



STRENGTHENING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION WORKFORCE

A Data-Informed Feasibility Study of Recruitment,
Retention, and Staffing Solutions Across the West
Central Region of New Hampshire

Prepared by: Shelli Roberts, InsightED, LLC

Prepared for:
West Central Special Education Administrators (WCSEA)
and CMF Kids

Funded by:
Crotched Mountain Foundation / CMF Kids
Improving educational outcomes for children with disabilities

Contents

Background and Purpose.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Study Objectives	4
Intended Use.....	5
Applying These Findings Beyond the West Central Region.....	5
Methods.....	6
Regulatory Alignment and Study Scope	6
Study Design	6
Geographic Scope and Context	6
Data Sources	7
Study Measures and Indicators.....	8
Data Processing and Analysis.....	9
Coverage and Participation	9
Limitations.....	9
Regional and State Context.....	9
New Hampshire State Context.....	9
Student Need and Poverty Context.....	10
West Central Regional Context	11
District Variation Within the Region	11
Relationship to CMF Kids Partner Districts.....	12
Implications for Workforce Analysis	12
District Workforce Snapshot	12
Participating Districts	12
District Context and Staffing Overview	13
District Size and Student Need	17
Special Education Staffing Configurations.....	18
Related Services and Hard-to-Fill Roles	18
Caseloads and Workload Considerations.....	18

Use of This Snapshot	19
Recruitment Findings	19
Overview.....	19
Survey Snapshot: Recruitment Pathways	19
Implications for Recruitment	21
Certification and Credentialing Barriers	22
Compensation and Market Competition.....	22
Role-Specific Recruitment Challenges	22
Recruitment Practices Currently in Use	23
Implications for Workforce Planning	23
Retention Findings	23
Overview.....	23
Short-Term Retention Outlook	24
Conditions Influencing Retention.....	24
Incentives That Matter Most	26
Implications for Retention.....	26
Commitment to Role and Students.....	27
Workload Sustainability	27
Compensation and Benefits	27
Professional Support and Growth	28
Retention Risks and Triggers	28
Implications for District Stability	28
Workload and Caseload Findings	29
Overview.....	29
Caseload Ranges and Variability.....	29
Impact of Staffing Vacancies	29
Protected Planning Time	30
Paperwork and Compliance Demands	30
Time Spent on Case Management and Documentation	30

Implications for Workforce Sustainability.....	31
Travel and Geographic Factors.....	32
Knowledge Sharing and Replication Findings	32
Overview.....	32
Promising Practices Identified	32
Conditions That Support Replication.....	33
Barriers to Knowledge Sharing	33
Role of Regional Collaboration	33
Implications for Next Steps	34
Implications for Equitable Access	34
Recommendations	34
Overview.....	34
Recommendations are organized around four focus areas:.....	34
Closing Note.....	38
Conclusion.....	38

Background and Purpose

Across New Hampshire, school districts face critical staffing challenges in recruiting, retaining, and sustaining a qualified special education workforce, underscoring the need to address these issues for effective delivery and compliance.

In response, the West Central Special Education Administrators (WCSEA) initiated a regional workforce study to foster a shared understanding and collective action toward improving staffing conditions across districts.

This study was funded by Crotched Mountain Foundation / CMF Kids as part of its broader commitment to improving educational outcomes for children with disabilities. CMF Kids supported this work to generate actionable, field-ready insights that strengthen inclusive special education systems and support the district decision-making across New Hampshire.

Workforce challenges described by West Central districts are consistent with patterns documented nationally, particularly in rural settings and in special educational roles.

Research indicates that rural districts face persistent constraints, including limited labor pools, geographic isolation, and competition with neighboring districts and contracted service providers, with special education positions among the most difficult to staff and sustain over time (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). This study builds on that broader context by examining how these pressures manifest within West Central districts using district-reported data and staff perspectives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the West Central Special Education Workforce Study is to provide districts with clear, usable information to support workforce planning and decision-making. The study is designed as a descriptive resource that brings together multiple data sources to identify patterns, highlight areas of variation, and document practices already in use across the region. Findings are intended to inform both district-level and regional action.

Rather than evaluating individual district performance, the study aims to:

- Establish a common factual baseline regarding special education staffing conditions.
- Identify pressures that consistently affect recruitment, retention, and workload sustainability.
- Surface differences in context that help explain why challenges appear more acute in some districts than others.
- Support regional and district-level planning efforts with actionable, locally grounded findings.

The study includes districts within the West Central region, as well as CMF Kids partner districts where applicable. District-level comparisons are limited to those districts for which sufficient, verified data were available, and all limitations are explicitly noted to avoid over-interpretation.

Study Objectives

Consistent with the approved scope of work, the study is organized around four core objectives:

1. **Recruitment**

To identify barriers and enabling conditions that influence districts' ability to attract qualified special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers.

2. **Retention**

To examine working conditions, stability factors, and short-term retention outlooks that affect staff retention.

3. **Workload Distribution**

To document how staffing levels, caseloads, and non-instructional responsibilities are distributed across districts and roles, including both visible and less visible workload demands.

4. **Knowledge Sharing and Replication**

To identify strategies currently in use within West Central and partner districts and describe conditions that support replication across different district contexts.

Intended Use

This report is intended for use by district leadership teams, special education staff, and school boards. Findings may inform staffing decisions, budget planning, regional collaboration efforts, and future grant or partnership initiatives. The study is designed to support practical action while acknowledging that solutions must be tailored to local context, capacity, and student need.

Applying These Findings Beyond the West Central Region

Although this study focuses on workforce conditions within the West Central region, the challenges identified; limited applicant pools, certification, and endorsement barriers, workload sustainability, and reliance on informal staffing strategies are common across many New Hampshire districts.

Districts outside the West Central region may use the findings to:

- Examine recruitment and grow-your-own pipelines
- Assess workload sustainability beyond caseload size alone
- Inform staffing models that balance in-district and contracted services
- Identify opportunities for regional collaboration to address the shared workforce constraints

The findings are intended to be adapted to the local context rather than applied as a prescriptive model.

Methods

Regulatory Alignment and Study Scope

This study is informed by New Hampshire’s Minimum Standards for Public School Approval (Ed 306) and the statutory requirements for an adequate education outlined in RSA 193-E:2-a. The purpose of this analysis is to examine special education workforce conditions, including recruitment, retention, workload, and knowledge sharing, using district-reported staffing data and a regional workforce survey.

Consistent with this scope, the study does not evaluate district compliance with Ed 306 student–educator ratios by grade span, as total educator staffing by instructional grade span was not collected. The study also does not assess the design or implementation of competency-based instructional systems under Ed 306 or RSA 193-E:2-a. Findings and recommendations should therefore be interpreted as workforce-planning guidance rather than regulatory-compliance determinations.

Study Design

The West Central Special Education Workforce Study uses a mixed-methods, descriptive design to examine workforce conditions across the West Central region of New Hampshire and selected CMF Kids partner districts. The study integrates quantitative and qualitative inputs to describe current recruitment, retention, and workload conditions without making causal claims or evaluating individual district performance.

The design emphasizes transparency and replicability. Findings are grounded in data from districts and participants, supplemented with publicly available state data for context. Where information is incomplete or uneven across districts, those limits are explicitly noted rather than inferred.

Geographic Scope and Context

The West Central region includes districts spanning small rural towns, regional school districts, and mixed-geography communities across western and central New Hampshire. Districts vary widely in total enrollment, geographic size, population density, transportation distances, housing availability, and proximity to neighboring districts and employment markets.

Geography plays a meaningful role in workforce conditions examined in this study. District leaders and survey respondents described challenges related to long commute times, limited local housing, competition with nearby districts and contracted service providers, and the difficulty of sustaining specialized roles across dispersed schools. These

geographic realities shape recruitment pipelines, staffing configurations, and workload distribution and are considered throughout the analysis.

