NEOED

2024 REPORT

TOP 5

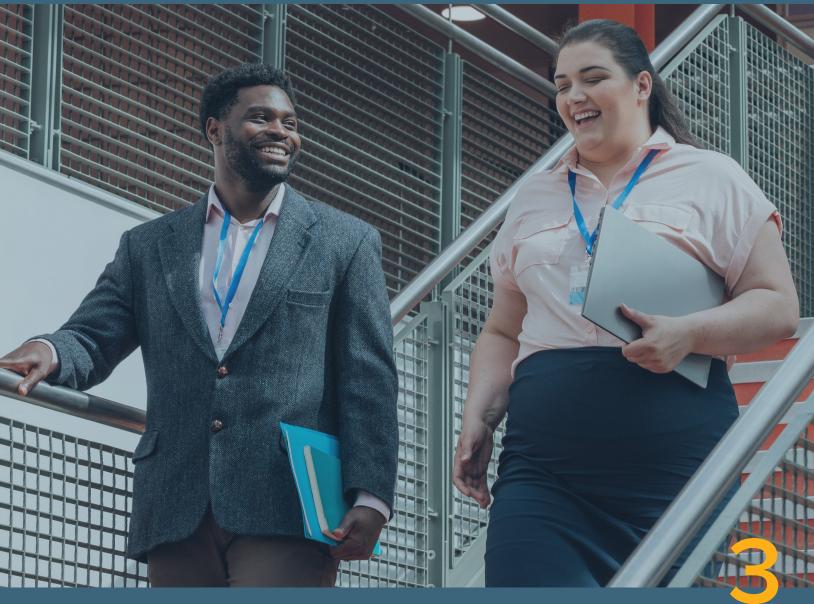# HR TRENDS IN EDUCATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME

The 2024 Trends Report explores the most impactful opportunities in education HR in 2024. This data-filled report reveals how your peers are prioritizing and tackling key trends. Leverage these insights to benchmark your HR efforts, fuel decision-making, and refine strategic priorities for a successful 2024.

Who We Surveyed

Filled with valuable insights gathered from 276 survey respondents, this report reflects the trends, challenges, and opportunities within education HR. Respondents included administrators, HR generalists, directors, recruiters, and managers from a variety of institutions from across the United States, including 4-year colleges/universities (40%), 2-year community colleges (38%), K-12 (10%), and school districts (10%). The survey was conducted in December 2023.

TOP HR PRIORITIES IN 2024

Going into 2024, educational institutions are battling the effects of high turnover while taking strides to improve the employee experience. Retention and recruitment top the list of priorities for another year, signaling that hiring woes in education are far from over.
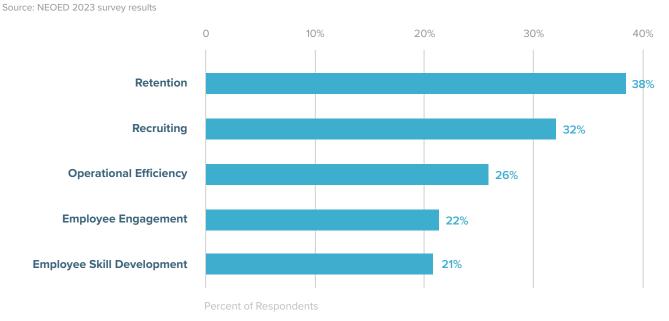
Key Takeaways

As the hunt for qualified candidates continues, institutions are narrowing in on a younger talent pool. Despite retirement numbers steadily rising, most institutions are not prioritizing succession planning or spending time planning for the long-term future.

Staffing shortages remain a challenge in education. Short staffing is straining overworked employees, causing them to look for other opportunities with higher pay and more flexibility. Institutions are supporting their employees with expanded wellness benefits and more development opportunities.

Employee engagement is also on deck for educational institutions in 2024. Respondents are working to build stronger cultures with better management training and proactive employee engagement strategies.

Keep reading to explore these trends in more detail.

