BREAKOUT SESSION

Designing a Workforce that Stays

Red Rover K-12 HR & PAYROLL LEADERSHIP FORUM





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DESIGN A WORKFORCE THAT STAYS

GROWING OUR OWN TALENT. STENGHENING OUR SCHOOLS.



Kelley Kirkland | Woodbridge School District

Jamie West | Red Rover

PRESENTERS

Kelley Kirkland | Woodbridge School District

Assistant Superintendent- Bridgeville, DE

2600 Students, 550 Employees, 5 Schools, Title 1- Rural

www.woodbridgeblueraiders.com

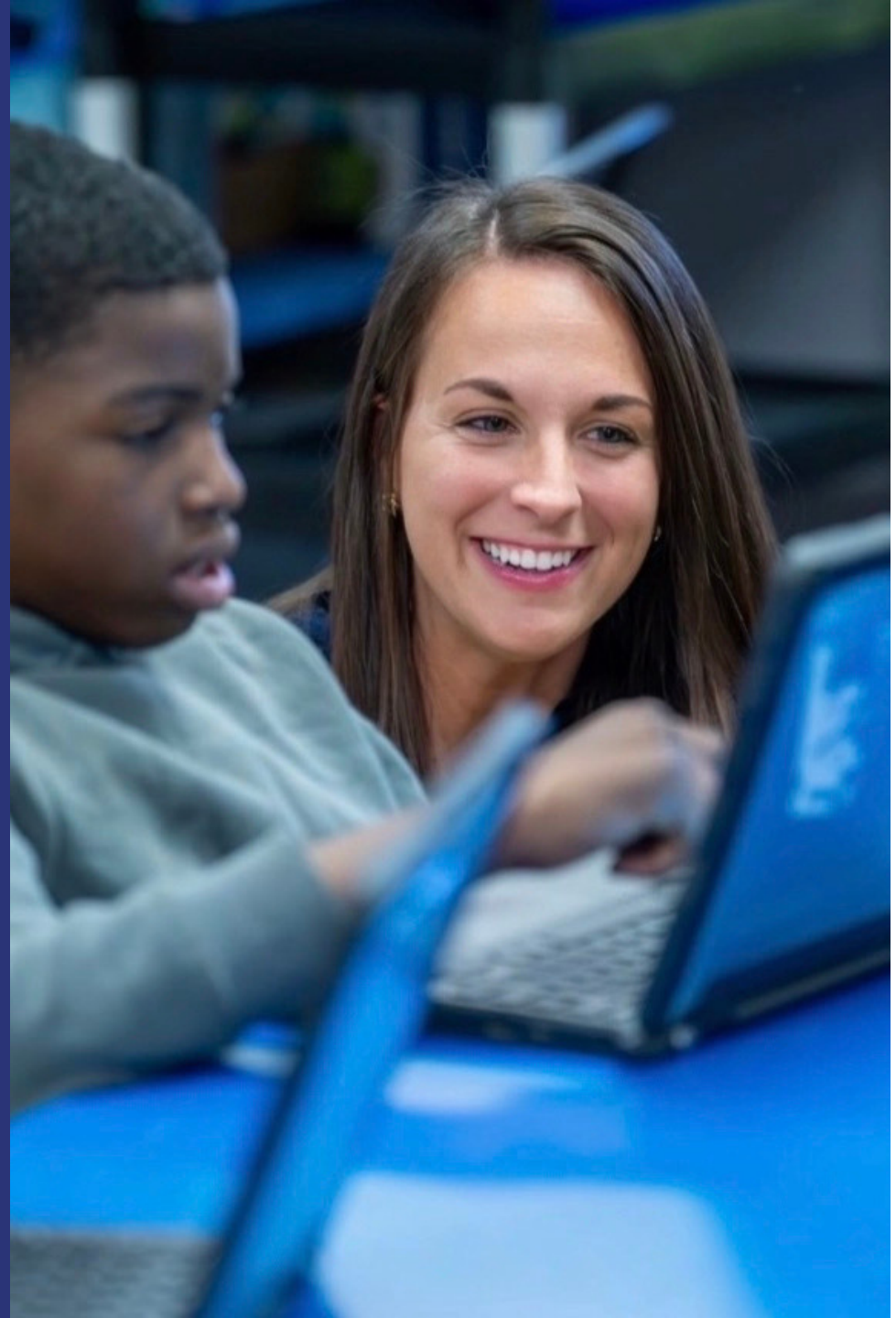
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Community Engagement Strategist

Previously in HR at Lake County Schools, FL







RETENTION-FOCUSED RECRUITMENT

- Onboarding & Barriers for Entry
- Engagement & Culture Strategy
- Grow Your Own & Pipeline Programs
- Sustainable People-focused Processes

Avoid Barriers for Entry & Create an Experience

Give your employees the experience they deserve to become a part of the community before picture day.

MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE

From pre-boarding to picture day, it's important all interactions give a sense of community, inclusivity, and integrity.
Word of mouth is the most influential form of marketing and it's going to impact your recruitment strategy more than you know, but also your culture for current employees seeking to grow their career within the district.

