

HR IN EDUCATION:

# Top 6 Challenges and How to Address Them



# Employee happiness in education is finally on the rise, hitting a **4-year high in September 2024**—so how can HR pros help keep this recovery going?

There's still a ways to go, especially with teachers, as they're still **far less satisfied with their jobs** than other workers.

While HR professionals can't fix all the problems in the education sector (K-12 teacher salaries, for example, come from a combination of federal, state, and local funding and tend to be set by school boards), they can improve the employee experience by advocating for the changes teachers value most.

Failing to do so will likely cause the teacher **shortage to worsen**, leading to consequences like larger class sizes, an increase in burned-out staff, and lower student achievement.

In this article, we'll dive into the most significant challenges HR professionals face in the education sector and practical solutions to address them. For example, with BambooHR, you can streamline operations that contribute to employee job satisfaction, such as hiring, benefits administration, and the employee experience—all in one place.

## Can Teachers Become Human Resources Professionals?

In short, yes! Our findings in **The State of Human Resources Leadership Report** show fewer than one in 10 HR leaders have an HR-specific degree. HR professionals come from diverse academic backgrounds, such as English, history, physics, philosophy, and counseling, to name a few. There's no one right way to become an HR manager, and teachers' first-hand experience in the classroom can better equip them to address HR challenges in schools.

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# The 6 Biggest HR Challenges in Education in 2025 + Solutions

## 1. Inefficient Talent Acquisition

Shortages in the education sector continue to be a national issue. In 2023, teacher shortages in 37 states and Washington, D.C. grew 35% to **more than 49,000 vacancies**, resulting in many states scrambling to fill them with underqualified or unqualified candidates.

As for higher education, **McKinsey & Company** reports that university heads and HR departments are often not aligned because of siloed communication. CHROs don't directly report to the university president and rarely have influence over strategic activities most commonly associated with HR in the private sector, such as **workforce planning** and hiring processes.

### ✓ SOLUTION

As an HR professional, you may not always be in the room making the hiring decision, but you can help support decision-makers and school administrators with the right **strategies and processes** to find the most qualified candidates. Here are some talent acquisition approaches to consider:

- **Establish specific hiring standards.** There's no one-size-fits-all approach to hiring educators and administrators, as each education level has different needs and demands. For example, a community college may prioritize hiring academic counselors who are familiar with transfer student college applications and can recommend majors and four-year institutions to students.
- **Align with key stakeholders.** In higher education, HR teams and university leaders need to have explicit conversations about hiring needs to create an effective talent acquisition strategy. HR should be regularly included in core leadership meetings

as opposed to only reporting to provosts or chief administration officers.

- **Recruit diverse candidates.** As **educational research** consistently proves, teacher diversity is key to learning. Not only do teachers of color improve student outcomes, but their positive impact holds true for **students of all races**. (The good news is that the key to this positive impact—**culturally responsive teaching**—is a skill all teachers can learn and adopt.)

**Diversity recruiting can also help reduce teacher shortages in the long term and boost student confidence.** Unfortunately, based on what they observe their teachers going through, **students of color and Indigenous students** say they wouldn't go into teaching, as they're worried they wouldn't be valued or supported.

HR teams have the power to change this by creating an environment where current (and aspiring) teachers of color feel respected and protected

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## 2. Low Employee Retention

More people are leaving than are entering the education field due to issues such as burnout, lack of support, and low wages. As mentioned above, some schools have resorted to hiring underqualified or unqualified teachers who tend to **turn over** more quickly. According to Chalkbeat, **turnover rates were the highest** they'd been in five years in eight states during the 2021–2022 school year.

### ✓ SOLUTION

On top of investing in professional development and competitive benefits (more on those later), regularly conducting **employee satisfaction surveys** is a crucial component of retention. The surveys should be anonymous to encourage honest feedback, which then enables HR to take a targeted approach for making improvements.

