

National Education Staffing Report



*National Workforce Trends
Shaping K-12 Staffing and
Student Services*



2026-2027

Special Education Staffing Industry Report

Staffing shortages remain a pressing issue for school districts across the country, particularly for special education and student support roles. This report presents current insights into the education talent landscape, highlighting key staffing trends, regional market dynamics, and practical considerations for district leaders navigating ongoing workforce challenges.

Data Sources: All data presented in this report is sourced from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and Lightcast Analyst. These findings reflect up-to-date and comprehensive labor market trends affecting school-based roles.

Data Note: Labor market and workforce data reflect the most current information available as of July 2026. Source organizations may revise or update published data after this report's release.

Who is BlazerWorks?

BlazerWorks is an education-only managed service provider (MSP) built to simplify education staffing, reduce compliance risk, and ensure your critical roles are filled so students receive the consistent, high-quality services they deserve.

With over **30 years of experience in special education staffing and leadership by former educators and administrators** who believe in student-first solutions, BlazerWorks is uniquely positioned to deliver unmatched recruiting power, expert guidance, and meaningful support for districts, school professionals, and the students they serve.

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National Workforce Trends

Workforce Supply and Demand

The nation's education workforce is under increasing strain as demand for specialized student services continues to rise. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and Lightcast Analyst reveal ongoing shortages across critical roles including Special Education Teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, and Behavioral Specialists.

The Workforce Gap

As student needs continue to grow, schools face mounting challenges in sustaining and replenishing their workforce.

Over **47,000 special education teachers are approaching retirement age**, while districts continue to struggle to attract enough qualified professionals to replace them.

Nationwide, approximately **366,000 teaching positions are staffed by educators who are not fully certified** for their assignments, highlighting the growing gap between workforce demand and available talent.

Growing Demand for Specialized Support

The number of students needing special education services continues to rise nationwide. More than **8.1 million students ages 3–21 now receive services under IDEA**—representing approximately 16% of all public school students, and the highest enrollment levels in the program's history.

At the same time, schools are seeing increased demand for speech-language services, behavioral supports, mental health interventions, and autism-related services. Recent CDC data indicates that approximately **1 in 31 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder**, further increasing the need for specialized school-based professionals.

Competitive Labor Market

Competition for qualified professionals remains intense. Entering the 2024-2025 school year, **74% of public schools reported difficulty filling teaching vacancies**, with special education among the most challenging areas to staff. As districts compete for a limited pool of specialized talent, recruiting and retaining qualified professionals remains a significant challenge.

A Strategic Approach

To address these challenges, school districts are turning to Managed Service Providers (MSPs), like BlazerWorks.

With a nationwide network of specialized education staffing partners, BlazerWorks helps districts maintain continuous special education support and services for their students.

National Workforce Trends

Turnover and Vacancies

Increasing Turnover in Special Education Roles

Special education roles experience some of the highest attrition rates across the education sector. Approximately **15% of special education teachers leave their schools each year**—nearly double the turnover rate of their general education counterparts—and nearly **50% leave their profession within their first five years**. This persistent turnover is driven by factors such as burnout, challenging working conditions, inadequate compensation, and limited institutional support.

The pattern extends beyond teachers; related service providers, including speech-language pathologists and school psychologists, also experience overwhelming workloads and burnout that lead to attrition.

Recurring Vacancies

Special education vacancies continue to persist in school districts nationwide. During the 2024-2025 school year, **34% of public school leaders reported being understaffed in special education**, forcing many districts to rely on long-term substitutes, contract professionals, or under-certified educators to maintain required services.

Specialized support positions often remain **open for months**, resulting in larger caseloads, delayed evaluations, and disruptions to student services.

Overall, special education positions have some of the **longest time-to-fill rates** in the education workforce, especially in underserved regions.

What is Driving This Turnover?

Across special education roles, several shared factors drive high turnover. Challenging working conditions and inadequate compensation create a continuous cycle of vacancies, especially among support staff (including aides, SLP assistants, and interpreters) where low **wages and limited training accelerate attrition**. Additional contributors include:

- Chronic burnout from **large caseloads and excessive paperwork**
- Insufficient administrative **support**
- Professional **isolation**
- High pressure to meet **legal compliance** requirements
- **Student loads** that exceed recommended ratios



National Workforce Trends

Student Impact and Compliance

Student Impact

Service and Evaluation Gaps

Federal reviews have shown that many students faced delays in their initial special education evaluations due to large backlogs. The U.S. Government Accountability Office also found that students often received IEP services late (or not at all) largely because of special education staffing shortages. These delays can lead to **missed early-intervention opportunities, widening academic gaps, and increased frustration** for students and families.

Student Well-Being

Understaffed schools often see more **classroom disruptions, disciplinary referrals, and even bullying or violence** due to limited supervision and support. With too few adults to address students' emotional and behavioral needs, small issues can quickly escalate.

In contrast, schools with adequate ratios of psychologists and counselors report better student outcomes and fewer disciplinary incidents. However, most districts continue to operate above the National Association of School Psychologists' **recommended 1:500** psychologist-to-student ratio, with the national average estimated at approximately **1 school psychologist for every 1,100–1,200 students**. This shortage limits access to mental health support and early intervention services for many students.

