

Boots to Books

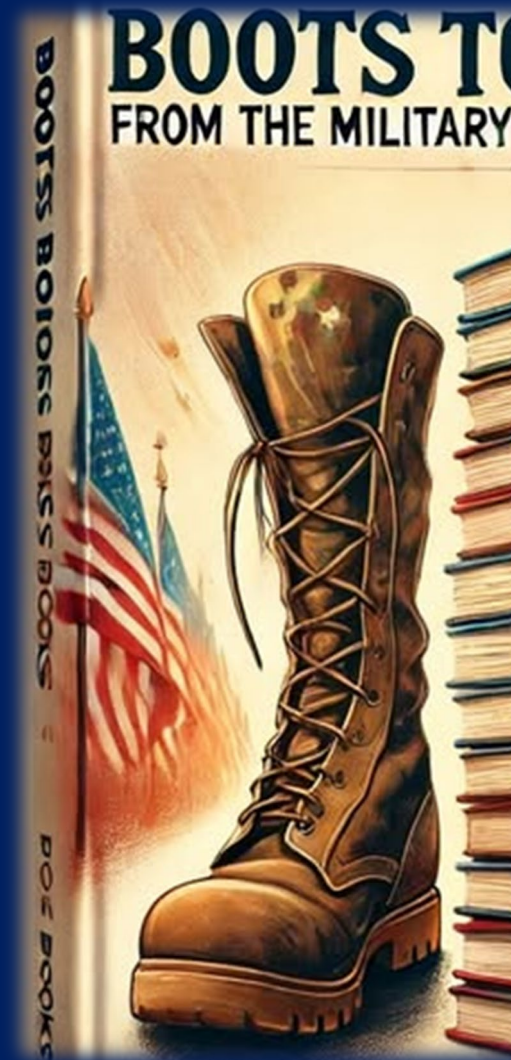
From Military Service to the Classroom
Nichelle Ruffin | 2026 LED Conference



The Problem

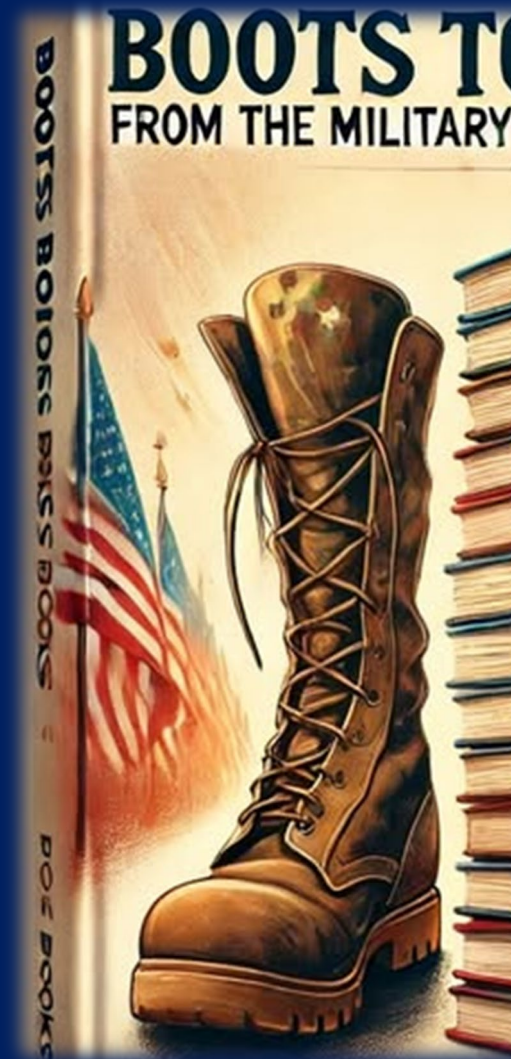
- Teacher shortages persist
- Veterans underutilized in education
- Data exists but is not aligned

“VEO shows us where veterans are—but not where they *should be*.”