Figure 1

Top 5 Priorities for Education HR in 2024
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

Priority	Percent
Retention	38%
Recruiting	32%
Operational Efficiency	26%
Employee Engagement	22%
Employee Skill Development	21%

Percent of Respondents

4

Persistent employee turnover continues to plague educational institutions. **Nearly 80% of respondents are experiencing staffing shortages.** Most report understaffing for both teaching and non-teaching positions.
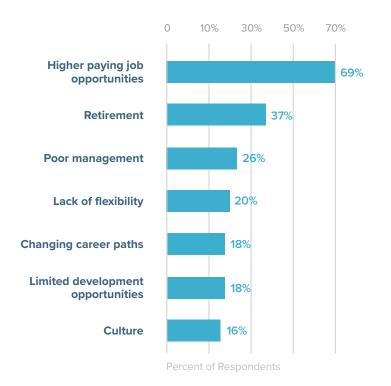
It's no surprise that the primary impacts of staffing shortages are an **additional strain on staff** (74%) and an **increase in overtime hours** (30%) – both of which contribute to the vicious cycle of burnout and turnover.

Why are employees leaving?

According to our survey data, most employees are leaving educational institutions for higher paying job opportunities. Besides employees leaving to retire, the next most cited reasons for employee turnover are poor management and lack of flexibility.

Employees leaving because of bad management can signal a host of underlying issues, such as micromanaging behaviors, limited autonomy for employees, and employee disengagement – all of which can lead to low morale and ultimately, turnover.

Figure 2

Top Reasons for Employee Turnover in 2022 and 2023
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

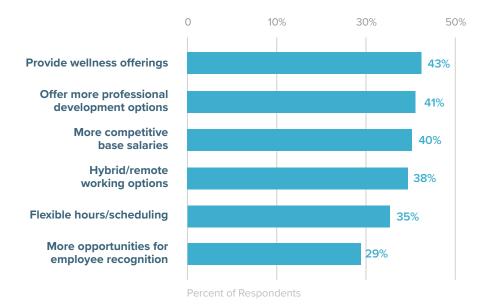| Reason	Percent
Higher paying job opportunities	69%
Retirement	37%
Poor management	26%
Lack of flexibility	20%
Changing career paths	18%
Limited development opportunities	18%
Culture	16%

Percent of Respondents

Retention Strategies

Most institutions are improving retention by providing wellness offerings, more professional development options, and more competitive base salaries. Survey takers are also offering flexible work arrangements, such as remote options and flexible scheduling, which can help alleviate the strain on overworked employees.
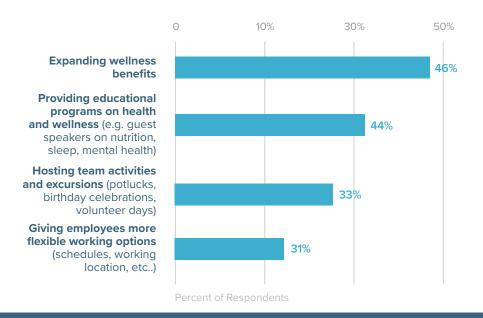
Figure 3

Strategies to Improve Employee Retention in 2024
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

Strategy	Percent
Provide wellness offerings	43%
Offer more professional development options	41%
More competitive base salaries	40%
Hybrid/remote working options	38%
Flexible hours/scheduling	35%
More opportunities for employee recognition	29%

Percent of Respondents

Supporting Employee Health and Wellbeing

The impacts of understaffing and increased overtime can quickly lead to overwhelm, stress, burnout – and ultimately turnover. Institutions plan to support their employees by:

Figure 4

Planned Areas of Support by Institutions
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

Area of Support	Percent
Expanding wellness benefits	46%
Providing educational programs on health and wellness (e.g. guest speakers on nutrition, sleep, mental health)	44%
Hosting team activities and excursions (potlucks, birthday celebrations, volunteer days)	33%
Giving employees more flexible working options (schedules, working location, etc..)	31%

Percent of Respondents

6

TREND #2: RECRUITING A
YOUNGER GENERATION

In a repeat of last year, finding qualified candidates remains the top recruiting challenge for educational institutions. Offering competitive salaries (53%) and the slow hiring process (35%) are additional recruitment challenges.

