



# 5 Ways to Decrease Turnover at Your Preschool



As a preschool director, it's your responsibility to run a thriving preschool. That means happy children, happy parents, and happy staff. But getting there can be hard, especially when you're constantly dealing with turnover, which often causes a negative ripple effect throughout your preschool.

So what can you do? These are five tried and true strategies our team has found to be the most effective for retaining staff. You don't have to do all of them at once, but when you start one by one and build up to all five, you will see a significant decrease in turnover at your preschool,

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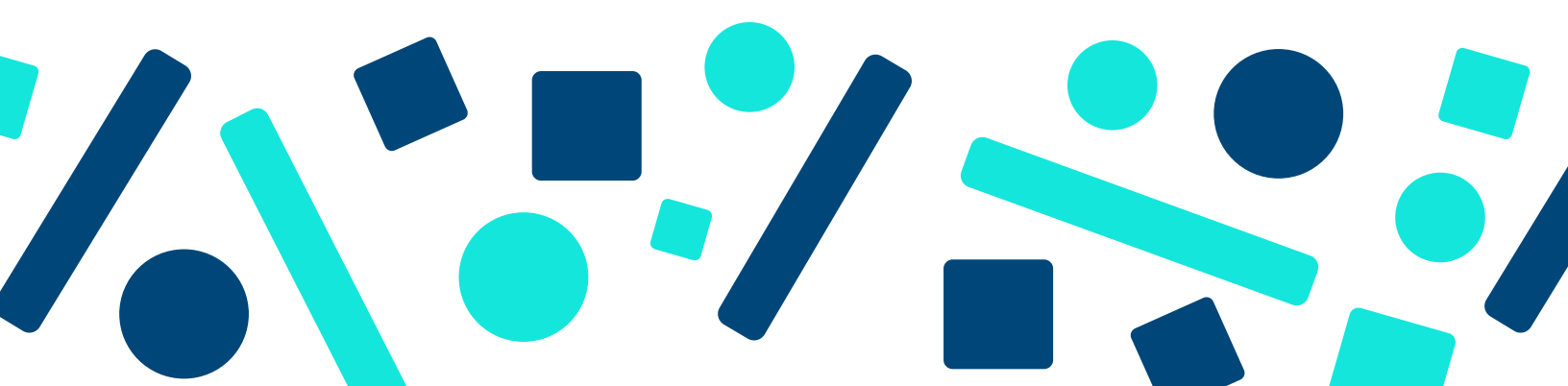
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# #1 Hire the right people and onboard them properly.

For every position, you have to make sure you hire the right person, not just someone with a pulse because you're short-staffed and stressed out! It's hard, but also important to let your school "hurt" a little longer so you can get the right person in that spot. It will pay great dividends later on.

Once you've found the right person, onboard and train them well. Put a solid, effective orientation and observation process in place and do not compromise that process, no matter how desperate you may be. Otherwise, you'll just be throwing them into a classroom unprepared, which is an unwise and costly move to make. No matter how much experience your new hire has, their experience doesn't include your center, your families, or the children in your care!

Make it a point to continually provide everyone on your staff with opportunities for feedback, coaching, and ongoing professional development, too, so they're equipped to handle challenging situations that come up. Your team is your biggest asset, and it's essential to pour into them and grow them as employees and people.



## #2 Be an authentic, intentional leader.

When you know who your staff are on a deeper level, both as a person and an employee, you can have a stronger connection with them, and strong connections with your team will help you lean into more authenticity and intentionality as a leader.

One way to do this is by committing to the walkaround style of leadership. Get out from behind your desk and get into your hallways and classrooms. You can't get to know your staff if you're never around them, so schedule some time in your busy schedule to pop into each classroom throughout each week so you can say hi to your teachers and check in on them.

Ask about their families and anything important in their lives they may have shared with you. If they haven't shared anything, then ask them specifics. Be curious (but not nosy!). Help with a child, sweep, or offer to take their trash out while you're in there. Show them you aren't too proud to get your hands dirty, too. Empathy goes a long way!