District-level comparisons in this report focus on a defined set of districts for which sufficient, verified data were available, identified by district name and SAU number. Additional districts are represented through survey participation and qualitative inputs, but are not included in standardized numeric comparisons. Geographic variation is therefore interpreted alongside data coverage rather than treated as a uniform regional condition.

Data Sources

The study draws on four primary data sources:

→ **Regional Special Education Workforce Survey**

A structured, anonymous survey was distributed across West Central districts and participating CMF Kids partner districts. The survey collected information on respondents' roles, certification status, recruitment pathways, perceptions of workload and caseload, professional support, compensation factors, and short-term retention outlook. Survey participation was voluntary, and responses were analyzed in aggregate.

→ **District-Submitted Staffing and Student Data**

Districts were invited to submit standardized workforce and student indicators to support cross-district comparison. Core indicators include enrollment, students with IEPs (count and/or percentage), reported special education staffing totals, paraprofessional/support staffing totals, vacancy information, typical caseload ranges, and related service configurations. Where districts provided supplemental information (e.g., certification mix or staffing stability notes), those data were included with appropriate context.

→ **Key-Informant Input**

Key-informant input includes interviews and written responses from selected district leaders, as well as an interview with the New Hampshire Department of Education Bureau of Credentialing. These inputs were used to clarify staffing structures, licensure pathways, and implementation realities and to contextualize patterns observed in survey and district-level data. Key-informant input is illustrative rather than representative.

→ **Publicly Available State Data**

Public NH Department of Education data (including iPlatform indicators) were used to provide statewide and regional context, including enrollment trends and free- and reduced-price lunch rates. These data are used for context and may not align

precisely with district-submitted figures in districts with out-of-district placements or tuition arrangements.

Study Measures and Indicators

This study uses a structured set of workforce and student indicators to support consistency across districts while allowing for variation in available data.

Tier 1 indicators were collected for all districts included in district-level comparisons and include:

- Total student enrollment
- Number and percentage of students with IEPs
- Free and reduced-price lunch rate
- Reported number of special education teachers
- Reported number of paraprofessionals supporting special education
- Related service delivery configuration
- Known staffing vacancies
- Typical caseload ranges (where reported)

Tier 2 indicators were collected where available and include:

- Certification status and use of alternative or conditional licensure
- Vacancy duration and turnover notes
- Use of grow-your-own or internal pipeline strategies
- Supplemental narrative context related to staffing stability

Tier 2 indicators are included to provide depth and context and are not available uniformly across districts.

The Regional Special Education Workforce Survey yielded 145 responses across West Central districts and participating CMF Kids partner districts. Survey results are analyzed descriptively and reported in aggregate.

While this study reports special education staffing ratios (such as students per special education teacher or paraprofessional), these indicators are not equivalent to the student-educator ratios specified in Ed 306.14, which are based on total instructional staff by grade span. As a result, Ed 306.14 ratio compliance is not assessed within this report.

Data Processing and Analysis

District-submitted data were reviewed, standardized, and compiled into a consistent dataset. Derived indicators (such as ratios) were calculated only when the required source values were explicitly available. When districts report headcount rather than full-time equivalent staffing, derived indicators are interpreted with caution and described accordingly in the narrative.

Survey responses were analyzed descriptively, with attention to patterns across roles and settings. Open-ended responses were reviewed thematically to identify recurring concerns, enabling conditions, and practical suggestions. Qualitative inputs were used to explain and deepen understanding of quantitative patterns rather than to generalize findings.

Coverage and Participation

Participation varies by data source. Some districts are represented across multiple inputs (survey, district-submitted data, and interviews), while others are defined only through survey participation or qualitative input. To maintain transparency, a Coverage and Participation Table documenting district representation by data source is included. The body of the report cites only evidence clearly supported by available data. District representation by data source is noted in the “Supporting Materials” section at the end of this report.

Limitations

This study is descriptive and has several limitations. Survey data are self-reported and reflect perceptions and reported conditions. District-submitted data vary in completeness, particularly for supplemental indicators related to staffing stability and certification pathways. Geographic and contextual differences across districts limit direct comparability in some areas. The report does not make causal claims and does not evaluate the effectiveness of individual districts or programs.

Regional and State Context

New Hampshire State Context

New Hampshire’s special education workforce operates within a statewide context characterized by relatively small school districts, limited educator preparation pipelines, and increasing competition for licensed professionals. While overall student enrollment has declined in many parts of the state, the proportion of students requiring special

education services has remained stable or increased in several districts. At the same time, districts report growing complexity in student needs, expanded documentation and compliance requirements, and heightened expectations for coordination across general education, special education, and related services.

Student Need and Poverty Context

Across the districts included in this study, the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) varies widely, reflecting meaningful differences in socioeconomic context and associated student need. FRL rates across participating districts range from very low percentages in some communities to rates exceeding 50 percent in others. These differences have important implications for staffing demands, service intensity, and workforce sustainability.

Districts with higher FRL rates often serve students with greater academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs, increasing demands on special education staff, paraprofessionals, and related service providers. In contrast, districts with lower FRL rates may experience different workforce pressures related to housing availability, commute distances, or competition with neighboring labor markets. FRL is included here as a contextual indicator to support interpretation of staffing conditions and does not imply differences in district effort or effectiveness.

To illustrate variation across the districts included in the study, Figure 1 presents free- and reduced-price lunch rates by district.

Figure 1. Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Rates by District

Source: NH Department of Education iPlatform, 2025–26 preliminary data; district-reported data where applicable.



Statewide, districts face persistent shortages in special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers. These shortages are compounded by credentialing requirements, limited access to preparation programs aligned to rural districts, and competition from contracted service agencies that often offer higher compensation or more flexible working conditions. These pressures are not evenly distributed across the state and are particularly acute in regions where geography, housing availability, and transportation distances constrain the labor market.

West Central Regional Context

The West Central region encompasses districts across western and central New Hampshire that vary substantially in size, geography, and community context. The area includes small single-town districts, multi-town regional districts, and districts that serve as educational hubs for surrounding communities. Geographic characteristics of the region include long travel distances between schools, limited public transportation, and, in some areas, constrained housing availability for school staff.

These geographic conditions shape workforce dynamics in several ways. Districts with dispersed school buildings or broad catchment areas often require staff to travel between sites, increasing workload and reducing protected planning time. Smaller districts may struggle to sustain specialized positions at sufficient full-time equivalency, resulting in shared roles, part-time staffing, or reliance on contracted services. Proximity to neighboring districts, larger employment centers, or state borders also influences recruitment and retention, as staff may have multiple competing employment options within a manageable commute.

District Variation Within the Region

Within the West Central region, districts differ markedly in enrollment size, student demographics, poverty levels, and special education service models. Some districts serve fewer than 100 students, while others enroll well over 1,500. The percentage of students with IEPs varies across districts, as do free and reduced-price lunch rates, reflecting differences in community resources and student need.

These differences affect how districts organize special education staffing. Larger districts may maintain in-district-related service capacity and more specialized roles, while smaller districts rely on itinerant staff or external providers. Caseload expectations, paraprofessional deployment, and access to instructional and behavioral supports also vary based on district scale and resources. As a result, workforce challenges manifest differently across districts even when underlying pressures, such as certification requirements or limited applicant pools, are shared.

Relationship to CMF Kids Partner Districts

In addition to West Central districts, the study includes participation from selected CMF Kids partner districts. These districts provide additional perspective on workforce conditions across varied geographic and organizational contexts within New Hampshire. While partner districts are not treated as a single comparison group, their participation helps situate West Central findings within a broader statewide landscape and highlights which challenges appear familiar across contexts and which are more closely tied to regional or geographic factors.

