



CASE STUDY

Midland Independent School District:
Growing a Thriving Teacher Workforce

Overview

As the demand for certified teachers continues to outpace supply, many districts are rethinking how they build their workforce. Midland Independent School District (MISD), a small but determined district in West Texas, is leading the way with a mentoring-based approach that supports career changers and aspiring educators, helping them grow into confident, classroom-ready teachers even without traditional training.

The Challenge

As a part of the Permian Basin, Midland Independent School District (MISD) faces a two-pronged challenge in teacher recruitment:

1. High competition for local talent. The Permian Basin oil fields offer high-paying jobs that often outcompete teaching salaries.
2. Limited relocation interest. Due to Midland's rural location, attracting certified educators from outside the area is tough—most candidates prefer to work close to where they grew up.

"Data tells us that, nationally, 60% of teachers come from a 20-mile radius of where they graduated high school, but that statistic is even more pronounced in the Permian Basin," says Jessie Garcia, Executive Director of Talent Development and Acquisition at MISD. "Unless someone has roots in this region, we don't get a lot of people who want to move here."

To tackle their staffing challenges, MISD has taken a unique approach to talent acquisition and development: "growing their own" educators.

This strategy is possible through MISD's designation as a District of Innovation (DOI). Texas, like many other states, grants certain districts special exemptions regarding staffing flexibility, such as allowing them to bring in non-traditional educators who are eager to make an impact.

One example of this flexibility is in MISD's creation of the "associate teacher" role.

As Garcia explains, "When we have a vacant position, instead of bringing in a substitute who may change weekly or monthly, we hire for a position we call an 'associate teacher.' This is essentially a long-term substitute who receives substantial support from a teacher mentor. We have 140 associate teachers who are working toward a degree with support from their mentor."

The district further leverages its DOI staffing flexibility by recruiting second-career professionals—people who have degrees but aren't certified teachers.

"We have 348 DOI teachers who aren't certified or who came to us as second-career professionals," Garcia says. "We have 1,600 teachers total in the district. Of that number, approximately 480 of them are DOI teachers and associate teachers." However, she notes, "That figure doesn't include our certified teachers who have fewer than five years' experience."

Having a sizable population of novice educators means one thing for MISD: "A lot of our teaching staff needs support."

The Solution

When Garcia arrived at MISD in February 2023, the district didn't have a formal teacher coaching platform, but she knew that if they wanted to see real change in teacher development, they needed a proper system and better processes.

"When we asked how people were documenting coaching, we got different responses," she says. "Some people had Google Docs. Some people used old-fashioned pen and paper."

But, overall, the majority of coaches just weren't tracking their coaching activities.

Additionally, the district was in the process of implementing Opportunity Culture®—a team-based teaching solution designed to extend the reach of excellent educators to more students.

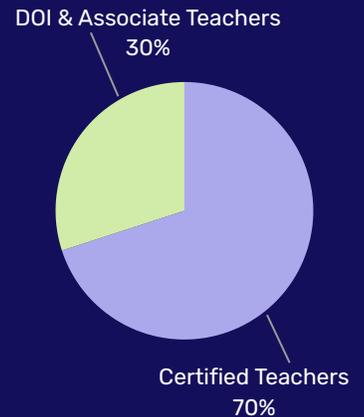
With the need for a formal teacher coaching system apparent and the district implementing the Opportunity Culture staffing model, MISD had "an opportunity to implement a platform that was aligned to our district's coaching framework and ensure coaching was uniform across the board," Garcia says.

Ultimately, MISD chose the teacher coaching and classroom observation software [Grow by Level Data](#).

