REIL-Extend
Rewarding Excellence in Instruction and Leadership

# ALL ABOARD!

THE CONDUCTOR'S GUIDE TO EDUCATOR ONBOARDING

| Performance Excellence | Strategic Staffing | Talent Management & Development | Culture & Total Rewards |

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⭐ ALL ABOARD!

As you embark on this journey, think of yourself as the conductor of a train.

The **train tracks** represent your district or school's Mission, Vision, and Goals: write them in here!

These tracks ensure you and your crew are always heading in the right direction, and don't get derailed.
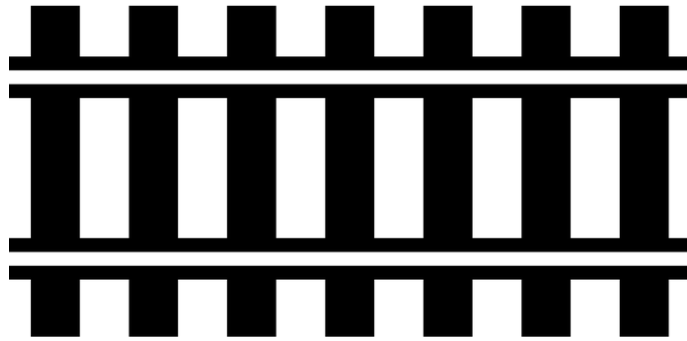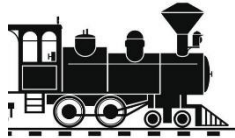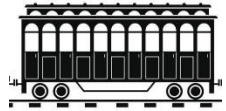
MISSION:

VISION:

GOALS:

The **train cars** are designed for different functions, too:

The engine, where you lead the charge and keep steady momentum, up hills and into valleys.
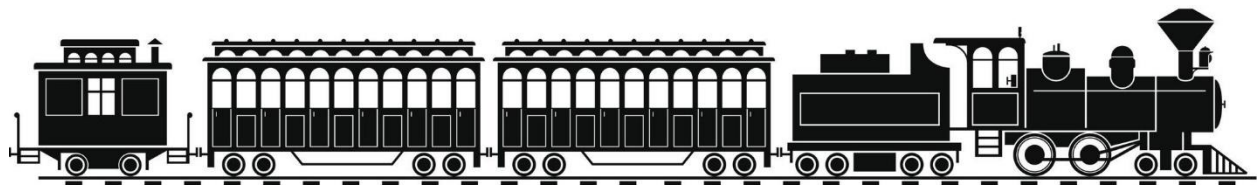
Passenger cars, where you can help your staff feel at home and comfortable in their roles.
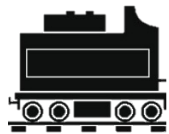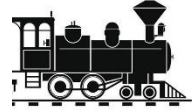
Freight cars, where you can keep the tools at your disposal, and ensure the right resources are available at each stop.

The **Caboose,** where you can keep a look out and remember how far you've come!

⭐ THE JOURNEY: Why We Embark

The first year of an employee's experience is the foundation on which their future with an organization is built and plays a major role in the decision about whether to return the following year. A thoughtful and comprehensive approach to employee onboarding can have a significant impact on a new employee's engagement, which leads to better team and student outcomes.

In today's tight educator candidate market, effective onboarding creates better employee relationships with the district and campus, can provide role clarity, enhance team dynamics, inform training opportunities, and serve as a foundational tool related to performance management. It leads to lower turnover, higher performance and productivity, and lower levels of stress. Onboarding also sets a tone for a school district and provides opportunities to communicate about culture, vision, mission, and goals.

Check out these other ways an onboarding plan contributes to the success of an organization!