Implications for Workforce Analysis

Understanding the regional and state context is essential for interpreting the workforce findings that follow. The staffing challenges observed in this study cannot be attributed to a single factor; instead, they arise from the interplay among geography, district size, student needs, labor market conditions, and policy requirements. The sections that follow examine workforce conditions with these contextual factors in mind, emphasizing patterns that recur across districts while acknowledging where local context shapes different staffing realities.

Credentialing and Licensure Environment (NH Department of Education)

Input from the New Hampshire Department of Education Bureau of Credentialing highlights several factors affecting workforce stability, including testing requirements, endorsement alignment, and the time required to review transcripts and licensure applications. Districts reported that uncertainty and delays related to credentialing can affect both recruitment and retention, particularly for candidates entering through alternative pathways.

State systems provide visibility into licensure status, but districts often shoulder the responsibility of supporting candidates through complex credentialing processes while maintaining service delivery.

District Workforce Snapshot

Participating Districts

This study includes district-level workforce data from the following school districts, identified by district name and SAU number. These districts represent the range of size,

geography, and service delivery models present within the West Central region of New Hampshire:

- **Croydon School District (SAU 99)**
- **Fall Mountain Regional School District (SAU 60)**
- **Kearsarge Regional School District (SAU 65)**
- **Lebanon School District (SAU 88)**
- **Lyme School District (SAU 76)**
- **Mascoma Valley Regional School District (SAU 62)**
- **Newport School District (SAU 43)**
- **Plainfield School District (SAU 32)**
- **Sunapee School District (SAU 85)**

District Context and Staffing Overview

To support cross-district understanding, district-submitted staffing and student data were compiled into a standardized snapshot. These data provide a common reference point for understanding district size, student need, staffing configurations, and workforce capacity. Tables 1–3 present Tier 1 indicators and derived comparison measures for districts with sufficient, verified data.

Key points from these tables include:

- Substantial variation in enrollment size and IEP prevalence across districts
- Wide differences in paraprofessional staffing ratios
- Reliance on a mix of in-district and contracted related services
- Variation in reported caseload ranges and vacancy presence

**Table 1. District Enrollment, Student Need, and Special Education Staffing
(Tier 1 Indicators)**

District (SAU)	Enrollment	Students with IEPs (n)	IEP %	FRL %	Special Education Teachers	Paraprofessionals (Total)
Croydon (SAU 99)	83	22	26.5%	25.00%	0.5 FTE + 0.5 OOD	2
Fall Mountain Regional (SAU 60)	1,419	295	20.8%	25.48%	20.5 FTE	79
Kearsarge Regional (SAU 65)	1,721	294	17.0%	13.35%	24 filled (25 budgeted)	73 filled (79 budgeted)
Lebanon (SAU 88)	1,700	—	16.0%	18.19%	25 (headcount)	105 (approx. 70% SPED / 30% Gen Ed)
Lyme (SAU 76)	289	46	15.92%	1.67%	3	10
Mascoma Valley Regional (SAU 62)	1,025	260	25.0%	19.57%	17	34 (+3 RBTs)
Newport (SAU 43)	691	197	29.0%	55.40%	12.5 FTE + 2.5 contracted	42
Plainfield (SAU 32)	194	34	17.49%	3.31%	2.5	12
Sunapee (SAU 85)	434	74	17.0%	13.69%	8	19

Notes:

- FRL = Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (iPlatform 2025–26 preliminary unless district reported).
- Lebanon School District reported the percentage of students with IEPs but did not provide a corresponding student count at the time of data collection.

Table 2. Related Service Delivery Models by District

District (SAU)	Speech-Language	Occupational Therapy	Physical Therapy	School Psychology	Behavioral Support	Delivery Notes
Croydon (SAU 99)	3 days/week	5 hrs./week	2 hrs./week	—	—	Primarily contracted
Fall Mountain (SAU 60)	3 SLP	1 OT + 1 COTA	—	2 Psych	1 BCBA	Mixed in-district and contracted
Kearsarge (SAU 65)	5 SLP	3 OT	—	3 Psych	—	In-district
Lebanon (SAU 88)	5 SLP + 2 contracted	1 OT + 1 COTA	0.5 PT	4 Psych	—	Mostly in-district
Lyme (SAU 76)	0.6 SLP	0.4 OT	—	—	1 BCBA	Fractional/shared roles
Mascoma Valley (SAU 62)	3 SLP	1 OT + 2 COTA	—	3 Psych	1 BCBA	Mixed model
Newport (SAU 43)	1 + 3 contracted	3 OT + 1 COTA	0.63 PT	1 + 1 Psych	1 + 1 BCBA	Heavy contracted use
Plainfield (SAU 32)	0.8 SLP	0.1 OT + 0.5 COTA	0.1 PT	2 days/month	—	Fractional staffing
Sunapee (SAU 85)	1.8 SLP	2.2 OT	—	1 Psych	—	In-district

Table 3. Derived Staffing and Caseload Indicators (Reported and Calculated)

District (SAU)	Students per SPED Teacher*	Students per Paraprofessional*	Typical Caseload Range	Known Para Vacancies
Croydon (SAU 99)	~44	~42	5–20	0
Fall Mountain (SAU 60)	~69	~18	Not reported	4
Kearsarge (SAU 65)	~69	~24	15–18	6
Lebanon (SAU 88)	~68	~16	~11	1
Lyme (SAU 76)	~96	~29	~15	0
Mascoma Valley (SAU 62)	~60	~30	12–17	Not reported
Newport (SAU 43)	~55	~16	11–18	1
Plainfield (SAU 32)	~78	~16	12–15	0
Sunapee (SAU 85)	~54	~23	8–12	Not reported

**Derived indicators calculated using reported enrollment and staffing counts; values are approximate and intended for comparison only.*

These districts were included in the snapshot because sufficient, source-verified Tier 1 workforce and student data were available at the time of analysis. Additional West Central and CMF Kids partner districts are represented through survey participation and qualitative input, but are not included in standardized district-level comparisons.

Table 4. Tier 2 Workforce Stability and Pipeline Indicators (Contextual)

District (SAU)	Certification Notes	Pipeline/Grow-Your-Own	Turnover Notes	Hard-to-Fill Roles
Croydon (SAU 99)	Mixed roles; combined responsibilities	Not reported	Stable but fragile	SPED teacher
Fall Mountain (SAU 60)	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Related services
Kearsarge (SAU 65)	Some staff are on certification plans	Yes – internal pathways	Mostly retirements	Related services
Lebanon (SAU 88)	Fully certified SPED staff	Informal internal pathways	1–2 roles/year	Minimal
Lyme (SAU 76)	Fractional roles	Not reported	Stable	BCBA
Mascoma Valley (SAU 62)	Mixed certification pathways	Emerging	Not reported	Psych, BCBA
Newport (SAU 43)	Combination certified/contracted	Yes – para to teacher	Ongoing recruitment	SLP, BCBA
Plainfield (SAU 32)	Small staff, limited redundancy	Not reported	Stable	Related services
Sunapee (SAU 85)	Fully certified	Informal mentoring	Stable	Paraprofessionals

District Size and Student Need

Districts included in the snapshot vary widely in enrollment, ranging from fewer than 100 students in the smallest districts to approximately 1,700 students in the largest. The proportion of students with IEPs also varies across districts, reflecting differences in community demographics, service models, and the presence of specialized programs.

Free and reduced-price lunch rates vary substantially across districts, underscoring differences in socioeconomic contexts and associated student needs. These differences influence staffing demands, the intensity of services required, and the availability of local labor pools to support special education roles.

