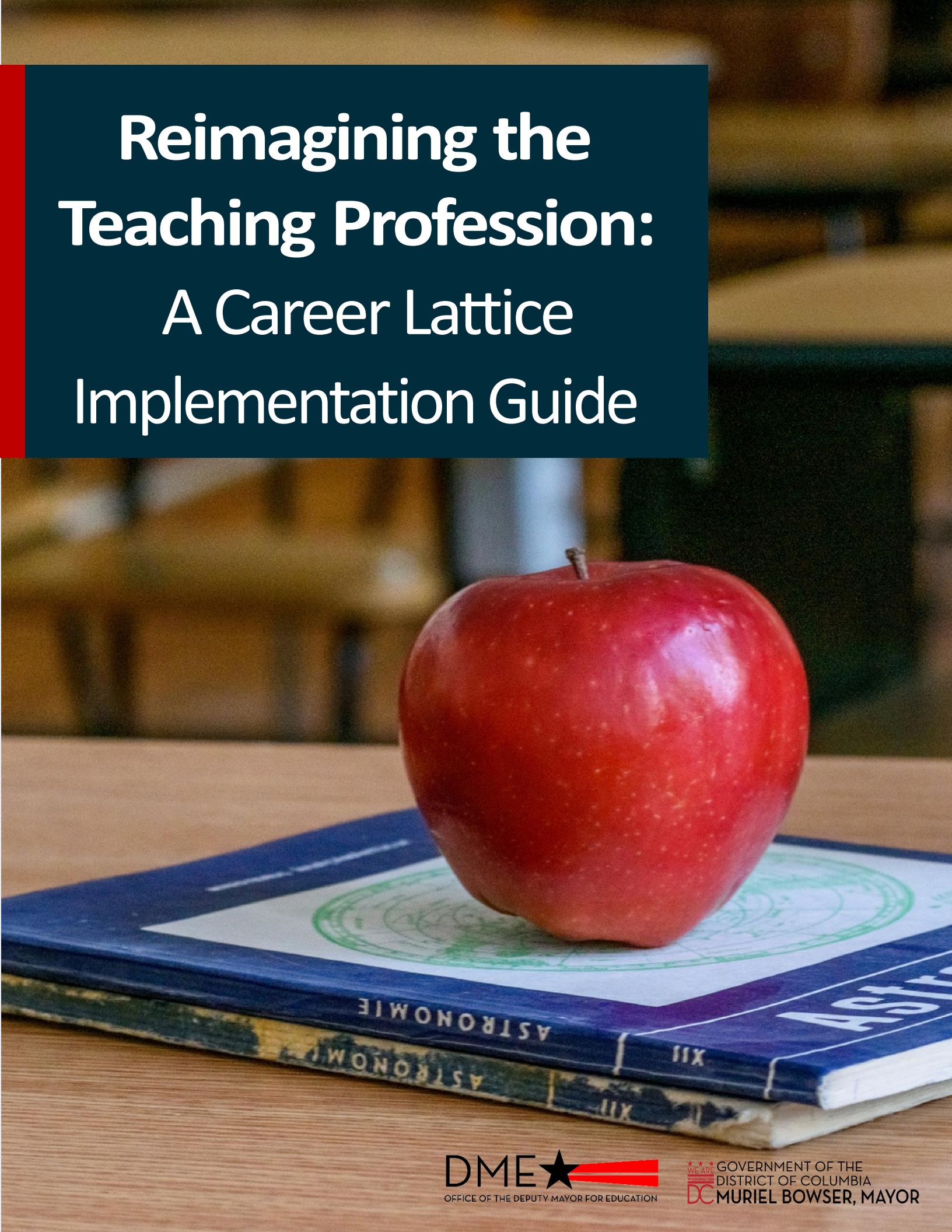
Reimagining the Teaching Profession:

A Career Lattice Implementation Guide



DME
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

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Scope, Purpose, and Acknowledgements

Applies to:

This document is intended to support educators, school and LEA leaders, and policymakers in the District of Columbia in their work. It serves as a comprehensive guide to implementing the Career Lattice framework, an innovative approach designed to transform the teaching profession.

Document Purpose:

By adopting a research-based, equity-driven approach, it addresses the multifaceted challenges faced by educators today. This guide outlines practical steps and strategies for creating an environment where teachers are empowered, supported, and given ample opportunities for professional growth and leadership by transforming how we prepare, support, and retain teachers, with a focus on the Career Lattice framework.

Acknowledgements:

We sincerely thank all members of the Career Lattice Working Group and everyone who participated in interviews. Their insights, dedication, and collaboration played a vital role in developing this document.

Introduction

Across the District of Columbia, we are at a key moment in public education. Our schools are filled with passionate, skilled educators who are deeply committed to their students—but too often they are asked to do too much with too little support. Early-career teachers are expected to master complex instructional demands with minimal preparation, while experienced educators are frequently left without meaningful opportunities to lead, grow, or be recognized for their expertise. At the same time, our students, especially those in historically underserved communities, deserve consistent access to excellent teaching and stable learning environments.

Over the past decade, The District has made remarkable strides in transforming itself into a highly desirable place to teach. Significant increases in teacher pay have positioned DC at the forefront of the nation, offering some of the highest salaries for educators. This financial boost is complemented by robust support systems such as the DC Reading Clinic and Science of Reading training, which provide invaluable resources and professional development opportunities for novice and career teachers alike. Strategic interventions such as High Impact Tutoring (HIT) have further bolstered teacher retention, especially after the return from the pandemic. The next phase of our work focuses on enhancing the preparation of new teachers, creating more leadership opportunities for seasoned educators, and employing strategic staffing to decrease teacher burnout. This is our opportunity to build on what we've already accomplished, effectively turning identified gaps into avenues for even more growth and advancement.

"The drawbacks of the profession are largely products of the design of the nearly ubiquitous "one teacher, one classroom" model of school. Over the last decade we have steadily raised our expectations for what teachers should do for students without changing how their work is organized. … The pervasive "one teacher, one classroom" model perpetuates inequity for our country's most marginalized students, blocking their access to opportunities for excellent teaching and learning. Furthermore, the stress, isolation, and lack of respect borne by all teachers fall more heavily on BIPOC educators, who are far too often asked to take on more than their fair share of work even as they are relegated to supporting roles with limited room for advancement."

– *CitySchools Collaborative, 2024*

The Career Lattice is our bold response to these challenges. Originally inspired by Pillar 2 of Maryland's Blueprint for Education and the work of Linda Darling-Hammond, the lattice has evolved into a comprehensive framework for reimagining the teaching profession in DC.

