

A Survey Study Examining Pre-Service Teachers' Thoughts about Recruitment and Retention of Quality Bilingual Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study identified important factors that need to be considered concerning the recruitment, retention and job satisfaction of teachers certified in bilingual/ESL from the pre-service teacher perspective. The Bilingual Pre-Service Teacher Questionnaire (BPTQ) was developed and administered to seventy-three undergraduate students who were enrolled in courses, which would lead to bilingual certification at a large university in central Texas. Students rated the importance of the following areas on the BPTQ: (1) resources and materials for the classroom; (2) compensation/salary; (3) professional development provided by the district; (4) and support from administration, parents, and co-workers. The aforementioned factors are commonly cited in the literature for recruitment and retention of teachers. Results indicated that support from administration, parents, and co-workers was most important for recruitment, retention and job satisfaction of teachers in the field of bilingual education. Compensation/salary was identified as least important.

Introduction

Presently, there are considerable shortages across the nation in the supply of K-12 teachers prepared in bilingual/ESL education (American Association of Employment in Education [AAEE], 2001). At the same time, demographic enrollment trend data indicates that English language learners (ELLs) continue to become an increasing proportion of the nation's student population (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2003; US Census, 2000). The need for more highly qualified teachers who are adequately prepared to teach ELLs in our public schools is an urgent problem and is highly recognized by school districts throughout the nation (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994; Darling Hammond, 1997). This study identified significant variables, from the pre-service teacher perspective, that will lead to successful recruitment, retention and job satisfaction of teachers in the area of bilingual/ESL education.

Review of Literature

The nation's shortage in the supply of K-12 bilingual/ESL teachers is alarming, and the problem becomes even more complex as the population of ELLs increases every year. According to the U.S. Department of Education Title III Biennial Evaluation Report for the school year 2003-2004, U.S. public schools serve about 5.1 million second language learners. One hundred forty five different languages are spoken among our ELL population. Significantly, eighty percent of ELLs are Spanish speakers. All state agencies reported using at least one type of English language instruction program with 40 states using a bilingual program in addition to English as a second language (ESL).

The national shortage of bilingual/ESL teachers is not limited to specific states. AAEE found that the shortages of bilingual/ESL teachers occurred in every region of the United States. Interestingly enough, these shortages are not limited to specific states that traditionally have had large influxes of immigrants. In fact, the most severe shortages have occurred in states that historically have not had large immigrant populations (AAEE, 2001). For example, the research conducted by the Oregon University System (2000) reported that around half of Oregon's school administrators had difficulty in finding teachers in bilingual/ESL education.

Texas, as well as many other states bordering with Mexico, faces a great challenge. The following table depicts that the majority of students attending public schools in Texas is Hispanic.

Texas Student Profile 2005-2006

Ethnicity	African American	Hispanic	White	Native American
Number of Students	665,799	2,047,308	1,651,040	147,315
Percentage	15%	45%	37%	0.3%

(Source: Public Education Information Management System [2005-2006], TEA 2006)

It is important to note that the total identified number of second language learners in Texas is 711,737. Most of these students are Hispanic and speak Spanish as their first language (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2006). The number of second language learners across the nation also continues to escalate (NCELA, 2003; US Census, 2000).

The increasing growth of Hispanic students across the nation, and specifically in Texas, places greater demands on the recruitment and retention of highly qualified bilingual/ESL teachers to address the academic and linguistic needs of this population.

Shortage of Bilingual/ESL Certified Teachers in Texas

Studies have documented that identification and successful recruitment of bilingual/ESL certified teachers have been a pervasive problem in school districts throughout Texas and continue to be critical shortage areas (Texas State Board for Educator Certification [SBEC], 2002; AAEE, 2001). The study conducted by Lara-Alecio, Galloway, and Irby (2003) from the Texas A&M University Bilingual/ESL Teacher Retention and Recruitment Coalition revealed 40% of the 843 Texas school districts that participated in the study had bilingual/ESL vacancies in the fall of 2002. Of those teachers assigned to a bilingual/ESL classroom, 40 % of school districts reported that less than 10 % of those teachers were fully certified.