Special Education Staffing Configurations

Special education staffing models across the region reflect district size and geographic context. Larger districts generally employ more special education teachers and paraprofessionals and are more likely to maintain in-district related service capacity. Smaller districts often rely on fractional positions, shared roles, or contracted providers to meet student needs.

Across districts, paraprofessionals play a critical role in supporting students with disabilities. The ratio of paraprofessionals to special education teachers varies widely, as does the extent to which paraprofessionals serve exclusively in special education settings versus across general and special education classrooms. Several districts reported difficulty recruiting and retaining paraprofessionals, particularly for positions requiring consistency across multiple settings or extended schedules.

Related Services and Hard-to-Fill Roles

All participating districts provide related services required to support students with IEPs, including speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, school psychology, and social work. However, the way these services are delivered varies. Some districts employ in-district providers, while others rely on contracted services, either partially or entirely.

Hard-to-fill roles are most frequently reported in specialized areas such as speech-language pathology, school psychology, and behavioral support services. Smaller districts and those with geographically dispersed schools report greater difficulty sustaining consistent coverage in these roles, particularly when providers must travel between sites.

Caseloads and Workload Considerations

Reported caseload ranges vary across districts, influenced by district size, staffing levels, and service delivery models. While some districts report caseloads within commonly accepted ranges, others describe variability driven by staffing vacancies, student mobility, or the need to cover multiple buildings or programs.

Workload extends beyond direct instructional time. District leaders and staff consistently described the impact of paperwork, IEP meetings, compliance requirements, and

coordination with related service providers on the overall sustainability of the workload. These factors are explored in greater depth in subsequent findings sections.

Use of This Snapshot

This snapshot is intended to provide readers with a shared understanding of the districts represented in the study and the broad staffing conditions under which they operate. It is not designed to compare district performance or effectiveness. The following sections build on this snapshot by examining recruitment, retention, workload distribution, and knowledge-sharing practices across districts, with attention to how local context shapes these patterns.

Recruitment Findings

Overview

Recruitment challenges are present across West Central districts and participating CMF Kids partner districts, though their nature and intensity vary by district size, geography, and role. Survey responses, district-submitted data, and administrator input indicate that recruitment difficulties are most pronounced in specialized and hard-to-fill positions and in districts with limited local labor pools.

While some districts reported relative success in filling vacancies within a reasonable timeframe, others described persistent difficulty generating qualified applicant pools, particularly for positions requiring licensure, specialized endorsements, or travel between multiple buildings.

Survey Snapshot: Recruitment Pathways

Survey responses indicate that recruitment pathways vary across districts, with staff most commonly learning about openings through informal networks and district-based channels rather than centralized recruitment systems. Word-of-mouth referrals, district websites, and education-specific job boards were the most frequently reported pathways into district positions.

Respondents represent a range of roles, including special education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and administrators. This distribution reflects the breadth of the special education workforce and provides insight into recruitment conditions across roles.

Figure 2. Survey Respondent Role Distribution

Source: CMF Kids Special Education Workforce Survey (N = 145).

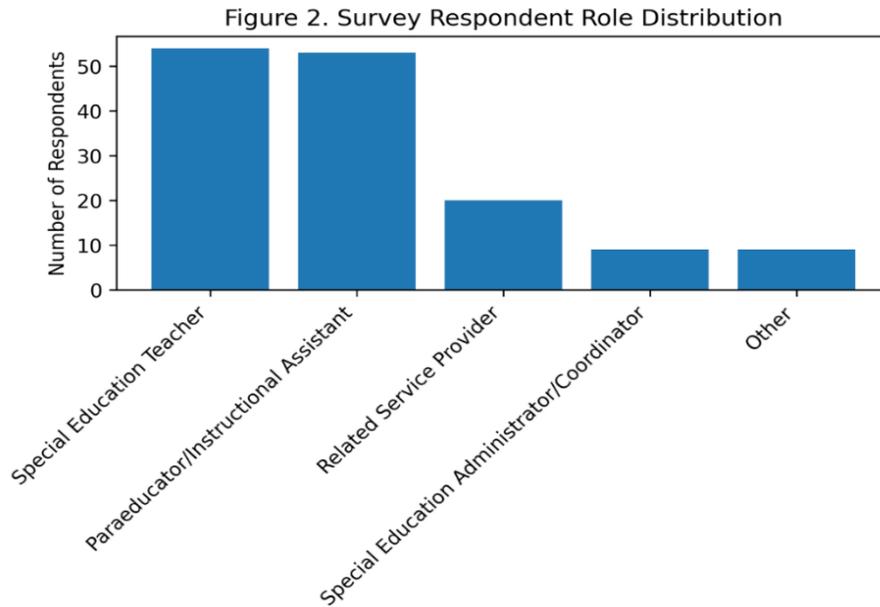
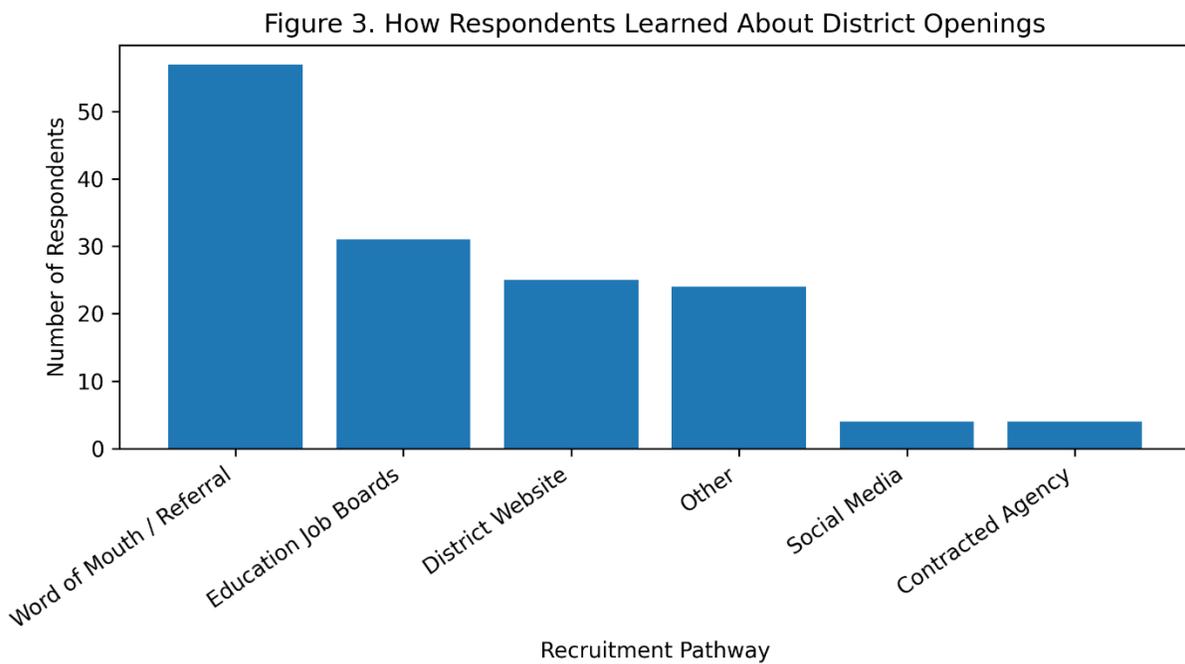


Figure 3. How Respondents Learned About District Openings

Source: CMF Kids Special Education Workforce Survey (N = 145). Multiple responses permitted.



Applicant Pool Constraints

Across districts, respondents identified limited applicant pools as a primary constraint on recruitment. Factors contributing to these constraints include:

- The small number of locally available, licensed special education professionals.
- Competition with neighboring districts, larger districts, and contracted service agencies.
- Geographic distance from educator preparation programs; and
- Limited housing availability or affordability within a reasonable commuting distance.

