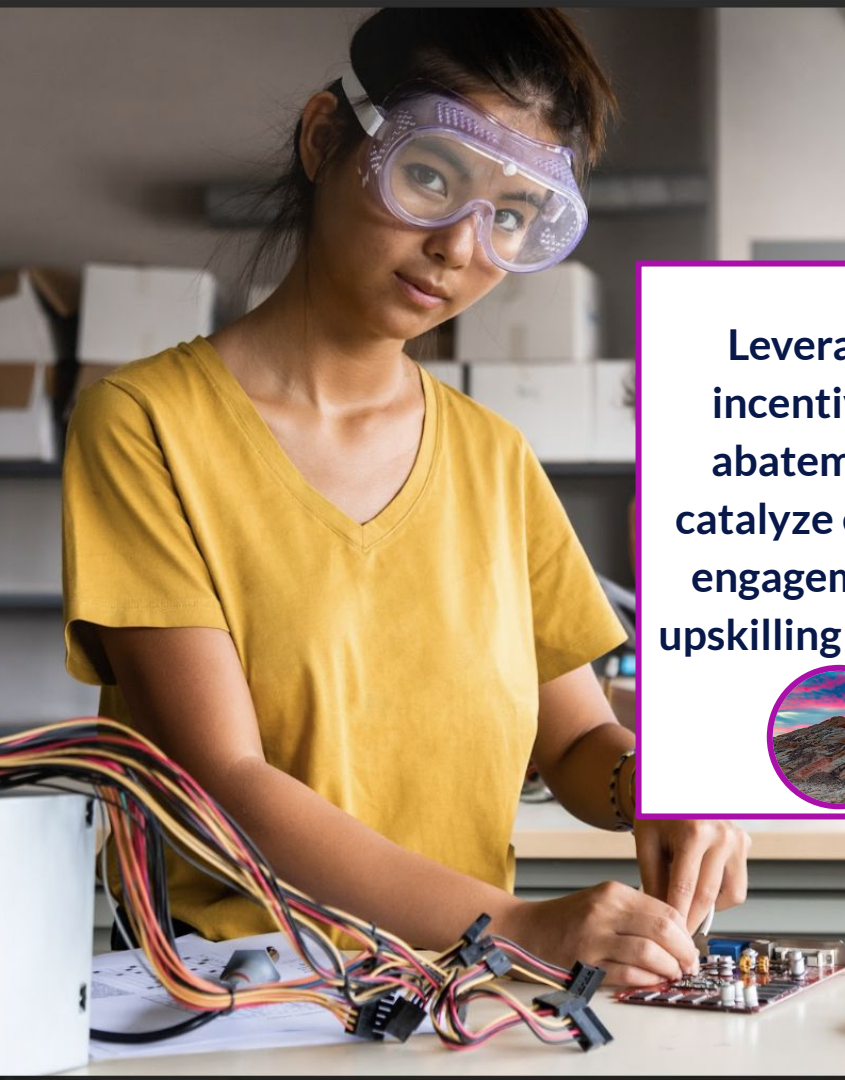


This effort recognizes the critical role early educators play in child development and seeks to improve retention, recruitment, and equity within the early childhood workforce by addressing longstanding pay disparities.

Florida's VPK program offers free, flexible prekindergarten options for all four-year-olds and is piloting an accountability system to support kindergarten readiness.



Since 2005, FL has provided free, half-day preK to all 4 year-olds through its Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program. Families can choose from a school-year option, a summer program, or specialized instructional services, and they have the flexibility to enroll their child with public, private, or specialized providers.



Leverage tax incentives and abatements to catalyze employer engagement and upskilling initiatives



Michigan Reconnect is a 2020 program that helps 25-year-olds without college degrees earn a two-year degree or skill certificate.



Michigan launched the Michigan Reconnect program in 2020 to support residents who are 25 years old and do not yet have a college degree. The initiative covers the costs for these individuals to pursue either a two-year degree or a skill certificate, aiming to improve their education and job prospects.



Singapore subsidizes work placements to encourage long-term employer engagement in training.



To strengthen the link between education and employment, Singapore offers subsidies for work placements, aiming to build a culture where employers take an active role in training talent. By lowering the initial cost barrier, the government incentivizes companies to host students or trainees, with the broader goal of shifting norms so that such placements become a standard, self-sustained practice.



**Create regional
career-connected
learning hubs to
leverage
partnerships and
technology that
bridge education and
workforce system**

Indiana's Workforce Cabinet coordinates cross-agency career education, ensuring all high school programs include real-world learning and college connections.

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Indiana created a Workforce Cabinet to oversee career education and coordinate across agencies including K-12 education, higher education and economic development. All programs for secondary students include capstone experiences with work-based learning and connections to Ivy Tech and Indiana University.

Donna ISD in Texas revamped its CTE programs to align with high-demand careers like SpaceX welding and drone piloting through strong employer partnerships.

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The district restructured its career and technical education (CTE) programs to align with high-growth, high-wage jobs, including accelerated welding tracks for SpaceX careers and commercial drone pilot training, using employer partnerships to design and deliver the programs.



**Integrate and
coordinate
community-based
learning
experiences and
student supports**



Vicksburg, MS schools collaborated with local partners to develop career academies and an entrepreneurship track that includes mentorship and student-led businesses.



The school district co-designed career pathways with local businesses and community members, including three career academies and an entrepreneurship pathway that supports student-led ventures through mentorship from civic leaders.

Minnesota's Whole Family Systems Initiative funds community-led efforts to connect early learning with broader supports for young families.



Launched in 2024, Minnesota's WFS Initiative focuses on building family-centered learning by integrating services through community-led collaboration. Funded by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, WFS provides grants to initiatives that connect education, health, housing, and economic support to reduce barriers for families with young children.