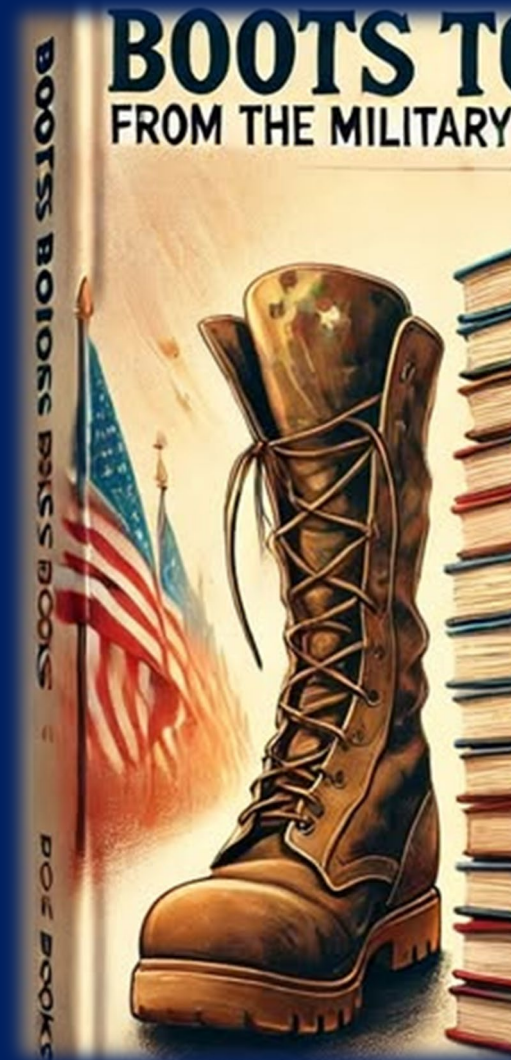
Why Veterans?

- Leadership and discipline
- Mission-driven mindset
- Strong retention potential