## 3. Finding Substitute Teachers

Emergencies are inevitable. People get sick and accidents happen. Is your team prepared to handle these absences and prevent disruption to student learning? According to the **National Center for Education Statistics**, 32% of public schools find it somewhat or much more difficult to find substitute teachers than in the previous year.

### ✓ SOLUTION

HR teams should have a database with qualified substitute teachers who can fill these vacancies in a timely manner. Consider using an automated substitute management system that simplifies the process of finding coverage. On top of freeing your district personnel from having to call substitutes, a software solution provides **recordkeeping** and data analysis.

## 4. Insufficient Professional Development Programs

As the education sector evolves, educators must be continuous learners to best serve their students. However, most K–12 teachers in one survey say their professional development programs **don't provide enough access to expert advice**.

As for higher education, a **report by Every Learner Everywhere** focusing on the professional development at community colleges and minority-serving institutions notes only 39% of respondents feel their Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs) are adequately funded.

### ✓ SOLUTION

Professional learning is often siloed for K–12 teachers, with general education teachers and specialized teachers receiving different programs. While there is merit to bespoke programs, teachers also want more opportunities for cross-departmental learning and planning. However, leadership must also bring in outside experts for workshops and coaching if knowledge gaps exist within their internal faculty.

Regarding colleges, leadership can leverage institutional and grant funds to ensure both full-time and part-time faculty members have access to high-quality, sustained programs as opposed to isolated workshops. Along with promotion and reward structures, these programs can boost faculty engagement and foster a culture of continuous learning. Program topics respondents find most useful include strategies for making online and hybrid learning more engaging for students and culturally responsive teaching methods.

Other solutions to consider include offering mentorship programs to newer staff, leadership training to principals and deans, and frequent **performance evaluations**.

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## 5. Shaping School Culture

There are several reasons why educators are leaving the field in droves, with low pay and poor working conditions being the most prominent. While some states have responded with **legislation to increase teacher salaries**, similar attention hasn't been given to working conditions. Working conditions encompass multiple factors, such as administrative support, shared decision-making, professional collaboration opportunities, and resources for teaching and learning.

### ✓ SOLUTION

Strong school leadership is crucial for improving retention and, in turn, teacher effectiveness and student achievement. HR in the education sector can help principals, deans,

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and other administrators **build a supportive culture** by prioritizing **transparent communication, employee feedback, recognition and rewards** for high performance, and **inclusive efforts** to help educators and students of all backgrounds achieve their potential.

## 6. Unorganized Benefits Administration

In **RAND's 2024 State of the American Teacher**, K-12 teachers are twice as likely to experience frequent **stress or burnout** compared to other professions, and three times as likely to report struggling to cope with job-related stress.

### ✓ SOLUTION

To attract and retain highly qualified educators, provide a **holistic benefits package** to support their physical and mental health. Educators should be entitled to **sick days** and medical, dental, and vision coverage. Plus, **mental wellness benefits** like therapy, mental health apps, and **employee assistance programs** can help them better manage stress and improve performance.

To ensure employees are aware of available benefits and perks, HR teams should send out benefits communications year-round. Whether through email, newsletters, Slack, or a combination of channels, consistently share videos, FAQs, and other resources they can always refer back to. Lastly, leverage **benefits administration software** that provides an intuitive employee experience and automates administrative tasks.

# Leverage an All-in-One Solution

The demands in the education sector can often feel overwhelming, but having the right technology at your fingertips can ease the burden.

BambooHR is HR software that's easy to use and packed with powerful features, like the [Applicant Tracking System](#), which helps organize and smooth out your recruiting and hiring process, or our secure [employee database](#), which helps you centralize and monitor all your employee information. Using an automated solution frees you up to focus on helping administrators and educators give students the care they deserve. 🌱

## You might also like...

- [New Teacher Checklist: 50+ Tasks for Successful Onboarding](#)
- [HR's Role in Transforming Education: Tackling Teacher Satisfaction and Retention](#)
- [Free Hiring Kit for Schools and Universities](#)
- [The Definitive Guide to Creating an Internship Program](#)

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