



Dolton School District 149

The Challenge

Dolton SD 149 was faced with 30-plus teaching vacancies in school year 2022-23 and SY 2023-24 and did not have a sufficient number of incoming candidates to fill the positions. Traditional recruiting efforts were unsuccessful, leaving the district to fill classrooms with substitute teachers.

\$423,137

FY 2024 Grant Award

Strategic Local Investments

Strategy 1: Short-Term Solution – International Teachers

District 149 filled 27 teaching positions that would otherwise have remained vacant with Visiting International Teachers, creating an opportunity for cultural exchange with both students and other teachers.

Outcomes

- Students benefited from unique international perspectives and culturally diverse classroom environments.
- Short-term solution of hiring **27 international teachers** allowed the district planning time to implement a longer-term strategy to prepare for anticipated vacancies due to natural attrition as a result of retirees and teacher turnover.

Strategy 2: Recruitment and Retention

Based on competitive neighboring districts, District 149 devised incentive programs to attract qualified candidates by paying sign-on bonuses, stipends for hard-to-fill positions, and compensation for teacher appreciation. It also added “culture and climate coach” positions to create stable and supportive classroom environments.

Outcomes

- Attracted **four new certified teachers**, with **two in hard-to-fill positions**.
- By providing ongoing recognition, realized a boost in teacher morale and engagement as evidenced by **teacher attendance rates improving by more than 10%**.
- Culture and climate coaches reported a **20% decrease in classroom disruptions**, contributing to a more focused academic setting and supporting better student behavior.

Strategy 3: Building a Grow your Own Pathway

In the third year of the Teacher Vacancy Grant, District 149 plans to create a pathway for noncertified staff to build on their strengths and transition into certified teachers.

Outcomes

- **Targeting 20-plus noncertified staff** to close the vacancy gap as newly certified teachers.
- Data shows that teachers who are nurtured and developed by the district are more likely to stay with the district. Implementing this strategy will **increase retention and reduce turnover**.
- Teachers who are locally trained are often more familiar with the culture, values, and needs of the students. This strategy will **strengthen relationships with students**, enhance classroom engagement and motivation, and support a positive learning environment.