Look for ways they excel and when you see them doing something great, compliment how they handled the situation. This must be sincere and from your heart. Ask them if they have everything they need or if they like something new you've implemented school wide or purchased for their room. Their feedback is truly valuable, so be receptive to it, whether it's good or bad.

## #3 Offer regular acknowledgement and recognition.

When people feel appreciated, they're almost always willing to go the extra mile. Working in a preschool is hard work, so regular acknowledgement and recognition can have a huge impact on your staff. Not only will it make them feel good and boost morale, but it will also encourage them to keep up the good work. Not sure how to do this? It doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes, simple is better!

You can feed them breakfast or lunch once a month, celebrate their birthdays and big milestones (personal and professional), and even catch them doing something right and let them know you see it, right in that moment. Print out parent emails or posts that mention them and include that in a handwritten thank you card, along with a gift card for coffee or lunch as an added thank you.

If morale seems low after a particularly difficult week, surprise them with breakfast or lunch in the breakroom. Communicate this through your sign in system with a thank you message and be present while they pop in to get their food. Acknowledge that things seem heavy and you wanted to cheer them up and on, be sure they know how much you genuinely appreciate them. Use this time to ask their opinions and get additional feedback, strengthen your connections with them.

Make appreciation a habit and a normal part of your leadership style; when you do, you'll see a difference in the attitude of your staff and the atmosphere of your preschool.

# #4 Build a positive work culture.

A toxic work environment isn't good for anyone, and it certainly doesn't help you retain staff! The first step toward a positive work culture is good communication, which includes transparency and open lines of communication between administration, coworkers, and families. Your leadership makes ALL the difference in the culture. The unconscious influence of leaders is known as The Shadow of the Leader, and your shadow will make or break your school culture, which is everything you say and do.

Your staff absorb and mirror your attitudes and behaviors. They take cues from you on their work ethic, responses to circumstances, and even their motivation. Owners of multiple centers know that each school eventually assumes a "feel" similar to how the leaders operate, so it's game on for you!

Be considerate of your staff, too. Know them beyond work (this goes back to #2!) and be aware of their needs, be sure they have what they need to provide superior early learning experiences. Give break schedules that are fair, and accommodate appointments and time off requests as they come in.

When it comes down to it, you need your preschool to be a place of positivity, so don't hesitate to remove those from the team who aren't performing well or are causing discord within the team. Keeping staff members like this is perhaps the fastest way to erode your culture. At the same time, be sure you're holding everyone accountable in the same way, without playing favorites. All staff must be held accountable for poor job performance, regardless of who it is. You have standards of behavior and discipline policies in your employee manual for this reason, so follow the policies in place if you don't see a change when addressed.

# #5 Prioritize staff numbers and scheduling.

This is where you should start, really, because it's the biggest reason for turnover.

Increase your staff numbers, then create a good staff schedule and maintain it. When you're constantly short-staffed and ask others to stay and work overtime to cover shifts, it quickly leads to burnout, negativity, gossip, and resignations. That's not how you build a thriving, successful preschool!

Take some time with your operating expenses and realign your budget to cut expenses in other areas so you can add more to payroll for extra support to your teachers. This includes additional staffing hours, part-time assistants, and floaters. It really can make all the difference. If you're not sure where you can cut expenses, start by reaching out to each of your distribution companies (food distributor, printing company, paper goods, cleaners, even insurance!) and tell them they need to beat the lowest rate to keep your business.

If that doesn't quite get you where you need to be, then raise tuition — but very minimally, and accompanied by a gracious letter of explanation. If you raise tuition by just 3%, it should be just enough to cover the additional payroll burden. Most families will accept this with no problem. For the few who don't, offer them some nice credits to keep them happy and grandfathered in.

# Try These 5 Things & Watch Your Turnover Decrease!

At Impact Early Education, we know running a preschool is anything but easy, and the last thing you should have to worry about is staff turnover. By putting these five things into practice, you can turn your preschool around, decreasing turnover and increasing happiness. You'll have to see it to believe it, though, so don't wait.

Get started today and watch your preschool thrive!

For an extra boost of success, get your staff (and yourself!) enrolled in our preschool training courses. Explore our available courses right now at

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