

RECRUITING & RETAINING SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL



...A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

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Section I

How To Use This Guide

1. Assemble a school district planning team.
2. Read “Recruiting and Retaining Special Education Personnel”
3. Complete and score the School District Profile.
4. Organize school district planning efforts by completing the planning worksheet.
5. Plan improvements by working through the guide.

Who: Staff involved in the school district’s recruiting and retention programs (the person responsible—working as a task force).





How: Begin with school district commitment, or by section in order of need, beginning with the area in which the school district has the greatest need.

6. Review, complete and finalize by compiling worksheets. Review and modify as needed. Add any additional planning material needed to describe the school district’s recruiting/retention program.

Tips for Success

- Secure support of school district leadership.
- Thoroughly read the material in each section.
- Discuss the topic with other school staff or recruiters from other school districts.
- Think through alternatives the school district might want to implement
- Record key ideas and plans.
- Arrange to share ideas and plans with others in the school district.
- Involve others to increase ownership and acceptance of the school district recruiting/retention program. Whenever possible, work as a team to develop and implement strategies.

How to Use This Guide

1.	Assemble a School District Team
	
2.	Read/Research Resources
	
3.	Organize Planning Effort
	
4.	Plan Improvements in School District Recruiting and Retention Programs
	
5.	Review and Finalize Plans

Alternative Ways to Use this Guide

1. Distribute copies of the guide to staff involved in recruiting and retention. Ask staff to read and be ready to jointly share ideas regarding one section each week.
2. Ask each of several small groups in the school district (central office, principals, teachers, parents, and community members) to complete one section of the guide; bring groups together to share ideas and reach consensus on the school district plan.
3. Create a task force to address school district retention and recruiting issues. Ask the task force to jointly work through the guide.

Recruiting and Retaining Highly Qualified Special Educators

Finding and hiring the highly qualified candidates in today's education marketplace can be as frustrating as it is rewarding and as demanding as it is satisfying.

This year, Wallingford County School District #1 will have trouble recruiting qualified special educators. Johnson School District will lose two therapists, and they won't be alone. In 2004–2005, schools across the U.S. were short 27, 474 special education teachers.

National projections suggest special education personnel shortages in the coming years may tax the ability of our schools to provide services for children with disabilities.

Consider these signs of decreasing supply:

- While teacher turnover rates run approximately 5–6 percent for general education, special education attrition rates in some States, average 10–15 percent, often nearly double the rate for general education.
- Over a 10-year period, the number of special educators graduating from personnel preparation programs across the country has decreased by 35 percent.
- While emergency certification recently represented 10–20 percent of education certificates issued in several States, emergency certification in special education averaged 30 percent. More emergency certificates are issued in special education than in any other area of education.
- In response to increased demand, nearly half the States have established alternative certification procedures.
- The highly qualified provisions of NCLB and IDEA have challenged rural and remote school districts.

The problem is exacerbated in some States where schools face increasing special education enrollments. At a time when schools need highly qualified special education personnel, fewer are available.

Improvement can start with a shift in perspective. Often, school districts approach recruiting as an annual event: announcing vacancies and hiring teachers. *Recruiting is not an event. It is a process—a process that encompasses gaining district commitment to organized recruitment/retention programs, creating a pool of highly qualified candidates, selecting the best applicants from the candidate pool and retaining veteran teachers.*

School District Commitment to an Organized Recruiting and Retention Program

School districts vary in their commitment to recruiting as reflected in policies, personnel allocations for the program budgets, interagency cooperation, and strategies for recruiting and retaining special educators. A key person should be assigned and given adequate time to promote effective recruitment and retention strategies. School district commitment sets the parameters within which the recruitment/retention program must function. Gaining adequate commitment to recruiting and retention is a first step to building a strong program.

Pool of Highly Qualified Candidates

Effective recruiting programs select from a pool of highly qualified candidates of those best able to meet the school district's needs. School districts can increase the size and quality of the candidate pool by developing a using attractive recruiting materials, thoroughly identifying staff needs, announcing vacancies in a timely manner, and processing applications in an efficient and personal way. In addition to these short-term strategies to help generate future qualified candidates.

Selection

Successful selection entails making the best possible match between what candidates have to offer and what school districts need. School districts can improve selection by thoroughly reviewing applications, conducting effective interviews, checking references, and observing candidates teach.

Retention

Schools with low attrition have fewer demands for recruiting. Although most schools have recruiting programs, many do not have retention programs. Orientation/induction of newly hired teachers and ongoing support and recognition for veteran teachers are critical to teacher retention.

Careful planning in each of these areas provides the foundation for strong and effective recruiting/retention programs. Effective programs make finding and keeping the best and brightest candidates in today's education marketplace both rewarding and satisfying.

School District Profile of Existing Recruiting/Retention Program

Describe the school district's current recruiting/retention program by rating each item on the following pages. Add notes or comments concerning the current program. Use the following scoring guide to score responses.

- 5—definitely accurate of the school district
- 4—generally accurate
- 3—sometimes accurate
- 2—generally inaccurate
- 1—definitely inaccurate

The completed profile will help identify areas of strength and areas that need attention. Use the planning worksheet to organize school district planning efforts.



School District Commitment

The School District:		Definitely Accurate	Generally Accurate	Sometimes Accurate	Generally Inaccurate	Definitely Inaccurate
1.	Has assigned one person the primary responsibility and authority for recruitment/retention of special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Has allotted adequate time in this person's role to plan, coordinate and evaluate recruitment/retention activities.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Has an adequate budget for recruitment activities.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Has an adequate budget for retention activities.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Has a comprehensive set of written policies related to recruiting/retention of personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Has developed an overall strategy "game plan" for recruiting special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Has developed an overall strategy for retaining qualified special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Understand the highly qualified provisions of NCLB and the State.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Periodically reviews recruitment/retention policies and procedures and makes changes to improve the programs.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Cooperates with other groups and agencies in recruiting and retaining special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
11.	Involves existing school district personnel in recruitment/retention program activities.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Provides a positive work environment for special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1

School District Commitment (continued)

		Definitely Accurate	Generally Accurate	Sometimes Accurate	Generally Inaccurate	Definitely Inaccurate
The School District:						
12.	Provides a competitive salary schedule for special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	Has identified factors that make candidates want to teach in the district.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Roles and responsibilities of school district personnel involved in recruitment/retention are clearly delineated.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Recruitment/retention activities and events are scheduled throughout the year.	5	4	3	2	1



Pool of Highly Qualified Candidates

		Definitely Accurate	Generally Accurate	Sometimes Accurate	Generally Inaccurate	Definitely Inaccurate
The School District:						
1.	Staff meets in a timely manner, early enough to enhance recruiting efforts.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Has written position guides for each special education and related services position; each guide describes the role and responsibilities of each position as well as attributes and characteristics needed for success.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Uses an attractive and informative recruiting packet of current material; both hard and electronic copies.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Utilizes a Web-based approach for recruiting and positing positions.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Provides definitive information to applicants about vacancies, the school system and the community.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Works closely with teacher training institutions that offer specialized training which reflects school district needs (rural emphasis, urban emphasis, etc.).	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Uses an effective recruiting theme on all recruiting materials.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Has recruiting materials that clearly describes the application and selection process. The application can be completed electronically.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Effectively uses local, regional, and national vehicles to announce vacancies.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Vacancies are announced early enough to reach potential candidates before they are committed to other positions and clearly enough so poorly-qualified candidates screen themselves out and qualified candidates apply.	5	4	3	2	1

Pool of Highly Qualified Candidates (continued)

The School District:		Definitely Accurate	Generally Accurate	Sometimes Accurate	Generally Inaccurate	Definitely Inaccurate
11.	Implements an application process that is simple and reduces paperwork.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Collaborates with neighboring school districts	5	4	3	2	1
13.	Vacancy announcements provide clear information in a manner which attracts interest and initiates action among applicants.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Works cooperatively with teacher training institutions to place student teachers in the district and provide short-term classroom experience for students.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Uses several long-term recruiting strategies such as future teachers club, student tutoring programs, opportunities for students to work with special education students.	5	4	3	2	1
16.	Maintain good working relationships with university placement offices and faculty members of special education training programs.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	School Web site announces vacancies in many ways, in many places (newspapers, journals, conferences, colleges, etc.).	5	4	3	2	1
18.	Promptly responds to every application in a personalized and friendly manner.	5	4	3	2	1
19.	Provides an opportunity for candidates to take a "virtual tour" of the school district/community.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	Uses National Electronic Employment Bulletin Boards	5	4	3	2	1