- Lay the groundwork for effective performance management

- Communicate HR branding

- Increase employee engagement

- Communicate common vision of instructional improvement

- Inform establishment of goals and objectives

- Provide role clarity

- Highlight the mission

- Reinforce a common language

- Expedite the orientation process

- Establish role relationships

- Support internal and external communication

- Support the Strategic Plan

- Initiate employee development and team socialization

> **CONDUCTOR'S NOTE: ONBOARDING VS. ORIENTATION**
> For the purpose of this guide, *Onboarding* refers to a year-long process that provides a new hire with an elevated experience of integrating into the team and culture. *Orientation,* on the other hand, typically refers to pre-boarding activities and the first few days of new employment.

⭐ THE LOADING PLATFOR*M*: Day Zero

For someone joining a new team, it can feel like they're not learning one new job, but two: the *job* they accepted, and the *role* they will come to play in a new team culture and workplace ecosystem. Sometimes, the "perfect hire" quickly seems less equipped for success simply because they didn't have a well-kept runway by which to enter their new role.

This is where a strong Day Zero plan can make a tremendous difference.

What Is Day Zero?

Essentially, Day Zero covers the entire period of time between a candidate accepting a job offer, and the first day they show up for their new job. For teachers, that can mean a whole summer, a month, or even just a week. Regardless, there is a relatively short opportunity to make your move, so plan to make it a good one.

What Should Day Zero Entail?

This is the fun part! Because much of the orientation-centered, checklist-driven activity doesn't begin until Day1, employers and teams can focus on developing more of the cultural aspects during this time. That new hire is in a stage of enthusiasm and anticipation—harness that energy and remind them why they made a great choice by joining your organization. You can set some expectations about the district's mission, vision, values, and goals, provide some basic information about the campus or team, and set a positive tone for the big

> The idea is for this new addition to walk onto campus feeling welcome, confident, and prepared to contribute.

day. Below are some ideas, but you can really run with this! Aim for 2-4 touchpoints (depending on time between acceptance and start date):

- Mail a Welcome Kit with school spirit swag
- Mail a handwritten welcome note, signed by the new team
- Send a few "countdown" emails communicating your excitement for Day 1

- Send an "About Us" email with photos and bios of the new team
- Send a loose schedule of activities for the first few days, including some kind of social opportunity like a luncheon with the other new hires or the new team

These may seem simple, but it makes an enormous impact to your new hire to know that you are bringing them into the fold early and intentionally.

⭐ THE STATION ITINERARY
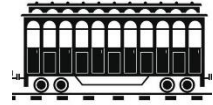
These are good times to take note of how new teachers might be feeling and what they are experiencing along the way.

Phase 0: Offer Acceptance
Day 0 is the day a candidate officially accepts an offer. It is then that the employee experience kicks off—*not* the first day of work!

> "Onboarding is a magic moment when new employees decide to stay engaged or become disengaged. It offers an imprinting window when you can make an impression that stays with new employees for the duration of their careers."
> *- Amy Robinson, Principal of The Interchange Group*

Phase 1: Welcome [August]
Characterized by excitement, possibly nervousness. New employees want to be welcomed and feel at ease as early as possible; this phase is critical to establishing a positive tone before students get into the classroom.

Phase 2: Students and Space [August-September]
This time is for meeting students, "nesting" in the classroom, setting norms, and building classroom culture. Be sure to check in frequently to answer questions and provide support!

Phase 3: Colleagues and Collaboration [September-October]
Once the demands of the school year set in, a new teacher relies on the support of his or her team to avoid overwhelm and feelings of burnout. Collaboration is key in this phase, and a team of committed colleagues will foster hope in a stressful time.

Phase 4: Engagement and Encouragement [November-December]
Many new teachers battle disillusionment and low morale, particularly as winter break approaches. Emphasize celebrating the joyful aspects of teaching and the passion behind the common vision. Provide encouragement and keep these teachers engaged, believing in the hope of the future.

Phase 5: Adjustments and Accountability [January-February]
Leverage the fresh start of the calendar year and invite teachers to reflect on the prior semester, set intentions, and create action plans for the remainder of the year. Review coaching opportunities, observation outcomes, and identify pain points.

