



RECRUITING GEN Z:
**Strategies for Hiring
the Next Generation
of Educators**



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Addressing the Teacher Shortage Crisis

Finding enough teachers has been a persistent nationwide challenge in recent years. With over 55,000 teacher vacancies reported by researchers from Kansas State University and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign,¹ this shortage is an urgent problem for HR leaders to tackle.

The National Center for Education Statistics recently found that nearly half (45%) of public schools felt understaffed as they entered the 2023-2024 school year.² Even more worrying, 86% of U.S. K-12 public schools struggled to hire teachers for the same academic year.

In the 2023 Education Focus Report, we asked district leaders about their educator shortages. Over 90 percent of them agree that finding and keeping good teachers is more challenging now than ever.³

The latest statistics suggest that interest in teaching is declining. A recent study by the Annenberg Institute found that student interest in teaching, preparation for entry, and job satisfaction are at a 50-year low.⁴ “Most of these declines occurred steadily throughout the last decade, suggesting they are a function of larger, long-standing structural issues with the profession,” the report states. “In our view, these findings should be cause for serious national concern.”

The number of new teacher graduates has also dropped significantly, from 8% of total undergraduate degrees in 2000-2001 to just 4% in 2021-2022.⁵

In districts nationwide, the teacher shortage results in unfilled positions, larger class sizes, and canceled electives. This shortage often leads to an over-reliance on uncertified substitutes, reducing education quality and increasing the workload for existing staff, worsening retention issues.

Given these alarming trends, it’s clear that innovative solutions are needed. Generation Z, as a growing part of the current workforce and the next wave of talent, has the potential to help address the teacher shortage. They are tech-savvy, value diversity, and want meaningful work, which fits well with the needs of modern schools. Understanding their unique characteristics, values, and expectations is crucial for developing effective recruitment strategies tailored to them.



This eBook will answer the following questions:

- 1** Who is Gen Z and what makes them different?
- 2** What do Gen Z candidates look for in a job?
- 3** How can schools and districts effectively recruit Gen Z candidates?

We will start by understanding what sets Gen Z apart from previous generations. Let’s explore their unique traits and how they can help fill the growing gap in our education system.



Understanding Gen Z

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, includes younger teens and adults already making significant impacts in the workforce.

Diversity and Education

Gen Z stands out as the most racially and ethnically diverse generation. Nearly half (48%) of those born between 1997 and 2012 are considered ethnic or racial minorities,⁶ and they are more likely to identify as LGBTQ+ than older age groups.⁷

Academically, Gen Z is on track to be the most well-educated generation yet. While the oldest members of Gen Z were reaching eighth grade around 2010, improvements in key education indicators were already noticeable. For example, eighth-grade students scoring proficient or better in math rose to 34% in 2011, up from 25% in 2000.⁸ Additionally, 57% of Gen Z were enrolled in college in 2018, compared to 52% of Millennials in 2003 and 43% of Gen X in 1987.⁹

Nearly half of Gen Z comes from low-income backgrounds. In 2011 and 2012, 46% of Gen Z aged 0 to 15 lived in households with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level.¹⁰




Pandemic Impact

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, Gen Z experienced a generally stable environment and economy relative to previous generations.¹¹ The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research reports that 46% of Gen Z feel the pandemic has made pursuing their educational or career goals more difficult, compared to 36% of Millennials and 31% of Gen X.¹² The pandemic upended their education and career paths and introduced many to remote-friendly learning and working.

The abrupt shift from in-person to virtual or hybrid instruction disrupted traditional high school and higher education experiences, impacting learning and social interactions. Students became familiar with digital tools and online collaboration, which may influence their preferences for flexibility and remote work in their professional lives.

Many workers in Gen Z's older cohort, especially those in higher-risk service sectors, were disproportionately affected by layoffs. In 2020, nearly half of the 19.3 million workers aged 16 to 24 were employed in service-related jobs, which faced high closure rates during severe COVID-19 outbreaks.¹³ These closures led to fewer job and internship opportunities for young people, especially in the hospitality, travel, and retail sectors, which typically offer many entry-level roles.

Overall, the pandemic has reshaped Gen Z's outlook on education and work, potentially driving them to seek more adaptable, supportive, and tech-savvy environments in their professional lives.



46% of Gen Z feel the pandemic has made pursuing their educational or career goals more difficult.¹²

Mental Health

The pandemic also took a heavy toll on Gen Z's mental health. Over half report that the pandemic has made having fun harder, and nearly half say it has negatively affected their happiness and mental health.¹⁴ Many also mention that the pandemic has strained their friendships, physical health, dating, and hobbies. The same study found that 35% of Gen Z frequently experience stress, while another 46% report feeling it sometimes.