Selection

		Definitely Accurate	Generally Accurate	Sometimes Accurate	Generally Inaccurate	Definitely Inaccurate
The School District:						
1.	Processes applications promptly and provides feedback to candidates.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Selection criteria are built into the system for processing applications.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Addresses the No Child Left Behind criteria for highly qualified teachers.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Withdraws unqualified applicants early. Unqualified candidates, although discouraged from completing the application process, end their contact with the district with a positive feeling about the district; the same applies to qualified candidates not selected.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Uses multiple types of information to evaluate each candidate.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Provides qualified applicants personal attention from the time the application is received until a hiring decision is made.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Gathers ample information about each applicant by e-mail, and/or telephoning people who have made written recommendations and talking to people who have seen the applicant teach.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	If possible, observe the candidate teaching (classroom observation, video tape or demonstration lesson).	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Response to and interactions with qualified applicants makes a strong positive impression.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Uses effective and rigorous interview techniques which sell the candidate on the school district and provides district personnel with information about the candidate.	5	4	3	2	1

Selection (continued)

		Definitely Accurate	Generally Accurate	Sometimes Accurate	Generally Inaccurate	Definitely Inaccurate
The School District:						
11.	Provides candidates opportunities to see special education programs in the school district and meet other special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Developed a profile of personal characteristics associated with successful teaching in the district and uses consistent interview questions to gather information regarding these characteristics.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	Procedures are carefully balanced to encourage qualified candidates but not give false hope to unqualified candidates.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Application and interview questions adhere to equal opportunity employment guidelines.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Interview/selection teams, at minimum, one central office person and one building level person.	5	4	3	2	1
16.	Implemented a "background check" process to ensure the protection of children.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	Provides positive and rapid feedback to all candidates.	5	4	3	2	1

Retention Program

		Definitely Accurate	Generally Accurate	Sometimes Accurate	Generally Inaccurate	Definitely Inaccurate
1.	Provides special welcome and orientation, induction, and mentoring activities for new staff members.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Orientation activities give new special education personnel a chance to meet and talk with other special education personnel and with general educators in their own buildings.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Pairs each new teacher with a specially selected veteran teacher.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Induction program includes an orientation to community activities and several opportunities to meet people from the community.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Special incentives for qualified special education personnel who stay in the school district.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Excellent working conditions and reasonable caseloads for special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Continuing opportunities for teachers to update and increase their skills.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Provides numerous opportunities throughout a teacher's first year to meet and communicate with other special education personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Opportunities throughout a teachers career to update and increase their skills.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Special education staff are included in all activities in each building.	5	4	3	2	1
11.	Provides substitutes for special education and related services personnel.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Provides assistance in program areas and in paperwork overload (aides, secretarial support).	5	4	3	2	1

Scoring Worksheet

1. Total and record the score for each topic area (school district commitment, pool of candidates, etc).
2. Rate each topic area to reflect the status of the school district's current program (excellent, warrants review, needs attention).
3. For each topic, note any individual items rated 1 or 2 (use a key word or two to describe content).

Score	Topic	Notes
_____	School District Commitment Excellent 60 – 75 Warrants review 38 – 79 Needs attention 0 – 37	_____ _____ _____
_____	Pool of Qualified Candidates Excellent 80 – 95 Warrants review 35 – 79 Needs attention 0 – 34	_____ _____ _____
_____	Selection Excellent 70 – 80 Warrants review 30 – 69 Needs attention 1 – 29	_____ _____ _____
_____	Retention Excellent 50 – 60 Warrants review 30 – 49 Needs attention 1 – 29	_____ _____ _____

The total score for each area provides a general measure of the school district's current level of performance. Paired with your own experience and informal needs assessment, this information will enable you to prioritize areas that need to be addressed.

Planning Worksheet

List below the school district priorities for improving recruitment/retention programs. (School district commitment, Pool of Candidates, Selection, and Retention). For each, write a few key words to describe what the district needs to work on to improve in that area.

Priority Areas	Work On	Plans Developed
		_____ Yes
		_____ No
		_____ Yes
		_____ No
		_____ Yes
		_____ No
		_____ Yes
		_____ No

Section II

School District Commitment to an Organized Recruitment/Retention Program

While personnel matters often consume 70 percent of a typical school budget, few schools devote a proportionate amount of administrative time and energy to recruiting and retaining teachers.

School district policies and procedures should reflect commitment to recruitment/retention. Well-organized programs do the following:

1. Designate key personnel and clarify their responsibilities.
2. Use a “game plan” of short- and long-term strategies for recruiting and retaining staff.
3. Create a Web site to promote school district and recruiting activities.
4. Use a recruiting theme and effective materials.
5. Allocate adequate funds.
6. Maintain written policies.
7. Schedule recruiting activities.
8. Periodically review and revise recruitment/retention programs.

This section suggests ways school districts can demonstrate commitment and provides planning worksheets to help develop and document district commitment.

Personnel

School districts with effective recruitment/retention programs formally delegate responsibility for the program to one person who assures that a well-planned program is implemented. This individual coordinates the work of others and personally carries out many recruitment/retention activities.

School districts also formally identify others involved in recruitment/retention and define each person’s role. Well-organized recruitment/retention programs includes written descriptions of the responsibilities of school board members, superintendents, principals, other central office staff, teachers, specialists, and members of the community. Varied responsibilities might include reviewing applications, updating Web site information, conducting personal interviews, observing applicants teaching, welcoming new teachers, working with community groups, establishing relationships with universities, and developing materials.

School District Plan

Well-organized recruitment/retention programs often use an overall strategic plan of action to describe short- and long-term goals for recruiting and retaining staff.

A school district's plan reflects unique characteristics of the school district and the community to do the following:

1. Create a "grow your own" program where paraeducators can earn a teaching degree.
2. Recruit from within the school district or outside the area.
3. Hire qualified African Americans, Native Americans, and other minorities.
4. Recruit in-State and out-of-State.
5. Recruit primarily from one or two colleges, from many teacher training institutions, or from training programs with specialized training programs.
6. Recruit multi-certified teachers.
7. Recruit teachers who work solely for the school district, or teachers who work part-time, or who work part-time for another agency.

School district plans include specific short-term strategies to fill vacancies, such as newspaper announcements, posting on Web sites, contact with particular teacher training institutions, interviewing at professional conferences, periodic review of computer-based data banks, and regular contact with professional colleagues.

Effective plans also address long-term strategies for finding and keeping qualified special educators, such as those listed below:

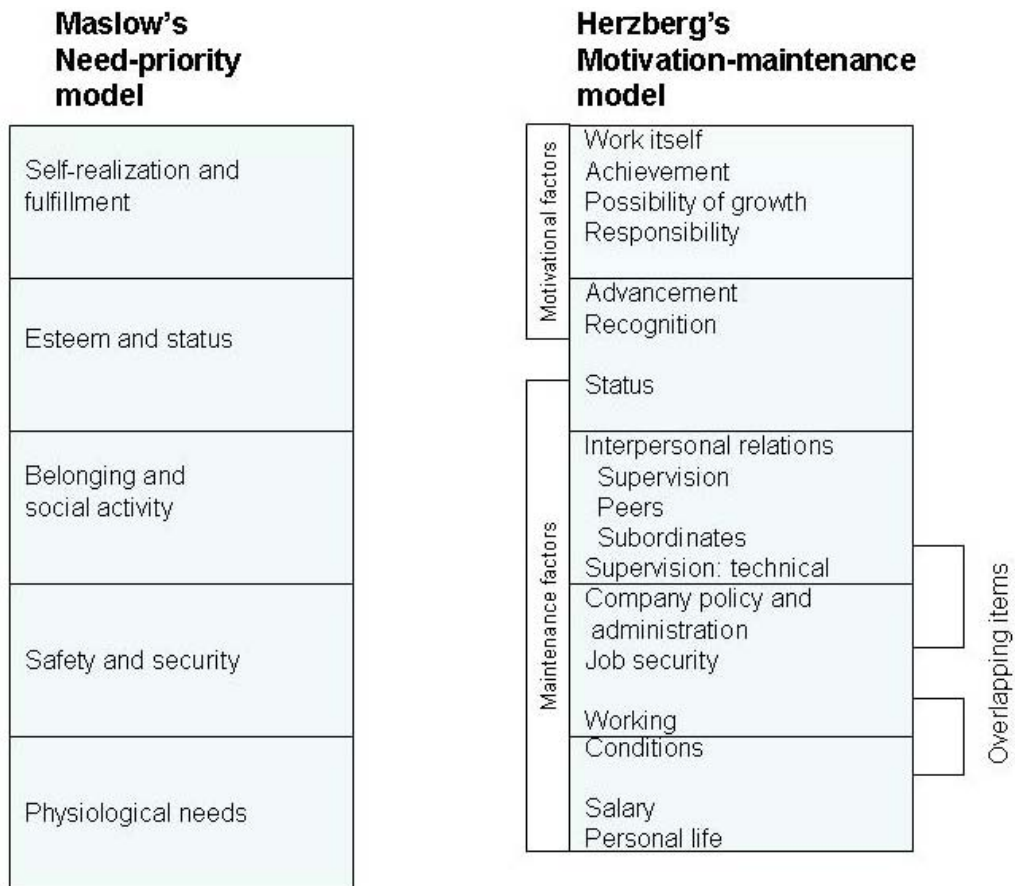
1. Encouraging paraeducators and high school students to enter the teaching profession
2. Encouraging general education staff to move into special education
3. Providing continuing education opportunities for staff members.
4. Providing incentives for veteran special education teachers and related service providers
5. Improving the quality of the workplace
6. Helping staff and their families become integrated in the community
7. Expanding cultural opportunities within the community for teachers and their families.