Phase 6: Transition and Rejuvenation [March-April]
Crunch time. Teachers may be feeling proud of their accomplishments and students' growth, or stressing about fitting everything into the remainder of the school year, or both. During this time, ensure mentor relationships remain strong and resources are accessible.

Phase 7: Reflection and Renewal [April-May]
Provide tools for reflection and hold one-on-one meetings to critically review the prior year. Celebrate successes, reward endurance, and encourage renewal of commitments for upcoming year.

⭐ PICKING UP STEAM: Supervisor Conversation Guide

This interview is designed to be completed by the supervisor and the new employee three times throughout the year: during Phase **1**, Phase **4**, and Phase **7**. However, if it fits into different Phases for your purpose, that's okay, too! Let this template be a starting point for getting to know one another and setting expectations for the time to come. Let it also be a tool for check-ins and review during different phases of Onboarding. These answers may remain constant, or they may shift with new perspectives. When you leave this meeting, you should both have total clarity on what success will look like in this role.

MOTIVATION:

What main things motivate you? (Ex: compensation, recognition, career growth, etc. Try to steer away from student-related motivation, like "Seeing students grow". This is about what motivates this person as an employee, not what values drive them.)

Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

CULTURE AND BEHAVIOR:

Share some cultural expectations that you have for your team as it relates to communication, behavior, and culture. Be sure to document behaviors that are not tolerated or that are damaging to team morale/cohesion.

    Example of behaviors we expect:
- Asking for help when needed
- Addressing issues as they arise

    Example of behaviors that will not be tolerated:
- Passing the blame
- Gossip

Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

RECOGNITION: How do you like to be recognized? Can you give me an example of a great style of recognition you have received?	
Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

CORE NEEDS: What three things do you need to stay with this district?	
Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

GROWTH: Where would you like to improve? What are a few things you are working on to be a better version of yourself?	
Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

STRESS:
What are signs that you are really stressed? How do you de-stress in these moments? How would you like your team to support you in these times?

Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

PERFORMANCE:
In this section, confirm specific performance expectations, skill acquisition expectations, and project/goal expectations for the first three months, six months, and year in the position (hopefully these are already documented clearly in the Job Description). Agree on what bad, mediocre, and excellent performance looks like. Paint a picture of the milestones that need to be hit and by when so that you can both confidently assess performance based on what is documented.

Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

CONCERNS:
What concerns or hesitations do you have? Do you need clarity on anything we have discussed?

Associate's Response	Supervisor's Response

⭐ DON'T GET DERAILED: Guidance for each Phase

The following table provides suggested meeting topics and resources within each phase:

Phase	HR	Supervisor	Mentor
Phase 1: Welcome [August] *Goal: New teacher will establish relationships with the team, get to know the community and the campus, and ensure formal policies are understood.*	• Introductions to district office staff • Ensure payroll and all paperwork in order • Review Benefits and collect elections	• Conduct initial Supervisor Conversation • Introductions to staff • Schedules review	• Introductions to team • Shadow • Buddy up at PD
	• Introduction Bingo • Bus ride in district neighborhood	• Bus ride in school neighborhood • Welcome package	• Meet and Greet • Shadow phone calls to parents • Shadow classroom set up
Phase 2: Students and Space [August-September] *Goal: New teacher will continue developing relationships and will get comfortable with the observation and evaluation processes.*	• Evaluation Instrument training • Consider conducting a Needs Assessment	• Invite new employee to shadow an expert teacher observation • Review grading expectations	• Mock Evaluation with Mentor • Invite teacher to shadow a lesson
		• Informal feedback on lesson • Pop-ins	
Phase 3: Colleagues and Collaboration [September-October] *Goal: New teacher will feel encouraged, have collaborative planning and observation time and receive direction on managing workload.*	• Email or call employee to check in • Email or call supervisor to check in on new employee	• Inform about scheduling parent/teacher/student conferences • Communicate Fall break expectations • Count classroom visits and individual feedback sessions; increase if needed	• Support preparation for parent/teacher/student conferences • Schedule Observations • Help replenish supplies where able
		• Provide substitute classroom coverage for half- or full-day planning intensive, if budget permits • Hold All-Staff meeting and recognize first-year staff	• Share conference forms and experiences • Provide Time Management guidance • Encourage rest and relaxation during break
Phase 4: Engagement and Encouragement [November-December]		• Review Supervisor Conversation, focusing on positives • Spend time reflecting with new employees	• Celebrate the end of first Semester • Encourage rest and relaxation during break

