

# Teacher Policy Recommendations to Improve Teacher Sustainability

**Educators for Excellence-Los Angeles**  
June 2024



## Introduction

According to the [2024 Voices from the Classroom Survey](#), only 16% of educators would recommend the teaching profession to a friend or family member. This shocking statistic speaks to an enduring call to action for those in education: we need to make the teaching profession more desirable and sustainable. Or as Misti Kemmer, 4th Grade Teacher in Los Angeles Unified School District, put it: “Why would teachers tell other people, ‘Come do this job where you have too many responsibilities and you don’t get paid enough?’ That doesn’t make sense.”

And so, with this broad question in mind, a group of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) educators gathered during the 2023-2024 school year to dig into research, gather input from their colleagues, and propose teacher-crafted policy recommendations to improve the sustainability of the teaching profession. In this report, Educators for Excellence - Los Angeles is proud to share the proposals authored and crafted by Los Angeles educators to answer the question: what do teachers think would make their profession more sustainable?

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Through independent and collaborative research, teacher-led focus groups, and conversations with districts across the country, these Los Angeles teachers have suggested three areas of focus, with specific policy shifts in each area, that if addressed would improve teacher sustainability. This report will briefly showcase these areas of recommendations and policy proposals within each to serve as one way that teachers' voices can be referenced and heard regarding the policies that impact their day-to-day work.

# Process



In the Fall of 2023 E4E-LA conducted a member survey asking LAUSD teachers what two issue areas E4E-LA should prioritize in the coming school year. Overwhelmingly, “Making the profession more sustainable” was the first choice of the 200+ respondents. This survey prompted the question: what makes teaching rewarding, dynamic, professional, and sustainable for education professionals? Why do teachers leave the classroom, and, more importantly, why do they stay? With these questions in mind, E4E-LA sought to convene a Teacher Action Team that would meet during the 2023-2024 school year to conduct focus groups, provide feedback, and make recommendations on what specific policy changes they believe would make the biggest impact on sustainability in the teaching profession.

Teachers were provided a small stipend for their weekly participation in the Teacher Action Team. Both E4E members and non-members were invited to join. The only requirement for Teacher Action Team membership was that they were a current LAUSD employee, and have experience working as a classroom teacher.

The Teacher Action Team met weekly from November 2023 - March 2024. In that time they conducted independent research on innovations in teacher sustainability, held anonymous focus groups with over 60 current LAUSD teachers, and ultimately crafted a series of policy recommendations found in this report.



## About Educators for Excellence-Los Angeles

Founded by classroom teachers, Educators for Excellence (E4E-LA) is a movement of 25,000 educators, including nearly 6,000 members in Los Angeles, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. We work together to identify issues that impact our schools, create solutions to these challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that give all students access to a quality education.

# Recommendations



## POLICY RECOMMENDATION ONE

### Compensation and Workload

In [Voices from the Classroom 2023](#), an annual poll of teachers from across the country, the second highest reported reason for planning to leave the profession was that teachers take on too many responsibilities for which they are not compensated - including preparing for lessons and completing grading at home. And, among teachers who work in schools with high percentages of students from low-income homes, where turnover is particularly high, this was the most popular reason for wanting to leave—even more so than wanting a higher salary. In the same survey, 87% of teachers reported that their role had too many responsibilities, making it difficult to be effective.

#### Increase Planning Time in the Workday

Increasing the time allowed for planning during the workday reduces the amount of unpaid time spent outside school hours, and increases the professionalization of the teaching role. In a survey conducted by the Center on Education Policy, teachers selected “more planning time during the school day” as one of the main changes that districts could take to help them most in their day-to-day teaching. The [Center for American Progress](#) details examples of different daily elementary and secondary school schedules that have taken steps to increase common planning time during school hours to improve collaboration and teacher mentorship.

#### Increase the number of paid teacher prep days

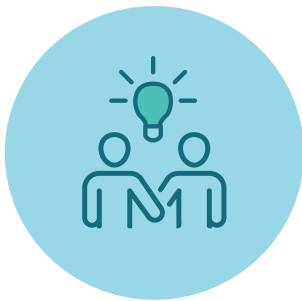
Another method to increase collaboration and increase the amount of time that educators can prepare to practice their craft is to increase the number of paid non-instructional days before the term begins. This would increase the amount of time teachers can prepare to teach the syllabus, increase the number of collaborative meetings between teachers, and allow teachers to set up their classrooms for incoming students. One elementary focus group member from Region South shared, “I feel like I never have enough time to fulfill my job requirements at work, and feel like I have to take my work home.” One way that school districts increase the average number of planning time minutes that teachers receive without lengthening the work day is by providing more paid teacher workdays before each term, or more frequent non-instruction days during the school year.

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"I'm not just a teacher. I feel like a counselor, an attendance monitor, a data analyst, a copy repair person, a babysitter. Sometimes those jobs come first."

## Increase the number of on-site professionals: psychologists, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals

Besides creating more time for teachers to accomplish their work, increasing the number of support staff at a school site would reduce the number of additional responsibilities that teachers take on during their workday. One middle school focus group member from North Region said "I'm not just a teacher. I feel like a counselor, an attendance monitor, a data analyst, a copy repair person, a babysitter. Sometimes those jobs come first." The [Next Education Workforce Center at the University of Arizona recommends](#) creating 'teams' of support for students and for teachers: "Just as other professions include a diverse range of professionals with varying levels of knowledge and skill, paraeducators work to complement the work of professional educators." Investing in additional support staff creates a collaborative professional environment for teachers, and more dedicated and intentional support for students.



