

An Aligned, Systemic Approach to Find, Grow, and Keep Talent

Anthony Wayne Local Schools

Historically, [Anthony Wayne Local Schools](#) (AWLS) in northwest Ohio was able to rely on their reputation alone to attract many applicants across all positions. Like many districts, they began seeing far less applicants in the past few years and needed a focused approach to recruit and retain staff.

Superintendent Dr. Jim Fritz knew the district needed a new approach, so he and a team of district and building leaders engaged in a year-long human capital professional learning experience. They learned with and from districts across Ohio and created an action plan to improve their people systems and meet local needs.



By utilizing a framework with their 21st century instructional vision at its core, the team was able to better **Align** efforts and enhance strategies to **Find, Grow, and Keep** the people that could deliver on their brand promise for students – [the Portrait of a General](#). Using a framework kept the work centered on student outcomes and helped focus the conversations within the human resources department and with building and district administrators.

By prioritizing systemic human capital practices and building internal capacity, Superintendent Fritz and his team were able to efficiently shift to implementation by year two. The following include recent steps they have taken in each core area of their human capital action plan.

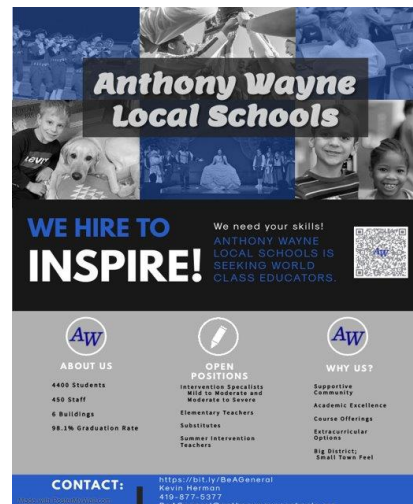


ALIGN: Key steps taken to align their people system

- **Analysis of job responsibilities.** AWLS looked at all job responsibilities across the district through the lens of alignment to their strategic plan and Portrait of a General. They also looked externally at other districts who had seen success.
- **New positions.** Based on the job analysis and current needs of the district, AWLS reallocated previous job duties to create two new positions: Communication Specialist and Director of Human Resources.
- **District-wide messaging.** AWLS created focused key messages that centered around the Portrait of a General and the continual growth of staff to promote consistency and support communication efforts.
- **Competency alignment.** More intentionality is occurring at AWLS to infuse desired competencies within hiring practices – that is, defining what it is they are looking for in a candidate, and what they would accept as evidence that the candidate posses that competency.

FIND: Key steps taken to find talent

- **Employment brand and recruitment strategies.** AWLS took a more active approach in highlighting their value proposition as an employer – especially to new teachers coming out of college and to candidates for classified positions. They promoted job opportunities through more channels, such as Indeed, Handshake, community websites, social media, and job fairs.
- **Recruitment materials.** Updates were made to recruitment artifacts to focus more on the “Why AWLS” and highlight the benefits of the district, the staff, and the culture. QR codes were used to link to more detailed information.



- **Brand Ambassadors.** The voices of AWLS staff and students were elevated to create short testimonial videos showcasing the benefits and how fun it is to work in the district. Access videos on [AWLS HR/Employment Page](#).
- **“We are all recruiters.”** AWLS leaders facilitated conversations with staff about how they portray AWLS to their friends and family. Their words impact the brand and culture of the district.
- **Community partners.** AWLS emphasized connecting with community partners and groups to get the word out on open positions and substitute opportunities (i.e. chamber, government agencies, parents, and pastors).
- **Partnerships with area colleges and universities.** AWLS enhanced ongoing efforts with formal partnerships to recruit from and fill open and future positions. The work includes:
 - **Early recruitment efforts of teachers from the local universities:** AWLS invited freshman education students from an area university into their district for classroom tours and information sharing about their district.
 - **Student teacher pipeline:** District leaders work with principals each winter to identify standout student teachers and discuss with them their future interests at AWLS and known open positions for next year.
 - **Preservice Special Education Teachers as Instructional Aides:** Area institutes support AWLS by identifying any current preservice teachers who are interested in filling aide positions on a part-time basis within AWLS for both work and educational experience.
- **Grow Your Own programs.** In partnership with a group of districts and the area career center, AWLS is re-igniting efforts to create more awareness and interest of current middle and high school students in the education career pathways.
- **Education Day.** There is also the potential of hosting an Education Day, where AWLS students could go to the area institutes and experience what the field of education prep looks like from the college level and hear from both college and local K12 educators.

GROW: Key steps taken to grow talent

- **Gap Analysis of Qualifications.** AWLS looks at current staff and their unique qualifications and interests and considers what the specific personnel needs are for the district now and in the future. Where there are gaps, AWLS encourages staff to seek additional qualifications opportunities for advancement.
- **Portrait to Practice.** AWLS focuses on the application of their [Portrait of a General](#) with all staff as they build those skills within the students. This work is central to both professional learning and performance management efforts.
- **Pathways.** Intentional efforts at AWLS include:
 - Special Education Aides – Getting them the coursework to become an intervention specialist.
 - Student Teachers – Helping them become Special Education Aides on a part-time basis.
 - Substitute Pipeline – Encouraging community groups. Examples include two pastors who serve as full-time substitutes and helped fill a coaching vacancy. Several parents and government officials are now also substitute teachers, and two AWLS parents that had flexible schedules are in the pipeline to be bus drivers.
 - Teacher Pipeline – Advocacy for the professional and providing middle and high school students with genuine learning opportunities.

KEEP: Key steps taken to keep talent

- **Culture of Engagement.** AWLS spends a lot of time as a district to create a positive environment for staff who can then pass high levels of engagement along to students and the classroom environment. This work starts with strong onboarding and mentoring practices for new staff and continues through all efforts to create and foster an engaging and inclusive environment.
- **Relationships with unions.** Significant time is spent nurturing a positive relationship with the unions. The work is critical in helping to retain employees. AWLS seeks opportunities in all ways to collaborate with the unions on the district's direction and paths to move forward.
- **Employee Wellbeing.** The district Wellness Committee informs AWLS wholistic wellbeing offerings. Examples include: dedicating 2 days a month where all teachers integrate physical activities into lessons for students; hosting Saturday Wellness Days; staff use of gyms at area universities; partnering with a local village for a 5K race; working with medical providers to offer counseling services to staff.

- **Financially Competitive.** AWLS tries to do their best with compensation and has continual efforts in place to monitor the market to stay competitive with employee pay and benefits – for both certified and classified staff, and administration.

When asked, “*What have you learned while transforming your Human Capital System?*”, here’s what Dr. Jim Fritz, Superintendent had to say:

1. Fostering a positive, inclusive culture is key.

“To retain our employees, our culture needs to be strong and positive, and we need to do whatever we can based on listening to them and knowing their needs to make sure they are physically and mentally healthy while doing their job.”

2. Have a plan.

“We knew we needed a focused, ever-evolving human capital plan, which is why we engaged in an ongoing professional learning cohort experience as a team last year.”

3. Cultivate partnerships.

“Find every group possible to talk about our needs and try to appeal to them on why it’s important for us to work together. Schools are a vital part of the economic engine of our community and across the state as well. It’s a partnership to fulfill staffing needs at our schools, and we are very lucky to have strong partners.”