Institutions are also facing difficulties hiring certain roles. Some non-teaching disciplines are more difficult to hire than others, such as support personnel (librarians, technicians, and custodians) (35%), engineering and IT personnel (31%), and administrative staff (25%). For higher-ed, nursing (28%), engineering (20%) and computer science (18%) are more difficult disciplines to hire.
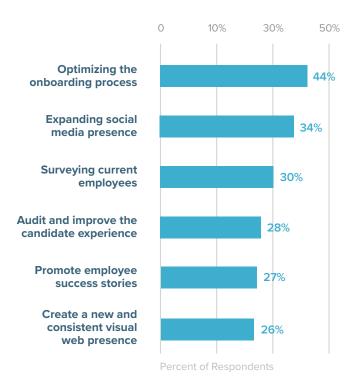
Recruiting Millenials and Gen Z

Educational institutions are **targeting Millennials and Gen Z job seekers** in 2024. Young, tech-savvy educators are vital in today's workplace environment, so it's important for institutions to attract these candidates.

A strong employer brand can help attract qualified candidates by introducing them to an agency's culture, values, and overall goals before they apply. Most survey takers either have a well-defined employer brand that's integral to recruitment (46%) or are improving it now (13%). Others have an employer brand that's strong for recruiting students, but not staff (19%).

Respondents are working to improve their employer brand by optimizing the onboarding process, expanding their social media presence, and surveying current employees. Connecting with Millennials and Gen Z on social platforms and ensuring the hiring process is efficient provides a good first impression to young candidates searching for tech-savvy employers.
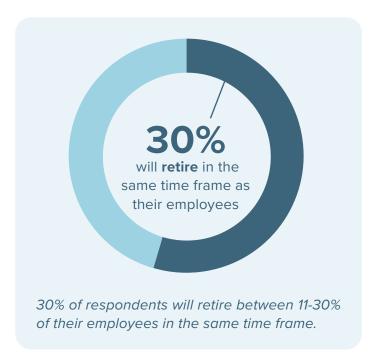
Figure 5
Ways to Improve Employer Brand
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

Way to Improve Employer Brand	Percent
Optimizing the onboarding process	44%
Expanding social media presence	34%
Surveying current employees	30%
Audit and improve the candidate experience	28%
Promote employee success stories	27%
Create a new and consistent visual web presence	26%

Percent of Respondents

7

Planning for Retirement

With the Silver Tsunami in full effect, **retirement tops the list of reasons for employee turnover** in education for another year in a row. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, all Baby Boomers will reach retirement age by 2030. It's estimated that nearly 10,000 Boomers reach retirement age every day.

In our survey, most agencies say 5-10% of their employees will retire within the next 5-10 years, but a number of respondents (30%) will retire between 11-30% of their employees in the same time frame.

30%

will **retire** in the same time frame as their employees

30% of respondents will retire between 11-30% of their employees in the same time frame.

Even with that in mind, a shocking 59% of respondents do not have succession planning in place to replace employees with critical knowledge and skills before they leave or retire. Most respondents spend less than 5% of their time on strategic planning for the long-term future, while 15% do not spend time planning for the future at all.

As institutions continue to bring in younger talent, succession planning is critical to the professional success and long-term career satisfaction of new
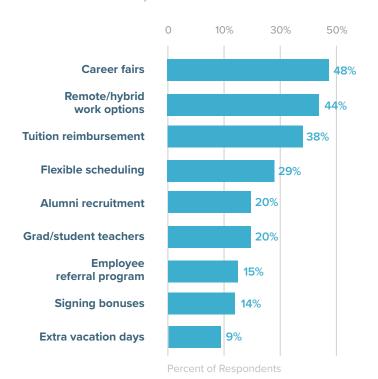
hires. Succession planning helps identify skill gaps in the organization, improves employee engagement, and fosters a culture that prioritizes employee development.