In addition, according to the Austin American Statesman (2004), universities are not producing enough educators who can teach elementary students in English and their native language. According to this article, there are a number of factors that contribute to the national shortage of bilingual teachers, from low salaries to high turnover among new teachers to early and routine retirement. According to Gold (1996), the lack of systematic, psychological, and academic support is one of the most important reasons for the shortages of bilingual/ESL teachers. The shortage of bilingual teachers in general constitutes an inconsistency in the student population demographic (National Education Association [NEA], 2002).

Alternative Programs to Recruit and Retain Bilingual/ESL Teachers

On the basis of a comprehensive teacher demand, supply, and shortage (TDSS) model, Boe (1990) emphasized that there is a need to consider alternative ways to

increase the supply of ESL and bilingual teachers in order to improve the retention of highly qualified experienced teachers and to improve the yield and retention of newly graduated teachers. According to the study conducted by the Texas Center for Educational Research (1999), among the most frequently voiced complaints of current and former teachers is working conditions in schools. This study addressed the policies to build supportive work environments, salary and other financial incentives, and professional development opportunities as important components of successful retention programs.

The Intercultural Research Development Association's (IDRA) project Alianza designed and implemented an alternative program that recruited immigrants who were credentialed teachers in their home countries. The project design led to the development of accelerated programs that worked to get these individuals through a university teacher preparation program in order to produce highly needed, qualified bilingual and ESL teachers in participating school districts (Cortez, 2000).

The Bilingual Education Collaborating Alliance (BECA) was yet another program which was developed and implemented by IDRA in conjunction with the University of Texas-Pan American and Texas State University-San Marcos in response to the high need for bilingual teachers. The purpose of this particular program was to alleviate the shortage of bilingual and ESL teachers in Texas. BECA supported the preparation and certification of approximately eighty-five qualified career-changing professionals and recent graduates with degrees in fields other than education who wished to become bilingual educators through alternative and accelerated routes (IDRA, 2007).

Bilingual/ESL Certified Teacher Retention/Recruitment

The retention of teachers who have already been certified in the bilingual/ESL area is addressed by several researches. According to the Texas Center for Educational Research (1999), 19% of the new teachers left after their first year of teaching because they didn't have seriously needed professional support. Twenty-nine percent of new teachers leave the education field within their first three years, and by the end of five years, 39 % have left (Viadero, 2002). Gonzales and Sosa (1993) examined the need for retaining bilingual education teachers and emphasized that states and schools need to create support systems to help smooth new teachers' transitions. The school systems have included mentor-type support systems where older and more experienced staff members are teamed with new teachers for one or more years. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) stated that the loss of new teachers played a major role in the teacher shortage problem, but the efforts to recruit more teachers will not alone solve the diminishing school staffing problem. The study emphasized retaining teachers by increasing support from school administrators for new teachers and improving teachers' working conditions. These research findings suggest that the first year of a teacher's career is critical in teacher retention, and programs that help them succeed should be developed and implemented (Texas Center for Educational Research [TCER], 1999).

Strategies to Recruit/Retain Bilingual/ESL Teachers

Lara – Alecio, Galloway, Irby, and Brown (2004) studied retention and recruitment strategies of school districts in Texas to address the need for bilingual/ESL teachers. The study revealed some strategies that superintendents employ to recruit and retain bilingual/ESL teachers. These strategies include: a) prioritizing recruitment, b) providing fringe benefits, c) professional development opportunities, d) formal mentoring/induction programs, e) encouraging paraprofessionals and teachers to obtain degrees/certification, f) assisting financially, and g) collaborating with universities and other educational entities. The study also points out that school districts must develop and implement policies and strategic plans aimed at addressing the need for bilingual/ESL teachers.

Darling-Hammond (1997) identifies the following factors in the retention of bilingual teachers: a) student motivation and discipline, b) recognition and support with the administration, c) salary is a factor though not a prominent one, d) attrition rates particularly in high poverty schools, and e) control over salient elements of working environment that includes: influence over policy, professional prestige, resources available, support from administrators, general work conditions, and opportunities for advancement.