Grow gave the district a powerful way to:

- Document and report on all coaching activities
- Monitor the frequency and quality of coaching happening across MISD
- Ensure feedback alignment with [Get Better Faster](#) and See It, Name It, Do It
- Hold teacher mentors accountable in their coaching role

Midland ISD Teaching Staff



Some teachers at MISD take on the role of a teacher mentor, whereby they become an Opportunity Culture **Multi-Classroom Leader**[™] (MCL). These teacher mentors, the MCLs, are highly experienced, highly effective educators who support a small team of teachers in multiple capacities:

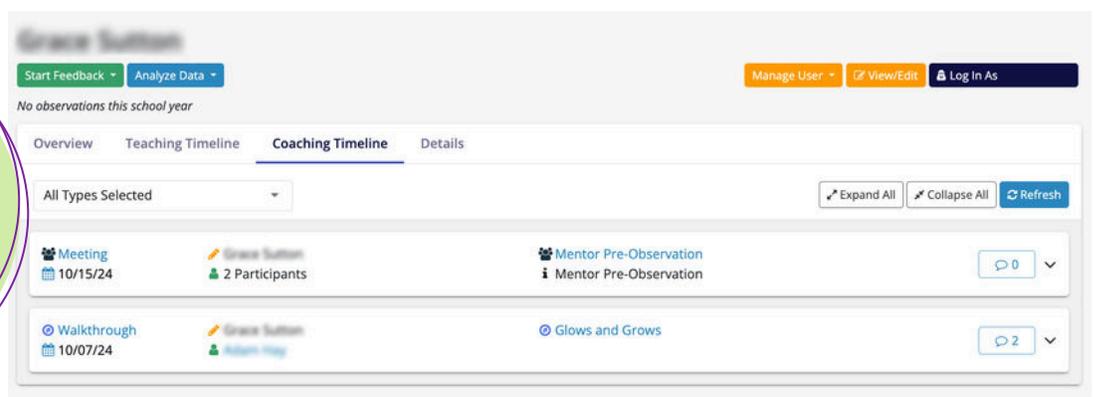
- Observing teachers on their team
- Providing instructional feedback
- Co-teaching and modeling effective practices

At MISD, each MCL has their own classroom but is also responsible for supporting the growth of their team teachers—a key part of the district's efforts to "grow their own"—and receives a stipend that can push their salary past \$100,000.

"And that's very exciting," Garcia says. "But when you're receiving that big of a stipend, it comes with the expectation that you'll be effective. So we have to ensure our MCLs, our teacher mentors, are highly effective."

Here, Grow plays a key role. Just as MISD's coaches use Grow to coach teachers, so do the talent specialists. The specialists, who work with the coaches, use Grow to review coaching timelines and the quality of feedback the coach is giving.

The **Coaching Timeline** feature shows a chronological list of the observations, meetings, Quick Feedback, action steps, and goals coaches have given in Grow.



The accountability framework Grow provides is essential in maintaining the high standards expected of MCLs—and it also provides a path for the coaches themselves to grow.

"Our coaches come from the teaching world. They're teachers first. The majority are part-time coach, part-time teacher," Garcia says. "But what we've learned about our coaches is that although they're great at being teachers, they're not always great at being coaches."

She explains,

“ Earning a highly effective teacher designation doesn’t automatically translate into being a highly effective coach. Those are skills we have to grow and develop. And Grow helps us do that. With Grow, we can examine the type of feedback coaches are giving, and, at the district level, see how they can improve their coaching. ”

This approach leads to two powerful outcomes: MISD’s effective coaches help elevate the skills of teachers who need support the most, and those teachers ultimately drive stronger student achievement.

The Results

Stronger Coaching & Mentorship

Grow by Level Data has become an integral teacher coaching tool for MISD as they work to elevate their new educators. By enabling administrators to monitor all coaching activities at the district level, the platform ensures that both new teachers and their coaches receive targeted, actionable feedback.

This system of accountability not only helps teacher mentors/MCLs transition effectively into their dual roles but also fosters growth across all teams, aligning with MISD’s strategy of “growing their own” educators.

In fact, a powerful example of this approach can be seen in one of MISD’s junior high schools: “One of our seventh-grade ELA teachers is a DOI teacher, and this is her second year in the classroom. She has a bachelor’s degree, but she’s not certified,” Garcia says.

Prior to that teacher’s first day of teaching, she had been a hairdresser.