Recruiting Theme

Effective recruitment/retention programs determine what the school district has to see prospective candidates and then develop a theme for the recruitment program. Strengths which include location, working conditions, membership on professional teams, salary, etc., might become themes for attracting new teachers.

Appealing to the right factors is essential. Today’s applicants are often interested in far more than the salary package a school district has to offer.

One approach is to select themes that address needs described by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs or Herzberg’s motivation-maintenance model.



Motivation and reasons a teacher stays with a particular school have more to do with administrative support and fulfillment than salary. For example, a small rural school district might market the advantages of its size and location based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as shown in the following diagram.

Maslow's Need Areas	Rural Community Characteristics
Social needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Friendliness of small communities ◆ Potential for status in small communities
Self-esteem needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Opportunity to know the families of students ◆ Flexibility to work in one's own interest area ◆ Small enrollments, individual attention to students ◆ Reputation for quality special education programs
Self-actualization needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Administrative support for professional growth and development ◆ Peer support, team environment ◆ Opportunities to develop and try innovative practices ◆ Self-development opportunities such as proximity to professional libraries or extension courses through universities

Another school district might use the same approach by identifying local factors that reflect Herzberg's motivation-maintenance model.

Interagency Cooperation

Successful recruiters maintain effective working relationships with other agencies. Recruiters stay in frequent contact with surrounding school districts, colleges, and universities, the local community, intermediate education agencies, employment Web sites, and the State Departments of Education because of the following:

1. Surrounding school districts can recommend qualified applicants they have not hired.
2. Adjacent school districts could share a specialist.
3. College and university faculty can stimulate student interest in particular districts.
4. New employees of local business sometimes have spouses who are in education.
5. Intermediate education agencies and State departments of education are often contacted by prospective candidates.
6. When other agencies know about school district needs, they are in the best possible position to refer potential applicants.

Budget

School districts with effective recruiting programs have budgets that allocate adequate funds to cover planning and implementation of recruitment/retention activities. *Yet most*

(more than 93 percent) of small school districts do not have a budget for teacher recruitment; many spend little money to recruit teachers.

Though the initial cost of developing a quality recruitment/retention program may be high, effective programs produce positive long-range results, often reducing recruiting costs.

The Million Dollar Decision

School district recruiters sometimes think of hiring as a “million dollar decision” (\$30,000 salary x 1.25 benefits x 30 years). When a school district invests a million dollars, it seems appropriate to spend a fair amount developing a recruiting program that maximizes the investment.

Budgets generally include personnel costs (professional and secretarial), travel costs, materials development, production and distribution, advertising fees, and communication expenses.

Schools find that hiring the wrong person is expensive, given the costs of added training, supervision, poor public relations, and lost productivity. Consequently, schools should invest considerable effort and expense to recruit, select, and orient the right people.

Written Recruitment/Retention Policies

School districts with well-organized recruitment/retention programs have written policies for hiring and keeping staff.

Policies clarify the district’s position regarding hiring issues such as the following:

1. Employment of relatives, veterans, and part-time staff
2. Rehiring former employees
3. Race, national background, age sex, and physical disabilities of employees
4. Any probationary period
5. Payment of relocation expenses for candidates
6. Job sharing
7. Recruiting teachers from other organizations (other districts, outside education sources, etc.)

Policies also clarify the school district’s position regarding current employee issues such as the following:

1. Filling vacancies from inside the school district
2. Employees residing in the school district
3. Bonus pay for teaching in certain areas (buildings, subject areas, etc.)
4. Personnel promotions

5. Providing training to help teachers perform better in current positions or prepare for advancement
6. Leaves of absence
7. Incentives for veteran teachers, minorities, and teachers with particularly “tough” assignments
8. Extended day contracts

Recruiting Calendar

Many school districts use a recruitment/retention program calendar to coordinate planning and implementation of recruitment/retention activities. Developing and using a calendar helps districts do the following;

1. Approach recruitment/retention as an ongoing process.
2. Clarify recruitment/retention activities.
3. Coordinate recruitment/retention activities with other activities.
4. Allocate resources.
5. Move to hire new staff early in the recruiting season before many qualified teachers have taken positions in other locations.

School districts could develop a calendar of all major recruitment/retention activities. Effective recruiters interface recruiting activities with other events (board meetings, conferences, etc.) to ensure that recruiting activities flow smoothly and to coordinate efforts. The calendar shows projected preparation activities and timelines and planned follow-up activities and timelines for recruiting events.

Periodic Review and Improvement

A recruiting program that’s effective in 2005 may well be ineffective in 2009. School districts with well-organized programs continually assess the effectiveness of the program, update materials to reflect changes in the district, and reallocate recruiting resources to maximize impact.

Ongoing review of recruiting/retention program might include evaluation of personnel time, costs, rates of filling open positions with qualified people, percentages of fully certified staff, attrition, perceptions of successful/unsuccessful candidates, and district interaction with other agencies.

**Section I Summary:
School District Commitment**

Effective programs include the following activities:

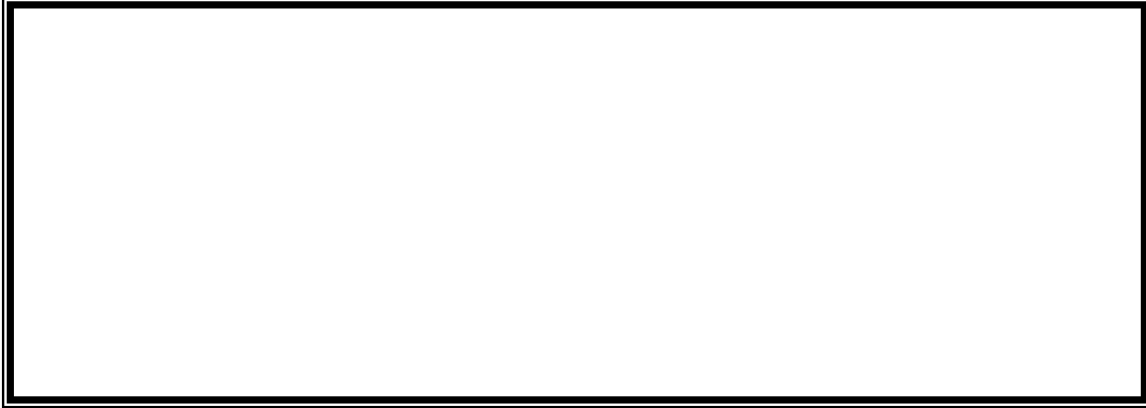
1. Designate key personnel and clarify their responsibilities.
2. Use a game plan of short- and long-term strategies for recruiting and retaining staff.
3. Use a recruiting theme and effective materials.
4. Interact with other agencies.
5. Allocate adequate funds.
6. Maintain written policies.
7. Schedule recruiting activities.
8. Periodically review and revise recruitment/retention programs.
9. Use technology as a tool

The following worksheets provide structure for planning school district commitment to an organized recruiting/retention program.