It is more than a ladder for advancement; it is a vision for a professional ecosystem where teachers are prepared like doctors, respected like lawyers, and recognized as the experts they are.

This implementation guide is designed to help policymakers, educators, and school and LEA leaders bring that vision to life. It outlines a research-based, equity-driven approach to transforming how we prepare, support, and retain teachers. At its core, the Career Lattice aims to:

- Provide early-career teachers with robust, clinical, on-the-job training and mentorship.
- Create clear, compensated pathways for experienced teachers to lead without leaving the classroom.
- Elevate the status of teaching as a profession worthy of deep respect, rigorous preparation, and long-term commitment.

We believe that by implementing the Career Lattice, DC can expand on its pioneering work in teacher pay and support to become a true Teacher Oasis — where educators thrive, students succeed, and the public sees teaching for what it truly is: a profession that shapes every other profession.

I. Research Foundation

Reimagining the Teaching Profession: A Clinical, Collaborative, and Career-Oriented Approach

The foundation of the proposed career lattice is rooted in a robust body of research that affirms the transformative power of clinical teacher preparation, structured mentorship, strategic staffing, and career advancement opportunities that do not inherently require leaving the classroom. These elements are not only essential for improving teacher retention and student outcomes, but also for elevating the teaching profession to one that is venerated, sustainable, and intellectually rigorous.

Research affirms our proposed approach. The foundation of the lattice is fourfold:

- Clinical teacher preparation,
- Structured mentorship and coaching,
- Strategic staffing, and
- Career advancement opportunities.

According to research, these elements improve teacher retention and student outcomes.

Clinical Preparation: A Proven Model for Teacher Effectiveness and Retention

Clinical models of teacher preparation, those that integrate coursework with immersive, mentored classroom experience, are widely recognized as the gold standard for preparing effective educators. Internationally, countries like Finland, Singapore, and Canada have adopted such models with remarkable success. In Finland, for example, all teachers complete a three-year, graduate-level program that includes a full year of clinical experience in professional teaching schools. These schools serve as hubs for innovation, curriculum development, and research, and are staffed by expert mentors who guide novice teachers through a structured induction process lasting two to four years. The result: less than 4% attrition and 98% of new teachers still in the profession after four years (Darling-Hammond, n.d.).

This model mirrors the medical profession, where residency is a critical phase of training. As the Learning Policy Institute (2025) notes, “teaching is a complex, performance-based profession,” and like medicine, it requires hands-on experience under the guidance of seasoned practitioners.

Many schools around the country have implemented systems like the ones mentioned above. The Atlanta Speech School exemplifies this approach domestically, operating as an “educational equivalent of a teaching hospital,” where lead teachers mentor assistant teachers while continuing to teach and plan.

Local programs in DC are already demonstrating the power of this model. These programs employ structured, clinical training models that are embedded in local schools, not just in university classrooms. These programs use a gradual release approach, pairing novice teachers with experienced mentors and providing ongoing coaching, professional development, and opportunities for reflection. The outcomes are compelling. For example, at DC Prep, during their first cohort of their Junior Teaching Program, eight out of ten of their first-year teachers who completed the Junior Teacher Program outperformed their new hire group according to teacher assessments regarding student academics. Additionally, 100% of their pilot (mentor) teachers have stayed in the teaching profession 4 years later.

Mentorship and Career Pathways: Supporting Teachers at Every Stage

Mentorship is a cornerstone of effective teacher development. Research shows that teachers who receive strong mentorship are more likely to stay in the profession and improve their practice over time. In high-performing systems, mentorship is not an optional add-on but a structured, sustained component of teacher induction.

These programs leverage structured mentorship models to provide novice teachers with valuable guidance and support. Ember Charter Schools in New York exemplify the benefits of professionalizing teaching by creating clear, rewarding pathways for educator growth. The school "sets out to professionalize teaching by empowering those closest to students to shape their learning and by building clear, rewarding pathways for educator growth" (Transcend, 2025). As a Senior Teacher at Ember Charter Schools notes, "the apprenticeship phase is so essential. You get to be with an experienced practitioner who leads their own space, grab their skills, and make them your own" (Transcend, 2025). This hands-on approach ensures that new educators are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the classroom. Ember Charter Schools have seen students significantly outperform state and district peers in ELA and math by the end of middle school, citing their mentorship model as the key factor for this success. Considering the similarities between New York and Washington, D.C., regarding urban challenges and educational needs, it is reasonable to anticipate that such models could achieve comparable effectiveness in D.C. schools.

Although not yet operationalized across the city, many schools have implemented mentorship structures that are already yielding positive results. For example, Friendship Public Charter schools are using mentorship as a piece of their program to further develop paraprofessionals who want to become teachers. These programs also emphasize that not everyone is suited to be a teacher. Rigorous standards and ongoing evaluation ensure that only those who meet high expectations remain in the classroom – only the best get to stand in front of students.

Strategic Staffing: Thoughtful Role Design

Strategic staffing is a crucial lever for ensuring that schools are equipped to meet diverse student needs while supporting educator growth and retention. By intentionally designing staffing models, districts can create opportunities for teachers to specialize, collaborate, and take on leadership roles without leaving the classroom. For example, multi-classroom leaders, instructional coaches, and interventionists can work alongside classroom teachers to provide targeted support, facilitate professional development, and drive instructional improvement. This approach enables schools to leverage the strengths of

experienced educators, distribute expertise more effectively, and ensure that students benefit from high-quality instruction across all grade levels.

In Washington, D.C., many schools have begun to experiment with flexible staffing arrangements that prioritize both student outcomes and teacher satisfaction. These models often include differentiated roles, such as mentor teachers or team leads, and allow for the integration of paraprofessionals and specialized staff into instructional teams. Strategic staffing not only helps address challenges like teacher shortages and turnover but also fosters a collaborative school culture where educators feel valued and empowered. As the District continues to build on promising practices, adopting thoughtful staffing strategies will be key to sustaining improvement and meeting the evolving needs of both students and teachers.

Career Advancement Opportunities

Career advancement opportunities are equally critical. As Linda Darling-Hammond and others have noted, one of the key reasons experienced teachers leave the classroom is the lack of pathways to grow professionally without leaving teaching altogether.

The proposed career lattice addresses this by creating roles aligned with other teacher-leader models such as In-Room Lead Teacher, Out-of-Room Lead Teacher, Instructional Coach, and Professor Distinguished Teacher. These roles, briefly, serve as in-classroom support, out-of-classroom leadership, whole-school instructional guidance, and professor roles in higher education respectively.

These roles allow educators to lead, mentor, and innovate while remaining connected to students and instruction. The American Institutes for Research defines teacher-leader models as “any program or policy that includes a career pathway for teachers, whereby excellent teachers are recognized for their performance and leadership skills” (Doyle, 2015).