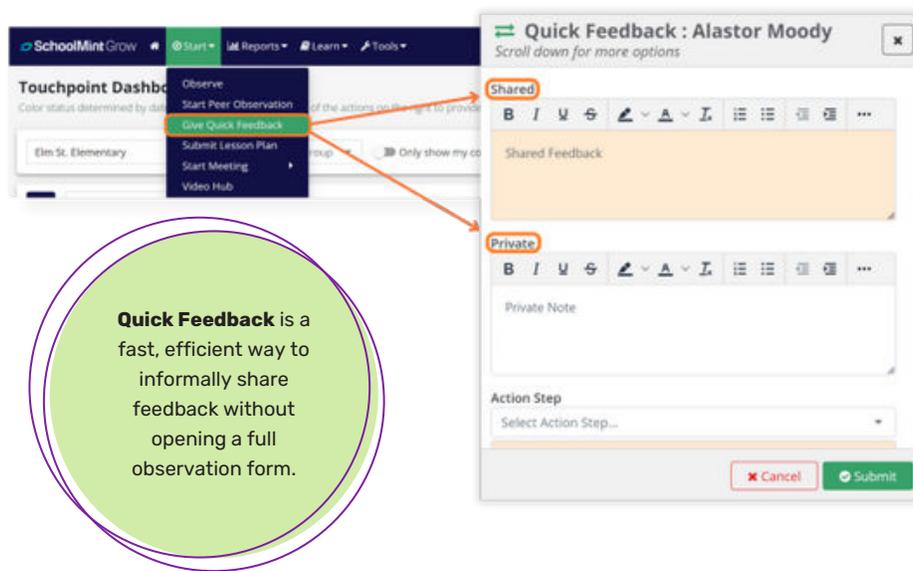
“And today, she’s rocking and rolling and having an amazing year,” Garcia adds. “She has a great coach, and Grow is where we document our coaching cycles. And the feedback and support she’s receiving from her coach is keeping her in the classroom and making her an effective teacher, which is what we want to see.”

"If we do a good job of having those conversations, it'll become a huge retention tool for teachers, because we know data shows us that the biggest indicator of student success is the teacher. So if we want our teachers to stay in the classroom, they have to grow and develop. And the way they're going to grow and develop is by receiving feedback."

Enhanced Coaching Processes

Another big benefit of Grow for MISD has been the platform's Quick Feedback feature, which allows coaches to provide targeted, manageable insights to teachers without overwhelming them.

"Quick Feedback is one of the best ways to get teachers comfortable with the platform," says Chelsea Reyes, MISD's Director of Talent Development. "It allows us to scaffold learning by starting with small pieces and then moving into more rigorous parts, like video feedback. This way, users can learn the platform gradually, which makes a big difference."



Quick Feedback enables coaches to break down lesson recordings into manageable sections—such as the introduction, main content, and closing—rather than asking teachers to review an entire 40-minute lesson.

"It really helps people digest information," she adds. "Who has time to sit down and watch a full lesson recording? With this feature, teachers can receive targeted, timely feedback on specific parts of their practice."

By focusing on these key segments, teachers at MISD can immediately apply the feedback they receive, helping them improve more rapidly and consistently.

Improved Accountability in Instructional Coaching

Grow's built-in dashboards, coaching timelines, and data tracking have been instrumental in helping MISD maintain consistency and accountability in coaching.

The platform has provided MISD with a clear view of the frequency and quality of feedback provided, which ensures two things:

- Novice educators receive the targeted feedback they need to become skilled teachers
- Teacher mentors meet the high standards expected of their roles as MCLs

Reyes explains,

“ At a glance, we can see when someone last received feedback, which is huge. From a district level, I can filter data to identify which campuses are making full use of the platform and which ones might need additional support. ”

By using this data, MISD can quickly identify patterns and intervene to support the campuses and teachers who need it most. This data-driven accountability ensures every teacher mentor is fulfilling their obligations as an MCL and ensures every teacher is receiving high-quality coaching.

Conclusion

MISD's story exemplifies how strategic staffing solutions can address teacher recruitment problems, especially in rural regions, where the impact of vacancies is arguably felt most acutely.

If your district is facing similar challenges, Grow by Level Data can help!

Discover how Level Data can support teacher recruitment, coaching, and other talent management needs in your school district!

Level Data provides powerful, easy-to-use solutions that remove the complexity from K-12 data management, enabling schools to make better decisions and focus on what matters most—students and their success.