Compliance and Legal Risk Indicators

IEP Implementation Gaps

Staffing shortages can create significant challenges in delivering the services required under students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Vacancies among special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and other related service providers may result in **delayed evaluations, missed service minutes, and interruptions to student support**.

Because districts remain responsible for providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under IDEA, ensuring consistent service delivery continues to be a critical operational and compliance priority.

Audit Findings and Federal Oversight

Special education staffing shortages continue to draw attention from federal agencies, state education departments, and advocacy organizations. Workforce gaps can affect districts' ability to deliver timely evaluations, implement IEP services, and meet federal compliance requirements.

As student needs continue to grow, districts face increasing pressure to maintain sufficient staffing levels while ensuring equitable access to services and support for students with disabilities.

Speech-Language Pathologists

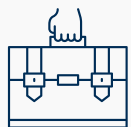
Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) play a vital role in supporting students' speech, language, and communication development within school settings. As demand continues to grow and qualified professionals remain in short supply, understanding the current dynamics of the SLP workforce has become increasingly critical.

Nationwide Overview



152,909

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



183,371

SLPs Currently Employed



27,994

Competing Employers



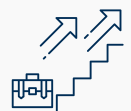
196,307

Yearly Job Postings



31,000+

SLPs Approaching
Retirement Age



10.9%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

Speech therapy roles are among the hardest to fill, with **high competition** from education and healthcare sectors. Extended vacancies can **delay speech evaluations**, disrupt IEP services, and contribute to literacy and social-emotional challenges, especially in early elementary students.

Approach to Hiring SLPs

Districts can strengthen their future SLP workforce by partnering with graduate programs and offering practicum opportunities that lead to full-time roles.

Retention improves with **manageable caseloads, protected administrative time, collaborative professional networks, and a balance of autonomy and support.**

BlazerWorks helps districts meet these needs by connecting them with qualified SLPs through its nationwide staffing network and reducing administrative burdens like credentialing, timesheets, compliance, and onboarding, allowing schools to focus on student support.

Leading Education Programs

Emerson College
Baylor University
University of Central Florida
New York University

Geographic Workforce Trends

Speech-Language Pathologists

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Very High

Hiring Demand
Very High

Competition
High

Compensation
Moderate

- Largest regional **SLP workforce** and hiring demand.
- **Population growth** continues to increase demand.
- Schools compete with growing **healthcare and education employers**.
- Lower salaries contribute to long-term **retention challenges**.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
High

- Leading **graduate programs** support a strong talent pipeline.
- High hiring demand is concentrated in **major metropolitan markets**.
- **Healthcare and education employers** compete for the same professionals.
- **Above-average salaries** help attract talent but increase recruitment costs.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Moderate

- **Stable workforce** supports a balanced labor market.
- Hiring demand remains **steady across most markets**.
- Rural districts continue to face **localized recruitment challenges**.
- **Moderate salaries** help control costs but may limit out-of-state recruitment.

WEST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Very High

Competition
Very High

Compensation
Very High

- **Sizable SLP workforce** despite intense demand.
- Strong hiring demand continues to **outpace available talent**.
- **Healthcare employers** intensify competition for qualified SLPs.
- **Highest regional salaries** reflect a highly competitive labor market.

Speech-Language Pathology Assistants

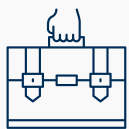
Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants (SLPAs) play a key role in school therapy teams, supporting licensed SLPs and helping deliver high-quality services to students. As demand for speech therapy grows, understanding SLPA workforce supply and employment trends is increasingly important for effective staffing and consistent service delivery.

Nationwide Overview



7,697

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



109,357

SLPAs Currently Employed



2,426

Competing Employers



16,504

Yearly Job Postings



23,000+

SLPAs Approaching
Retirement Age



5.3%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

SLPAs face high turnover risk due to **low pay, underutilization, and limited autonomy without supervision**. These roles are critical for extending services in districts with SLPA shortages, but underutilization limits their effectiveness. Many schools fail to fully leverage SLPAs' skills, contributing to service backlogs and impacting student support.

Approach to Hiring SLPAs

Districts can grow their SLPA workforce by partnering with **local colleges and implementing structured supervision** aligned with state requirements. Providing clear pathways to full SLP licensure, access to high-quality therapy resources, and inclusion in school-based teams supports long-term retention.

Additionally, investing in **professional development and recognition** fosters a sense of purpose and belonging, boosting job satisfaction and commitment.

Leading Education Programs

Ivy Tech Community College
Hillsborough Community College
Black River Technical College

BlazerWorks' MSP program supports these efforts by connecting districts with top Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants (SLPAs) through its nationwide network of specialized staffing partners and offering services that ensure high-quality, student-focused support.

Geographic Workforce Trends

Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs)

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Very High

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Moderate

- Largest regional SLPA workforce supports growing school districts.
- Consistent hiring demand continues across expanding school systems.
- Competition remains moderate despite strong demand.
- Lower salaries can contribute to long-term retention challenges.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
High

- Smaller talent pool limits candidate availability.
- Hiring demand remains steady across most markets.
- Lower posting competition creates a more balanced hiring environment.
- Higher salaries help attract qualified SLPAs.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Moderate

- **Stable workforce** supports a balanced labor market.
- Hiring demand remains **steady across most markets**.
- Rural districts continue to face **localized recruitment challenges**.
- **Moderate salaries** help control costs but may limit out-of-state recruitment.