Districts serving rural or geographically dispersed communities reported that, even when positions are widely posted, applicant pools are often small and may not include fully certified candidates. This is particularly evident for related service roles and for special education teachers with multiple endorsements.

National Rural Recruitment Context

National workforce studies consistently show that rural districts experience greater difficulty recruiting special education teachers and related service providers due to limited local labor markets, geographic distance, and competition from neighboring districts and contracted agencies (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). This context helps explain why applicant pools remain limited even when districts actively recruit.

Implications for Recruitment

The recruitment findings suggest that persistent staffing challenges are driven less by a lack of interest in special education roles and more by structural constraints, including limited applicant pools, certification and endorsement requirements, geographic distance, and housing availability. Districts may use these findings to examine grow-your-own pipelines, strengthen partnerships with preparation programs, and consider regional or shared recruitment strategies that expand access to candidates beyond individual district boundaries. Addressing recruitment through coordinated, systems-level approaches may help reduce vacancy duration and reliance on short-term staffing solutions.

Certification and Credentialing Barriers

Certification requirements emerged consistently as a recruitment barrier across survey responses and administrator input. Respondents described challenges related to testing requirements, alignment with endorsements, and the time and cost associated with entering or completing alternative certification pathways.

District leaders noted that while conditional and alternative certification routes can support recruitment, candidates often require significant mentoring and administrative support during the certification process. In some cases, districts reported losing prospective hires due to delays or uncertainty related to credentialing timelines.

These barriers were reported to affect both early-career educators and experienced professionals seeking to add endorsements or transition into special education roles.

Compensation and Market Competition

Compensation was frequently cited as a factor influencing recruitment, particularly when districts compete with contracted service providers or nearby districts offering higher pay or more flexible work arrangements. This was especially pronounced among related service providers, for whom districts reported difficulty matching market rates offered outside traditional school contracts.

Paraprofessional recruitment was also affected by compensation levels, particularly in districts where wages are not competitive with local employers offering similar or higher pay for positions with fewer responsibilities or less demanding schedules.

Role-Specific Recruitment Challenges

Recruitment challenges vary by role:

- **Special education teachers:** Districts reported difficulty recruiting candidates with appropriate endorsements, particularly for positions serving students with intensive needs or requiring cross-grade or cross-building assignments.
- **Paraprofessionals:** Districts consistently describe challenges recruiting paraprofessionals willing to commit to full-day schedules, manage physically or behaviorally demanding roles, or work across multiple settings.
- **Related service providers:** Speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and behavioral specialists were among the most frequently identified hard-to-fill roles, especially in smaller districts or districts requiring travel between sites.

Recruitment Practices Currently in Use

Districts reported using a range of recruitment strategies, including district websites, regional job boards, word-of-mouth referrals, and partnerships with preparation programs. Several districts described informal recruitment pipelines, such as encouraging paraprofessionals or long-term substitutes to pursue certification, though these efforts are not consistently formalized across the region.

Administrators noted that districts with stronger local recruitment networks and clearer role expectations appeared better positioned to attract candidates, even with compensation constraints in place.

Implications for Workforce Planning

Recruitment findings suggest that staffing challenges are driven less by a lack of interest in special education work and more by structural and market constraints. Geographic isolation, certification requirements, compensation competition, and limited local pipelines interact to shape recruitment outcomes.

These findings underscore the importance of regional approaches to recruitment, including shared pipelines, grow-your-own strategies, and coordinated support for certification pathways. Recruitment challenges also have downstream effects on workload and retention, which are explored in the sections that follow.

Retention Findings

Overview

Across West Central districts and CMF Kids partner districts, retention patterns reflect a complex balance between staff commitment to students and the sustainability of working conditions. Survey responses indicate that many special education staff intend to remain in their current roles in the near term. At the same time, respondents consistently identified structural and workload-related factors that place long-term retention at risk, particularly in high-demand roles and in districts experiencing staffing instability.

Retention conditions vary by district size, geography, and role, but several themes emerged consistently across data sources.

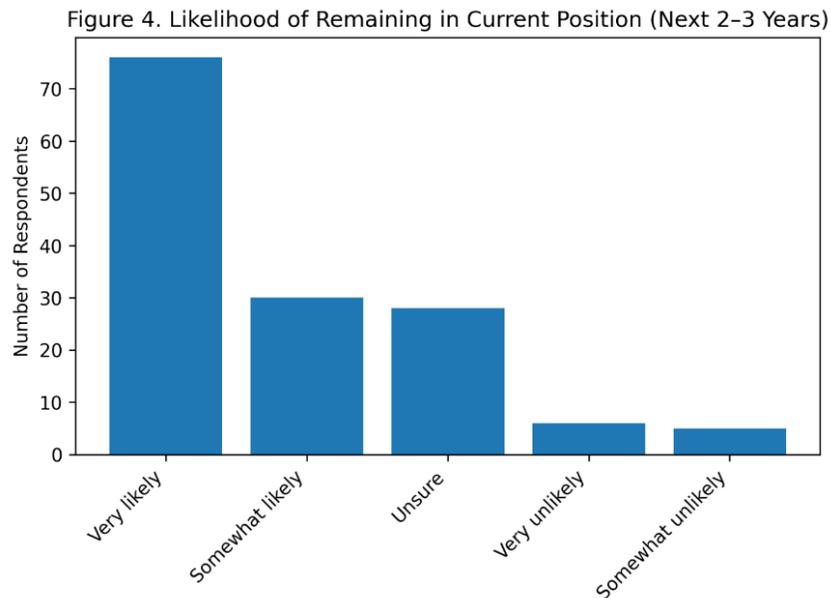
Short-Term Retention Outlook

Survey results indicate that many respondents expect to remain in their current positions in the near term. However, this stated intent exists alongside persistent concerns related to workload sustainability, compensation, and staffing stability.

Respondents who reported stronger leadership support, clearer role expectations, and access to planning time were more likely to indicate a higher likelihood of remaining in their roles over the next two to three years.

Figure 4. Likelihood of Remaining in Current Position (Next 2–3 Years)

Source: CMF Kids Special Education Workforce Survey (N = 145).



Conditions Influencing Retention

Survey ratings related to leadership support, collaboration between general and special education staff, access to crisis and behavioral supports, and evaluation feedback provide additional insight into retention conditions across districts.

Figure 5. Leadership Support and Collaboration Ratings

Source: CMF Kids Special Education Workforce Survey (N = 145). Ratings shown on a 1–5 scale.