Recruiting Strategies

According to Darling-Hammond (1997), recruitment efforts should begin with intensive initiatives to improve pre-service teacher education by subsidizing college education, working toward the accreditation of Schools of Education, establishing professional development academies, and establishing beginning teacher-mentoring programs. She also states that the need for recruitment of teachers is related to the fact that student enrollments are growing. One element feeding into the growing student school population is the rise of immigration rates. Darling-Hammond also recommends the recruitment of a diverse teaching force. This is necessary if we consider the proportion of minority teachers reported as 13% in contrast to the proportion of minority students reported as 33%.

As mentioned previously, the number of vacancies in bilingual education/ESL is extremely high. Many of the vacancies in this area can be found in school districts with large numbers of minority low-income students. These school districts have difficulty filling these vacancies because they pay teachers less, tend to have larger class sizes, have access to fewer materials, and work in less desirable teaching conditions. Darling-Hammond points out that there is a bridge between the pre-service phase and the job phase. She describes the hiring process as cumbersome and dysfunctional. She recommends the need for aggressive recruitment through university/school partnerships, bonuses or salary increments as well as offering free retraining to help prepare teachers in

bilingual education and ESL among others. It is also important to recognize that teachers earn less than other professions that obtain a similar level of education (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

The body of literature related to pre-service teachers and their perceptions about job satisfaction, as a bilingual/ESL teacher is very limited. At the time that this study was initiated, one recent and relevant study with regards to bilingual/ESL teachers by Diaz-Rico and Smith (1994) was found. Diaz-Rico and Smith (1994) emphasized the need for creative strategies to attract bilingual/ESL teachers. Their study introduced cooperative school community-university models for teacher recruitment and staff training. They reported four philosophical elements and the six program components that must function together to achieve maximum success in bilingual teacher recruitment and retention. The four elements include: a) personalizing the student-university interface, b) having a shared knowledge base among experts in bilingual education, c) making teachers feel valued, and d) the orchestration of community support for bilingual education. The six program components include: a) staffing policies and procedures, b) career ladder opportunities for bilingual teachers, c) district support for credentialing, d) recruitment activities, e) teacher education, and f) community awareness. The study viewed unified staffing, recruitment, and retention plans for bilingual teachers as an essential factor for recruiting and retaining bilingual teachers.

Summary

The number of second language learners is dramatically increasing in the nation and in Texas (TEA, 2006; NCELA, 2003; US Census, 2000). At the same time, there is a shortage of bilingual/ESL certified teachers nationwide (AAEE, 2001). Thus, there is a strong need to produce and retain certified bilingual/ESL teachers. In the studies mentioned above, researchers agree on several factors that need to be considered in regards to the recruitment and retention of teachers certified in bilingual/ESL. These factors include: working conditions, administrative support, professional development and salary (Darling Hammond, 1997; Gold, 1996; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Mandel, 2006; Sosa & Gonzales, 1993; Lara – Alecio, Galloway, Irby, and Brown, 2004; TCER, 1999). It is also noted in the literature that the first year of teaching is a critical year and strong support and mentorship is recommended (TCER, 1999).

Purpose of the Study

It is evident that there is a strong need to produce more highly qualified bilingual/ESL teachers across the nation and specifically in Texas where the number of second language learners is increasing at a very fast pace. There is also a need for finding ways to keep the skilled bilingual/ESL teachers already teaching in elementary school

classrooms. There is published research in regards to the retention of mainstream teachers and limited published evidence in regards to the recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999; 1997; Diaz-Rico and Smith, 1994; Lara – Alecio, Galloway, Irby, and Brown, 2004). There is no published evidence in regards to recruitment, retention and job satisfaction of bilingual/ESL teachers from the pre-service teacher perspective.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate which factors are most important in recruiting and retaining bilingual teachers from the viewpoint of bilingual pre-service teachers. Therefore, an answer to the following question was sought:

Which of the following factors will lead to bilingual teacher recruitment, retention and job satisfaction from the perspective of pre-service teachers that are working toward teacher certification in bilingual/ESL education: (a) resources and materials for the classroom, (b) compensation/salary, (c) professional development provided by the district, and (d) support from administration, parents, and co-workers?

