

Understanding Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers and Student Support Staff

Research on Financial Incentives for Scholarships and Add-on Endorsements in High-Need Roles

David Prudente, Ed.D., Senior Researcher
dprudente@air.org

Sarah Mae Olivar, MSW, Ph.D., Researcher
solivar@air.org

June 2026

Topics selected by the commission

Providing health insurance
to educators through the
Public Employees Benefits
Program

Allocation of funding for
scholarships for
students seeking to become
a school counselor,
social worker or
psychologist

Provision of Nevada teacher
advancement scholarships

Allocation of funding to
school districts to assist a
licensed teacher with
obtaining an endorsement in
a shortage area

Agenda

In this presentation, we will:

1. Review research on educator shortages and two workforce pipeline strategies to address shortages:
 - a. Add-on endorsements for in-service teachers
 - b. School-based mental health workforce shortages
2. Highlight examples of add-on endorsement initiatives for teachers in Washington, Arizona, and Colorado
3. Highlight examples of scholarships, residencies, and programs for school-based mental health professionals in California, Oregon, and Idaho
4. Share follow-up interview strategy with key stakeholders to better understand how these initiatives function in practice

Two Workforce Pipeline Scholarship Strategies Examined

Add-On Endorsements for In-Service Teachers

- Builds on the existing teacher workforce
- Supports certification in shortage areas
- Addresses immediate staffing needs
- Allows teachers to transition into high-need roles while remaining employed

Financial Incentive Programs for School-Based Mental Health Professionals

- Expands pathways into counseling, psychology, and social work professions
- Reduces financial barriers to preparation and licensure
- Includes scholarships, residencies, loan repayment, and “grow-your-own” initiatives

Add-On Endorsements for In-Service Teachers

Elements of Teacher Shortages

Teacher shortages include any teacher who is not-fully certified.