WEST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Very High

Competition
Very High

Compensation
Very High

- Large regional SLPA workforce supports a growing market.
- Hiring demand continues to outpace available talent.
- Intense employer competition increases recruiting difficulty.
- Highest regional salaries reflect one of the nation's most competitive markets

Special Education Teachers

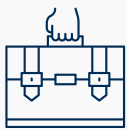
Special Education Teachers play a vital role in providing individualized instruction and support for students with diverse learning needs. Yet, the ongoing national shortage of qualified educators continues to challenge school districts, elevating recruitment and retention as critical priorities.

Nationwide Overview



5,145

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



224,834

Special Education Teachers
Currently Employed



1,766

Competing Employers



6,168

Yearly Job Postings



47,000+

Special Education Teachers
Approaching Retirement Age



1.8%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)



16.4%

Annual Turnover Among K-12
Special Education Teachers

Staffing Challenges

Special education roles face high turnover—about 16% annually, with nearly half of educators leaving the profession within five years. During the 2024-2025 school year, 34% of public school leaders reported being understaffed in special education, contributing to service delays, unfulfilled IEPs, and increased IDEA compliance risk.

Approach to Hiring Special Education Teachers

Districts can strengthen their special education workforce with sustainable hiring and retention strategies. “Grow Your Own” programs, residencies, and alternate licensure pathways build long-term pipelines, while early contracts, mentorship, and reduced paperwork support retention. **Career growth and a supportive culture** help prevent burnout and keep staff engaged.

As a trusted Managed Service Provider, BlazerWorks helps districts meet immediate needs while building a more sustainable special education workforce.

Leading Education Programs

Grand Canyon University
Arizona State University
Ball State University

Geographic Workforce Trends

Special Education Teachers

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Very High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Low

Compensation
Moderate

- Largest regional workforce supports consistent hiring across districts.
- Steady hiring demand creates ongoing opportunities.
- Lower employer competition makes recruiting more manageable.
- Moderate salaries help districts remain cost competitive.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
Very High

- Deep regional talent pool supports large education systems.
- Strong hiring demand continues across many districts.
- High employer competition increases recruiting difficulty.
- Among the highest salaries nationally reflect a competitive market.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
Moderate

- Smaller workforce creates recruiting challenges in many markets.
- Strong hiring demand keeps positions consistently open.
- High employer competition makes filling vacancies more difficult.
- Moderate salaries remain close to the national average.

WEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Low

Compensation
Very High

- More limited talent pool can make sourcing candidates challenging.
- Steady hiring demand supports ongoing recruitment.
- Lower employer competition creates a more balanced hiring environment.
- Highest regional salaries help districts attract qualified educators.

School Psychologists

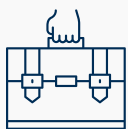
School Psychologists play a critical role in supporting students' emotional, behavioral, and academic growth, especially for those with complex needs. Ongoing nationwide staffing shortages, however, make it increasingly challenging for schools to provide these essential services.

Nationwide Overview



38,002

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



63,258

School Psychologists
Currently Employed



2,737

Competing Employers



50,678

Yearly Job Postings



13,800+

School Psychologists
Approaching Retirement Age



2.9%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

School psychologist shortages have left most schools operating well above the **recommended 1:500** student-to-psychologist ratio, with the national average exceeding **1:1,100 students per psychologist**.

High caseloads contribute to evaluation delays, missed early interventions, burnout, and reduced access to student mental health services.

Approach to Hiring School Psychologists

To address school psychologist vacancies, districts should establish **recruitment pipelines with EdS or NASP-accredited programs** and consider flexible schedules or hybrid assessment models. Smaller districts can manage demand through itinerant or shared-service staffing arrangements.

Retention is supported by maintaining recommended student-to-psychologist ratios, providing protected time for proactive mental health initiatives, and funding **continuing education and licensure renewal**.

As a trusted MSP, BlazerWorks helps districts fill critical school psychologist roles while building a stable, long-term mental health workforce.

Leading Education Programs

Southern New Hampshire University

Liberty University

Capella University

Geographic Workforce Trends

School Psychologists

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Low

Compensation
Low

- Moderate workforce supports hiring across a broad geographic region.
- Steady hiring demand creates consistent opportunities.
- Lower employer competition makes recruiting more manageable.
- Below-average salaries help districts remain cost competitive.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
Very High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
High

- Largest regional talent pool provides the strongest supply of school psychologists.
- Steady hiring demand supports ongoing recruitment.
- Average employer competition creates a balanced hiring environment.
- Higher salaries reflect the competitive market.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
Low

- Workforce is close to the national average for the region.
- Strong hiring demand keeps positions consistently open.
- High employer competition makes recruiting more challenging.
- Below-average salaries may make attracting experienced candidates more difficult.

WEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Very High

- Average-sized talent pool supports ongoing hiring needs.
- Steady hiring demand keeps recruitment active.
- Average employer competition creates a balanced market.
- Highest regional salaries reflect the cost and competitiveness of western markets.

