



Think back to your first year teaching, whether it was last year, or more than 20 years ago. Think about how excited you were to finally have your own classroom and students. And think about the support you did, or did not, receive from your colleagues. Some teachers have amazing stories of being welcomed with open arms into a department or team and feeling greatly supported in their first few years of teaching. Unfortunately, we hear far too many stories that are the exact opposite. Stories of new teachers feeling isolated, over-whelmed, and quickly wondering if they really want to be a teacher after all.

School systems across the country are battling significant teacher turnover, and frequently report it is the best and brightest who are fleeing the profession within their first five years of teaching. This turnover has a profound effect on student achievement, a school budget, and on overall staff morale. A report by the [Learning Policy Institute](#) (2019) indicates that teacher attrition in the United States is 8%, and more than two-thirds of those are leaving the profession due to reasons other than retirement. It is also worth noting that it is not just new teachers who are leaving the profession. An increasing number of experienced teachers are also changing schools or professions, frequently citing feelings of isolation and lack of ownership in the school as their reasons. In many schools, this boils down to a low sense of self-worth and belonging. If teachers do not feel “plugged in” and experience meaningful opportunities to collaborate and contribute to the greater good of the school, they can slip into a place of disconnection and isolation. Listening to and valuing teacher voice are key to establishing a school culture that teachers flock to, and that no one would dream of leaving!

Retaining effective teachers is not solely the responsibility of school leaders. Every teacher plays a role in establishing the culture of a school, be it positive or negative. If we want to nurture and retain excellent teachers, we must engage *all* voices—new and experienced—and be mindful of the support we provide to one another. The only way to move forward is together!

What can you do as a teacher leader to help retain great teachers?