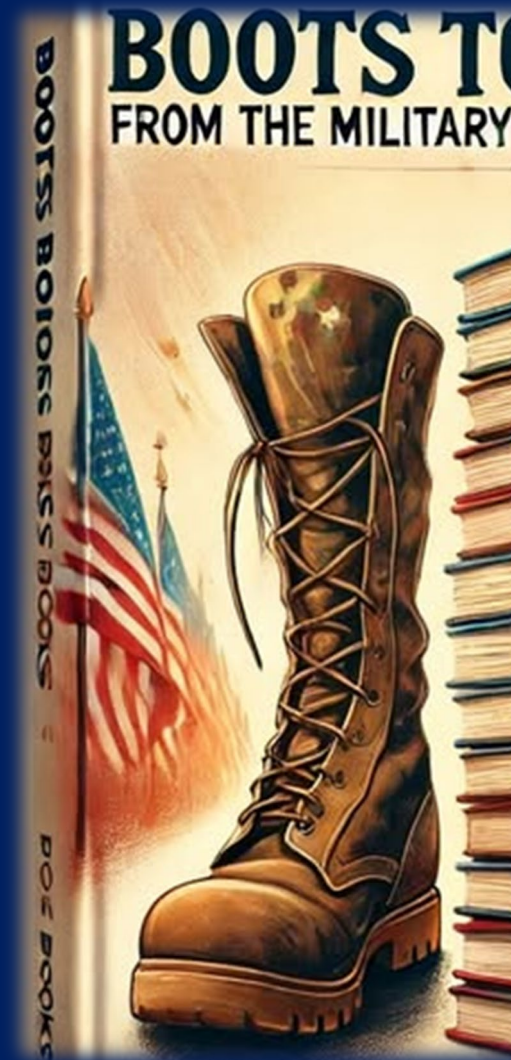
The Missed Opportunity

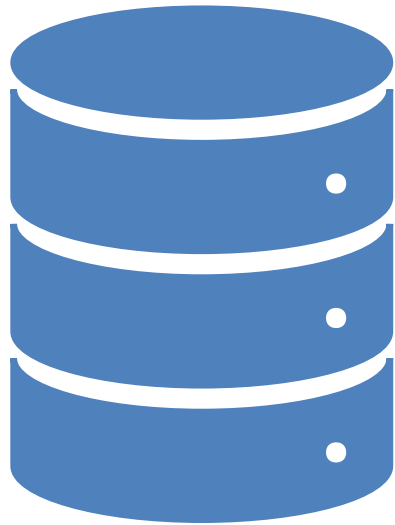
- Veterans transition annually
- Teacher shortages continue
- No system connects the two



Boots to Books Framework

Identify → Prepare → Place → Sustain
Data-driven pipeline alignment
Focus on long-term retention