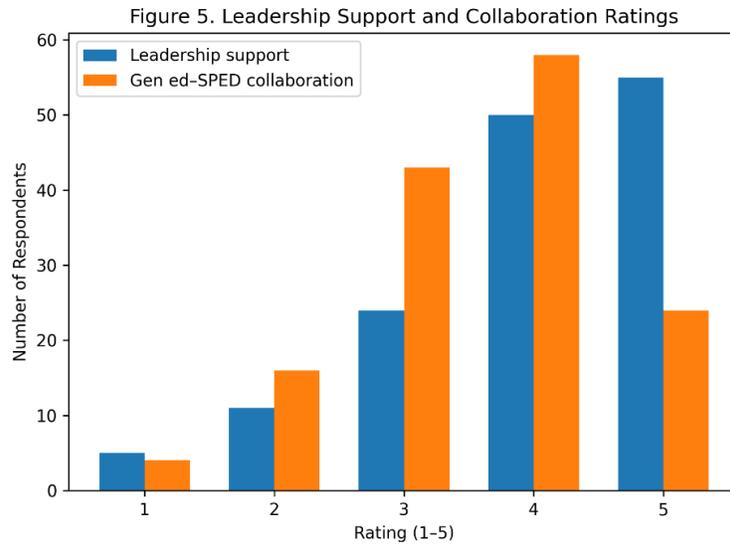
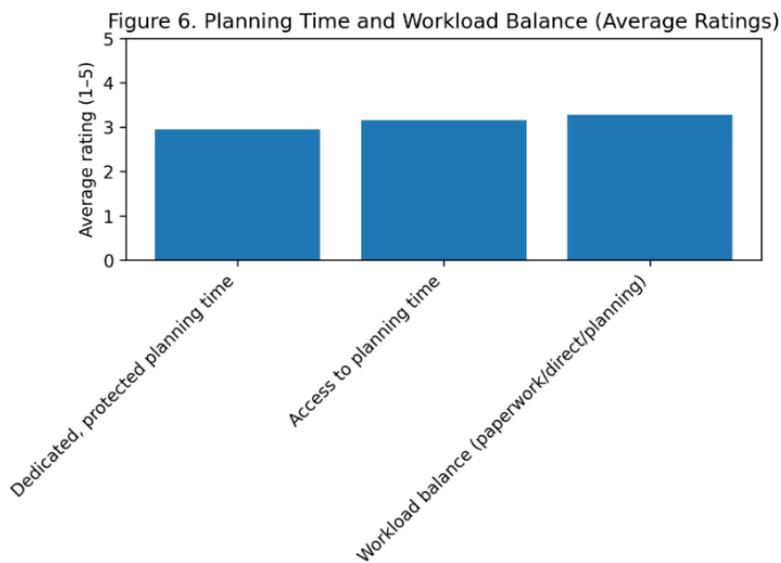


Figure 6. Planning Time and Workload Balance

Source: CMF Kids Special Education Workforce Survey (N = 145). “Access to planning time” and “Workload balance” categories were converted to a 1–5 scale (Very unclear/insufficient=1; Somewhat unclear/insufficient=2; Adequate=3; Good=4; Excellent=5).



Incentives That Matter Most

When asked which incentives would most influence their decision to remain in their role, respondents most frequently selected compensation-related supports, particularly benefits, insurance, and stipends, followed by tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness support, and career advancement pathways.

Survey respondents were also asked to identify incentives that most influence their decision to remain in their roles. Results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Retention Incentives Identified by Survey Respondents

Source: CMF Kids Special Education Workforce Survey (N = 145). Respondents selected up to three incentives.

Incentive	Number of Respondents Selecting	Percent of Respondents (N = 145)
Increased benefits	80	55.2%
Better insurance package	57	39.3%
Stipends or pay differentials	54	37.2%
Tuition reimbursement	39	26.9%
Loan forgiveness support	37	25.5%
Career advancement pathways	34	23.4%
Other incentives	23	15.9%
Mentoring/induction supports	12	8.3%
Housing assistance	5	3.4%
Relocation assistance	2	1.4%

Implications for Retention

Retention findings indicate that workforce stability is closely tied to working conditions, role clarity, and workload sustainability rather than staff commitment to students or the

profession. Districts may use these findings to assess how case management demands, administrative responsibilities, and access to planning time affect staff capacity over time. Strategies that protect instructional and planning time, clarify role expectations, and reduce non-instructional burden may support retention by making special education roles more sustainable and predictable.

Commitment to Role and Students

Survey respondents frequently described a strong commitment to their students and to the mission of special education. Many cited relationships with students, families, and colleagues as primary reasons for remaining in their positions. This sense of purpose appears to buffer some retention pressures in the short term, particularly in districts with supportive school cultures and stable leadership.

District leaders also noted that staff who feel valued, recognized, and supported by administration are more likely to remain, even when workload demands are high. These qualitative observations align with survey responses, indicating that perceived leadership support and collegial collaboration contribute positively to retention outlook.

Workload Sustainability

Workload emerged as a central factor influencing retention. Respondents across roles reported challenges in balancing direct instruction or student support with paperwork, meetings, compliance requirements, and cross-team coordination. Lack of protected planning time was frequently cited as a stressor that accumulates over time.

Districts experiencing vacancies or relying on contracted services reported increased workloads for remaining staff, which, in turn, affects morale and retention risk. In smaller or geographically dispersed districts, staff covering multiple buildings or roles described additional strain related to travel time and schedule fragmentation.

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation and benefits were consistently identified as factors influencing retention decisions. While compensation alone does not appear to drive immediate departures for many respondents, it becomes increasingly significant when combined with high workload and limited advancement opportunities.

Paraprofessionals reported that compensation often does not align with the demands of the role, contributing to turnover or transitions to non-school employment. Related service providers cited difficulty remaining in district positions when external agencies offer higher pay or more flexible schedules.

Professional Support and Growth

Access to meaningful professional development, mentoring, and induction support emerged as a retention factor across roles. Respondents who reported receiving consistent onboarding and role-specific professional learning were more likely to report a positive retention outlook.

Conversely, limited access to mentoring or unclear career pathways were identified as reasons staff might consider leaving. This was especially true for staff in alternative or conditional certification pathways who require structured support to navigate licensure requirements alongside full-time work responsibilities.

Retention Risks and Triggers

When asked about factors that might lead them to leave their position, respondents most frequently cited:

- Unsustainable workload or caseload increases.
- Ongoing staffing vacancies without relief.
- Inadequate compensation relative to job demands; and
- Lack of administrative or systemic support.

These risks were more pronounced in districts with persistent staffing shortages than in those with episodic shortages.

Why Vacancies Persist

National analyses show that many special education vacancies are filled by educators moving between districts rather than new entrants to the field, contributing to continued staffing instability across regions with limited labor pools (Pendola & Perrone, 2025).

Implications for District Stability

Retention findings suggest that while many districts currently benefit from staff dedication and short-term stability, this stability may be fragile if workload and compensation pressures remain unaddressed. Retention is closely linked to recruitment outcomes; difficulties filling vacancies increase workload, which, in turn, heightens the risk of turnover.

These findings highlight the importance of retention strategies that go beyond individual incentives and address structural conditions, including protected planning time, workload distribution, mentoring, and clear career pathways. The following section examines workload and caseload patterns in greater detail.

Workload and Caseload Findings

Overview

Workload and caseload patterns across West Central districts and participating CMF Kids partner districts reflect substantial variation driven by district size, staffing levels, geographic factors, and service delivery models. While reported caseload ranges in many districts fall within commonly accepted parameters, workload sustainability is influenced by factors that extend well beyond caseload numbers alone.

Survey responses, district-submitted data, and administrator input consistently indicate that workload concerns are shaped by the interaction of staffing stability, role clarity, travel demands, and non-instructional responsibilities.

Caseload Ranges and Variability

District-reported caseload ranges vary across the region. Larger districts generally report more stable caseload distributions, supported by higher staffing capacity and specialized roles. Smaller districts often report wider caseload ranges, particularly when staffing levels fluctuate or when staff are required to serve multiple grade levels or buildings.

Respondents noted that caseload size alone does not fully capture workload intensity. Caseload composition, including the complexity of student needs, the number of IEP meetings, and coordination with outside agencies, significantly affects day-to-day demands. Districts serving students with higher behavioral or medical needs reported increased workloads even when numeric caseloads appeared manageable.

Impact of Staffing Vacancies

Staffing vacancies have a direct and compounding impact on workload. Districts experiencing unfilled positions or delays in filling vacancies reported that remaining staff absorb additional responsibilities, including increased caseloads, coverage across settings, and expanded coordination duties.

Survey respondents in districts with ongoing vacancies were more likely to report that the workload is unmanageable. Administrators described a cyclical effect in which vacancies

increase workload, elevated workload contributes to stress and burnout, and burnout increases the risk of turnover.