These programs are characterized by a few key features: first, a strong emphasis on practical, hands-on experience; second, the presence of experienced mentors who provide ongoing support; and third, a structured induction process that extends over multiple years. These elements combine to create an environment where novice teachers can thrive, continuously improving their practice and building confidence in their abilities.

II. Understanding Retention and Turnover: Local Insights

Local Data: Retention, Satisfaction, and the Cost of Turnover

The District is well-positioned to explore new ways of implementing structured and supportive career lattices for teachers. It is also important to recognize the existing elements we have in place, such as competitive teacher pay and Grow Your Own (GYO) programs, which have contributed to improving retention rates. These strengths in the system provide a solid foundation to build upon, emphasizing the opportunities to enhance and expand our support for educators.

According to the 2024–25 OSSE Educator Retention Brief, 91% of teachers with more than 10 years of experience were retained, compared to 82% of those with 0–1 year of experience. These rates are higher than many urban school systems (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024), signaling a strong foundation. This gap, however, highlights the need for stronger support systems for early-career teachers.

There is a clear financial benefit to high teacher retention. Urban districts spend more than $20,000 per new hire, and teachers with little preparation are 2.5 times more likely to leave after one year compared to their well-prepared peers (Learning Policy Institute, 2024). Locally, “DC schools have experienced high rates of novice teacher attrition over the last five years. Because teachers improve most rapidly at the beginning of their careers, this so-called ‘revolving door’ effect is potentially harmful to students who are frequently taught by early-career teachers rather than more experienced teachers” (District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2025). This “revolving door” effect is particularly harmful in schools serving economically disadvantaged students, where teacher turnover is highest.

Diversity and the Teacher-to-Professor Pipeline

The career lattice is a tool for advancing equity and diversifying the educator workforce. Research from The New Teacher Project (TNTP) shows that students of color benefit significantly from having teachers who share their racial identity (TNTP, 2023), yet teacher preparation programs often fail to reflect the diversity of the student population. During SY 2023-2024, teachers employed in schools across DC identified as 57% Black, 27% White, 11% Hispanic/Latino, and 4% Asian, while students across DC identified as 62% Black, 21% Hispanic/Latino, 13% White, and 1% Asian (District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent for Education, 2024). These data show that Hispanic/Latino students are most underrepresented relative to the percent of teachers versus students in DC Public

and Public Charter Schools, followed by Black students. Even though the teacher workforce in DC is diverse, there are still gaps to close in educator representation.

Additionally, when we look at the university level, nationally, in 2022, only 7% of postsecondary faculty were black and only 6% were Hispanic/Latino. This underrepresentation highlights the critical need for pathways that support the advancement of educators of color in higher education.

The proposed Professor Distinguished Teacher addresses this shortage by creating pathways for experienced educators of color—who form a significant part of DC's veteran teacher workforce—to enter higher education as part-time professors. At the same time, they will remain within the PK-12 school system, serving as knowledgeable resources ready to support both teachers and students. This not only diversifies the pipeline but ensures that future teachers are trained by individuals who understand, and are connected to the communities they will serve.

"Professional teachers should have space for innovation... Teachers should not be seen as technicians whose work is to implement strictly dictated syllabi, but rather as professionals who know how to improve learning." – Linda Darling-Hammond (2009)

By creating structured roles, clear advancement criteria, and opportunities for leadership, the lattice affirms that teaching is a profession that demands expertise, reflection, and respect.

III. Support from the Field

To bolster the recommendations outlined here, it is critical to incorporate the perspectives and practices championed by educators themselves. Teachers' direct experiences and expertise are fundamental in developing policies that address their actual needs and challenges. Doing so ensures our proposals are rooted in everyday classroom realities.

Supporting New Teachers through Induction Programs

The Center for American Progress (CAP) suggests introducing programs that allow new teachers to enter the profession gradually. This includes options such as extended hands-on training, teaching residencies, and induction programs. Through these approaches, prospective and new teachers spend more time working alongside experienced educators,

observing strong instructional practices and classroom management, and receiving valuable feedback. Accordingly, we are advancing these recommendations by proposing the establishment of Teaching Fellows, In-Room Lead Teachers, and Out-of-Room Lead Teachers.

Establishing Professional Practices Schools

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) advocates for establishing professional practices schools that can serve as training grounds for new teachers. These schools aim to develop model programs, advance school restructuring efforts, and disseminate information on promising practices for teacher preparation. This initiative ensures that new teachers are well-prepared and equipped with the latest educational strategies. In response, we propose the Professor Distinguished Teacher model to ensure aspiring educators benefit from the knowledge of experienced teachers who remain active in their school communities, while the Teaching Fellow, In-Room Lead, and Out-of-Room Lead roles provide structured mentorship and leadership opportunities. Collectively, these initiatives are designed to provide an optimal training environment for new teachers and to foster additional opportunities for experienced educators.

Career Pathways and Leadership Opportunities

High performing nations cultivate specialized expertise among educators and establish clear pathways to leadership—often referred to as 'career ladders.' The National Education Association (NEA) recommends creating structured opportunities for advancement. Building on this recommendation, we have created a career lattice that defines such pathways. Teachers need meaningful leadership opportunities, and paraprofessionals should have supported routes to becoming teachers.

IV. Promising Practices in The District

This section outlines the ongoing efforts and initiatives in the District of Columbia aimed at improving educational outcomes through innovative practices that focus on training novice teachers and elevating experienced educators. Although different from our proposed career lattice, these initiatives demonstrate how recommendations can exist in different contexts while meeting established needs.

OSSE's High-Impact Tutoring (HIT) initiative accelerates academic progress and tackles long-standing opportunity gaps in student learning. This program meets students' needs with targeted, intensive tutoring.

According to research (District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, n.d.), HIT is recognized as one of the most effective tools for learning acceleration. By providing small-group, individualized tutoring sessions, this initiative creates more opportunities for each student to receive the attention and support necessary to thrive. Tutoring through this initiative boasts 2+ sessions per week, employing data-driven instruction in math and ELA, over a span of 10+ consecutive weeks. Grounded in trusted relationships with students and school staff, programs include high-quality curriculum and consistent, trained tutors, maintaining a maximum 1:4 tutor-to-student ratio.

These programs focus their attention on students who are furthest from opportunity. Professional development and customized technical assistance for HIT providers and schools will be provided to enhance the quality of these programs. Lessons learned from the District's initial three years of HIT implementation (2021-2024) will be leveraged to maximize impact.