Creative Ways of Filling Jobs

As institutions continue to struggle to find qualified candidates, many are trying different strategies to attract talent and fill open jobs. Attending career fairs is the favored method among survey respondents, but some are tapping into alumni networks and leveraging employee referral programs to recruit talent.

Many survey respondents are using incentives to attract talent, such as offering remote and hybrid work options, flexible schedules, and tuition reimbursements. Since most employees leave institutions due to low pay and a lack of flexibility, these strategies align with the current climate.

Figure 6
Creative Ways of Filling Open Positions
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

	Percent
Career fairs	48%
Remote/hybrid work options	44%
Tuition reimbursement	38%
Flexible scheduling	29%
Alumni recruitment	20%
Grad/student teachers	20%
Employee referral program	15%
Signing bonuses	14%
Extra vacation days	9%

Percent of Respondents

Loosening Hiring Requirements

To improve recruitment efforts, **56% of institutions are loosening degree requirements for non-teaching roles** (as compared to 25% for teaching roles). Of institutions that loosened their degree requirements, 32% did so for all roles.

Among institutions that loosened degree requirements for teaching roles, most focused on adjunct faculty (36%) or technical skills teachers (22%). Since respondents reported that technical teaching roles are some of the hardest to hire for, and many are targeting recruitment efforts on adjunct faculty in 2024, **loosening degree requirements for these roles can widen the candidate pool and help reduce time-to-hire considerably.**

Most survey respondents are not loosening other hiring requirements, such as residency location, pre-employment drug screenings, the use of search committees, or background checks.

9

Operational efficiency is important for any organization, but especially for educational institutions struggling with staffing shortages and high turnover. **Staffing shortages are causing institutions to reduce course offerings (29%) and increase class sizes (20%).** With fewer staff, there are simply less resources to operate normally.

Institutions are turning to technology to improve operational efficiencies, but they are particularly interested in the onboarding process. Efficient onboarding creates a smoother transition for new hires and boosts their productivity from day one. Engaged employees are more likely to be invested in their work, experiment with new ideas, and collaborate as a team.
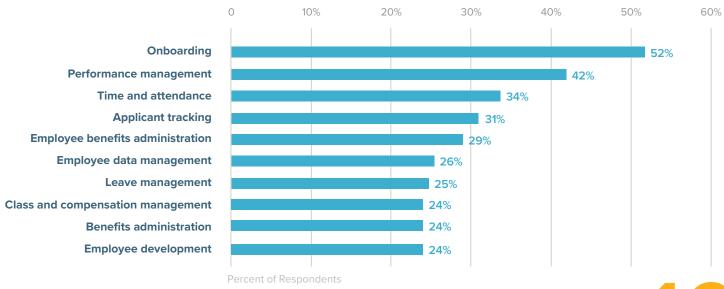
It's no surprise that the top way institutions are increasing employee engagement in 2024 is by improving the onboarding process (53%). Optimizing the onboarding process (44%) is also the top method for improving the employer brand among survey takers.

Although institutions want to improve processes with technology, adopting new technology can be a challenge. When asked what needs most improvement in their organization, adopting new technologies (41%) was a top three response. Additionally, support personnel, such as technicians and IT staff, are the two non-teaching roles that are hardest to hire.

Thankfully, technology has come a long way in just a few years, helping institutions streamline the onboarding process so new hires can hit the ground running. By leveraging technology, institutions can automate manual onboarding tasks, centralize important onboarding resources, and keep new hires engaged with the organization from their first day.