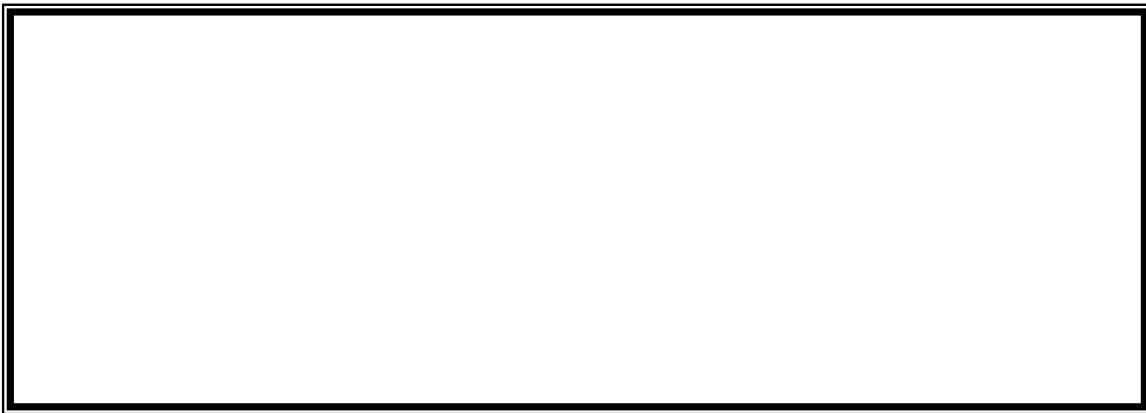


Planning Worksheets

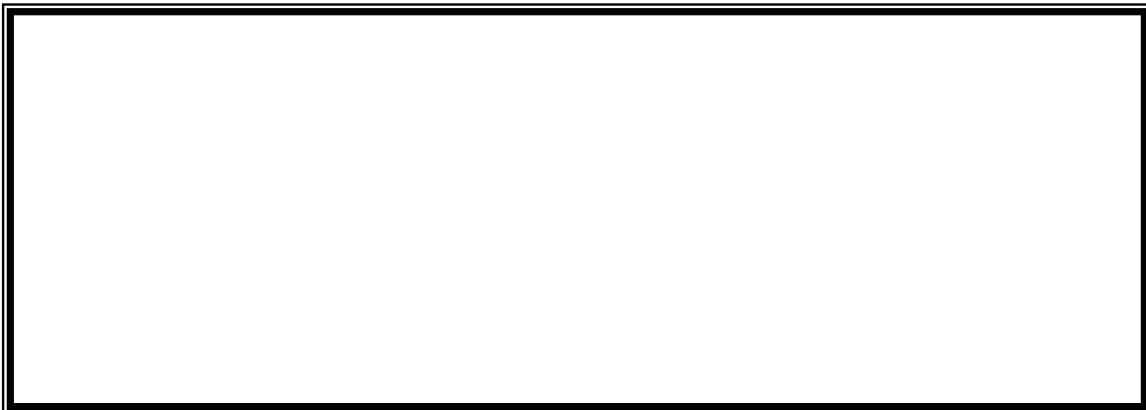
Describe the school district's overall approach to recruiting special education personnel.



Long-term strategies



List Strategies the school district plans to use to recruit special education personnel.



Personnel

Name the people who will be responsible for the following:

- Recruiting general education teachers: _____
- Recruiting special education personnel: _____
- Retaining general education teachers: _____
- Retaining special education personnel: _____

Check the people in the school district who are involved in recruiting. Please a star beside those people who will be involved in the improved recruiting program.

	Role:
___ School Board Members	_____
___ Superintendent	_____
___ Assistant Superintendent	_____
___ School Principal	_____
___ Central Office Staff	_____
___ General Education Staff	_____
___ Special Education Staff	_____
___ Community Representatives	_____
___ Others (list)	_____

Interagency Cooperation

List agencies the school district will work with to enhance recruiting efforts.

Agency	Contact Person	How the district will work with the agency
Surrounding school districts	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
Teacher Training Institutions (colleges/universities)	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
Local Community Representatives	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
Local Businesses	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
State Department of Education	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
Electronic Employment Bulletin Boards	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____
Commercial Employment Web sites	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____

Budget

“Financing the Million-Dollar Decision”



List below the major cost categories for all recruitment/retention activities. For each, estimate anticipated expenses.

Major Costs	Estimated expense

Policies

Does the school district have a written policy which addresses each of the following areas?

Yes/No	Policy	Current policy		
		Is Fine	Needs revision	Proposed change
	Employment of relatives, veterans, part-time staff			
	Rehiring former employees			
	Race, national background, age, sex, and physical disabilities of employees			
	Any probationary employment period			
	Payment of relocation expenses for candidates			
	Recruiting teachers from other organization (other districts, outside education, e.g., private schools, etc.)			
	Filling vacancies above starting levels from internal sources			
	Employees residing within the district			
	Bonus pay for teaching in certain areas (buildings, subject areas, etc.)			
	Personnel promotions			
	Providing training to help teachers perform better in current positions			
	Leaves of absence			
	Incentives for veteran teachers			
	Early retirement options.			

Reviewing and Improving the Recruiting/Retention Program

When during the year will the school district review, evaluate, and modify the recruitment/retention program?

Who's responsible for review, evaluation, modification?

What kinds of information will the school district want to review?

How and when will the school district gather this information?

How will review/modification information be shared with others in the school district?

Community Involvement

Who are the key people in the community/neighborhood?

List major businesses/business persons in the community.

Which of these people/businesses can the district involve in recruitment and retention?

How will this involvement occur?

Planning Calendar

January					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
February					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
March					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

April					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
May					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
June					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

July					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
August					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
September					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

October					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
November					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
December					
Major Tasks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Section III

Creating a Pool of Highly Qualified Candidates

This section outlines strategies that school districts can use to develop a pool of qualified candidates and provides planning worksheets to help districts create a pool of qualified candidates.

Effective recruiting programs choose the best candidates from many well qualified applicants by doing the following:

1. Identify and describe staff needs early.
2. Develop and use recruiting materials.
3. Announce vacancies and interest candidates.
4. Implement long-term strategies.

Identify and Describe Staff Needs Early

Time between the deadline for return of teaching contracts by current employees and the recruiting season can be short; in some school districts, these events overlap.

School districts with effective recruiting programs often contact and have qualified candidates before other potential employers. Because recruiting days on college campuses are sometimes scheduled late in the season, good candidates are often already committed. Consequently, small school districts often need to hire new staff members before college recruiting days. *Electronic employment bulletin boards and Web sites are replacing traditional recruiting activities such as job fairs.*

Often schools anticipate vacancies before formal resignations are submitted. By preparing vacancy announcements and position guides in advance, school districts are “ready to roll” as soon as a position actually becomes vacant. Many school districts maintain written position guides that describe the unique aspects of each special education position. When vacancies occur, the guides provide a basis for vacancy announcements and advertisements, helps school districts determine types of information to collect concerning each applicant and provide a basis for reviewing applications.

Position guides describe what special education personnel or related service providers must do and the characteristics he/she must possess to succeed in a particular position. It may include some of the following items:

1. The general nature of the position (school district goals, organization structure, general expectations of the teacher etc.)
2. Unique features of the position (students, relationship of the assignment to other school district programs, etc.)

3. Teacher behaviors and skills required and desired (in the classroom, the school district, and the community)
4. Teacher characteristics sought (aptitudes, interests, etc.)
5. Compensation (length of contract, salary, fringe benefits)

Developing Recruiting Materials

Since packaging is the majority of marketing, school districts need to devote serious attention to creating a set of high quality recruiting materials and Web sites.

Types of Materials

Many school districts distribute recruiting packets describing the vacancy and the application process, including calendars and appointment sheets for interviews, visitations, or appointments and tips for applicant success.

Information needs, cost, publishing expertise, and individual preference influence the types of materials school districts develop and distribute. Often, school districts use some of the following materials.

Brochures

- Briefly describe the school district, advantages of teaching in the school district, and positive features of the community. Information usually specifies how to apply or request additional information.

School District Information Sheets

- Describes in greater detail various aspects of the school district and the community. A school district might develop sheets for each type of special education program, for each building in the school district, or for each disability area.

Position Guide

- Describe in detail what an individual must do and what characteristics the individual should possess to succeed in a particular special education position. School districts often use guides as a basis for vacancy announcements.

Vacancy Announcements

- Describe the position, the qualifications required, and how to apply. Announcements are distributed to an posted by other agencies who come into contact with potential applicants. Good position guides facilitate self-selection and discourage unqualified applicants from pursuing positions for which they are not qualified.