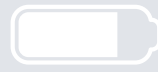
This generation is more concerned about societal challenges and reports greater mental health needs than any other before them.¹⁵ An overwhelming 84% of Gen Zers believe mental health is a crisis in the United States, and they are over 80% more likely to report dealing with anxiety or depression compared to older generations.¹⁶ A multi-year study released in 2023 found that nearly two-thirds (65%) of Gen Z reported experiencing at least one mental health challenge in the past two years, a higher rate than older generations like Millennials (51%), Gen X (29%), and Baby Boomers (14%).¹⁷

Digital Natives

Gen Z has grown up in a digital world and has little to no memory of a time without the internet or social media. Since birth, many of this generation have had immediate, unfiltered access to the digital world. Research shows that 97% of Gen Z use at least one major social media platform.¹⁸

This constant exposure to digital content has shaped their behaviors and preferences. For example, Microsoft research found that the average attention span of Gen Z individuals is about eight seconds, four seconds less than that of Millennials.¹⁹ Gen Z's comfort with technology makes them ideal candidates for integrating digital tools into the classroom, enhancing teaching and learning experiences.





The Gen Z Candidate Profile



DIVERSITY

- 48% ethnic or racial minorities
- Higher likelihood of identifying as LGBTQ+



EDUCATION

- Most well-educated generation
- 57% enrolled in college in 2018



ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

- 46% from low-income households



MENTAL HEALTH

- 84% believe mental health is a crisis
- 65% reported experiencing a mental health issue in the past two years



DIGITAL NATIVES

- 97% use at least one major social media platform
- Average attention span of 8 seconds



VALUES

- Financial security, flexibility, autonomy, collaboration, purpose



NEEDS


- Positive environment, mental health support, DEI commitment, career advancement



Gen Zers seek jobs that provide financial security, ongoing support, flexibility, autonomy, collaboration, and a sense of purpose.²⁰ Positive school environments and access to mental health support are crucial for Gen Z educators. They also need training to teach diverse learners and opportunities for career advancement. Given their familiarity with virtual and hybrid learning during the pandemic, Gen Z educators are likely to have high expectations for incorporating instructional technology and digital tools in their classrooms.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are also significant factors for Gen Zers. According to a Monster poll, 83% of Gen Z respondents consider an employer's commitment to diversity and inclusion when deciding where to work.²¹ Another survey found that 75% of Gen Z would hesitate to apply for a job if they weren't satisfied with the organization's diversity and inclusion efforts.²²

Gen Z's diversity, educational background, economic perspectives, mental health priorities, and digital fluency make them a unique and valuable addition to the workforce.

 **Now that we understand what sets Gen Z apart, let's explore practical strategies for attracting and engaging these job seekers. Discover how to stand out in today's competitive market and successfully recruit the next generation of educators in the next section.**



Attracting and Engaging Gen Z Job Seekers

Attracting Gen Z to teaching isn't easy. A survey by NORC at the University of Chicago revealed that 44% of U.S. adults are not likely to encourage a young person to become a K-12 teacher.²³ It's safe to say schools and districts are competing with other professions to attract Gen Z job seekers.

Leveraging Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool for attracting Gen Z. Regular posts from your school or district's accounts can keep your content fresh and engaging. Here's how to make the most of social media:



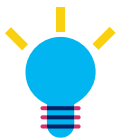
SHOWCASE YOUR SCHOOL'S CULTURE

Use virtual tours, student and staff voices, videos, and photos to highlight the real experiences of working in your school. Content like photos and videos tends to engage audiences more effectively and create strong emotional connections. This authenticity will resonate with Gen Z candidates looking for workplaces where they can relate to their colleagues.



ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY

Your current teachers and staff are your best ambassadors. When they align with your core values or mission statement, they can effectively communicate who you are and why your school is a great workplace. Highlight current employee stories, perspectives, and ideas, and encourage applicants to contact these ambassadors for more information.



SPOTLIGHT USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Recent research suggests Gen Z prefers user-generated content over traditional high-production advertisements.²⁴ Because they are more authentic, short videos and glimpses of social and academic life created by students, teachers, or staff can perform better than professionally made videos.



Modern Online Applications

Gen Z candidates expect a smooth online application process. Here's how to meet their expectations:



STREAMLINE THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Allow candidates to apply from anywhere with a seamless online application process. A clunky or unresponsive website will immediately test their attention span and turn them away. Ensure your website is intuitive and provides quick access to relevant information. They'll want all the content on a single page, easily accessible with a scroll, click, or tap. Ensure your site is mobile-friendly since Gen Z will likely view your post on their phone.