Fully Certified Teachers

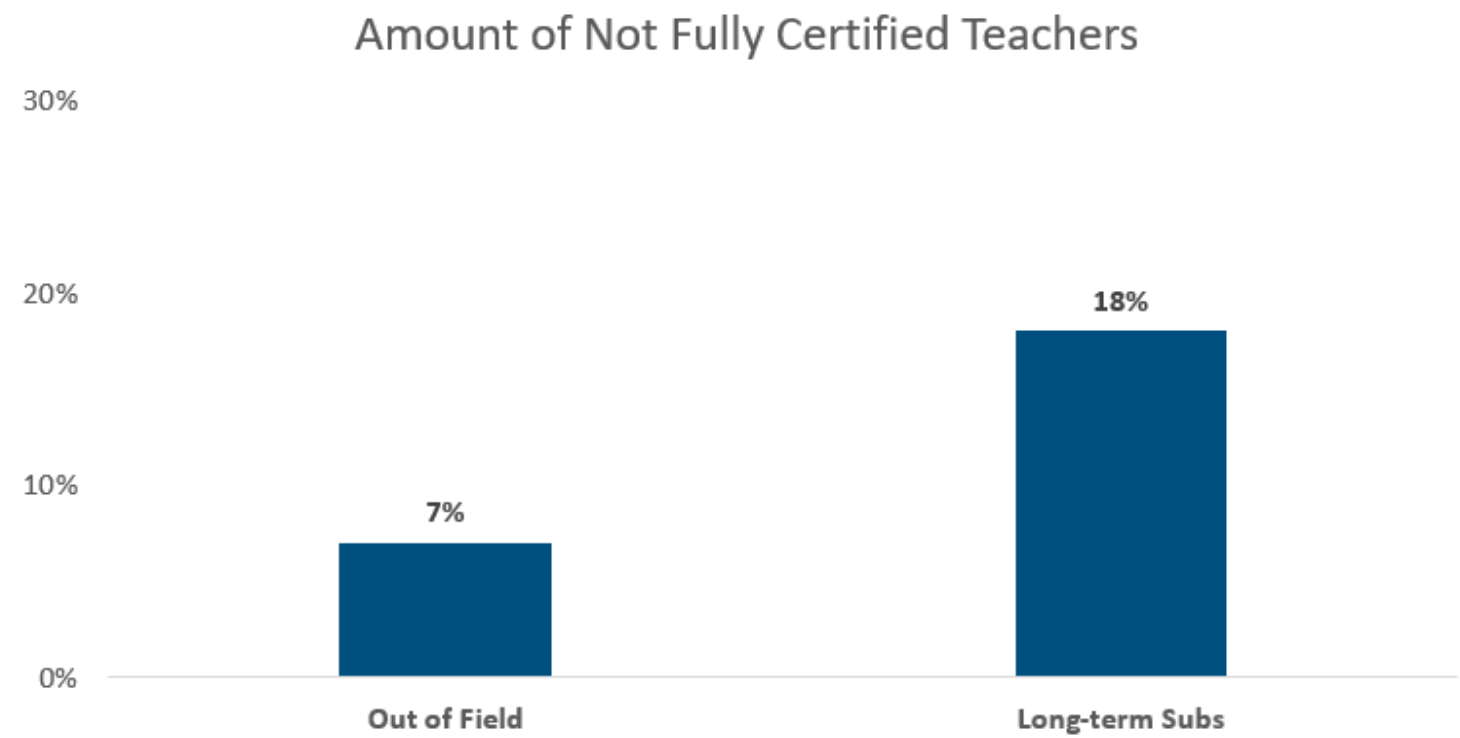
Not-Fully Certified
Teachers

Out-of-Field
or Uncertified

Long-Term Substitutes

Teacher Shortages in Nevada

Out of 27,081 teachers in Nevada during the 2023-24 school year:



Note: 1,828 teachers were out of field, 4,827 were long-term substitutes. Out-of-field teachers teach outside their certified subject area, grade level, or area of specialization, often without adequate preparation or qualifications (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021).

Source: Nevada Report Card, 2024 educator workforce data at <https://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/nv/2024> (pulled on June 17, 2026)

Impacts of Not-Fully Certified Teachers

Instructional Impacts	Student Achievement Impacts	Equity Impacts
• Lower pedagogical content knowledge • Greater reliance on textbooks • Fewer higher-order learning opportunities <i>(du Plessis, 2015; Van Overschelde & Piatt, 2020)</i>	• Lower student achievement and higher dissatisfaction • Measurable “value lost” on state exams <i>(Hobbs et al., 2022; Van Overschelde, 2022)</i>	• Schools serving higher proportions of students of color employed substantially more uncertified teachers <i>(NCES CRDC, 2014)</i>

Potential Roles of Add-On Endorsements in Reducing Out-of-Field Teaching and Teacher Shortages



EXPAND CERTIFICATION
into high-need areas



ACCESSIBLE PATHWAY
to additional
endorsements



ALIGN CREDENTIALS
With staffing needs



INCREASE ACCESS
to fully certified
teachers

Examples from Nearby States

- Washington
- Arizona
- Colorado

Washington: Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship

State-supported financial assistance for Washington educators pursuing shortage-area endorsements

PURPOSE

- Administered through WSAC in collaboration with PESB
- Supports certified educators pursuing shortage-area endorsements
- Addresses educator shortages in high-need subject areas

SUPPORT PROVIDED

- Up to \$3,000 per endorsement add-on, supporting:**
- Coursework and endorsement testing
 - Add-on endorsement pathways
 - Subject-area or geographic shortage endorsements

REQUIREMENTS

- Current Washington teaching certificate required
- Endorsement must be in a designated shortage area
- Two-year service obligation required for loan forgiveness

Source: Washington State Legislature. (n.d.). RCW 28B.102.130: Educator retooling conditional scholarship program.

Arizona: GenEd Teacher to SPED Teacher (GETSET)

State-supported tuition assistance program designed to expand the special education teacher workforce

PURPOSE

- Implemented through the AZ Dept of Education (Exceptional Student Services)
- Supports general education teachers pursuing SPED certification
- Uses a “grow-your-own” approach

SUPPORT PROVIDED

Up to \$20,000/year in tuition assistance, supporting:

- State-approved SPED preparation pathways
- Tuition reimbursement for certification coursework

REQUIREMENTS

- Enrollment in a state-approved preparation program
- Continued employment during participation
- Multi-year completion expectations (2–5 years)
- Commitment to teaching in SPED roles

Source: Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services. (n.d.). *GETSET and SETTA Tuition Assistance Programs*.