Web site

- The school district Web site address should be posted clearly on all materials. Candidates should have an opportunity to complete the application process “on-line” and submit electronically. Use State and National electronic bulletin boards.

Community Information Packets

- Provide applicants with a clear picture of what the area has to offer. School districts often include material obtained from the Chambers of Commerce and other community organizations. Appropriate community Web sites should be included.

Photo Album or Scrapbook

- Provided by the school district. Individual schools or special education programs provide candidates an opportunity to learn more about programs. Candidates waiting for an interview or visiting the school district can review albums and scrapbooks.

CD/PowerPoint Presentation

- These can be effective tools for orienting candidates to the school district. A brief presentation prior to an interview or as part of a visit to the school district can help candidates actually see special education programs in action.

District Videotape/DVD/CD

- These can show candidates aspects of school district programs that are especially strong, such as team teaching, classroom paraprofessionals, parent conferences, or IEP meetings. Some school districts use videos or CDs showing community activities and events to help candidates gain a sense of what living in the community is like. Candidates can view CDs and DVDs at college interview centers or during school district visits.

Marketing Souvenirs

- Pens or bookmarks that remind candidates of the school district can provide contact information such as school district name, Web site, and a contact telephone number.

Posters

- Posters can attract candidate attention and stimulate interest. Some school districts display posters in recruiting offices, at job fairs, conferences, or on campuses with vacancy announcements.

Recruiting programs need a variety of materials to meet different needs—materials that catch the attention of potential applicants, materials that provide information, materials that convince applicants to teach in one district as opposed to another, and materials that guide candidates through the application process. All materials should be available in alternate formats for individuals with disabilities.

Material Content

Candidates are most interested in materials informing about the position, the school district and the community. Information about the position might include the following:

Position information

- Structure of special education services
- Student caseloads
- Extra responsibilities
- Certification requirements
- Philosophy of inclusion
- Individualization of programs
- Special education policies and procedures
- The relationship between general and special education

School district information

- Salary schedule
- Description of fringe benefits
- Policies and procedures
- Composition of the study body and faculty
- Extracurricular assignments
- District philosophy, goals, inservice opportunities
- Special innovative programs and incentive programs
- Mentoring programs

Community information

- Community economy
- Cultural and recreational opportunities
- Cost of living, cost/availability of housing
- Community or church organizations
- Community expectations for personal conduct
- Opportunities for graduate study

Effective materials clarify application procedures, specify the person an applicant should contact, and reassures applicants that the district is interested in meeting and taking with qualified candidates.

Effective Materials

Effective materials deliver tailored messages to target audiences. A first step in developing materials is to clarify the message the school district wants to send and the audience the school district is trying to reach. Strong recruiting programs design and use the best possible materials they can afford.

1. **Reflect a theme** that can be used in ads, brochures, and interviews. By pairing graphics with a short, written message, districts focus candidate attention on key features.
2. Sell the candidate by pinpointing the **benefits of teaching** in the school district. Materials explain why a teacher would pick this school district over others and focus on what the school district will do for the candidate.
3. Accurately **reflect community diversity** or homogeneity in terms of minorities, ethnic groups, cultural, church groups, educational, and recreational opportunities.
4. Clearly identify the **position requirements**, experience, personal, and professional qualities the school district is seeking. Applications not meeting minimum requirements are a waste of time and effort for the school district and the applicant.
5. Use **strong headlines** in Web sites, ads, and brochures to capture reader interest, sell the position, and make the school district an attractive place to teach.
6. **Use graphics** carefully to convey a message or image. No graphics are better than bad graphics, but good graphics can make a world of difference.
7. Use **appropriate language** to ensure that material is easy to read and understand. Beware of educational jargon.
8. Use **space efficiently** to present information concisely. Usually, space cost is the greatest cost of advertising. Skilled recruiters avoid running items as classified ads if boxed ads work better. The copy, graphics, and size of an ad must work together (avoid cramped or empty ads). All printed material (brochures, information sheets, vacancy announcements) should present concise content in an attractive format.
9. Use **legible typefaces** that are aesthetically pleasing and easy to read. An applicant must be able to easily, effortlessly read both headlines and details in the recruiting material.
10. **Budget wisely** to reach the potential candidates. Computing the cost-per-candidates of different materials allows school districts to use the materials budget cost effectively.

Announce Vacancies and interest Candidates

School districts who successfully announce vacancies receive responses from an ample number of qualified applicants. Their announcements reach the pool of qualified applicants and capture the attention and interest of individual applicants enough to motivate them to contact the school district.

Reaching Qualified Applicants

Teacher training institutions are a natural contact point for reaching potential applicants. Successful school districts reach many applicants via colleges and universities with special education training programs. Recruiters reach potential candidates through placement offices, department offices, college newspapers, and department or campus organization newsletters. Special college events like career days, conferences and job fairs provide opportunities to contact students nearing graduation. Many college living units post vacancy information on bulletin boards.

Special programs/projects provide a vehicle for finding candidates with particular types of training. Rural schools, for example, might work with colleges and universities and provide rural training. Other special recruiting/retention projects that provide avenues for finding candidates include the following:

Newspapers and periodicals

- Use local and regional newspapers, professional newsletters, journals, and magazines. Effective programs target potential candidates. Local, State, regional, and national meetings provided forums for announcing vacancies by distributing printed material, making presentations, and interviewing applicants.

Meetings and Conferences

- Local, State, regional, and national meetings provide forums for announcing vacancies by distributing printed materials, making presentations, and interviewing applicants.

Networks

- Both formal and informal networks, afford many opportunities for disseminating vacancy information. Almost every special educator has a personal network of professional colleagues. Often, school district employees know candidates interested in special education positions. Effective recruiters ensure that all employees and many professional colleagues know about existing vacancies and encourage others to apply for positions in the system.

Computerized systems and Web sites

- Provide easy access to information about special education positions. Several electronic bulletin boards provide information relevant recruitment and retention: recruitment/retention, employment, and supply/demand. Subscribing school districts can post vacancy announcements, read posted announcements, or search national databases for employment. In several States, intermediate education agencies and school districts have successfully developed computerized databases and Web resources to match candidates to openings.

Attract the Interest of Potential Applicants

The art of announcing vacancies lies in providing as much information as possible so applicants can self-screen without overwhelming applicants with so many details they never finish reading the announcement.

Announcements that attract applicants clearly state specific position vacancies and describe features that made teaching in the school district irresistible.

Position information generally includes a brief description of the types of students the applicant will be teaching and the structure of the program (self-contained, resource classroom, homebound, inclusion, etc.). Features that make teaching in the school district desirable should be highlighted. School districts with effective recruiting programs focus on key district assets, like the following:

1. Tremendous geographic location (or proximity to one)
2. Strong community support for the schools
3. High starting salary or schedule with large increments
4. A good fringe benefits package
5. Easy access to graduate work at a nearby college
6. Cultural advantages or opportunities
7. Outstanding professional teamwork among teachers
8. Opportunities for increased personal responsibility or advancement
9. An open and warm community, safe and secure or stimulating
10. Low cost of living
11. Opportunities for teachers to create and try new programs
12. District recognition or awards for special education
13. Parent support for special education programs
14. Active professional teaching organizations (CEC, CASE, ACLD, etc.)
15. Teacher involvement in program development and planning

For example, a rural school district might highlight the following:

1. Community spirit
2. Absence of bureaucratic barriers
3. Community and family interdependence

4. Personal attention for staff and students
5. Slower pace of living
6. Raising children in a healthy environment

School districts that many not have many viable “assets” sometimes recruit by turning seeming problems into assets that provide applicants a challenge. This “Peace Corps” (“seeking the challenge”) approach touches the leadership and personal commitment of potential applicants.

Unusual, but not Unheard-of, Incentives

School districts enhance applicant interest in unusual but not unheard-of ways. Teachers, administrators, school board members, community members, and local business leaders jointly commit to attracting qualified special education professionals by developing creative monetary and nonmonetary incentives for teacher recruitment.

One school district *identifies outstanding seniors in special education training programs*, contacts the students, discusses needs, and pays for interested students to visit the school district. Using a difference approach, a rural district identifies, contacts, and works with college special education seniors who have been raised in small communities.

One community program *identifies top education majors from selected colleges*. The candidates are invited to the community in the fall of their senior year where they are entertained and interviewed by the school board, district specialists, and other staff. Interested students complete their student teaching in the school district and are then added to the substitute cadre until they begin full-time teaching assignments.