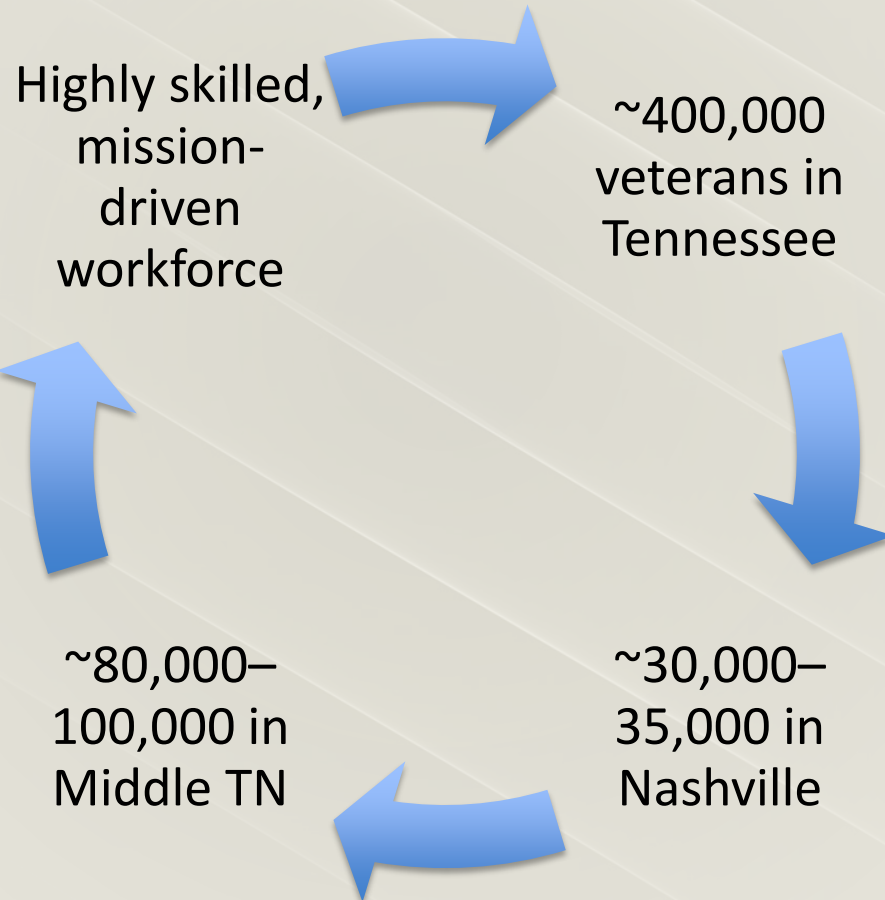




Connecting Veterans to Classrooms in
Middle Tennessee

Example: Local Data Insight

A Local Opportunity: Veterans in Middle Tennessee



Supply vs Demand

Veteran Workforce (Supply): ~100,000 in Middle TN

Teacher Shortage (Demand): Persistent vacancies

High-need areas: SPED, STEM, ESL

Retention challenges continue



The Pipeline Problem

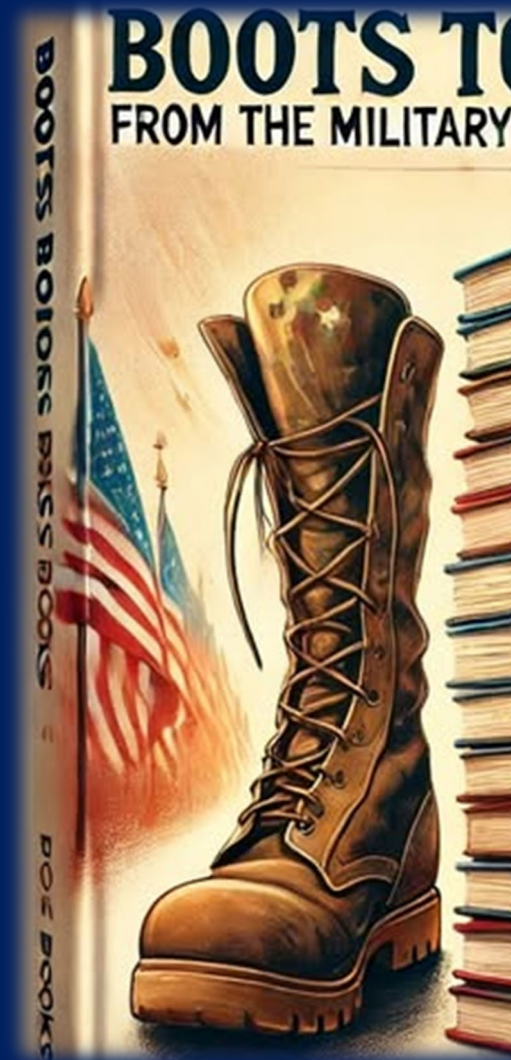
100,000 Veterans
→ Small % enter
education →
Teacher shortages
persist

What If Just 1% Transitioned?

1% of 100,000 veterans = 1,000
teachers

District Application

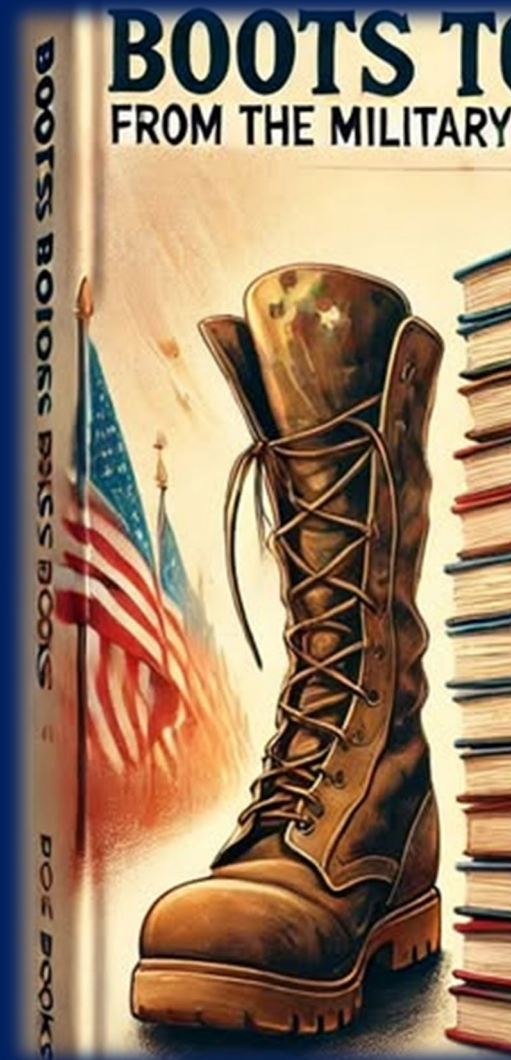
- Map veteran populations
- Align with shortage areas
- Target recruitment strategies