Additionally, OSSE's initiative also benefits teachers by allowing struggling students to receive one-on-one or small-group assistance from trained tutors during class time, further closing the opportunity gap. By fostering strategic partnerships and prioritizing long-term outcomes, the HIT initiative stands as a cornerstone of the District's commitment to equitable education, reaching over 100,000 students by September 2024 across more than 100 community-based sites.

OSSE's Apprenticeship in Teaching program is an innovative initiative designed to remove the financial barriers to becoming a teacher in the District of Columbia. This program offers DC paraprofessionals a cost-free bachelor's or master's degree, flexible coursework offerings, and paid on-the-job learning. It aims to create strong novice teachers through practical experience in DCPS or DC public charter schools while allowing individuals to continue working in their current roles, maintaining their connections to the communities they already serve.

It features two core components: paid on-the-job learning in schools and cost-free coursework that leads to a degree and an OSSE Standard Educator Credential. During the day, apprentices work full-time in a DC school under the guidance of a mentor teacher, and in the evenings, they complete coursework leading to a bachelor's or master's degree at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC).

The Apprenticeship in Teaching Program offers two distinct pathways to a degree and eligibility for an OSSE standard teaching credential:

Bachelor's Pathway: Apprentices continue working full-time at their schools while completing coursework leading to a bachelor's degree. Upon graduation, apprentices will be eligible for an OSSE standard teaching credential in Special Education, Elementary Education, or Early Childhood Education. Candidates must be currently employed as a paraprofessional or providing high-impact tutoring at a DCPS or DC public charter school. The program length ranges from 2 to 4 years.

Master of Arts in Teaching Pathway: Apprentices continue working full-time while completing coursework leading to a master's degree. Upon graduation, apprentices will be eligible for an OSSE standard teaching credential in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Secondary English, and Secondary Math. Candidates must have a bachelor's degree but not yet the necessary requirements for an OSSE standard teaching credential and must be employed as a paraprofessional or providing high-impact tutoring at a DCPS or DC public charter school. This is a one-year program.

OSSE's Apprenticeship in Teaching Program is a promising example of pathways with on-the-job training to create strong novice teachers. It allows individuals who cannot take time away from their jobs to pursue a degree while working in schools, keeping them connected to the communities they already serve. This program ensures the development of a diverse and highly skilled teaching workforce in the District and was designed to respond to high-demand subject areas in DC LEAs. Additionally, it creates opportunities for effective and experienced teachers to lead, mentor, and impact the new generation of educators.

DCPS's Teacher Leadership Innovation Program offers a distinctive opportunity for teachers and school leaders to design and execute innovative teacher leadership roles. These roles allow a teacher to dedicate part of their day to teaching and the remainder to guiding other adults within the school environment. Tailored to meet the specific needs and priorities of each school, the TLI roles are crafted at the school level with the support of the central office.

One of the primary objectives of TLI is to provide the necessary training and resources for outstanding teachers to assume leadership roles that are both meaningful and sustainable. These roles expand the influence of excellent teachers to enhance student achievement across the entire school. Additionally, TLI aims to increase the frequency and quality of feedback teachers receive and encourage a culture of collaboration within the school. By offering a career pathway that maintains classroom involvement, TLI also seeks to improve teacher retention.

TLI Teacher Leaders spend at least 50% of their time instructing students in the classroom and the remainder of their time leading their colleagues. For fulfilling their TLI Teacher Leader responsibilities, they receive an annual extra duty pay stipend.

DC Prep's Junior Teacher Program was designed to strengthen the teacher pipeline by addressing two critical challenges: retaining top-performing educators and recruiting high-quality new teachers. By leveraging the expertise of veteran teachers, known as Pilot Teachers, the initiative aims to create a sustainable model where experienced educators mentor novice teachers, fostering instructional excellence and reinforcing a culture of high expectations and collaboration.

Structurally, the program offers a gradual on ramp for first-year teachers through co-teaching, mentorship, and layered support systems. Junior Teachers receive biweekly coaching, professional development, and access to a fully funded master's program leading to licensure. Over three years, participants transition from co-teaching to lead teaching roles, while Pilot Teachers gain flexibility and leadership opportunities. This approach not only enhances instructional quality but also builds a pipeline of mission-aligned educators.

KIPP Capital Teaching Residency is designed to train new teachers to maximize their impact within early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school classrooms at KIPP DC Public Schools. The program offers a full year of immersive learning under the guidance of a mentor teacher, providing professional development opportunities for both experienced and novice teachers. This program serves as an accessible and alternative pathway to entering a career in teaching.

The AppleTree Early Learning Teacher Residency Program offers a comprehensive, hands-on pathway for aspiring early childhood educators in Washington, DC. Residents are placed in pre-K classrooms at AppleTree charter schools, where they work alongside mentor teachers throughout the school year. As they gain experience, residents gradually take on increased teaching responsibilities, supported by the Every Child Ready curriculum. The program emphasizes professional growth through weekly development sessions and practical assignments that help residents deepen their understanding of early childhood education and demonstrate progress toward leading their own classrooms. Upon completion of the residency year, participants earn their teaching license and become eligible for tuition assistance to pursue a master's degree in early childhood education.

In the second and third years, residents may transition to lead teacher roles, accompanied by a salary increase and continued support from school staff. AppleTree fosters a culture of mentorship, with many former residents returning to mentor newcomers.

City Teaching Alliance aims to identify, prepare, and retain exceptional career educators who are empowered to make a lasting impact on student outcomes. The program addresses the national teacher shortage by preparing certified teachers through a comprehensive model known as the 5Cs: Coursework, Coaching & Mentoring, Clinical Placement, Certification, and Community.

- Coursework**:** Through university partnerships, fellows complete a master's degree focused on research-based instructional practices, integrating their coursework with classroom experience.
- Coaching & Mentoring**:** Each fellow is paired with an experienced coach who provides year-long 1:1 guidance, real-time feedback, and professional encouragement.
- Clinical Placement: Fellows undergo a full-year clinical experience in a public school, co-teaching with a skilled host teacher to bridge theory and practice.
- Certification: The program supports fellows through the certification process, removing barriers and helping them meet state licensure requirements.
- Community: The program fosters a sense of belonging through cohort bonds and a supportive alumni network, fueling resilience and retention in the profession.

This prioritizes well-prepared, committed, and certified educators – ultimately addressing the urgent needs of school systems and communities.

The City Teaching Alliance's approach aligns with the recommendations by providing on-the-job training for novice teachers, supporting professional growth of both early career and experienced teachers, and maintaining connections to the community. It exemplifies a pathway that combines practical experience with academic advancement, ensuring that new teachers are well-equipped to meet the demands of modern education.