Colorado: Rural Inservice Educator Stipend

State-supported financial assistance for rural educators pursuing additional qualifications and endorsements

PURPOSE

- Administered through CDHE and the CO Center for Rural Education
- Supports rural PK–12 educators pursuing additional qualifications
- Intended to help address educator shortages in rural districts

SUPPORT PROVIDED

Up to \$6,000 Stipend supporting:

- Additional endorsements
- Concurrent enrollment qualifications
- Other locally needed credentials

REQUIREMENTS

- Enrollment in a qualifying higher education program
- Three-year commitment in a rural Colorado district
- Available to educators working in rural or small rural districts

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education. (n.d.). *Rural Inservice Educator Stipend*.

Next Steps to Inform Policy and Practice

Next Steps: Follow-Up Interviews

To inform educator workforce policy and practice, this study proposes interviews with key stakeholders to better understand how add-on endorsement strategies function in practice.

Why	Who	What
• Capture how add-on endorsement pathways are experienced in practice • Examine how financial supports and program structures shape decisions and outcomes • Provide insight into variation across state and district contexts	• Teachers pursuing or have completed add-on endorsements • Educator preparation providers • District leaders and hiring staff • State program administrators	• Decisions to pursue add-on endorsements • Barriers and supports affecting completion • Transitions into shortage-area roles • Program design, implementation, and implications for policy and practice

Scholarship Programs for Student Support Staff



MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS AMONG CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS



21% OF CHILDREN
AGES 3-17

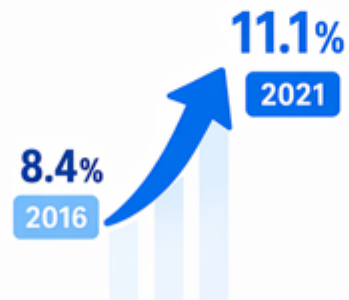
had ever been diagnosed with a mental, emotional, or behavioral condition in **2021**.



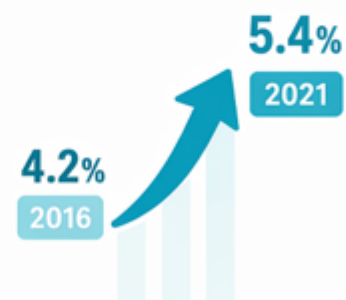
1. DIAGNOSED RATES (2022-2023)



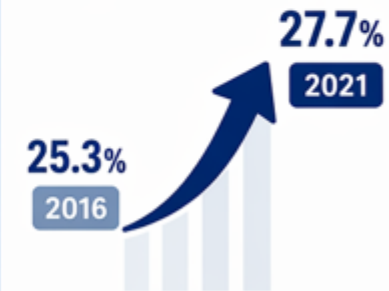
2. ANXIETY IS RISING



3. DEPRESSION IS RISING



4. OVERALL DISORDERS ARE RISING



**MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
BUILDS STRONGER FUTURES.**



EARLY SUPPORT



OPEN CONVERSATIONS



ACCESS TO CARE



BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025). *Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health*. <https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html>

Common Roles of School-Based Mental Health Professionals

Profession	Common Areas of Focus	Examples of Responsibilities
School Counselors	Academic, postsecondary, and social-emotional learning	Academic planning, college and career readiness, individual counseling, crisis response, and student support coordination
School Social Workers	Mental health, family/community engagement, and wraparound supports	Mental health services, family outreach, attendance interventions, case management, and connecting students with community resources
School Psychologists	Assessment, intervention, and behavioral and mental health supports	Psychoeducational assessment, behavioral intervention, special education evaluation, MTSS support, and crisis response

Sources: American School Counselor Association (ASCA); National Association of School Psychologists (NASP); National Association of Social Workers (NASW); School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA).