From Numbers to Narratives

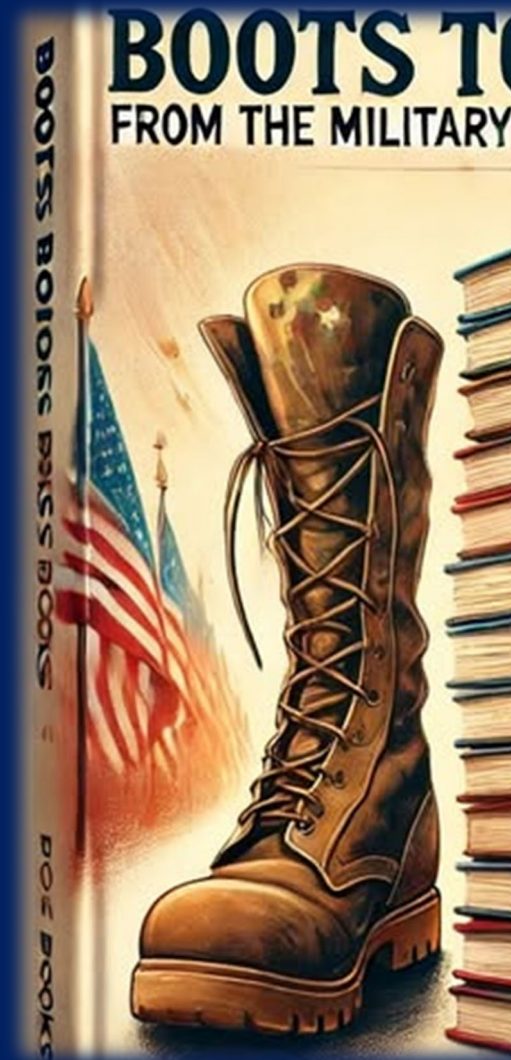
Data → Insight → Action

Translate workforce data into decisions



Call to Action

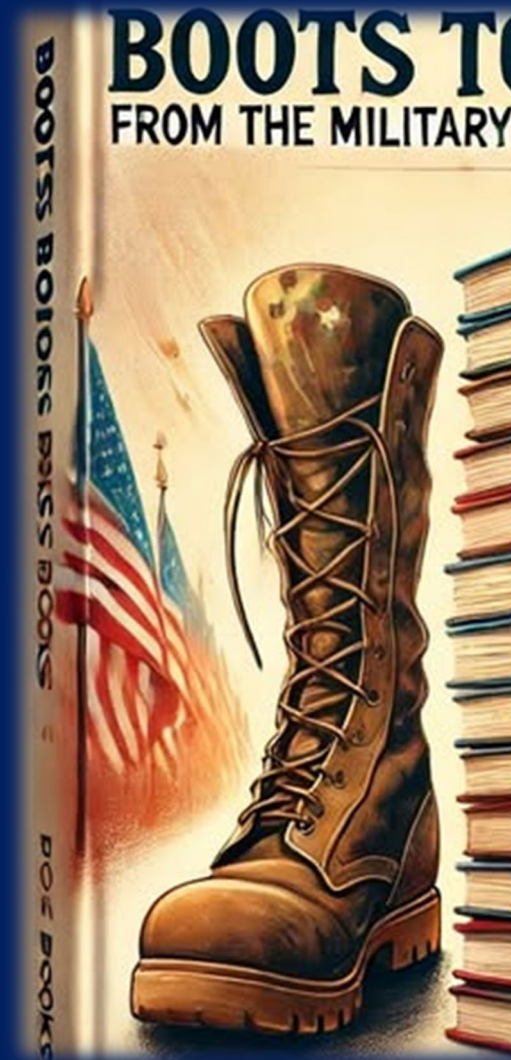
- Use LED data
- Build pipelines
- Partner across sectors



The Bridge We Haven't Built

Veterans → Classroom
The pathway is missing

Boots to Books | From Data to Deployment



Key Takeaway

We are not
lacking talent—
we are lacking
alignment.

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