Georgetown's Master of Arts in Education Transformation Teaching & Learning concentration

Students in the Learning & Teaching concentration are employed in a K-12 classroom in DC public or public charter schools as a paid instructional aide, working full-time as a co-teacher while engaging coursework on pedagogy, culturally relevant education and child adolescent development.

Throughout the program, students gradually assume greater responsibilities in the classroom, and receive direct, specific evaluation and feedback on their developing instructional practice through their coursework in Teaching Residency I and Teaching Residency II. The goal of working with a dedicated mentor teacher is to gradually ramp up skills, confidence, and efficacy by integrating the skills of teaching and running a classroom with the specific knowledge of how to guide aspiring learners daily. As full-time employees of DC public or public charter schools, Learning & Teaching students are paid and receive benefits through their schools.

V. Introducing the Career Lattice

New Architecture for the Teaching Profession

Changing the role of teaching as we know it requires us to rethink the ways that we organize people, time and money in both schools and larger school systems. A system wide shift could fundamentally change the experience of teachers – moving from a one size fits all approach to a collaborative team approach that allows educators to share the load of planning, teaching, and supporting their students.

The Career Lattice is not a ladder; it is a multidimensional structure that allows for both vertical advancement and lateral movement. The career lattice is rooted in the deep, unwavering belief that good teachers are crucial to the success of students and schools. The structure does not view remaining in or returning to the classroom as a step backward or a demotion, rather, it sees this transition as a valuable opportunity for experienced educators to bring their extensive knowledge and insights directly to the students, thereby enriching the educational environment and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Additionally, it offers teachers a chance to enhance their professional skills and advance their careers without stepping away from their primary role in the classroom. This duality ensures that educators can grow and develop while maintaining direct engagement with students.

Good teaching, much like brain surgery or arguing a precedent-setting case, requires precision, expertise, and a deep understanding of the intricacies of human development. It demands not only technical skills but also the ability to make quick, informed decisions knowing they can have long-lasting impacts on a student's life.

We believe in the transformative power of teachers and acknowledge that teaching is a challenging profession not suited for everyone. It requires a unique toolkit of knowledge,

patience, creativity, and dedication. Therefore, we believe that teachers need an environment that supports their work. While DC is already a leader in teacher compensation, this strength allows us to push boundaries and try something bold. This is where the career lattice comes into play.

Inspired by international models such as Finland's professional teaching schools and clinical master's programs, the lattice framework incorporates research-based practices into a unified system that still honors the complexity of DC's education landscape. This system integrates and operationalizes a wide range of concepts that guide our work and build on the transformative initiatives already underway in our city, such as OSSE's Apprenticeship Program, DC Prep's Junior Teaching Program, and many more.

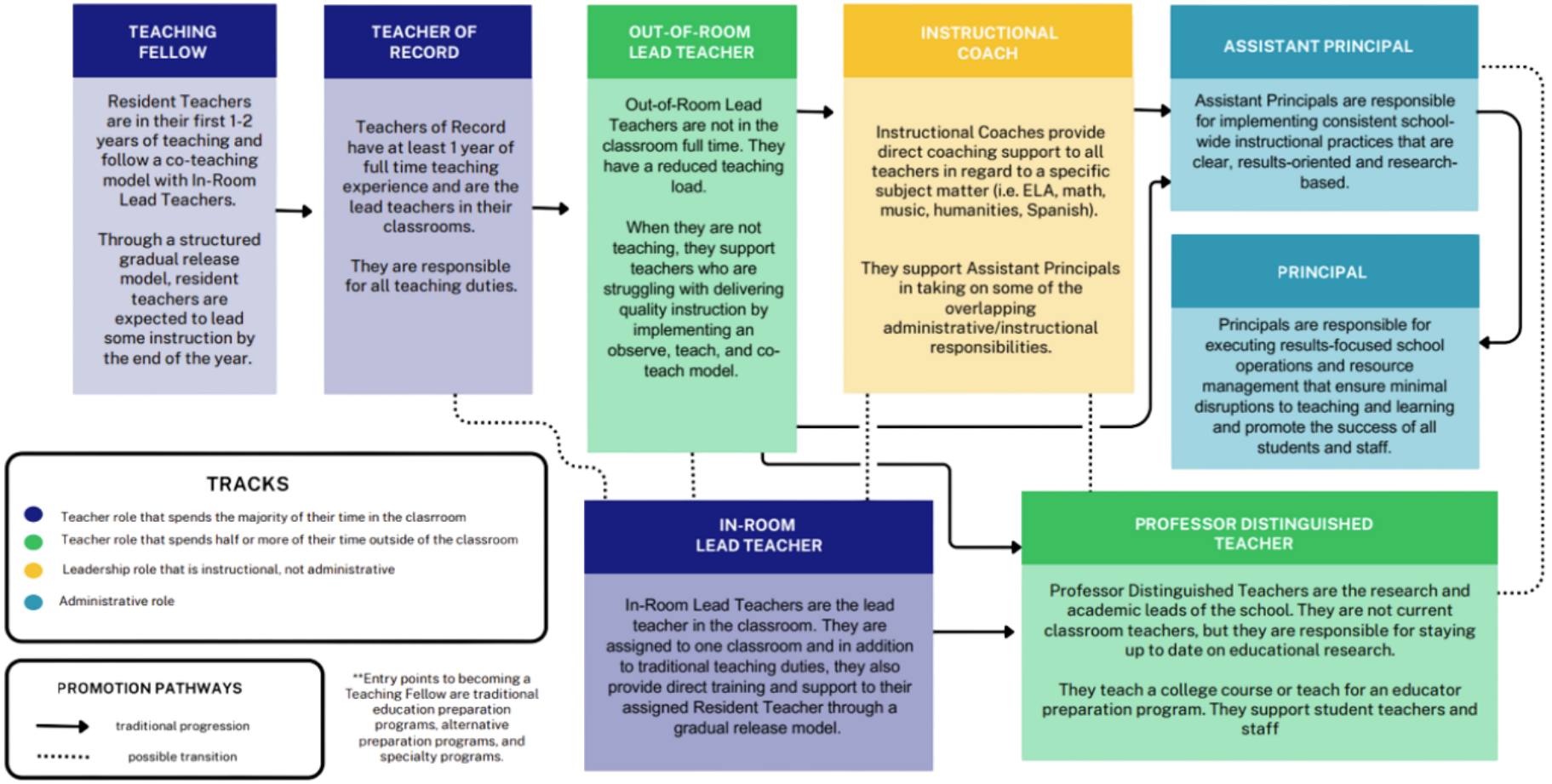
Defined Roles and Advancement Criteria

These defined roles serve as guideposts for what a career lattice could include, offering a vision of potential pathways and development opportunities. However, it is essential to note that the framework is not prescriptive; it provides examples of ways to address unique challenges and achieve desired goals related to teacher recruitment, training and development. This lattice can and should be adapted to fit the unique needs and contexts of individual schools or LEAs.