How can we meet them where they are?

- Talk to the candidate 1:1, not just a resume review and virtual application process
- Be available to them when it's convenient for them
- Create virtual office hours to check-in after 60/90 days
- Present them with growth opportunities from the very beginning

LARGE CULTURE. LARGE DISTRICT.

Creating and sustaining culture can be tough, especially from a large district. Here is what you can do to implement a large culture for a large district from the first impression and beyond:

- Be welcoming and grateful for the connection and conversation.
- Encourage the employee to reach out with any questions, initiating a foundational level of comfort.
- Simply ask them, “Do you want to become a teacher with us, or what is your goal starting as a substitute with the district?” (We only know what we know and we don’t know what we don’t know.)
- Invite them to events to learn how to grow with your district and explore opportunities that are available to them.
- Have a clear mission, vision, and initiative-program that makes sense… and don’t preach it, live it.

BUILT BLUE

Growing our own talent. Strengthening our schools.

A district pipeline for employee growth, opportunity, and retention

CREATE. DEVELOP. RETAIN.

Grow Your Own is more than a recruitment strategy. It is a commitment to the people already making a difference.

INVEST
Recognize potential

→

PREPARE
Build skills & experience

→

ADVANCE
Open the next door

Build a pipeline—not a one-time program

A connected employee journey creates opportunity at every stage.

1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5

IDENTIFY

Notice strengths, interests, and leadership potential

INVITE

Make pathways visible; remove access barriers

PREPARE

Pair coursework with real district experience

SUPPORT

Provide mentors, feedback, and practical coaching

ADVANCE

Recruit, select, and onboard internal talent

Retention by design

- Employees can picture a next step—not just a current job.

District-wide ownership

- HR, principals, mentors, and preparation partners share the work.

A living talent bench

- Keep relationships active before vacancies are posted.

Pathway 1 | Para-to-Teacher

Partner with educator preparation programs to turn current paraeducators into future teachers.

PARTNER

- Build relationships with educational preparation programs.
- Create residency and student-teaching placements for paraeducators.
- Coordinate requirements, timing, and building needs.

→

PRACTICE

- The para remains employed in their para role while completing student-teaching requirements.
- An in-building teacher serves as the cooperating teacher.
- The para completes program requirements with support and authentic classroom experience.

→

TRANSITION

- Maintain para support for the building during preparation.
- Build familiarity with district practices, students, and teams.
- Position the employee to be considered and hired as a teacher upon completion and certification.

WIN–WIN: the employee keeps earning • the school retains para support • the district grows a future teacher

Pathway 2 | Rising Blue Raiders

A year-long leadership development cohort for teachers and specialists preparing for administration.

Develop the skills, confidence, and practical experience to apply for future administrative roles.

WHO PARTICIPATES

- Teachers and specialists
- Seeking an administrator certificate or already certified
- Selected through an application process

HOW IT WORKS

- Year-long professional development cohort
- Learning with district and building administrators
- Mentoring, reflection, and real-world leadership practice

WHY IT MATTERS

- Builds a ready pool of internal applicants
- Creates visibility into the work of school leadership
- Strengthens continuity when admin openings arise

The outcome: a stronger bench—not a promise of placement.

Rising Blue Raiders | Learning + doing

A structured cohort blends professional development, reflection, and job-embedded leadership experiences.

SIX PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

1. Developing Your Leadership Style: Leadership vs. Management
2. Instructional Leadership
3. Conflict Resolution
4. Communication
5. Data-Driven Decision-Making
6. Equitable Schools: Providing Supports for Students

Also included: *Who Moved My Cheese?* book study + required mock interview.

REQUIRED LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

1 | Shadow an AP Day

- Two full days with an assistant principal—one secondary and one elementary; includes classroom walkthroughs.

2 | Personal Leadership Vision

- Develop and present a leadership identity; receive peer and mentor feedback.

3 | School Leadership Team Meeting

- Observe a real meeting and reflect on communication and decision-making.

PLUS: Choose one bonus experience—data dive/action plan, mini-PD, family/community engagement, or school culture snapshot.

Sustain the pipeline | Make growth part of the culture

Programs last when the district builds the supports—and the next step—around them.

MAKE IT VISIBLE

- Share pathways and eligibility early.
- Invite employees to name career interests.
- Celebrate progress—not only promotions.

MAKE IT DOABLE

- Coordinate schedules, coursework, and job responsibilities.
- Protect time for shadowing, mentoring, and practice.
- Use clear milestones and regular check-ins.

MAKE IT CONTINUOUS

- Track participants and completion.
- Maintain a pool of prepared internal candidates.
- Review hiring, retention, and advancement outcomes.

A strong Grow Your Own pipeline answers one question for every employee:
“Where can I go next—and how will my district help me get there?”

THANK YOU

Thank you for joining us

People don’t stay because of one big perk. They stay because the everyday experience works.

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UP NEXT

Bringing Control & Clarity to School Workforce Planning

2:55 – 3:25 PM EST



Len Reed

Tigard-Tualatin



Nick Rawson

Central Valley