Occupational Therapists

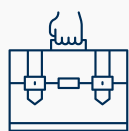
Occupational Therapists (OTs) help students with mental, developmental, and emotional challenges engage fully in daily school activities. As student needs increase, so does the demand for skilled OT professionals to deliver these essential services.

Nationwide Overview



164,319

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



164,014

OTs Currently Employed



9,039

Competing Employers



170,233

Yearly Job Postings



23,850+

OTs Approaching
Retirement Age



10.4%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

Occupational Therapists (OTs) are in high demand, with national job growth of 10.4% through 2030, and schools must compete with healthcare providers for talent. Vacancies can delay development of fine motor, sensory, and daily living skills and put IEP goals at risk, making adequate OT staffing essential for student progress and compliance.

Approach to Hiring Occupational Therapists

Recruitment of OTs is most effective when districts provide **competitive incentives** such as housing stipends, predictable schedules, and a focus on meaningful student outcomes.

Retention improves by **limiting travel between sites, managing caseloads, and promoting collaboration** with other providers. Opportunities for professional development and participation in cross-functional planning also enhance engagement and support long-term commitment to school-based positions.

BlazerWorks helps districts get access to and quickly hire and retain Occupational Therapists, connecting schools with qualified staffing partners and providing ongoing support to ensure **consistent, long-term service delivery** while easing administrative burdens.

Leading Education Programs

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences
University of Southern California
Thomas Jefferson University

Geographic Workforce Trends

Occupational Therapists

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Low

Compensation
Moderate

- Slightly smaller-than-average workforce creates a moderate talent pool.
- Steady hiring demand supports ongoing recruitment.
- Lower employer competition makes hiring more manageable.
- Near-average salaries help districts remain competitive without significant wage pressure

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
Very High

Hiring Demand
Low

Competition
Low

Compensation
Low

- Largest regional talent pool provides one of the strongest OT workforces.
- Lower hiring demand creates fewer competing openings.
- Low employer competition makes recruiting easier.
- Below-average salaries further improve hiring conditions.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Very High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Workforce is close to the national average for the region.
- Strong hiring demand keeps positions consistently open.
- High employer competition makes recruiting more challenging.
- Below-average salaries may make attracting experienced candidates more difficult.

WEST

Talent Supply
Low

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
High

- Smaller-than-average workforce limits available talent.
- Strong hiring demand keeps positions consistently open.
- High employer competition makes recruiting significantly more challenging.
- Highest regional salaries reflect the tight labor market.

Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs)

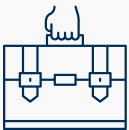
Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) play a crucial role in delivering therapy services that promote students' functional independence and daily participation. Gaining insight into this in-demand workforce is essential for ensuring consistent, high-quality care in schools.

Nationwide Overview



18,967

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



51,195

COTAs Currently Employed



3,046

Competing Employers



32,054

Yearly Job Postings



8,500+

COTAs Approaching
Retirement Age



12.8%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

Recruitment and retention of Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) vary regionally, with Western districts offering higher pay but facing strong competition, while Southern districts hire more frequently but struggle to retain staff.

COTAs are essential in delivering therapy under an OT's supervision, but underutilization can slow student progress. Attrition often stems from limited advancement, lower pay, and misaligned expectations, pushing many out of school-based roles.

Approach to Hiring COTAs

Districts can expand their COTA workforce by partnering with community colleges, offering mentorship, and clearly defining roles as hands-on contributors to student progress.

To support retention, regular check-ins, inclusion in team meetings, and recognition during IEP planning help COTAs feel valued and motivated to remain in school-based positions.

BlazerWorks supports districts by connecting them with qualified COTAs and providing ongoing support for consistent, high-quality therapy while easing administrative tasks.

Leading Education Programs

Ivy Tech Community College
Ohio State University
University of Connecticut

Geographic Workforce Trends

Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs)

SOUTH

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Low

Compensation
High

- Stronger-than-average workforce supports hiring efforts.
- Healthy demand continues across healthcare and education settings.
- Moderate employer competition creates a balanced hiring market.
- Higher salaries reflect continued demand for experienced COTAs.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Low

Compensation
Moderate

- Regional workforce is close to expected employment levels.
- Lower posting competition creates favorable hiring conditions.
- Smaller talent pool may extend recruitment timelines.
- Compensation remains near the national average.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Larger-than-expected workforce provides a strong candidate pool.
- Moderate hiring demand helps maintain workforce stability.
- Lower compensation can improve affordability for districts.
- Favorable supply makes the Midwest one of the strongest recruiting markets.

WEST

Talent Supply
Low

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
High

- Smaller-than-expected workforce limits available talent.
- Strong employer demand keeps recruiting highly competitive.
- Higher salaries reflect continued workforce shortages.
- Districts may experience longer hiring timelines and greater competition for qualified COTAs.

Registered Nurses

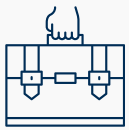
School-based Registered Nurses (RNs) are essential to student health and safety, providing vital care and wellness support throughout school campuses. With consistent demand across the country, maintaining reliable staffing is crucial to safeguarding student well-being.

Nationwide Overview



2,554,000+

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



~3,415,000

RNs
Currently Employed



45,639

Competing Employers



2,314,425

Yearly Job Postings



838,000+

RNs Approaching
Retirement Age



5.5%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

With demand consistently outpacing supply, hiring qualified school nurses remains a challenge, and shortages can impact both student health and school operations.