|			
Goal: New teacher will be celebrated and encouraged in order to help foster joy of teaching.		• Record celebrations	• Write a letter to new teacher • If appropriate, have students write a kind letter to new teacher • Word Bubble •
Phase 5: Adjustments and Accountability [January-February] *Goal: New teacher will reflect on the first semester, plan changes for remainder of the year, and increase community and parent involvement.*	• Contracts go out; check in with supervisors on if new teachers be offered contracts • Consider planning a community service project or school service day	• Continue formal observations • PRR if used • New year celebrations • If school supports student centered conferences, supports should be given now. • 2nd check-in with new teachers	• New year celebrations • Is there a 100-day activity? • If school supports student centered conferences supports should be given now
Phase 6: Transition and Rejuvenation [March-April] *Goal: New teacher will prepare for and conduct state testing, receive diversity training, and engage in a social activity.*	• Contract Deadlines • Diversity Training	• Continue observations • State testing • Host social activity • Optional but encouraged happy hour • Invitation to cultural pastime or sporting event	• Support with state and district testing • Support Spring parent/teacher/student conferences
Phase 7: Reflection and Renewal [April-May] *Goal: New teacher will engage in self-reflection, share and celebrate successes, organize classroom and teaching materials, and close out the school year.*	• End of year survey from new teachers • Review data on new teachers • Develop survey specifically surrounding feedback on the first-year experience	• Final Supervisor Conversation of the year • Ensure all observations are complete and teacher has received feedback • Final PRR if using • Review data on new teachers • Develop survey surrounding feedback on leadership and colleague satisfaction • Write a celebratory letter to new teachers	• End of year activities • Assist with closing out the school year • End of year celebration/gift/recognition • Advise on how the classroom should be packed up for summer

*Many of these ideas can apply to the online environment as well; adjust where needed!

⭐ CONDUCTOR'S NOTE: Virtual Onboarding

As we continue to acclimate to the online working environment, it becomes even more important for a comprehensive onboarding plan to equip newly hired educators for success. Even though you may not be greeting new staff face-to-face and hosting campus walking tours, you can still ensure your school and district make a great first impression. Here are some things to consider:

- Establish a solid plan and eSignature software for new hire paperwork
- Provide early access to any online teaching platforms your staff will be using
  - Ensure new hires can access training and professional development in individual and team settings.
  - Consider implementing mock lessons with small groups, in which each participant can practice taking over control of the learning environment.
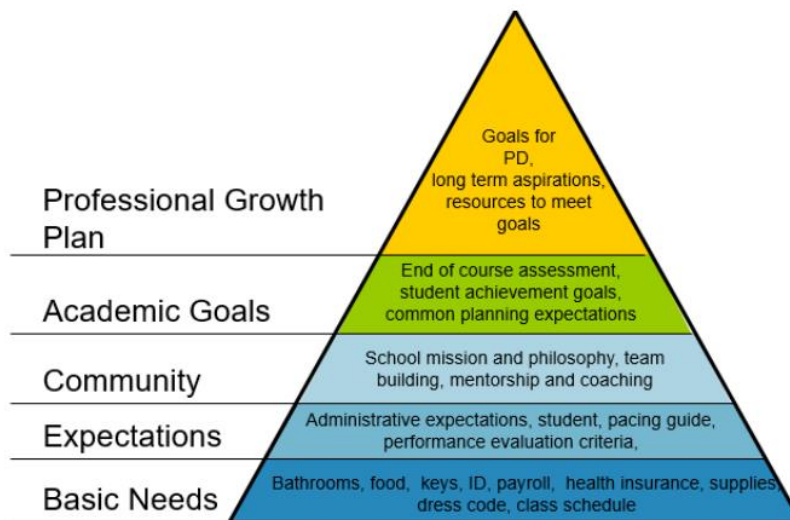
Consider the hierarchy of needs: while some of the basic needs are different when working remotely, an employee will still have needs built upon the premises of clear expectations, community engagement, academic goals, and professional growth.