The lattice includes a series of clearly defined roles, each with specific requirements, responsibilities, and pathways for advancement:

A graphic of the lattice is below.

The District's Educator Career Lattice



Teaching Fellow

- **Purpose**: Entry-level role for new educators to receive intensive, clinical training.
- **Recommended Requirements**: DC teacher credential or eligibility, bachelor's degree
- **Advancement**: Promotion to Teacher of Record requires one year of full-time teaching, and rating of effective or higher on an evaluation of the LEA's choosing.
- **Support**:
    - Paired with In-Room Lead Teachers using a gradual release model
    - Instructional Coach and Assistant Principal provide school-wide support.

Teacher of Record

- **Purpose**: Full-time classroom teacher responsible for student instruction and planning
- **Recommended Requirements**: One year of full-time teaching experience, effective or higher rating on an evaluation of the LEA's choosing.
- **Advancement**: Eligible for Lead Teacher roles after three years of effective or higher evaluations and completion of approved coaching training
- **Support**:
    - Out-of-Room Lead Teachers support if needed.
    - Instructional Coach and Assistant Principal provide school-wide support.

In-Room Lead Teacher

- **Purpose**: Mentors novice teachers and supports instructional improvement while continuing to lead a classroom
- **Recommended Requirements**: 3+ years of effective or higher on an evaluation of the LEA's choosing, and complete mentorship training
- **Support**: Instructional Coach and Assistant Principal
- **Advancement**:
    - Eligible to become an Instructional Coach after demonstrated proficient in a specific content area based on a content assessment and received a rating of highly effective on most recent evaluation.

- Pathways to Professor Distinguished Teacher after 7+ years of teaching and 5+ years with an effective or higher rating on evaluations.

Out-of-Room Lead Teacher

- **Purpose**: Supports instructional improvement across classrooms
- **Recommended Requirements**: 3+ years of effective or higher on evaluations, and complete approved coaching classes
- **Support**: Instructional Coach and Assistant Principal
- **Advancement**: Eligible for roles such as Instructional Coach or Assistant Principal.

Instructional Coach

- **Purpose**: Content-specific expert supporting teacher development
- **Recommended Requirements**: 3+ years of teaching experience, demonstrated proficiency in a specific content area based on a content assessment, completed approved coaching classes, highly effective on most recent evaluation as a Lead Teacher
- **Advancement**: Pathways to Assistant Principal or Professor Distinguished Teacher

Professor Distinguished Teacher (PDT)

- **Purpose**: Veteran educators who contribute to teacher preparation at the university level
- **Recommended Requirements**: Terminal degree, 7+ years of teaching experience, and 5+ years of effective of higher on an evaluation of the LEA's choosing within the past 7 years
- **Impact**: Diversifies the educator pipeline, elevates teaching as a scholarly profession, and prepares future teachers to work in DC schools

Research and practice have shown that teachers become significantly more effective after their initial years in the classroom (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). By mandating this experience, we ensure that lead teachers possess the proficiency and expertise necessary to mentor and guide their peers effectively. Additionally, aligning the experience requirement for lead teachers with that of instructional coach roles emphasizes the importance of parity between these positions. In Washington, DC, the standard requirement for becoming an instructional coach is also three years (*Instructional Coaches Position Description | DCPS*,

2012), reflecting the belief that this timeframe is crucial for developing the skills needed to excel in such a role.

At best, each role would include compensated opportunities for continuing education, such as National Board Certification and advanced degrees, reinforcing the lattice's commitment to professional growth.

VI. Expected Outcomes

Transforming the Educator Workforce and Student Experience

The implementation of the Career Lattice is a strategic investment in the future of education in DC. Grounded in research and informed by local data, the lattice is designed to produce measurable improvements in teacher preparation, retention, professionalism, student outcomes, and educator wellbeing.

Stronger Teacher Pipeline

The lattice strengthens the educator pipeline by addressing the root causes of early-career attrition and underprepared teachers:

- **Clinical Training for Novice Teachers**: Teaching Fellows receive immersive, mentored training that mirrors medical residency. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, "Giving teachers a strong start through mentoring and induction programs has been identified as a successful approach to keep more novice teachers in the profession, and, when done well, early career mentoring can help new teachers become more effective" (Drake, 2023).
- **Reduced Turnover**: Teachers with little preparation are 2.5 times more likely to leave after one year. The lattice's structured induction reduces this risk, saving districts over $20,000 per new hire (Learning Policy Institute, 2024).
- **Equity in Preparation**: Economically disadvantaged students are less likely to have experienced teachers. The lattice ensures that all students have access to well-prepared educators (District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2024).

Elevated Professionalism

While those within the educational community understand that teaching is an intellectually rigorous and demanding profession, it is often undervalued by the broader public (Kocon,

2017). This misconception that "anyone can teach" diminishes the true complexity of the role. Contributing to this devaluation is the historical and ongoing reality that teaching is a profession predominantly occupied by women, leading to societal biases that undermine its importance and difficulty (Kocon, 2017).

- **Recognition and Leadership:** Roles like Lead Teacher and Professor Distinguished Teacher affirm that teaching is a career worthy of advancement and scholarly contribution. Experienced and effective teachers possess a wealth of knowledge that can support novice educators. By creating a system that acknowledges their expertise and provides opportunities for their voices in leadership, the lattice fosters recognition and professional growth.
- **Respect and Autonomy**: Surveys show that teachers want to be treated as professionals with decision-making power and opportunities for growth. The lattice responds directly to these needs (EmpowerEd, personal communication, 2025).
- **Diversity in Academia:** The PDT role creates pathways for educators, particularly Black women who make up a large percentage of teachers in DC but are underrepresented in academia. This addresses long-standing disparities in faculty representation and provides valuable opportunities for professional growth.

Improved Student Outcomes

Students benefit directly from the lattice's impact on teacher quality and stability:

- **Effective Instruction**: In many programs, teachers trained through clinical models that involve on-the-job training outperform their peers in student achievement. As stated by Mathematica (2004-2010), programs that provide novice educators with:
    - carefully selected and trained full-time mentors;
    - a curriculum of intensive and structured support that includes orientation, professional development, and weekly meetings with mentors;
    - an emphasis on instruction, with opportunities to observe experienced teachers;
    - formative assessment tools that enable ongoing evaluation of practice and constructive feedback; and
    - outreach to school-based administrators to enlist their support for the program see positive impact on student achievement, even if not within the first two years.