Understaffing among school nurses can lead to serious challenges, including delayed emergency response, medication errors, and reduced chronic care support. With many nurses covering multiple campuses, **care gaps** and **compliance risks**—such as 504 plan or state health violations—become more likely.

Approach to Hiring School Nurses

To attract and retain school nurses, districts can target candidates with pediatric or public health experience and highlight benefits like **predictable schedules** and the academic calendar. Flexible or part-time roles can also appeal to nurses coming from hospital settings.

Retention is strengthened when nurses are engaged in **professional networks**, supported in **maintaining certifications** like NCSN, and involved in school wellness initiatives.

Partnering with an MSP like BlazerWorks helps districts secure qualified nurses and ensure consistent student care.

Leading Education Programs

Western Governors University
Chamberlain University
University of Phoenix

Geographic Workforce Trends

Registered Nurses (RNs)

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Workforce is closely aligned with regional demand.
- Steady hiring activity creates consistent opportunities.
- Balanced employer competition supports ongoing recruitment.
- Lower compensation makes the region cost-effective for employers.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
High

- Workforce remains near the national average.
- Consistent hiring demand supports a stable labor market.
- Average employer competition keeps recruitment competitive.
- Higher wages reflect the region's elevated labor costs.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Larger-than-expected workforce provides a strong talent pool.
- Stable hiring demand supports continued workforce availability.
- Average employer competition creates balanced recruiting conditions.
- Lower compensation improves affordability for employers.

WEST

Talent Supply
Low

Hiring Demand
Low

Competition
Low

Compensation
High

- Smaller-than-expected workforce limits available talent.
- Lower posting competition reflects a smaller overall hiring market.
- High salaries indicate continued pressure to attract experienced nurses.
- Recruiting can remain challenging despite fewer competing job postings due to limited workforce supply.

Physical Therapists

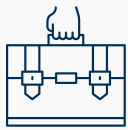
Physical Therapists (PTs) are essential in promoting students' mobility, physical development, and participation in everyday school activities. However, many districts continue to struggle with persistent shortages, making it challenging to meet increasing service demands.

Nationwide Overview



183,161

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



260,187

PTs Currently Employed



10,798

Competing Employers



393,947

Yearly Job Postings



40,800+

PTs Approaching
Retirement Age



9.0%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

Schools face persistent challenges hiring physical therapists, as **many choose higher-paying** private practice roles. Prolonged vacancies **disrupt student mobility goals and classroom access**, especially for those with physical disabilities, while competition from the healthcare sector further limits available talent.

Approach to Hiring Physical Therapists

Offering relocation assistance and transparent role expectations supports hiring, while fostering stability, professional collaboration, and inclusion within student support teams promotes long-term retention.

When districts partner with an education-only MSP like BlazerWorks, they will be connected with qualified physical therapists, streamlining recruitment and onboarding to ensure **consistent, high-quality student therapy with minimal disruption**.

Leading Education Programs

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences
The University of Montana
Arcadia University

Geographic Workforce Trends

Physical Therapists

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Workforce is close to the national average, providing a stable talent pool.
- Strong hiring demand keeps physical therapists in high demand.
- Moderate employer competition supports active recruiting.
- Competitive salaries help attract qualified professionals.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Moderate

- Larger-than-average workforce creates one of the strongest regional talent pools.
- Consistent hiring demand supports ongoing recruitment.
- Balanced employer competition keeps recruiting competitive.
- Compensation remains close to the national average.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Low

Competition
Low

Compensation
Low

- Workforce is aligned with national averages, creating a dependable talent pool.
- Lower hiring demand reduces pressure on recruitment.
- Fewer competing employers improve hiring conditions.
- Compensation remains near the national average.

WEST

Talent Supply
Low

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
High

- Smaller-than-average workforce limits available talent.
- Steady hiring demand maintains consistent recruiting needs.
- Employer competition remains near the national average.
- Higher salaries reflect one of the nation's most competitive labor markets.

Physical Therapist Assistants

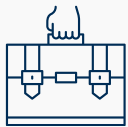
Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) work alongside licensed PTs to provide hands-on support that enhances students' mobility and overall well-being. As demand for school-based therapy increases, understanding PTA workforce trends is key to effective staffing and service continuity.

Nationwide Overview



83,234

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



114,340

Physical Therapist Assistants
Currently Employed



9,852

Competing Employers



107,322

Yearly Job Postings



15,350+

PTAs Approaching
Retirement Age



14.0%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

Districts can strengthen recruitment by partnering with PTA education programs and establishing clear **supervisory structures** under licensed PTs.

Defining PTA roles around measurable student outcomes enhances **effectiveness**. **Retention** improves when PTAs receive **training** in adaptive and assistive technologies, consistent feedback, and the resources needed to deliver high-quality interventions in school settings.

Approach to Hiring Physical Therapist Assistants

Turnover among PTAs remains high due to competition from outpatient clinics and hospitals, with southern districts facing the greatest **retention challenges** despite employing large numbers of staff. Their **support** is essential for meeting IEP mobility goals, particularly in districts where PTs are shared across multiple campuses.