Methodology

The following section will discuss the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data on the factors that will lead to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction of bilingual teachers from the perspective of pre-service teachers that are working toward teacher certification with an emphasis in bilingual/ESL education. Specifically, this section contains a description of the respondents, instrument, data gathering procedures, and data analysis and results.

Respondents

Seventy-three undergraduate students who identified themselves as future bilingual teachers and were enrolled in courses (Introduction to Bilingual Education and the Psychological Foundations of the Bilingual Child), which would lead to initial bilingual/ESL teacher certification, filled out a questionnaire addressing bilingual/ESL teacher recruitment, retention and job satisfaction. The courses that they were enrolled in were in a block format with a field component. Students met for class with course

instructors once a week for a three hour time period. On a separate day, students spent approximately 3 hours in an elementary bilingual classroom as an intern. During this time, students were expected to observe classroom routines, work with individual students and small groups, develop lesson plans and assist and perform normal teacher duties.

Sixty-seven of the students who responded to the questionnaire were female while only 6 were male. The majority of the respondents were Hispanic. The respondents were informed by the authors/researchers that the questionnaire not only pertained to job satisfaction, but was critical in identifying factors that would lead them, as future certified bilingual educators, to remain in the classroom for an extended period of time.

All of the respondents were enrolled at Texas State University-San Marcos, a doctoral granting university that is located in the Austin-San Antonio corridor. Presently, there are over 27,500 students enrolled in the university. It is one of the 75 largest universities in the country. Twenty-eight percent of the student body comes from ethnic minorities. Texas State is also one of the top 20 producers of baccalaureate graduates in the United States (Texas State University, 2007).

Initially, Texas State University began as Southwest Texas State Normal School in 1903. The original mission of the university was to prepare public school teachers. Today, Texas State University-San Marcos is one of the top three university producers of teachers on a yearly basis in the state of Texas (Texas State University, 2007; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2007).

During 2006, approximately 4,800 students made up the College of Education. Roughly 2,500 of those students were enrolled in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. During this same academic year, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction graduated 655 teachers. Of those graduates, 516 students were White (79%) and 114 (17%) were Hispanic. Three percent of the graduates were Black and 1% was Asian/Pacific Islander (Texas State University, 2007; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2007).

Procedure and Instrumentation

Initially, the authors and researchers reviewed the literature for all possible information on job satisfaction, recruitment and retention and pre-service teachers. They found that there is published research in regards to the retention of mainstream teachers and limited published evidence in regards to the recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999; 1997; Diaz-Rico and Smith, 1994; Lara – Alecio, Galloway, Irby, and Brown, 2004). However, presently there is no published evidence in regards to recruitment, retention and job satisfaction of bilingual/ESL teachers from the pre-service teacher perspective.

Based on the lack of research in the field and the experience of the researchers as former bilingual teachers, supervisors, and university professors, the Bilingual Pre-Service Teacher Questionnaire was developed. The first questionnaire was given to 18

elementary bilingual/ESL teachers from a school district located in the Brazos Valley. Minor wording alterations were made to the first questionnaire to make it appropriate for pre-service teachers.

The questionnaire consists of 4 questions in which students were to rate the importance of the following areas on their importance pertaining to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction: resources and materials for the classroom, compensation/salary, professional development provided by the district, and support from administration, parents, and co-workers. These four factors were identified as critical to include on the questionnaire as they are commonly cited in the literature concerning teacher recruitment and retention (Darling Hammond, 1997; Gold, 1996; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Mandel, 2006; Sosa & Gonzales, 1993; Lara – Alecio, Galloway, Irby, and Brown, 2004; TCER, 1999).

Seventy-three undergraduate students who were enrolled in bilingual education courses (Introduction to Bilingual Education and the Psychological Foundations of the Bilingual Child) filled out the questionnaires in regards to bilingual teacher recruitment, retention and job satisfaction. Because the questionnaire was a required assignment for the students enrolled in the bilingual education courses, all respondents completed the questionnaire. Respondents were given the opportunity to turn in their questionnaire anonymously and still receive credit for the activity.