### POLICY RECOMMENDATION TWO

## Mentorship and Leadership

In addition to looking at current hurdles that make the teaching profession feel unsustainable, the Teacher Action Team considered how to maximize the components of the teaching role that make the role feel dynamic, professional, and sustainable. As members of focus groups and members of the Teacher Action Team highlighted, strong relationships with colleagues, parents, and students make the profession rewarding. As a focus group member put it when asked why they've stayed in the classroom: "It's the community. Having a strong sense of community means you can bounce ideas off each other. You feel like you're not alone. Same thing with the students and families. I feel like a valuable member of the community. Trust makes it sustainable." Improving and increasing opportunities for educators to seek out or provide mentorship, and professionalizing mentorship opportunities for middle-career teachers would improve teacher retention.

## Increase Access to Existing Teacher Mentorship Programs

The Teacher Action Team detailed the ways they have sought out and received mentorship in their roles, and one point became clear: there's no straightforward path to receiving mentorship. Members shared that they received opportunities through friends, word of mouth, or simply being in the right place at the right time. This highlights a disparity in mentorship offerings - many teachers are unsure how to find ongoing and middle-career mentorship. By creating a central database of both internal and external mentorship opportunities for entry-level, middle-level, and senior teachers all teachers would have access to the opportunities available, and create deeper equality in the process of creating mentor relationships.

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## **Improve Accountability for Mentorship Programs**

In addition to improving institutional equity, the quality of mentorship programs is often left unchecked. One focus group member shared that their mentor never met with them, and another shared that their mentor’s coaching was unhelpful and inaccurate. Creating an evaluation process for mentors would increase the quality of support and relationships, and professionalize the experience for both mentors and mentees.

## **Increase the number of co-teaching classrooms**

The biggest commitment a district could make to increasing prep time, collaboration, and professional opportunities would be to increase the number of co-taught classrooms. According to the [2024 Voices from the Classroom Survey](#), 81% of teachers favor or are open to the idea of team-teaching. The ASU Next Education Workforce provides one [multi-educator model](#) that creates leadership and mentorship roles for senior teachers, learning opportunities for entry-level teachers and pathway positions for paraprofessionals to all plan, teach, and learn from and with each other.



### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION THREE**

## **Evaluation and Professionalism**

Both in focus groups and within the Teacher Action Team, teachers highlighted how their daily work in the classroom felt disconnected from what they would be evaluated on at the end of the year. This disconnect creates a sense of distrust and resentment toward evaluations. Teachers agreed, however, that there needed to be a better way for teachers to be assessed. They want to see high-performing educators rewarded and want to set a high bar and standard for the teaching profession.

## **Implement Collaborative Student Learning Outcomes**

Student Learning Outcomes or SLOs are individual learning goals set for students by their teachers based on the previous year’s performance. SLOs require planning time before the school year begins and are collaborative - they require meetings between teachers and principals to understand the whole student. According to [EdSource](#) SLOs are proven to increase performance: “Research by the Community Training and Assistance Center, showed that elementary, middle, and high school students whose teachers had high-quality SLOs outperformed their peers on state and national standardized tests over a four-year period.” Relying on teacher expertise to set learning outcomes for students improves professionalization for teachers, and playing a more thoughtful role in their own end-of-year evaluation benchmarks allows teachers to have more control and equity in their own evaluation process.

## Increase Classroom-Level Formal Leadership Opportunities

Unlike many professions, teachers see little opportunity for advancement in their careers besides moving into administrative positions. Many districts have begun to create in-classroom leadership roles and programs that have created leadership and promotion pathways for teachers while continuing to keep high-quality educators reaching students. **Opportunity Culture**, a formal teacher leadership model adopted by districts across the country highlights that schools that have adopted a model of in-classroom paid leadership roles have seen an increase in both recruitment and retention of educators and students receive an extra ‘half year’ of learning compared to their peers.

## Conclusion

Through focus groups, research, and conversations among Teacher Action Team members E4E-LA sought to answer: what makes the teaching profession sustainable, according to teachers? So often teacher voices are left out of the conversation about teacher sustainability, quality, and accountability. In this report, E4E sought to use teacher voice to answer the broad question—How can the teaching profession be reimagined to make it more dynamic, sustainable, and rewarding? In doing so educators recommended specific policy ideas and proposals. Many of these ideas have been tested in districts across the country, and if implemented, LAUSD could see improvements in job satisfaction, recruitment, and retention. There’s much more work to be done to dig into these proposals, but with teacher voices and input in the conversation, we hope to create a guiding light for teachers and students past and present.

# About the Teacher Action Team

**Anji Williams.** Anji is a teacher at Bancroft Middle School. With over two decades of experience, Anji is also a member of the Racial Justice Taskforce and a proud LAUSD parent.

**Elisabetta Pepe.** Elise is a teacher and UTLA Chapter Chair at Flournoy Elementary School. Elise is also the Gifted and Talented (GATE) Chair and sits on the Positive Behavior Committee.

**Laura Kampmeyer Jaeggi.** Laura is currently a Literary Interventionist at Maclay Middle School. With decades of experience in the district, Laura also has served as her school as a Magnet Coordinator, Gate Coordinator, Instructional Coach, Lead Teacher, Department Chair, and Senior Advisor.

**Judith Angeles.** Judith is currently a Targeted Student Population Advisor for two primary centers in Central Los Angeles. With twenty-eight years of teaching, she has also served as grade level chair, UTLA Chair and Co-Chair, ELLP Designee, Science Ambassador, Title I Coordinator, TSP Advisor, and EL Designee.

**Claire Ilo.** Claire is a teacher at Orville Wright Engineering and Design Magnet. She has led as the Restorative Justice Lead and has worked as a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Coach.