Protected Planning Time

Lack of consistent, protected planning time emerged as one of the most frequently cited workload concerns across roles. Respondents described planning time being reduced or eliminated due to coverage needs, meetings, or travel between sites. This was particularly pronounced for staff serving multiple buildings or programs.

District leaders acknowledged that scheduling constraints and staffing shortages make it difficult to protect planning time, even when it is formally included in contracts or schedules. The absence of protected planning time was closely linked to increased after-hours work and reduced work-life balance.

Paperwork and Compliance Demands

Paperwork, documentation, and compliance-related responsibilities were consistently identified as significant contributors to workload. Respondents described spending substantial time on IEP development, progress monitoring, meetings, and coordination with related service providers and families.

These responsibilities were reported to be particularly burdensome during periods of staff turnover or when staff are new to roles and systems. Administrators noted that case management demands often fall disproportionately on special education teachers, further intensifying workload pressures.

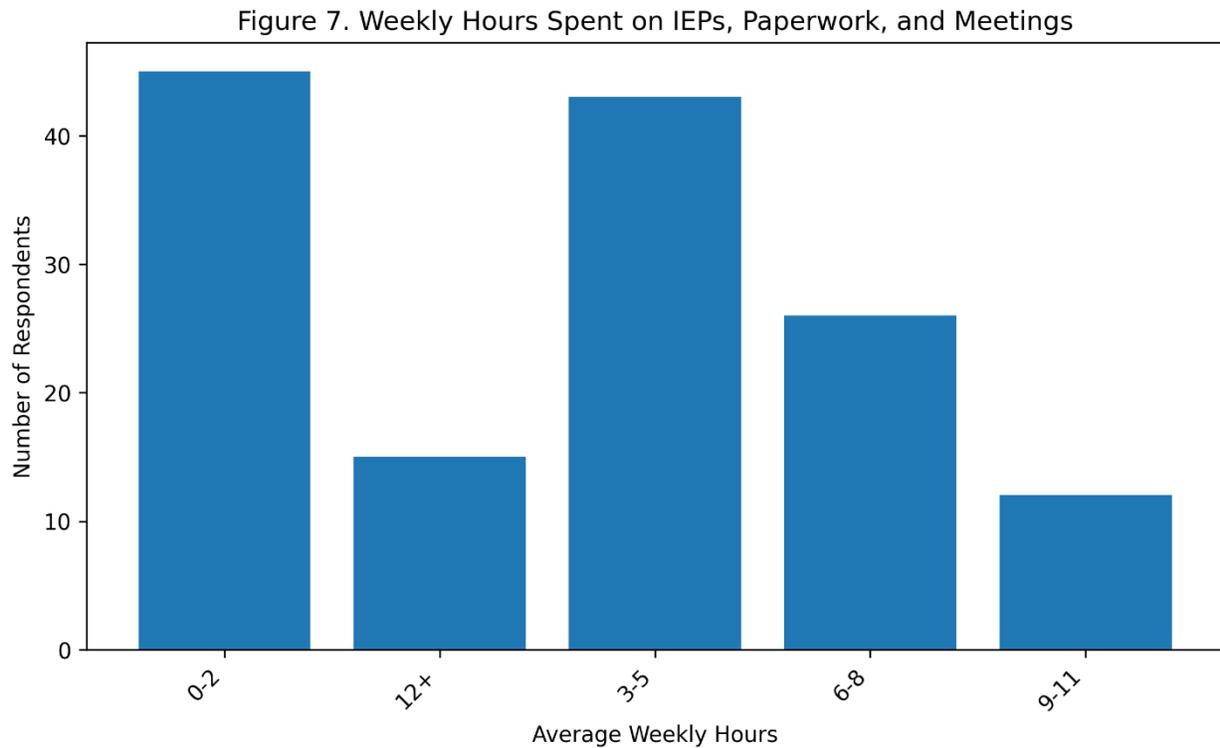
Time Spent on Case Management and Documentation

Survey respondents reported spending a substantial portion of their workweek on IEP development, meetings, documentation, and coordination. These responsibilities contribute significantly to the overall workload and are not fully captured by caseload numbers alone.

Respondents who reported higher weekly hours spent on paperwork and meetings were more likely to describe their workload as unmanageable, particularly in districts experiencing staffing vacancies.

Figure 7. Weekly Hours Spent on IEPs, Paperwork, and Meetings

Source: CMF Kids Special Education Workforce Survey (N = 145).



Implications for Workforce Sustainability

Workload and caseload findings underscore that sustainability is influenced by multiple interacting factors, not solely by caseload size. Staffing stability, protected planning time, case management expectations, and geographic considerations all shape staff experience and capacity.

These findings suggest that addressing workload requires structural strategies, including improved case-management support, more precise role delineation, and regional approaches to staffing coverage. The following section examines how districts currently share knowledge and practices and where opportunities exist for replication and collaboration.

National research similarly identifies workload structure, administrative demands, and access to planning time as central factors influencing special education retention, particularly in high-need and rural settings (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023).

Travel and Geographic Factors

Geographic factors play a meaningful role in workload sustainability. Staff serving geographically dispersed districts or multiple buildings reported increased travel time, fragmented schedules, and reduced efficiency. These challenges were more commonly reported in smaller or regional districts with broad catchment areas.

Travel demands also affect service providers serving multiple schools or districts, contributing to scheduling complexity and reduced time available for direct services and collaboration.

Knowledge Sharing and Replication Findings

Overview

A key goal of the West Central Special Education Workforce Study is to identify practices that are currently working within districts and to consider how these practices might be shared or adapted across the region. Survey responses, district input, and administrator interviews indicate that while many districts have developed effective local strategies, these practices are often informal, person-dependent, or not widely shared beyond individual districts.

Opportunities for knowledge sharing exist both within the West Central region and across CMF Kids partner districts, particularly in areas such as recruitment pipelines, onboarding, workload management, and the use of contracted services.

Promising Practices Identified

Several districts described practices that appear to support workforce stability or mitigate staffing challenges. These practices vary by context but include:

- Informal “grow-your-own” approaches, such as encouraging paraprofessionals or long-term substitutes to pursue special education certification while working in district roles.
- Strong onboarding and mentoring practices for new hires, particularly when administrative or peer support is intentionally structured.
- Strategic use of contracted services to fill temporary gaps or support highly specialized needs; and
- Clear role delineation and communication within special education teams, which supports collaboration and reduces duplication of effort.

While these practices were not universally implemented across districts, they were consistently associated with more stable staffing conditions where they were in place.

Conditions That Support Replication

District leaders emphasized that successful replication of practices depends on enabling conditions rather than on simply adopting a strategy in isolation. Key conditions identified include:

- Stable leadership and administrative support.
- Clear communication of roles, expectations, and priorities.
- Trusting relationships among staff, administrators, and community partners; and
- Flexibility in scheduling, staffing models, and budget structures.

Districts noted that practices developed in larger or better-resourced districts may need to be adapted to fit the scale and capacity of smaller districts.

Barriers to Knowledge Sharing

Despite shared challenges across the region, districts reported limited formal mechanisms for sharing workforce strategies. Knowledge exchange often occurs informally through personal relationships, regional meetings, or ad hoc problem-solving rather than through structured forums.

Time constraints, staffing shortages, and competing priorities were frequently cited as barriers to intentional knowledge sharing. In some cases, districts report uncertainty about how practices in other districts translate to their own context, particularly when geographic or scale differences are significant.

Role of Regional Collaboration

Respondents identified regional collaboration as a promising avenue for strengthening workforce sustainability. Potential areas for collaboration include shared recruitment pipelines, coordinated professional development, regional mentoring networks, and shared problem-solving around hard-to-fill roles.

Several administrators noted that regional approaches may be particularly valuable for smaller districts that lack the scale to develop specialized programs or staffing solutions independently. Collaboration can also reduce duplication of effort and support more consistent experiences for staff across districts.