- Make social experiences virtual
  - Virtual Happy Hour or Social Hour with conversation starters and games
  - Virtual discussion boards with "getting to know you" prompts
  - Virtual campus tours and promotional videos
- Maintain a strong central hub of information
  - Employee handbooks, time and payroll systems, FAQs, and org charts

> "Even though you're shaking things up by making your onboarding process remote, don't forget to stay true to your brand and culture. Make the most of the situation and set your new hires up for a long, successful career."
> *- Namely*

THE FAST TRACK: Teacher & Principal Checklists
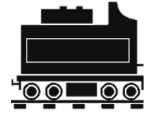
First Week Teacher Checklist

General

☐ I sat with _____ to go through the attendance system and procedure.

☐ I sat with _____ to go through how to fill out the grade book.

☐ I toured the school.

☐ I went to coffee with _____.

☐ My classroom is set-up and ready for students on Monday.

☐ My lesson plan is ready for day one.

☐ I have read through the staff handbook.

☐ I met one-on-one with my Team Lead or School Leader (i.e., principal or AP).

Academics:

☐ Are there any school-based pacing guides?

☐ What are the expectations for grading and assessments?

☐ What is the procedure for lesson plans?

Logistics:

☐ What are the cafeteria procedures?

☐ What are the pickup and dismissal policies?

☐ What is the dress code?

- Students:

- Staff:

☐ Where are supplies kept? Who do I go to if I need to order new supplies?

School Behavior Management:

☐ Is there a school-wide discipline policy?

☐ Is there a school-wide incentive policy?

Principal Checklist

☐ Send Welcome Note to new teachers

☐ Provide Staff Handbooks

Some helpful items to highlight or include:

- Schedule for school year and day to day bell schedule
- Schedule for school-based orientation week
- Immediate next steps and action items
- Dress code for the first day
- Map of school with where to park and other logistics
- Teacher check-list
- Lesson plan template

☐ Schedule and Conduct first Supervisor Conversation

☐ Schedule Supervisor Conversations for Phases 1, 4, and 7*

☐ Organize and facilitate school tour

☐ School based contact tree

☐ Map of the surrounding area

Date: First week on campus (ex: July 17-21)

☐ Social activity (New teacher-specific)

☐ Tips and tricks to set up the classroom and time to do so

☐ School resources for students

☐ Information about school climate and expectations

Date: First day of school (ex: August 8)

☐ Make direct, in-person, and one-on-one contact with new teachers

☐ Ensure new teacher has connected with mentor or team lead

☐ Provide encouragement

*If using PRR Rubric, tie this into the Supervisor Conversations!

APPENDIX

Additional Sources Reviewed to Inform this Document

- **PROJECT ARISTOTLE**
https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136/

- **HUMAN CAPITAL LEADERS IN EDUCATION STANDARDS SUMMARY**
https://static.battelleforkids.org/documents/bfk/HCLEStandardsSummaryDRAFT.pdf

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY**
https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/technology/pages/louch-workforce-planning.aspx

- **BEST-SELF KICKOFF GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS**
https://www.15five.com/quick-guide/best-self-kickoff/

- **LEAN ON ME: A MENTOR'S FIRST YEAR**
http://neatoday.org/2017/06/19/lean-on-me-how-mentors-help-first-year-teachers/

- **HOW TO BUILD A VIRTUAL ONBOARDING PROGRAM: NAMELY**
https://blog.namely.com/how-to-build-a-virtual-onboarding-program

- **NEEDS ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE: WHITEPAPER**
http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/TeachrAssmntWhtPaperTransform10_2.pdf