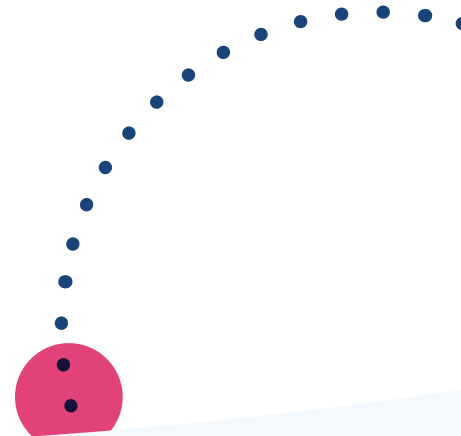
PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY AND CONVENIENCE

Applicants enjoy the flexibility to complete the hiring process on their schedule. Making it easier to start, stop, and save their progress means they can finish as soon as possible. Eliminating duplicate data entry by automating the transfer of resume information can save applicants time and encourage them to complete their application more quickly.



BE TRANSPARENT

Provide details about salary ranges, benefits, and policies upfront to save the employer and candidate valuable time. Gen Zers are used to immediate answers, so consider providing an FAQ section or an AI chatbot on your site.





COMMUNICATE CLEARLY


Applicants want to know what to expect. Will they be notified if they pass the initial screening? When will interviews be scheduled? Does your process require them to arrive in person before extending an offer? Anticipating applicant questions and clarifying the process in job postings and follow-up communication can build trust and understanding.



PRIORITIZE DEI

Over a third of Gen Zers say they know someone who uses they/them pronouns, more than any previous generation.²⁵ However, only 18% report being asked about their preferred pronouns at work.²⁶ Including an optional spot for pronouns on applications shows that you consider inclusivity from the start.

By integrating these strategies, your school or district can attract and engage Gen Z job seekers and position itself as a workplace that can fit their needs and preferences.

 **Ready to turn these engaged job applicants into qualified candidates? In the next section, we'll dive into practical recruitment strategies that can help your school or district excel.**





Effective Recruitment Strategies for Gen Z

In today's competitive job market, recruiting and retaining Gen Z educators requires innovative and multifaceted strategies. Here are some effective approaches to appeal to this dynamic and diverse generation.

Grow Your Own

Recruiting can start right within your schools. Over half of early-career teachers began college intending to pursue a career in education. In Tennessee, for example, 70% of early-career teachers had education in mind from the start.²⁷

Most states offer pathways, programs, or incentives to recruit high school students into teaching, with many providing scholarships or loan programs. These programs involve recruiting teacher candidates from the local community and have proven more effective than traditional methods, especially in rural areas, for recruiting and retaining a higher proportion of people of color.²⁸ By engaging students early, these programs help cultivate a dedicated future workforce.

Develop a Candidate Pool

A multi-channel approach can help consolidate candidates from various sources, from local teaching graduates and experienced educators nearby to those across state lines seeking employment in your district. Here's how to build a robust candidate pool:



ENGAGE AT REGIONAL AND VIRTUAL JOB FAIRS

Connect with prospective candidates and showcase your school's strengths and opportunities.



POST JOB LISTINGS ON WIDE-REACHING ONLINE JOB BOARDS

Ensure your job postings are visible to as many potential candidates as possible.



MAINTAIN A CONSISTENT SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Regular updates keep your district in the minds of potential applicants.

Establish an Employer Brand

Your brand is who you are to the world, especially those deciding whether to apply for a teaching job. Social media is a great place to establish your school or district's brand. Here's how to do it:



CURATE ENGAGING, THOUGHTFUL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Use consistent images, like your district logo, across all social media pages. Consider how each post reflects your organization's values and unique perks.



SHOW WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT WORKING IN YOUR DISTRICT ON YOUR WEBSITE

Spotlight the teachers, principals, and staff who are the heart and soul of your school or district. Celebrate their success and perseverance through challenging times. Posts like these show that you're an employer who values and honors educators' vital role in the community.



ENCOURAGE YOUR CURRENT STAFF TO LEAVE REVIEWS ON GLASSDOOR OR SIMILAR SITES

These reviews are invaluable for job seekers to gauge your school's environment and culture.



Foster a Culture of Inclusion and Well-Being

Gen Z is looking for a workplace that respects individuality, values every voice, and fosters a sense of belonging for everyone. Here's how you can create such an environment:



SUPPORT DIVERSITY

Embrace a broad concept of diversity, including gender, race, ethnicity, neurodiversity, people with disabilities, and diverse ideas and experiences. Ensure Gen Zers feel their unique perspectives are recognized and valued.



CULTIVATE DIVERSITY

Actively promote diversity throughout all levels of your organization. It's crucial for Gen Z to see leaders they can identify with, helping them envision their potential career growth.



OFFER UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING

Provide training that helps staff recognize and address their biases, fostering a more inclusive environment.



INTEGRATE MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES

Create stigma-free work environments and prioritize personal and professional wellness.

Next, let's explore how technology can streamline recruitment and make your processes more efficient and appealing to Gen Z candidates.



Leveraging Technology and Tools for Modern Recruitment

Effective recruitment in today's digital age means using modern technology to streamline processes.