Implications for Next Steps

Knowledge-sharing findings suggest that the region has a strong foundation of locally developed strategies that could inform broader workforce solutions if supported by more intentional structures. Creating opportunities for districts to learn from one another, while respecting differences in context and capacity, may strengthen recruitment, retention, and workload sustainability over time.

The following section presents actionable recommendations grounded in these findings and aligned with the study's objectives.

Implications for Equitable Access

Variability in staffing capacity, service models, and access to specialized expertise can contribute to uneven service delivery for students with disabilities across districts. The practices identified in this study suggest that intentional knowledge sharing, regional collaboration, and common planning structures may help mitigate these disparities. Districts may use these findings to explore shared approaches that promote more consistent access to services, regardless of district size or geographic location.

Taken together, the findings in this study illustrate how workforce conditions influence recruitment effectiveness, staff retention, staffing sustainability, and equitable access to services for students with disabilities. The recommendations that follow are grounded in these findings and are intended to support practical, data-informed action at both the district and regional levels.

Recommendations

Overview

The recommendations below address the patterns documented in the recruitment, retention, workload, and knowledge-sharing findings presented earlier in this report. They are designed to be practical, scalable, and adaptable to district size and geographic context. While no single strategy will resolve workforce challenges across all districts, coordinated action in these areas can strengthen workforce stability over time.

Recommendations are organized around four focus areas:

1. Recruitment
2. Retention
3. Workload Sustainability

4. Knowledge Sharing and Regional Collaboration

Where appropriate, recommendations include early implementation actions that districts or the region could pursue within existing structures.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen Regional Recruitment Pipelines

Grow-your-own pathways are widely used in rural and high-need districts to expand local recruitment pipelines and reduce reliance on external labor markets.

Focus Area: *Recruitment*

Districts would benefit from moving beyond isolated recruitment efforts toward more coordinated regional strategies. Recruitment challenges are driven less by lack of interest and more by limited applicant pools, certification barriers, and geographic constraints.

Action Steps

- Develop regional “grow-your-own” pathways that support paraprofessionals, substitutes, and community members in pursuing special education licensure while employed.
- Coordinate outreach to educator preparation programs to increase awareness of opportunities in West Central districts.
- Share recruitment messaging and job postings regionally to increase visibility and reduce duplication of effort.

Why this matters

Regional pipelines expand the pool of candidates and reduce reliance on short-term or contract staffing, particularly in rural and smaller districts.

Recommendation 2: Provide Structured Support for Certification Pathways

Focus Area: *Recruitment and Retention*

Certification and credentialing requirements emerged as a consistent barrier to both hiring and retaining staff. Districts that support candidates through these processes are better positioned to stabilize staffing.

Action Steps

- Establish clear internal guidance for staff pursuing alternative or conditional certification pathways.

- Identify regional or shared mentoring supports for staff completing licensure requirements.
- Explore coordinated test preparation, tuition assistance, or reimbursement strategies where feasible.

Why this matters

Reducing uncertainty and administrative burden during certification increases the likelihood that candidates remain in district roles long enough to become fully licensed.

Recommendation 3: Protect Time for Instruction, Planning, and Case Management

Focus Area: *Workload Sustainability*

Workload findings demonstrate that caseload numbers alone do not determine sustainability. Lack of protected planning time and increasing case management demands are significant contributors to burnout. Research consistently shows that retention is strongly influenced by working conditions, such as manageable caseloads, protected planning time, and administrative support, rather than compensation alone (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023).

Action Steps

- Review schedules to identify opportunities to protect dedicated planning and case management time.
- Explore clerical or administrative supports for IEP coordination, scheduling, and documentation.
- Use staffing data to anticipate workload impacts when vacancies occur and adjust expectations accordingly.

Why this matters

Protecting time reduces after-hours work, improves service quality, and supports long-term retention.

Recommendation 4: Address Paraprofessional Stability as a Retention Priority

Focus Area: *Retention*

Paraprofessionals play a critical role across all districts and are consistently among the most challenging positions for staff.

Action Steps

- Review compensation, scheduling, and role expectations to identify barriers to paraprofessional recruitment and retention.
- Clarify career pathways for paraprofessionals interested in advancing into certified roles.
- Provide consistent onboarding and role-specific training to improve job satisfaction and effectiveness.

Why this matters

Stability in paraprofessional staffing directly affects student support, teacher workload, and overall program continuity.

Recommendation 5: Formalize Knowledge Sharing Across Districts

Focus Area: *Knowledge Sharing and Replication*

Districts currently share information informally, often relying on personal relationships. Formal structures can help ensure effective practices are shared more consistently.

Action Steps

- Create regular opportunities for districts to share workforce strategies, challenges, and lessons learned.
- Document and disseminate examples of effective onboarding, staffing models, or workload supports.
- Use regional meetings or facilitated sessions to focus specifically on workforce topics.

Why this matters

Intentional knowledge sharing reduces duplication, accelerates problem-solving, and supports districts with limited internal capacity.

Recommendation 6: Institutionalize Workforce Data Review and Planning

Focus Area: *Cross-Cutting*

The process of collecting and reviewing workforce data was itself a valuable outcome of this study.

Action Steps

- Maintain a shared set of workforce indicators that districts can update annually.
- Use staffing and caseload data proactively during budget and staff planning cycles.
- Revisit workforce conditions periodically to assess progress and adjust strategies.

Why this matters

Consistent use of data supports transparency, strengthens planning, and allows districts to respond more effectively to emerging challenges.

Closing Note

These recommendations are intended to support districts in strengthening special education workforce stability while recognizing differences in scale, capacity, and geographic context. Progress is most likely when districts act both locally and collaboratively, using shared data and collective problem-solving to address challenges that no single district can resolve on its own.

Conclusion

The West Central Special Education Workforce Study provides a clear, locally grounded picture of staffing conditions across participating districts. Taken together, the findings show that workforce challenges are not the result of isolated issues or individual district practices, but of intersecting structural factors that shape recruitment, retention, and workload sustainability across the region.

Districts operate within diverse geographic, demographic, and organizational contexts, yet many face shared pressures. Limited applicant pools, certification and credentialing barriers, competition from contracted services, and increasing workload demands affect districts of all sizes. At the same time, the study highlights strengths across the region, including strong staff commitment to students, locally developed strategies that support stability, and a willingness among districts to learn from one another. This report is intended to support informed workforce planning within the current New Hampshire policy context and does not substitute for regulatory compliance reviews or fiscal impact analyses conducted at the district level.

A central theme of the study is that workforce sustainability depends as much on systems and structures as on staffing numbers. Caseloads alone do not define workload. Labor markets and policy requirements constrain recruitment efforts. The cumulative effect of workload, compensation, professional support, and role clarity influences retention. These

realities underscore the importance of addressing workforce challenges through coordinated, data-informed approaches rather than short-term fixes.

The study also demonstrates the value of shared data and regional collaboration. By establishing a common baseline and documenting variation transparently, districts are better positioned to engage in meaningful planning conversations, align strategies, and advocate collectively for solutions that reflect regional needs.

Moving forward, districts can use this report as:

- A reference point for staffing and budget planning.
- A tool to support internal discussions with staff and boards.
- A foundation for regional collaboration and partnership development; and
- A starting point for future workforce analysis and continuous improvement.

Sustaining a qualified and stable special education workforce is essential to meeting students' needs and ensuring equitable access to services. While no single strategy will resolve workforce challenges across all districts, the findings and recommendations in this report provide a practical framework for taking coordinated, informed steps toward greater stability and long-term capacity across the West Central region.

Strengthening the special education workforce is essential not only for staffing stability but also for ensuring equitable, consistent access to services for students with disabilities across diverse district contexts.