Financial incentives often impact candidates’ choices. One school district might pay travel expenses for candidates’ school district visits; still another provides travel stipends for interviews. Creative monetary and nonmonetary incentives would enhance applicant interest, increasing the pool of potential candidates.

Implement Long-term Strategies

Key personal experiences often influence a student’s career. Providing high school students opportunities to meet special education professionals and work with people with special needs fosters interest in special education. Many school districts sponsor future teacher clubs or cadet teaching corps. Some States hold annual future teacher conferences; others select and honor “Teachers of Tomorrow.” One school district monitors interested students through college, sending a letter per year telling the student that the school district hopes he/she will continue in school and consider returning home to teach.

Student tutoring programs in elementary, junior, and senior high schools expose students to opportunities in special education. Tutoring programs and class assistant programs provide opportunities for students to interact with special needs children. Current research suggests early experiences may be a powerful influence in later career choices.

Volunteer experiences often direct students toward work in special education. Many school districts help students volunteer with organizations serving children with disabilities. Some communities provide opportunities for secondary students to work as coaching assistants with local Special Olympics programs or to assist with Very Special Arts festivals. Other communities use high school students as counselors at Easter Seals summer camps. One school district stimulated early interest in working with children with hearing impairments by conducting signing classes for all students in a kindergarten class where one student was deaf.

Ongoing media coverage provides another approach to stimulating interest in special education. Newspaper articles and local radio or television coverage of special education activities increases the awareness of potential future special educators. Collaboration among school districts and local newspapers or television stations can lead to a major media campaign to stimulate interest in teaching.

High school career days and conferences provide opportunities to expose students to special education career alternatives. In one State, interagency collaboration resulted in a conference during which high school students interested in teaching could explore educational career alternatives. Another effort produced a State sponsored conference for high school peer tutors in conjunction with a statewide conference for professionals in special education.

Early college experiences help high school students explore special education alternatives. Inter-agency efforts between school districts and colleges offer high school students opportunities to take introductory college teaching courses for credit during their senior year. Other special programs permit high school students to take introductory special education college courses during summer sessions.

Student teaching provides an opportunity for college students to experience teaching in the school program. School districts not adjacent to college training programs sometimes offer special student teaching opportunities to special education majors. One rural community provides free housing to visiting student teachers.

Special training for prospective special educators can help interested general education teachers shift to special education. Several school districts in one State formed a consortium to certify prospective teachers who lacked State certification. Through collaboration with the university, the consortium developed courses and offered field-centered training in local communities through extension services and correspondence courses.

Presentations about special education can spark interest in the teaching profession. Some school districts prepare and give presentations about special education careers to school district student clubs and PTAs. Presentations about unique district special education programs can also be given to college campus future teacher organizations. A district with a particularly innovative or effective program might make presentations in college special education courses.

Financial support for special education training is sometimes a critical factor in an individual's career. Some local communities offer scholarships to academically talented students who plan to become teachers. Community programs vary, but they often provide tuition waivers or stipends to high school graduates entering teacher preparation programs.

One school district selects outstanding college juniors majoring in special education whose training best meets projected district needs and offers scholarships to students who, in turn, sign letters of commitment to teach in the district for a specified period of time.

Communities offer financial assistance to general education teachers currently employed by the school district who are interested in filling special education positions of the school district. Stipends for cross-training help teachers expand types of certification in special education

Long-range programs benefit school districts by creating a large pool of qualified candidates while simultaneously providing positive public relations for the school district.

Section II Summary: Pool of Candidates

Selecting from an ample pool of highly qualified candidates helps school districts improve the overall quality of special education programs. To create a pool of qualified candidates, school districts need to do the following:

1. Identify and describe staff needs early.
2. Develop and use recruiting materials.
3. Announce vacancies and interest candidates.
4. Implement long-term strategies.

Pool of Candidates The following worksheets provide a structure for planning and creating a highly qualified pool of candidates.

Position Guides

Select one special education or related services position. Write a position guide. Over time, develop a position guide for each special education position.

Position _____

General description of the position:

Teacher behaviors/skills required/desired:

Teacher characteristics needed:

Preparation/experience desired: Compensation:

Materials

Check the items you would like to use in the recruiting program.

		Does the district currently have one?		Does it need to be revised?		Target date:	Person Responsible:
		Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Brochure	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	District Information Sheets	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Special Education Program Information Sheets	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Position Guides	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Vacancy Announcements	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Community Information Packets	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Web site Recruiting	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Represents Minorities	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Scrapbooks	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	PowerPoint Productions	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	District Presentations	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Special Education CD/DVD	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Marketing Souvenirs	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____
_____	Posters	Yes	No	Yes	No	_____	_____

Evaluating Recruiting Materials

Use the matrix below to profile existing recruiting materials.

Recruiting Materials	Provides what information about the vacant position?	Provides what information about the district, the special education program?	Provides what information about the community?	Other Features



Designing Materials

Item: _____

Comments:

Reflects school district theme.

Sells candidate.

Accurately reflects community.

Current marketing strategies.

Uses graphics effectively.

Uses appropriate language.

Uses space efficiently.

Uses legible typefaces.

Is cost effective.

Recommendations

Announcing Vacancies

List below the strategies the school district will use to announce vacancies. Besides each, write a few words to explain why this particular strategy was selected.

Teacher Training Institute

Newspapers

Meeting/Conferences

Periodicals and Newsletters

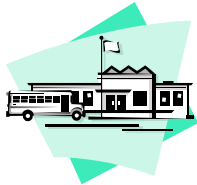
Web sites/National Employment
Bulletin Boards

Other

Irresistible Features

List below all the positive features you can think of for teaching in your school district.

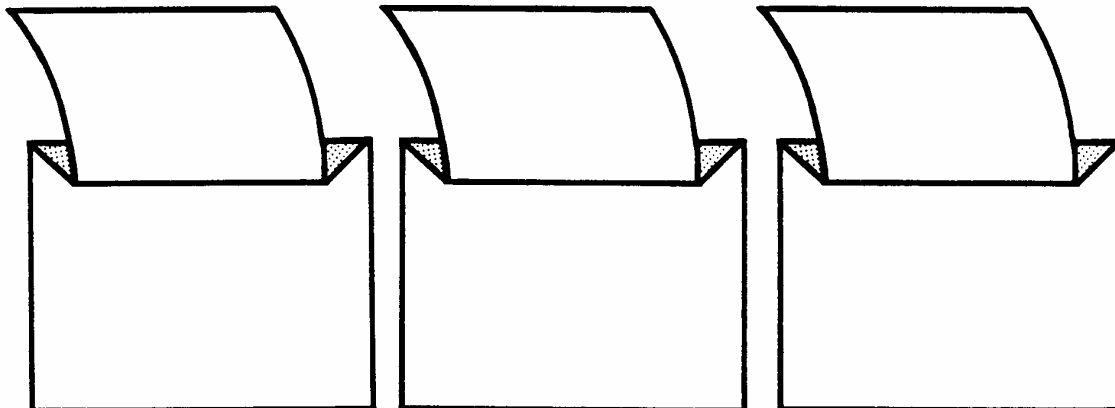
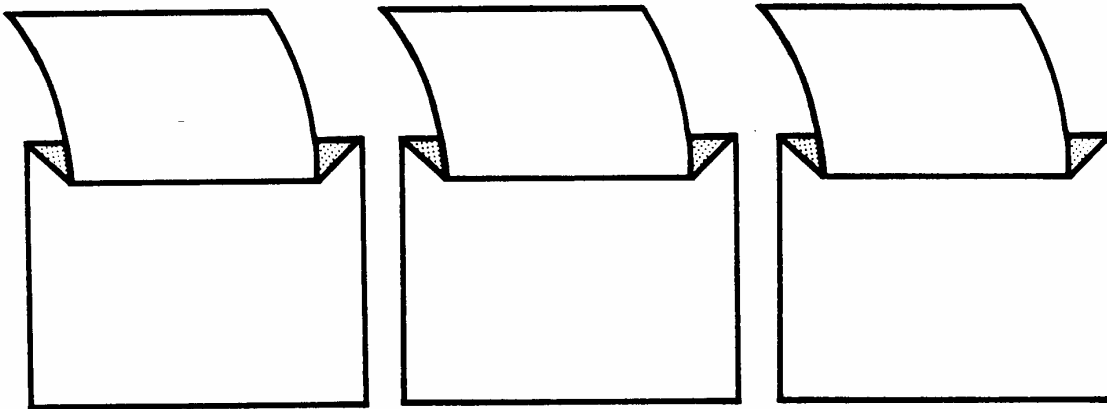
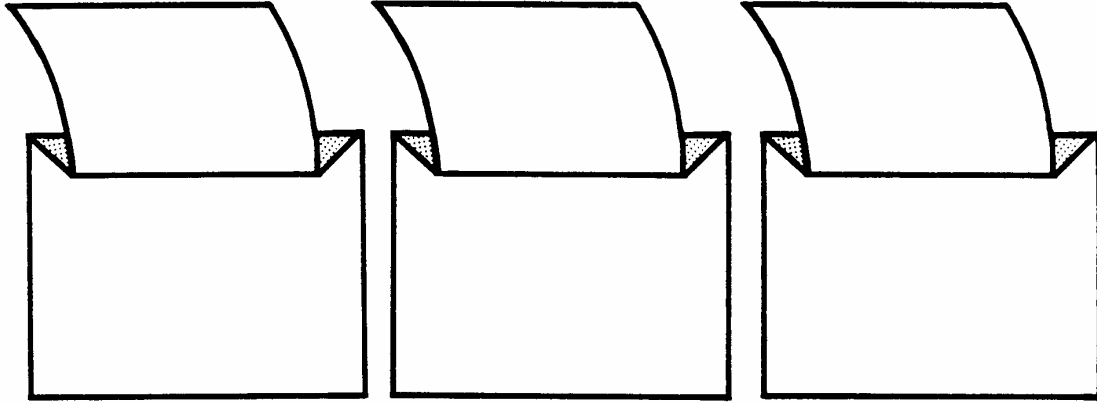
Check the top three features.