- **Stable Learning Environments**: Reducing turnover—especially in high-poverty schools—creates continuity and trust. The lattice helps close equity gaps by ensuring that all students have access to experienced, well-supported educators
- **Strategic Staffing**: By positioning experienced teachers as mentors and instructional leaders, the lattice ensures that students benefit from the expertise of the entire teaching team. Additionally, providing teachers with more time to collaborate ensures a shared responsibility for student success and fosters a culture of continuous learning that benefits both students and teachers.

Enhanced Teacher Wellbeing & Addressing Burnout and Isolation

The Career Lattice is designed to improve instructional outcomes and to support the holistic wellbeing of educators. Teacher burnout, stress, and dissatisfaction are well-documented challenges in the profession, and the lattice directly addresses these issues through structural and cultural shifts.

Research reveals that teachers across experience levels consistently cite burnout, lack of support, and excessive workloads as main stressors (Doan et al., 2024).

This is part of our attempt to respond to those challenges by:

- **Reducing Load for All:** When teachers become lead teachers, they receive reduced teaching loads to allow time for coaching and collaboration. Meanwhile, novice teachers are not burdened with planning on their own as they navigate the complexities of becoming a teacher. Teachers of record, along with their peers, are given more time to collaborate with other teachers. A reduced load for all revolutionizes teaching by breaking the isolation of the one teacher one classroom model, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment for educators.
- **Increasing Collaboration through Flexible Scheduling**: Roles like Teaching Fellows, In-Room Lead, and Teacher of Record will have more time for collaboration. Out-of-Room Lead Teacher and Instructional Coach include dedicated time for planning, mentoring, and team-based instructional design, reducing the isolation of solo teaching. Additionally, the lattice's differentiated roles allow for varied work structures that accommodate personal and professional needs, which is especially valued by veteran teachers. High impact tutors can also support the lattice by providing targeted assistance to students, ensuring that teachers can focus on broader instructional goals and collaborative efforts.

Valuing Teacher Voice and Expertise

In DC, middle-career teachers have expressed a strong desire for more transparent advancement pathways and greater recognition of their expertise and professionalism. Additionally, teachers across the country with three to nine years of classroom experience have lower morale than their peers (Will, 2024).

A defined pathway for career progression and an increase in trust and respect within their professional community are essential for sustained engagement and dedication from all teachers. This feedback underscores the importance of fostering an environment where teachers not only see a future for themselves within the profession but also feel their expertise and contributions are genuinely recognized and appreciated.

The lattice affirms these priorities by:

- **Creating Leadership Roles Without Leaving the Classroom**: Teachers can advance to Lead Teacher roles while remaining connected to students.
- **Recognizing Expertise**: Advancement is based on demonstrated effectiveness, not just tenure or credentials, reinforcing a culture of merit and respect.
- **Professional Development Pathways**: Teachers are supported in pursuing National Board Certification, advanced degrees, and coaching credentials, with compensation aligned to these achievements.

Improving Mental Health and Job Satisfaction

Teachers want more collaboration, mental health days, strategic and stable staffing, and appreciation for their work.

This model supports these needs by:

- **Stabilizing School Staffing**: By reducing turnover and creating retention-focused roles, the lattice promotes year-to-year consistency in school teams.
- **Creating a Culture of Appreciation**: These new roles elevate educators as thought leaders and community anchors, reinforcing their value to the profession and the public.
- **Reducing the "Revolving Door" Effect**: Teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to leave due to lack of support. The lattice's mentorship and leadership structures, combined with opportunities for strategic staffing, provide the scaffolding needed to retain teachers in these critical environments.

VII. Implementation Guidance

Operationalizing the Career Lattice in DC Schools

The Career Lattice is designed to be adaptable across DC's diverse education landscape, including DCPS and charter schools. This section provides practical guidance for implementing the lattice, including staffing structures, financial strategies, and policy considerations.

This model is not a mandate for all schools or Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Instead, it is a recommendation – a flexible framework – that can be tailored by schools or LEAs to meet their specific needs and contexts. It provides a range of ideas and strategies to address unique challenges and achieve desired goals. Crucially, this model is designed to complement and enhance existing initiatives, supporting better coordination and integration rather than replacing or eliminating current efforts.

A. Guiding Principles for Implementation

Before diving into sector-specific guidance, these principles should anchor all implementation efforts:

1. **Equity and Access**
   Ensure that all students—especially those in marginalized communities—benefit from highly prepared and supported educators.
2. **Flexibility and Sustainability**
   Adapt the lattice to fit different school and LEA needs while maintaining fidelity to its core components: clinical on-the-job training, career advancement, and embedded and compensated mentorship.
3. **Financial Feasibility**
   Reallocate existing resources strategically (e.g., IMPACT bonuses, performance pay, stipends, and professional development funds) to fund new roles without increasing overall budgets.
4. **Alignment with Policy and Collective Bargaining**
   Work within existing frameworks for licensure, evaluation, and union agreements while advocating for necessary adjustments.

B. Steps to Take for Successful Implementation

1. School administrators will create and staff the Teaching Fellow role as the entry point for novice educators and paraprofessionals transitioning to teaching.
2. School administrators will stand up Lead Teacher roles (In-Room and Out-of-Room) with explicit duties, time allocations, and stipends or salary increases.
3. School leadership teams will embed team-based strategic staffing – including Fellow Teachers, In-Room Leads, Teachers of Record, Out-of-Room Leads, Instructional Coaches, paraprofessionals, and HIT tutors – to minimize the effects of isolation that happens with the "one-teacher-one-classroom" model and increase with collaborative delivery.
4. School leadership or LEA leadership will ensure alignment with licensure and Science of Reading guidance where applicable
5. Assistant Principals, Instructional Leads, and/or Instructional Coaches will design and configure evaluation and feedback systems that can be implemented to support new positions
6. School administrators and/or financial officers will fund the lattice through smart reallocation (e.g., performance pay, Title II-A, PD set-asides), avoiding supplanting and negotiating union implications.

C. Teaching Fellow Guidance

This role is designed to attract:

- Paraprofessionals who are excellent in schools but can't enter currently available traditional or alternative pathway programs such as the OSSE Apprenticeship Program. This will be a clinical bridge. *
- Novice teachers (traditional or alternative program completers) who prefer a mentored, sustainable on-ramp and don't want to immediately lead a classroom.
- Career changers and former or currently HIT tutors ready for a team-based clinical year before full responsibility.