Partnering with a Managed Service Provider like BlazerWorks helps districts meet growing service demands by connecting them with qualified Physical Therapist Assistants and maintaining continuity of mobility and physical support for students across all school settings.

Leading Education Programs

Ivy Tech Community College
Ohio State University
Baylor University

Geographic Workforce Trends

Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs)

SOUTH

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Moderate

- Large regional workforce creates a strong pipeline of physical therapist assistants.
- Steady hiring demand supports ongoing recruitment.
- Employer competition remains near the national average.
- Compensation is competitive while remaining close to national benchmarks.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Moderate

- Smaller-than-average workforce limits the available talent pool.
- Consistent hiring demand keeps recruitment active.
- Employer competition remains close to national averages.
- Compensation is generally in line with national market rates.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
High

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Low

Compensation
Low

- Above-average workforce provides one of the strongest talent pools.
- Steady hiring demand supports consistent recruiting activity.
- Lower employer competition makes hiring more favorable.
- Below-average salaries can help districts remain cost competitive.

WEST

Talent Supply
Low

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
High

- Smaller regional workforce creates a tighter labor market.
- Consistent hiring demand maintains ongoing recruitment needs.
- Employer competition remains near the national average.
- Higher salaries reflect one of the nation's most competitive markets for physical therapist assistants.

Sign Language Interpreters

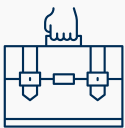
Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) are vital in supporting communication for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, ensuring they have equal access to educational opportunities. As schools place greater emphasis on inclusivity, the demand for qualified interpreters continues to rise.

Nationwide Overview



2,401

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



61,128

SLIs Currently Employed



575

Competing Employers



3,677

Yearly Job Postings



12,900+

SLIs Approaching
Retirement Age



4.3%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

Sign Language Interpreters are in particularly short supply, especially in rural districts and low-population states. Their absence can **violate FAPE under IDEA** for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as other roles cannot legally substitute for qualified interpreters.

Recruitment is further challenged by the limited number of preparation programs and **lower pay** compared to freelance or video relay positions.

Approach to Hiring Sign Language Interpreters

Hiring and retaining Sign Language Interpreters starts with strong relationships. **Districts should establish pipelines** with interpreter training programs and use national registries to fill hard-to-staff roles. Retention goes beyond placement—supporting NIC renewals, involving interpreters in student planning, and **recognizing them as essential team members** of the educational team fosters long-term commitment.

Leading Education Programs

Arizona State University
Grand Canyon University
Western Governors University

With SLIs in high demand, partnering with an MSP like BlazerWorks gives districts access to a vetted network of credentialed interpreters, helping ensure students and families receive consistent, reliable support across the entire school year.

Geographic Workforce Trends

Sign Language Interpreters

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Average regional talent supply provides a stable hiring pool.
- Consistent employer demand supports ongoing recruitment needs.
- Competition for interpreters is close to national averages.
- Lower salary expectations can help districts remain cost competitive.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
Low

Hiring Demand
Low

Competition
Low

Compensation
High

- Smaller-than-average talent pool makes sourcing more challenging.
- Fewer job postings create a less competitive hiring environment.
- Lower employer competition can improve recruiting success.
- Higher compensation expectations reflect a premium market.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Regional supply is close to the national average.
- Hiring demand remains steady across the region.
- Employer competition is in line with national benchmarks.
- Lower compensation requirements support cost-effective hiring.

WEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
High

- Average talent availability is offset by elevated hiring demand.
- High job posting activity creates a highly competitive market.
- Employers face increased competition for qualified interpreters.
- Above-average salaries are often needed to attract and retain talent.

Paraprofessionals

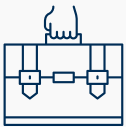
Paraprofessionals are essential members of the educational team, providing instructional, behavioral, and classroom support that helps students thrive. As student needs continue to grow, districts face increasing challenges recruiting and retaining qualified paraprofessionals to ensure consistent support across every school.

Nationwide Overview



598,635

Active Job Seekers
(Matching Online Profiles)



1,422,214

Paraprofessionals
Currently Employed



32,394

Competing Employers



244,965

Yearly Job Postings



345,600+

Paraprofessionals
Approaching Retirement Age



2.1%

Projected Job Growth (2025-2030)

Staffing Challenges

Paraprofessional shortages continue to challenge school districts as low wages, demanding responsibilities, and competition from other industries make hiring and retention difficult. Ongoing vacancies increase workloads for educators and can reduce the consistent support students need to succeed.

Approach to Hiring Paraprofessionals

Building a reliable paraprofessional workforce requires proactive recruitment and long-term retention strategies. Districts should strengthen partnerships with local colleges, workforce development organizations, and community groups while creating clear pathways for **career growth and professional development**.

Competitive compensation, flexible scheduling, meaningful recognition, and ongoing training can improve retention and help districts maintain a stable support staff. Partnering with an MSP like BlazerWorks expands access to a nationwide network of qualified paraprofessionals, helping districts fill vacancies faster while ensuring students receive consistent support throughout the school year.