Long-range Recruiting Strategies

On each envelope below, list a long range strategy the school district can incorporate into its recruiting program.

On each card, write the name of the person/people involved or the name of the person responsible.



Section IV

Selecting Teachers from the Candidate Pool

The “bottom line” in recruiting is to acquire signed contracts from highly qualified candidates best able to meet the school district’s needs. Effective recruiting programs do the following:

1. Set the stage for successful selection.
2. Gather ample information about candidates.
3. Carefully select candidates most likely to succeed.
4. Gain commitment from selected candidates.

This section provides ideas for effectively selecting teachers and related service providers from the candidate pool and provides planning worksheets to improve teacher selection.

Set the Stage for Successful Selection

Few candidates fulfill every item in a school district’s job position description. Consequently, districts need to know which skills, attitudes, and characteristics are most critical, which are important, and which are “nice, but not necessary.”

Gather Ample Information About the Candidates

Efficient use of resources means developing a system for managing applicants that eliminates unqualified candidates early, provides adequate information for differentiating among promising candidates, and ensures that sample information is available about applicants with the greatest potential for meeting district needs.

Initial screening usually entails review of written material. Applications must request information the school district needs to 1) determine whether or not the candidate is qualified for the position, 2) assess the degree to which the candidate possesses characteristics to succeed in the position, and 3) gather additional information about the candidate. Strong programs use **multiple screening information factors**, including those listed below:

1. Application forms
2. Transcripts, coursework and overall grade point average
3. Student teaching performance
4. Performance on tests (basic skill tests, verbal/written expression tests)
5. Letters of recommendation
6. Observations

Investigating references in today’s marketplace, surprises recruiters. In an era of libel suits, people are cautious about what they say. To maximize the usefulness of references, many recruiters telephone people who have given references. Many school districts require background checks to ensure the safety of children.

Telephone conferences can clarify, expand, or add information. As one special educator observed, “I can’t tell you how often I have read a candidate’s letter of recommendation, made a follow-up call, and then wondered if the letter writer and I were talking about the same person.” Asking tough questions can provide invaluable information. Successful recruiters suggest talking with the person long enough to “hear not only the words, but the music as well.”

Consulting supervising teachers addresses one problem many recruiting programs encounter: school district personnel seldom see candidates teach. The next best thing may be to talk with people who have a close working relationship. Many school districts call applicants’ student teaching faculty supervisors or supervising classroom teachers to discuss a candidate’s teaching ability. Other school districts call candidates’ instructors to learn more about individual candidates.

Work samples provide a unique way to learn more about candidates. Although it may not be possible to have candidates demonstrate their actual classroom teaching skills, districts ask candidates to perform other related tasks teachers and related service providers perform. A school district might ask candidates to complete in-basket tasks like: responding to a memo, writing a note to a parent whose child is not doing well, or planning an agenda for a committee meeting concerning inter-agency cooperation—kinds of tasks teachers might find in their own in-boxes. School districts might also ask candidates to submit sample lesson/unit plans, demonstrate a lesson, or write short essays on key topics.

Interviews are almost universally used, are often very influential in the selection process, and yet, are often invalid and unreliable. Because many interviews are unstructured, last less than an hour, and are heavily influenced by first impression, appearance, non-verbal behavior, and conversational skills, interviews often do not accurately reflect a candidate’s teaching competence.

Interviewers often unconsciously seek candidates whose attitudes match their own, yet interviews provide an opportunity for district recruiters to do the following:

1. Meet candidates face-to-face.
2. Assess a candidate’s personal and communication skills.
3. Validate or clarify written information.
4. Convince candidates to teach in the school district.

It is good to use a series of individual and group interviews. Group interviews give candidate an opportunity to talk to people with whom they work, give teachers a chance to learn more about potential colleagues, and foster staff input in the hiring process.

Select and train interviewers to use district criteria, make quick and accurate notes during interviews, suppress personal biases, be alert to cues, and be perceptive about what's not being said.

Recruiting program interview strategies include these activities and items:

1. Interview selection teams (often including a community member and teacher, building principal, and central office person)
2. Pre-written structured questions (designed to elicit information related to characteristics the district desires)
3. Interview that are flexible enough to explore areas not included in pre-written questions
4. A series of interviews to narrow the field of candidates
5. Formal rating sheets which each person on the interviewing team uses to rate applicant responses
6. Rank ordering of applicants after each set of interviews.
7. Check references and background.

Recruiters stay within the requirements of equal employment opportunity laws during interviews by avoiding questions designed to obtain information about a candidate's race, color, religion, or national origin. Certain types of questions constitute an unjustifiable invasion of an applicant's privacy, including personal habits, financial situation, marital status, or age. One easy way to avoid asking inappropriate questions is to ask only questions designed to obtain job related information.

Observing the candidate teach can provide invaluable information. Although it may sound impractical, some school districts find that observing candidates teach is the surest way to assess a candidate's potential. One possible system could include these items:

1. After interviews, a district representative (principal, department chairman, or central office administrator) visits candidates who are teaching or student teaching and watches them work for three or four hours.
2. The representative evaluates the candidate using the same evaluation system used for teachers in the recruiting district.

Few things attract candidates to the school system more than visits and observations. Invariably, candidates seem to be impressed with the school district's thoroughness, as are teachers and administrators in the schools visited. In fact, the school district often receives unsolicited job applications from teachers who have seen district representatives observing a colleague.

When observation is not possible, candidates might provide videotapes of their teaching. Because many colleges now use videotapes to evaluate student teaching, candidates may have access to and be able to loan the school district a videotape of their teaching.

Gain Commitment from Selected Candidates

A major step in every recruiting program is getting selected candidates to sign contracts. If possible, offer special incentives to top candidates. While some school districts offer payment of relocating expenses, inexpensive housing, or a housing stipend, others may offer interest-free short-term loans to new teachers to “bridge the gap” until the teachers’ first paychecks arrive. It is not uncommon for school districts to pay signing bonuses for special education staff members.

Successful incentive programs are based on collaboration. When local business, community members, and school districts join to provide incentives for new teachers, options seem unlimited. One collaborative community program provides a month’s free apartment rent with no security deposit, discounts from moving companies, restaurant discounts, and other “perks” to help confirm newly recruited teachers’ positive impression of the community’s commitment to education.

Section III Summary: Selection

Teacher selection does not end until the school district has obtained signed contracts from selected candidates. Effective recruiting programs do the following:


1. Set the stage for successful selection.
2. Gather ample information about candidates.
3. Carefully select candidates most likely to succeed.
4. Gain commitment from selected candidates.

Planning Worksheets

The following worksheets provide structure for planning and selected teachers from the candidate pool.