Respondents rated the four areas using a five point Likert scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 with 1 and 2 indicating the lowest level of importance and 4 and 5 indicating the highest level of importance (1=not very important and 5=extremely important).

Analysis and Results

For the purpose of this study, an answer to the following question was sought:

Which of the following factors will lead to bilingual teacher recruitment, retention and job satisfaction from the perspective of pre-service teachers that are working toward teacher certification in bilingual/ESL education: (a) resources and materials for the classroom, (b) compensation/salary, (c) professional development provided by the district, and (d) support from administration, parents, and co-workers?

Mean scores and standard deviations (see Table 1) were calculated for each of the four areas. Frequency counts by question and score (see Table 2) and percent of responses by question and score (see Table 3) were also calculated. For this study, recruitment, retention and job satisfaction as a bilingual/ESL teacher were identified as the dependent variables. The four factors that were rated by respondents (resources and materials, compensation/salary, professional development, and support) were identified as independent variables.

Table 1 Mean Scores by Question

Question	Mean	SD
A. Resources and Materials	4.64	0.61
B. Compensation/Salary	3.77	0.98
C. Professional Development	4.49	0.81
D. Support	4.82	0.66

Table 2 Frequency Counts of Responses by Question

Question	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	No score
A. Resources and Materials	0	0	5	16	52	0
B. Compensation/Salary	1	7	17	29	19	0
C. Professional Development	1	1	2	23	44	2
D. Support	0	0	0	8	63	2

Table 3 Percent of Responses by Questions

Question	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5	No score
A. Resources and Materials	0	0	6.8	21.9	71.2	0
B. Compensation/Salary	1.3	9.5	23.2	39.7	26	0
C. Professional Development	1.3	1.3	2.7	31.5	60.2	2.7
D. Support	0	0	0	10.9	86.3	2.7

Respondents rated support from administration, parents, and co-workers as the most important factor leading to recruitment, retention and job satisfaction with a mean score of 4.64. The majority of respondents (63) assigned a score of 5 to support (86.3%). None of the respondents assigned a score below a 4 to support.

Respondents rated resources and materials for the bilingual classroom as the second most important factor leading to recruitment, retention and job satisfaction with a mean score of 4.64. Again, the majority of respondents (52) assigned a score of 5 to resources and materials (71.2%). None of the respondents assigned a score below a 3 to resources and materials.

Respondents rated professional development provided by the school district as the third most important factor leading to recruitment, retention and job satisfaction as a bilingual/ESL teacher with a mean score of 4.49. Most respondents assigned a score of 4 (23) or 5 (44) to this factor (31.5% and 60.2%). It is important to note that even though the respondents rated professional development third out of four factors, it is still important because the mean score was over 4. This indicates that the respondents still rated it as very important to extremely important.

Finally, the respondents rated compensation/salary as least important in regards to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction as a bilingual teacher. Most respondents assigned a score of 4 (29) to this factor (39.7%) followed by a score of 5 (19) at 26% and a score of 3 (17) at 23.2%. Compensation/salary was the only factor that did not receive a mean score over 4. However, it is important to note, that the mean score was over 3, so the respondents still indicated that it was somewhat important.

Discussion of Results

Through the completion of the BPTQ, seventy-three respondents rated support from administration, parents, and co-workers as the most important feature for recruitment, retention and job satisfaction, even over salary. This is consistent with the literature in this area (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gold, 1996; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Mandel, 2006; Sosa & Gonzales, 1993; TCER, 1999). It appears that the pre-service teachers show wisdom in their recognition that parents, communities, school administrators and teachers need to work together, support each other and be consistent. This is evident by the following comments made on the questionnaire by some of the pre-service teachers pertaining to support:

Pre-Service Teacher Response: I think a support system is needed for everything. It is especially important from parents because they are the voices of the community and have the power to change rules and procedures in the school district. Support from administration and co-workers are important, as well because I feel teaching is a team project. It is a great way to share ideas and help one another by having a team support.