Student Access to School-Based Mental Health Supports is Lacking

Role	Recommended Ratio	National Ratio	Nevada Ratio
<u>School Counselors</u>	1 : 250	1 : 372	1 : 437
<u>School Psychologists</u>	1 : 500	1 : 1071	1 : 1866
<u>School Social Workers</u>	1 : 250	National estimates vary	1 : 8730

- National student-to-provider ratios continue to exceed recommended levels for school-based mental health supports, limiting schools’ capacity to support student mental health and learning (Learning Policy Institute, 2023).
- Lower student-to-counselor ratios are associated with stronger academic and engagement outcomes across multiple states (Donohue et al., 2022), although outcomes also depend on how counseling services are structured and delivered (Kearney et al., 2021; Shi & Brown, 2020).

Sources: ASCA (2024–25); NASP (2024); SSWAA (2022); Hopeful Futures Campaign (2022)

Workforce Shortages and Pipeline Challenges

- School counselors, psychologists, and social workers typically require graduate education, supervised clinical training, and ongoing licensure or certification requirements.
- Required practicum and internship experiences are often unpaid, which may create financial barriers for individuals completing preparation programs.
- ACA's 2024 Workforce Survey found that the average counselor student loan debt (\$79,434) exceeded the average annual salary (\$70,956), raising concerns about debt burden and long-term workforce sustainability.
- National organizations have identified ongoing recruitment and retention challenges across school-based mental health professions, particularly in high-need and underserved communities.

Sources: American Counseling Association (2024); National Association of School Psychologists (2024); Bocanegra et al. (2020); School Social Work Association of America.

Examples from Nearby States

- California
- Oregon
- Idaho

California: School Counselor Residency Grant Programs

California invested \$20 million in competitive residency grants to expand and diversify the school counseling workforce through LEA–IHE partnerships.



Sources: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing; *Expanding School Counseling: The Impacts of California Funding Changes* (Annenberg Institute, 2024); UCLA School Counseling Studies; Learning Policy Institute.



Oregon: Oregon Teacher Scholars Program (OTSP)

OTSP scholars are more likely to come from underrepresented backgrounds, demonstrated slightly higher graduation rates than the overall student population, and nearly 88% were employed in education two years after graduation.



Sources: Oregon Teacher Scholars Program; Oregon Educator Equity Report; Educator Advancement Council Grant Programs Report (2025).

Idaho: Rural and Underserved Educator Incentive Program

Idaho's incentive program provides loan repayment and educational reimbursement to recruit and retain educators and school-based support professionals in rural and underserved communities.

PURPOSE

- Created through Senate Bill 1290 (2022)
- Addresses educator and pupil service personnel shortages in rural and underserved schools
- Supports recruitment and retention in high-need communities
- Includes school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists

SUPPORT PROVIDED

- Direct educational loan repayment
- Reimbursement for degrees, certifications, and educational expenses
- Support for additional endorsements and advanced preparation
- Up to \$12,000 tied to service commitments

REQUIREMENTS

- Employment in qualifying rural or underserved schools
- Standard renewable certification required
- Eligibility tied to state shortage and rurality criteria
- Four-year service commitment for full award eligibility

Sources: Idaho State Board of Education; Senate Bill 1290 (2022); Idaho Educator Pipeline Reports.

Next Steps to Inform Nevada Policy and Practice

Next Steps: Follow-Up Interviews

To inform policy and practice, this study proposes interviews with key stakeholders to better understand how financial incentive programs for school-based mental health professionals are implemented.

Why	Who	What
• Understand how scholarship, residency, and “grow-your-own” initiatives operate across states • Examine how financial supports influence recruitment, preparation, and retention • Explore variation across state implementation contexts	• Current scholars or program participants • Recent alumni or completers • Educator preparation program administrators • District leaders, hiring staff, and state program administrators	• Decisions to enter preparation programs • Barriers and supports affecting completion • Transitions into school-based mental health roles • Recruitment, retention, and program implementation

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

David Prudente, Ed.D.

Senior Researcher
410-707-3596
dprudente@air.org