*For candidates without a bachelor's degree, leaders should consider enrolling them in OSSE's Apprenticeship in Teaching pathways (Paraprofessional or HIT Pathway) and simultaneously deploying them in Fellow-like responsibilities while they progress. The OSSE program is a no-cost bachelor's pathway with paid on-the-job learning and structured mentoring. However, it is important to note that currently OSSE's

Apprenticeship in Teaching program has more demand than available slots. Although many paraprofessionals and career-changers note that cost and time are barriers to obtaining a bachelor's degree, there are currently no other pathways for paraprofessionals to transition into the teaching profession without obtaining a bachelor's degree. This highlights an opportunity for DC to create more accessible and supportive pathways for paraprofessionals and HIT tutors to enter the teaching profession.

Position structure:

- Year-long clinical assignment with gradual release: Observe → Co-plan/co-teach → Lead segments → Lead full days → Sustain.
- Paired to an In-Room Lead Teacher, supported by their In-Room-Lead Teacher and the schoolwide Instructional Coach.
- Protected time weekly for coaching, feedback, and planning (minimum 7-9 hours/week).
    - 5 hours of planning time to be shared with their In-Room-Lead
    - 2-4 hours of time with the instructional coach or another team member
- Evaluation: Narrative, observation-based, developmental; focus on competencies aligned to LEA framework (IMPACT-aligned for DCPS where feasible).

D. Implementation

D1. Principals, LEA leaders, or School Administrators will establish roles and design HR and staffing setups.

Step 1 — Determine classification and compensation options. See your LEA's relevant pay scale progression.

Step 2 — Draft job descriptions and competencies. Align to your LEA's evaluation model and with OSSE licensure and Science or Reading requirements.

Step 3 — Secure approvals and confirm funding sources with your LEA's finance department.

D2. School Administrators and Instructional Coaches will develop mentorship structures (Lead Roles)

In-Room Lead Teacher

- Load: 70–80% instructional with 20–30% mentoring/co-planning

    - When the gradual release model is implemented, In-Room-Lead Teachers will gradually step away from leading their class one day a week. This day will allow Teaching Fellows to lead instructional classroom duties one day a week and will allow In-Room-Lead Teachers one day to plan, grade, observe, or pull students who need more one-on-one support.

- Stipend: $7–$12K; funded via PD/Title II-A or performance pay reallocation.

Out-of-Room Lead Teacher

- Load: 50% instructional; 50% cross-classroom coaching, modeling lessons, leading data cycles and team collaboration

  Stipend: $7–$12K; funded via PD, performance pay reallocation, or Title II-A allowable use (mentoring, recruitment/retention, job-embedded PD).

Instructional Coach

- Regular observations and feedback cycles to support content areas and improve school wide teacher development

D3. School Administrators will create strategic staffing & teaming structures

Build “Teaching Teams” per campus:

- Teams may be comprised of Fellows and In-Room Leads, Teachers of Record, Out-of-Room Leads, and High Impact Tutors.

D4. School Administrators and Instructional Coaches will create evaluation & development plans

- Fellows: Use a developmental rubric aligned to evaluation teaching standards; track competencies and artifacts (lesson plans, video reflections).
- Leads: Align coaching quality to “Instructional Coach” / LEAP Leader guidebooks; include teacher feedback quality, frequency of cycles, and impact metrics.
- Teachers of Record: Continue standard evaluation processes.

D5. Principals will redesign finance and funding systems that support new staffing structures

Shift funds from performance-based compensation to cover costs while preserving highly effective and effective recognition through decreased stipends, base adjustments, or other mechanisms.

1. Title II-A (ESSA): Allowable for residencies, induction/mentorship, coaching, PD, and stipends/sub coverage. Ensure supplement-not-supplant and reasonableness/allocability checks.
2. PD set-asides (district/LEA): Redirect PD funds to coaching funds
3. Substitute funds: Redirect sub funds to coaching funds given Fellows, Lead Teachers, and Coaches could cover classes instead of substitute teachers
4. Discretionary operating funds: Shift dollars from contracted tutoring vendors
5. Philanthropy: Seek funders already supporting teaching pilots

Illustrative pilot budget (per school, annual):

- Fellow options:
    - DCPS:
        - 3 Fellows x ET-15 salary of 68,577
        - 3 Fellows x EG-4 salary + fellow stipend
    - Public Charter Schools:
        - 3 Fellows x average salary of year 1 teachers
        - 3 Fellows x average salary of a year 1 paraprofessional + a fellow stipend
            - If the fellow has been a paraprofessional for more than one year, add the fellow stipend to their current salary
- 3 In-Room Leads (current teacher salary) × $7,500 stipend = $22,500
- 2 Out-of-Room Leads (current teacher salary) × $7,500 stipend = $15,000

E. Measuring Performance

E1. KPI Dashboard

- Retention: Fellow → Teacher of Record conversion rate; year-over-year retention of Leads and Teachers of Record.

- Instruction: Walkthrough ratings; coaching cycles completed; Science of Reading fidelity checks (where applicable).
- Student: Small-group progress, standardized test scores, class grades
- Equity: Distribution of experienced teachers across grades, races, school locations, and leveled classes

E2. Feedback Mechanisms

- Fellow reflections (bi-weekly) and Lead coaching logs (weekly).
- Mid-year pulse check (workload, collaboration time, respect/professionalism signals); triangulate with more formal surveys where available.

VIII. Contact information

City Teaching Residency

Contact Information
Anthony Dorado Executive Director anthony.dorado@cityteachingalliance.org

Georgetown University Teacher Residency Program

Contact Information
Dr. Sabrina Wesley-Nero Director, MA in Education Transformation (202) 687-1503 Sabrina.WesleyNero@georgetown.edu

OSSE's Apprenticeship in Teaching Program

Contact Information
To find a list participating schools and learn more, visit https://osse.dc.gov/page/osse-apprenticeship-teaching

DCPS Teacher Leadership Innovation Roles

Contact Information
To learn more about this role, visit https://dcps.dc.gov/page/teacher-leadership-innovation-tli

High Impact Tutoring Initiative

Contact Information
To learn more about this initiative, visit https://osse.dc.gov/node/1700656

DC Prep's Junior Teacher Program

School Name	Contact Information
DC Prep	**Mary-Frances Smyth** Senior Director of Talent mfsmyth@dcprep.org

Friendship Public Charter Schools

School Name	Contact Information
Friendship Public Charter Schools	**Dr. Raymod Ivey** Educator Pathway Director RIvey@friendshipschools.org

AppleTree's Early Learning Teacher Residency

School Name	Contact Information
AppleTree Schools	**Sarah Galloway** sarah.galloway@appletreeinstitute.org

KIPP Capital Teaching Residency

School Name	Contact Information
KIPP	**Ashley Carter** Program Director (202) 301-5019 Ashley.Carter@kippdc.org

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