Pre-Service Teacher Response: I think having support from administration, parents and co-workers is very important. I can't imagine getting through my first year of being a teacher without their support. I want to be able to ask my co-workers for advice and help. I would like administration to support my ideas and methods of teaching. I would want parents to be happy with what and how their children are learning.

It is interesting that salary was rated lowest in importance. Again, this is consistent with the literature (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Perhaps, the pre-service teachers are already aware that teachers' salaries are low. This is again evident by many of the comments made by the pre-service teachers pertaining to support:

Pre-Service Teacher Response: For me, and I assume for most teachers, being happy with their job is more important. Most educators are not in this profession for the money, but instead, personal satisfaction. If they are not satisfied with the job though, the salary is not going to make them want to keep that position.

Pre-Service Teacher Response: I'm not expecting a huge salary because it's known that teachers don't earn much. I honestly feel that the rewards of teaching children are not monetary, and I don't really care about the money.

It is important to note that even though salary was rated as lowest in importance, it still obtained a mean score of over 3, indicating that it is still of some importance to the pre-service teachers. Several of the pre-service teachers indicated the importance of salary through their written comments:

Pre-Service Teacher Response: Most teachers do not enter this profession for the money, but if the salary is good enough to live comfortably it can become an incentive for effectiveness. Things such as benefits and bonuses can increase a teacher's self-worth which directly affects their attitude and motivation to continue with this job.

Pre-Service Teacher Response: Teachers need to be paid better in order to keep them on the job.

The pre-service teachers rated resources and materials second. This indicates that the pre-service teachers are aware of the importance of materials that are age and language appropriate when working with second language learners.

Finally, the pre-service teachers rated professional development provided by the school district as third. It appears that the pre-service teachers are aware of the fact that there is always new research in the field of education and that it is important to keep up to date with new ideas and methods in order to best serve the students.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this study concerns the fact that it was conducted with pre-service teachers/respondents who were attending and working toward bilingual/ESL certification at one university. The classroom and field experiences for these respondents would therefore be very similar and may be unlike the experiences of pre-service teachers in other bilingual education programs at other universities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At this juncture, it is important to continue to disseminate the questionnaire (BPTQ) to respondents who are enrolled in bilingual/ESL education programs at other universities. As much data as possible in this area is needed in order to help administrators and university faculty to develop and implement successful strategies and programs to help provide support as well as appropriate materials and professional development that will lead to job satisfaction for bilingual/ESL teachers. As the population of English language learners continues to grow, it is of utmost importance to recruit, develop and retain the best teachers possible for these students.

Significance of the Study

The number of second language learners across the nation and in Texas continues to increase at an alarming rate (TEA, 2006; US Census, 2000). At the same time, there is a shortage of bilingual/ESL certified teachers (AAEE, 2001). Because of this, there is a strong need to produce and retain certified bilingual/ESL teachers. Researchers agree on several factors that need to be considered in regards to the recruitment and retention of teachers certified in bilingual/ESL. These factors include: working conditions, administrative support, professional development and salary (Darling Hammond, 1997; Gold, 1996; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Mandel, 2006; Sosa & Gonzales, 1993; Lara – Alecio, Galloway, Irby, and Brown, 2004; TCER, 1999). The purpose of this study was to investigate which of the aforementioned factors are most important in recruiting and retaining bilingual teachers from the viewpoint of bilingual pre-service teachers.

The findings of this type of study are particularly significant because of the need for highly qualified bilingual/ESL teachers who are adequately prepared to teach the English language learners in our public schools (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). It is of great importance for school administrators to know what factors need to be addressed in order to recruit and keep these highly qualified bilingual/ESL teachers in the classroom for the benefit of the students and for accountability purposes according to No Child Left Behind legislation which focuses on high standards and increasing academic achievement for all students in K-12 population (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kiefer, & Rivera, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). It is also important for university faculty involved in teacher preparation programs to be aware of this information as they recruit students into their bilingual/ESL programs and as they build relationships with school districts.

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