Leading Education Programs

Grand Canyon University
Arizona State University
National University

Geographic Workforce Trends

Paraprofessionals

SOUTH

Talent Supply
Low

Hiring Demand
Low

Competition
Low

Compensation
Low

- Smaller workforce creates a thinner regional talent pool.
- Lower hiring demand reduces competition for candidates.
- Fewer competing employers can improve recruitment success.
- Lower regional wages help districts remain cost competitive.

NORTHEAST

Talent Supply
Very High

Hiring Demand
High

Competition
High

Compensation
Moderate

- Largest regional workforce provides a deep talent pool.
- Strong hiring demand keeps recruiting competitive.
- High employer competition requires proactive hiring strategies.
- Compensation remains near the national average.

MIDWEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
Low

- Workforce size is close to the national average.
- Hiring demand remains steady across the region.
- Employer competition is consistent with national benchmarks.
- Lower compensation supports cost-effective hiring.

WEST

Talent Supply
Moderate

Hiring Demand
Moderate

Competition
Moderate

Compensation
High

- Regional workforce is near the national average.
- Consistent hiring demand creates a balanced labor market.
- Employer competition is similar to national levels.
- Higher salaries reflect a more expensive labor market.

Should Your District Partner with a Managed Service Provider (MSP)?

A Strategic Comparison for Education Leaders

With growing student needs, workforce shortages, and administrative strain, many districts are rethinking how they build and sustain their teams. While internal hiring remains important, staffing agencies and Managed Service Providers (MSPs) offer flexible, scalable solutions for filling critical roles. **Here's how they compare:**

	BlazerWorks' MSP	Staffing Agency	Internal Hiring
Time-to-Fill	Rapid—leverages multiple staffing agencies	Fast—often days to weeks	Longer—typically weeks to months
Access to Talent	Nationwide network of staffing agencies	Nationwide pool from a single agency	Limited to candidates who apply directly
Credentialing & Compliance	Extra oversight with centralized credentialing team managing all staffing agencies	Managed by the staffing agency	Requires internal HR oversight
Cost Structure	Transparent, consolidated billing; flexible pricing models	Fixed hourly and contract rates with admin included	Salary + benefits + hiring + onboarding costs
Flexibility	Highly scalable for short- or long-term needs across multiple positions	Scalable for individual roles or short-term needs	Fixed FTE model; harder to adjust mid-year
Administrative Burden	Greatly reduced—handles sourcing, onboarding, staffing agency management, timekeeping, & reporting	Reduced—agency handles onboarding & documentation	Managed internally by HR & administrative teams
Staff Retention	Long-term partnerships offering stability, professional advisory, & wraparound support	Professionals often receive agency support & development	Retention dependent on district resources
Workforce Groups	Optimized—coordinates coverage across agencies to prevent service disruption	Ideal for covering short-term leave, mid-year exits, & virtual roles	Challenging to backfill quickly without disruption

Why Choose BlazerWorks

When it comes to special education and student support staffing, BlazerWorks delivers more than service—we provide a true partnership built on insight, efficiency, and results. With over 30 years of experience in special education staffing, our education-only MSP program has helped districts nationwide streamline staffing operations and strengthen support for their students.



Nationwide Network

BlazerWorks connects districts with a nationwide network of education staffing partners—supported by regional and local teams who understand the unique dynamics of your schools and community.



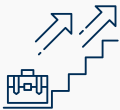
Specialized Talent On-Demand

We help districts secure hard-to-find special education and related service providers, including therapists, school nurses, behavioral health specialists, and more. All professionals sourced through our staffing partner network are licensed, experienced, and prepared to make an immediate impact.



Single Dedicated Point of Contact

Your dedicated BlazerWorks point of contact is supported by talent management and clinical advisory teams who provide guidance and consultation to ensure that we customize the right MSP program to meet the staffing needs of your district.



Speed & Scalability

Our MSP infrastructure enables you to address critical staffing gaps and scale quickly and confidently. With access to thousands of pre-vetted education professionals across our staffing partners, we ensure you get the right professionals—right when you need them.



Full-Service Workforce Support

BlazerWorks centralizes and manages credentialing, compliance, onboarding, timesheet management, and contractor support—removing administrative strain from your team so you can stay focused on student outcomes.

Proven Support for Every District

From rural districts to large metropolitan systems, education leaders rely on BlazerWorks to deliver an MSP solution that adapts and scales with their evolving needs. **When it's time to streamline staffing, reduce administrative load, and ensure you have the staff to support every student's needs, BlazerWorks is the partner districts trust.**

160+ Special Education Roles Filled Through Strategic MSP Partnership

Our Partner

The 2nd largest and most diverse school district in Missouri with **30+ schools and serving 21,000+ students** and families.

Key Results

Since becoming the district's sole Managed Service Provider in 2024, BlazerWorks has:

- Successfully managed **160+ special education placements**
- **98% fulfillment rate**
- **24-48 hours average** from requisition to interview
- **Eliminated redundant administrative tasks**, allowing district staff to focus on student outcomes
- **Streamlined** job order fulfillment, invoicing, and timekeeping, reducing billing errors and reconciliation delays
- Provided **full visibility** across all staffing agency partners, enabling better oversight, compliance, and benchmark reporting
- Implemented **tailored professional development** for the district's internal staff

"BlazerWorks ensures we have the right talent to fill our roles. They have also provided tailored professional development for our staff. The training equipped them with valuable knowledge and practical strategies they can immediately apply to their daily work, enhancing their ability to support students effectively and confidently."