> *Onboarding is the top process to automate in 2024.*

Figure 7
HR Processes to Streamline or Automate in 2024
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

Process	Percent
Onboarding	52%
Performance management	42%
Time and attendance	34%
Applicant tracking	31%
Employee benefits administration	29%
Employee data management	26%
Leave management	25%
Class and compensation management	24%
Benefits administration	24%
Employee development	24%

Percent of Respondents

10

TREND #4: IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND
SKILL DEVELOPMENT

4

In a world filled with technology, there is still room for soft skills in the workplace, especially good communication. But according to survey data, communication (49%) and management skills (40%) are the areas that need the most improvement.
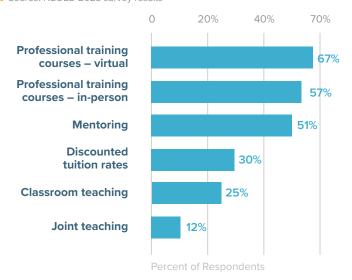
Poor management is ranked high on the list of reasons why employees are leaving educational institutions. Ineffective managers often struggle to clearly communicate expectations, goals, and decisions, which leaves employees feeling frustrated, undervalued, or left out.

Communication is becoming more challenging with the increase in remote work and the growing multi-generational split as more Millennials and Gen Z enter the workplace. **Managers who are skilled communicators play a large role in creating a positive and productive work environment regardless of location or age.**

Institutions point to several areas of training for supervisors and managers that need improvement and would help overcome these challenges. Most involve soft skill development, including effective communication (61%), conflict resolution (44%), morale building (38%), and staff empowerment (34%). Coaching and development is another area of operations respondents say needs improvement.

But development opportunities don't just support better workplaces. Educational institutions are losing talent as a result of limited development opportunities for all their staff. This can make employees feel as though institutions don't support their career goals, skill growth, and promotional advancement. Survey respondents recognize this. Most are offering more professional development options in 2024, and nearly a quarter intend to streamline or automate the employee development process.

Figure 8

Career Development Opportunities for Teaching Staff

Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

Category	Percent
Professional training courses – virtual	67%
Professional training courses – in-person	57%
Mentoring	51%
Discounted tuition rates	30%
Classroom teaching	25%
Joint teaching	12%

Percent of Respondents

11

TREND #5: BUILDING CULTURE WITH
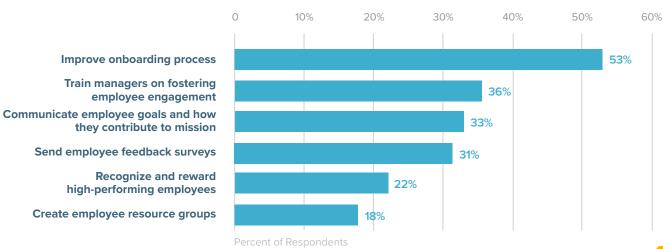# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

5

When asked to describe their institutional culture, responses were mixed. **Most respondents report their culture to be collaborative (48%), supportive (37%), and inclusive (30%) – but some say their culture is outdated (30%), siloed (29%), and stressful (24%).**

These numbers show why employee engagement is a top priority for institutions in 2024. **Better engagement supports a better culture.** When employees are disengaged, they are less likely to participate, be productive, or feel connected to the institution.

Over time, disengagement can develop into negative work cultures. Addressing this is crucial for the well-being of employees and to the success of the entire organization. In 2024, institutions are planning to improve employee engagement by improving the onboarding process (53%), training managers on how to foster employee engagement (36%), and communicating employee goals (33%) in relation to the mission.

Employee recognition is another opportunity for institutions to engage employees. It's also how some institutions plan to improve employee retention in 2024. Celebrating institutional and employee successes can foster a sense of shared accomplishment, while building a collaborative and supportive workplace culture.

Figure 9
Ways of Improving Employee Engagement in 2024
Source: NEOED 2023 survey results

Improve onboarding process	53%
Train managers on fostering employee engagement	36%
Communicate employee goals and how they contribute to mission	33%
Send employee feedback surveys	31%
Recognize and reward high-performing employees	22%
Create employee resource groups	18%

Percent of Respondents

12

Thanks for reading the 2024 HR Trends Report by NEOED. We hope these peer insights, data analyses, and resources have been helpful.

NEOED is the market leader in education HR, offering a comprehensive suite of solutions for recruitment, onboarding, performance management, staff development, managing employee information, and more. To learn how NEOED's HR software can help your agency, **sign up for a free consultation today.**

300+
Schools & Colleges

20+
Years of Experience

350,000+
Employees Supported