Time is of the essence in recruitment—the quicker you move from application to interview, the better your chances of securing top candidates. Research by PowerSchool and partners, including the Northwest Evaluation Association and the University of Chicago, found that if it takes more than 30 days to make an offer, the odds of rejection go up by 66%. Moving swiftly can make all the difference.

Utilizing Job Boards

District- and state-specific job boards are key for reaching local candidates. Every job you post can potentially reach thousands of qualified applicants. [PowerSchool SchoolSpring Job Board](#), the nation's most popular online K-12 job board, connects you with over half a million unique visitors monthly. This tool allows you to expand your reach, simplify recruiting, and save time and money.

Streamlining Hiring

Efficient hiring processes are crucial for attracting top talent and reducing the time positions remain open. Streamlining hiring helps schools and districts manage applications quickly and effectively, ensuring they can secure the best candidates before other employers do.

[PowerSchool Applicant Tracking](#) makes this process seamless by providing tools to:



SAVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Easily repost jobs, saving staff time for other recruiting efforts.



CENTRALIZE HIRING STEPS

Post jobs, review resumes, and manage applicants all in one place online.



ENHANCE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Offer a user-friendly online application with filtering options and automatic updates.



MANAGE INTERVIEWS ONLINE

Schedule and oversee interviews efficiently, view statuses, and share results with decision-makers.

This tool allows for a paperless hiring process that simplifies administrative tasks and enhances the candidate experience.

Screening Candidates Online

Using online tools like [PowerSchool Candidate Assessment](#) to screen and assess candidates can save valuable time for everyone involved. Here's how online screening can enhance your recruitment process:



EFFICIENT EVALUATION

Set qualifications, aptitudes, and behavioral preferences to get a full view of each candidate's strengths.



DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Use assessment data to understand strengths, identify impactful candidates, and plan professional development.



TAILORED INTERVIEWS

Craft personalized interview questions based on screening reports.



HOLISTIC MEASUREMENT

Identify the best hires with objective measurements aligned to your district's needs.



LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Guide teachers' professional development with personalized learning profiles.



Automating Applicant Communications

Keeping candidates informed maintains their interest and engagement. Automated communications can help:



PROVIDE CONSISTENT UPDATES

Use automated messages to confirm application receipt and update candidates on their progress.



ADD A PERSONAL TOUCH

Personalize thank you and confirmation messages. Ensure candidates know when to expect interviews and who to contact with questions.



HELP YOUR SCHOOL OR DISTRICT STAY TOP OF MIND

Keeping applicants engaged ensures your organization remains front of mind, especially since many apply to multiple places.

Conducting Video Interviews

If you're looking for teachers who can teach students in a digital environment, a video interview is a great way to let them showcase their skills. Given the impacts of the pandemic, Gen Z candidates are well-versed in digital tools and online collaboration. Leveraging platforms like [Spark Hire, integrated with PowerSchool](#), can streamline the video interviewing process.

By using video interviews, districts can evaluate candidates' presentation and communication skills remotely. Video interviews also allow for flexible scheduling, as both applicants and interviewers can connect from anywhere, accommodating the preferences of Gen Z candidates.



Solutions for Modern Educator Recruitment

A school's greatest resource is its teachers, and the educator workforce is evolving rapidly. Teachers are looking for inclusive and encouraging work environments, ongoing professional development, and modern tools supporting their teaching and personal well-being.

To attract top educators, schools are modernizing HR processes by adopting comprehensive recruitment solutions like the [PowerSchool Talent Recruitment & Retention Cloud](#). This set of digital tools helps streamline recruitment from posting jobs to reviewing applications, and it uses real-time coaching data to set personalized goals and recommend professional development.



The Talent Recruitment & Retention Cloud supports you at every phase of the employee life cycle. It addresses the unique needs of Gen Z educators who prioritize diversity, digital fluency, holistic support, and career growth.

- **SchoolSpring Job Board** connects your school to a broad audience, simplifying the hiring process and reaching diverse candidates.
- **Applicant Tracking** makes applying easy, reducing redundant steps like duplicate data entry and speeding up the hiring process.
- **Candidate Assessment** can help you determine the best candidate and provide personalized professional growth opportunities.
- **Professional Learning** offers personalized development plans based on data-driven insights, helping new and seasoned teachers advance their careers.
- **Perform** enables flexible teacher evaluations, offering observations, peer reviews, and self-evaluations. It integrates with Professional Learning to turn evaluation data into actionable growth plans.
- Tools like **Employee Records** and **SmartFind Express** support work-life balance by simplifying processes like substitute scheduling and contract management, ensuring educators have time for self-care and professional growth.

Explore the PowerSchool Talent Recruitment & Retention Cloud for more information on modernizing your HR processes and building a future-ready workforce.

Learn More

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