HR Director of Wellness and Development

The Challenge

As a district with diverse and evolving needs, the client depended on multiple staffing agencies to fill critical roles in special education. While this approach ensured broad coverage, it created significant administrative strain and roles still went unfilled. District personnel were spending excessive time managing open jobs, timesheets, tracking multiple invoices, and coordinating communication across multiple agencies and contacts — often at the expense of other mission-critical responsibilities. The complexity of using multiple agencies made it difficult to achieve efficiency, consistency, or clear oversight.

Our Solution

Several of our staffing partners, already working with the district, recommended BlazerWorks' Managed Service Provider (MSP) program as a option to create more efficiency. Our team conducted a thorough needs assessment to understand the district's goals and opportunities. Following a competitive evaluation, BlazerWorks was awarded the contract as the sole MSP for the district. Through implementing a customized MSP program, we assumed full responsibility for coordinating and overseeing all education staffing leveraging our nationwide network of staffing partners. This partnership has transformed the district's contract staffing program, turning a previously fragmented process into a unified, transparent, and efficient program ensuring critical roles are filled.

How a Minnesota School District Filled 170+ Special Education Positions

Our Partner

One of the largest Minnesota school districts serving more than **30,000 students** and families through **35+ schools**.

Key Results

Since becoming the district's sole MSP in 2024 BlazerWorks has:

- Managed **170+ placements**, including special education teachers, paraprofessionals, BCBAs, COTAs, SLPs, SLPA's, virtual IEP writers, and captionists.
- Implemented a paraprofessional program to **reduce turnover and increase retention**.
- Supported their **Para to Teacher Program hiring initiatives**.
- **Simplified contract staffing** for principals and directors while aligning with the district's complex structure.

"I have enjoyed collaborating with you and have appreciated all BlazerWorks has done for our schools over these past 8 years."

*Director of Special Education
for Secondary Schools*

The Challenge

Our partner was spending significant time managing multiple staffing agencies to support their district's special education staffing needs. From tracking multiple timesheets and invoices to coordinating communication across agencies, the complexity of this approach made it difficult to maintain efficiency, consistency, and clear oversight of their contract staffing usage.

Our Solution

BlazerWorks partnered with the district beginning in 2018 to implement a streamlined managed services program (MSP), consolidating all staffing agencies under a single point of contact.

Through this program:

- All timesheets and invoices are managed in one easy-to-use vendor management system (VMS), eliminating the need to track and reconcile multiple and varied systems.
- BlazerWorks coordinates directly with school principals reducing the administrative burden on Special Education Directors and district leadership.
- The district gains clear visibility and consistency across its contract staffing agencies while maintaining flexibility.

Kansas City School District Secures **137+** Critical Roles with BlazerWorks MSP

Our Partner

Our partner is a diverse, urban district in Kansas City serving approximately **22,000 students** across **44 schools**.

Key Results

- Average Fill Rate: **83%**
- Average Time to Fill: **48–72 hours**
- **137 positions** filled and managed
- Positions include:
 - School RBT, RN, LPN, CNA, Paraprofessional, Teacher, Special Education, and School Social Worker

The Challenge

Prior to partnering with BlazerWorks, the district was managing a large number of staffing agencies, creating significant operational strain for the special education team and making it difficult to ensure consistency, accountability, and compliance. At the same time, the district was required to adopt a Board-approved universal rate sheet, adding further complexity to vendor coordination and cost control.

The district needed a more efficient, centralized approach for its staffing program—one that could align all agencies to new pricing requirements, reduce administrative burden, and ensure students continued receiving uninterrupted, high quality services.

Our Solution

BlazerWorks was selected as the district's Managed Service Provider (MSP) in 2024 to centralize and streamline its staffing providers. We implemented a single point of contact to manage all staffing agencies, eliminating fragmented communication and creating clear, consistent processes across the district.

BlazerWorks rolled out the Board-approved universal rate sheet to all existing vendors and managed compliance conversations on the district's behalf. We also identified gaps in agency capabilities and brought in additional staffing partners to improve fill rates, ensuring uninterrupted services for students.

Our partnership has enabled district leaders to focus more on supporting students and staff rather than navigating staffing logistics. Over time, our dedicated Account Manager has become deeply integrated into the district's culture, building trust by understanding their values, priorities, and people.

As an invested partner in the community, BlazerWorks sponsored the district's local charity golf event benefiting education services, providing on-site support and an additional monetary contribution. Today, BlazerWorks is the exclusive MSP for the district's Special Education department, while also supporting their Health Services and Early Childhood departments.

"Your partnership is a blessing, providing us with the human capital we require to serve our community."

Coordinator, Special Education

Your Next Step Toward Stronger Staffing

As districts navigate evolving staffing demands—whether immediate vacancies or long-term planning—BlazerWorks offers a streamlined path to support. Our customizable MSP Solution gives you direct access to expert guidance and a coordinated network of local, regional, and national education staffing partners.

When you connect with BlazerWorks, our team takes the time to understand your goals, evaluate your needs, and recommend a tailored approach that keeps your focus where it belongs: supporting students and empowering your staff.



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instagram.com/blazerworks



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