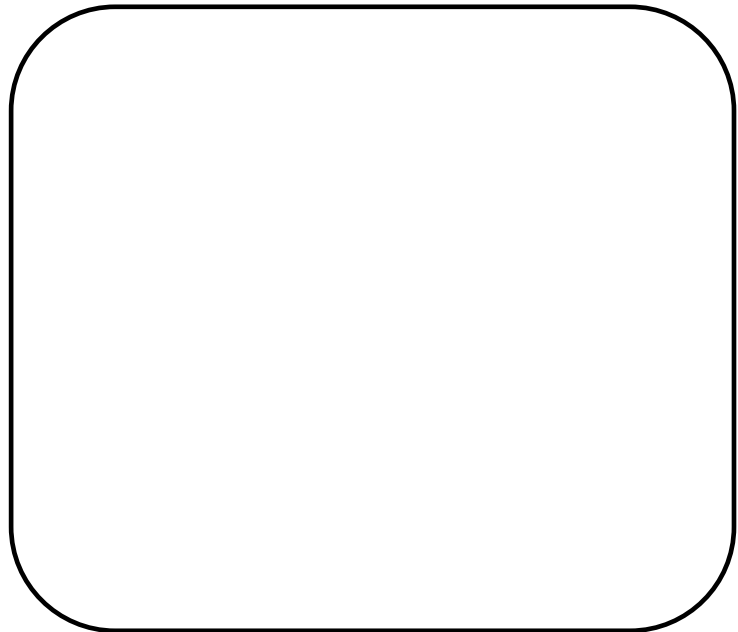
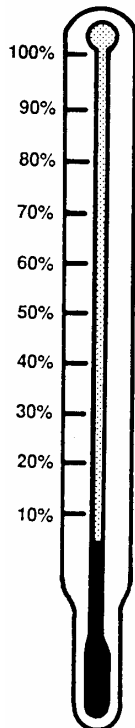
Gathering Information

What strategies does the school district currently use to gather information about the candidates?



Overall, how effective are these strategies?

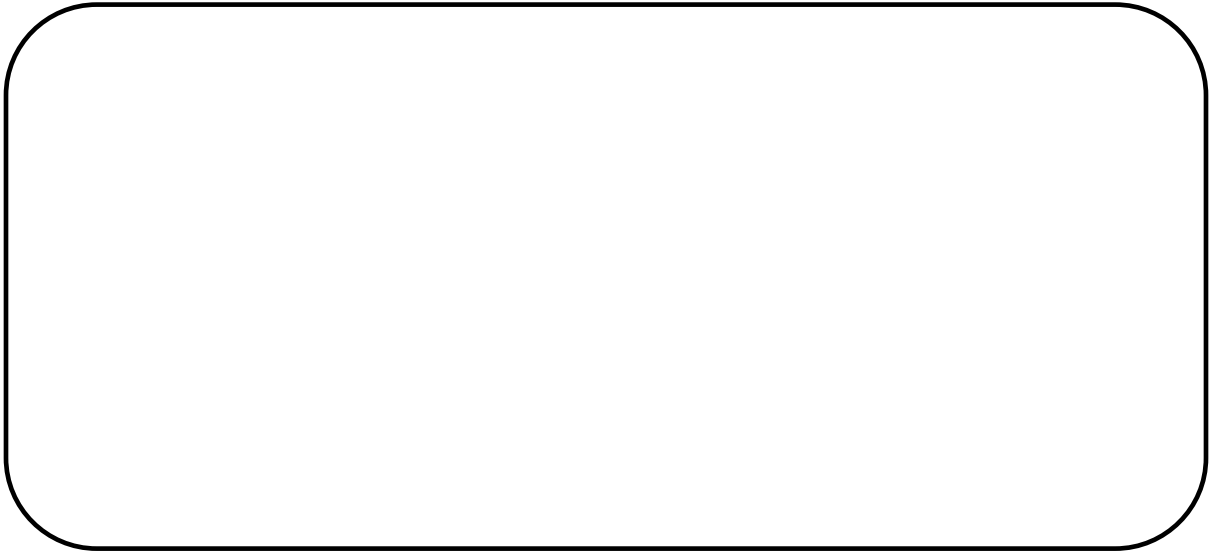
What other strategies might the school district try?



Interviewing

Personnel and Communication Characteristics

What interview questions will elicit information about this area?



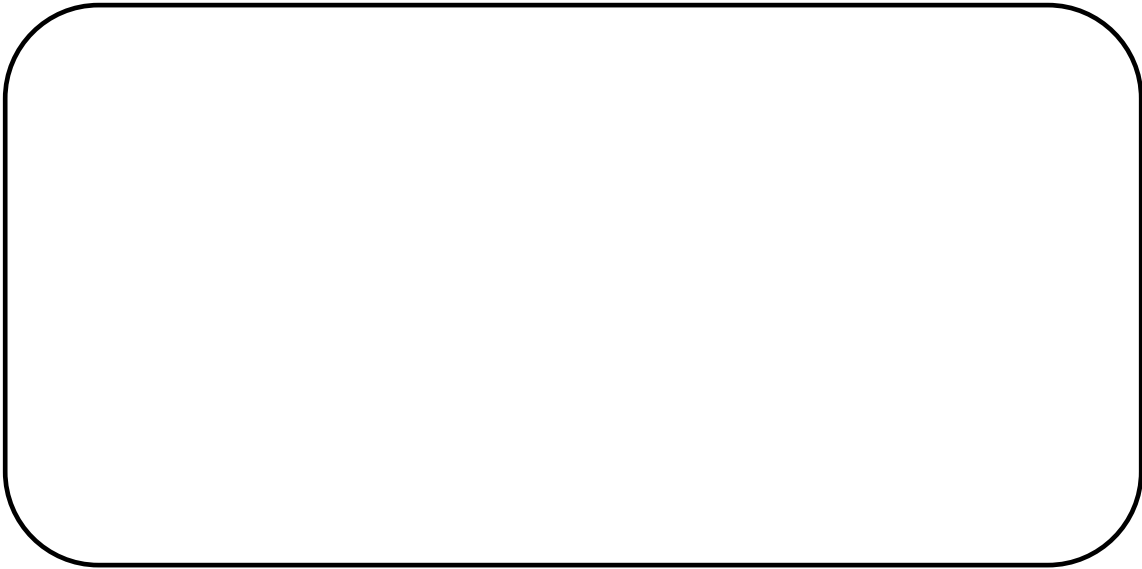
Professional Characteristics

What interview questions will elicit information about this area?



Incentives

Who from the administration, the teaching staff, and the community might work together to identify incentives for teachers?



List below examples of incentives the community and school district might provide:



Section V

Retaining Highly Qualified Special Education Personnel

This section suggests ways school districts can strengthen retention programs and provides worksheets for planning and retention activities.

Successful recruiting and retention extends far beyond the signing of a contract. School districts with poor retention must continually invest time, effort, and money to recruit staff. In education, most new teachers are hired to replace teachers to leave rather than filling new positions created by expanded enrollments or new programs. Most teachers leave between the first and fifth year of being hired. It is important to have a strong induction and mentoring program for teachers in the first five years.

To have effective retention programs, school districts must do the following:

1. Identify factors that motivate teachers to stay/leave.
2. Provide new staff orientation/induction.
3. Provide special support for veteran teachers.
4. Provide strong mentoring support during the first to fifth year of employment.
5. Provide creative retention strategies

Identify Factors that Motivate Teachers to Leave or Stay

Teacher attrition in special education is higher than in general education. Consider these attrition factors:

1. The likelihood of teachers below age 35 leaving is significantly higher than for teachers over age 35.
2. Attrition rates for teachers with fewer than five years' experience are higher than for teachers with six or more years' experience.
3. Attrition among teachers in multi-categorical programs is three times the rate of teachers in single category programs.
4. Female educators are more likely to leave than males.
5. Teachers whose training is limited to undergraduate coursework are more likely to leave than teachers with graduate training.
6. Teachers are five times more likely to transfer from special education to general education than from general education to special education.
7. Physical therapists and occupational therapists in many States leave education to work in private hospitals and clinics where salary ranges are significantly higher.
8. Teachers with provisional certificates are more likely to leave than fully certified teachers.

Why Teachers Leave

Many school districts pinpoint factors that influence teachers' decisions to leave. During an exit interview or through a follow-up questionnaire, they gather information about teachers' decisions to leave.

While no single factor is responsible for teacher attrition, a number of factors influence attrition, including these examples:

1. Poor administrative support
2. Working conditions (salary, hours, career advancement, paperwork)
3. Increased federal and State requirements
4. Lack of opportunities to work on curriculum development
5. Lack of support from colleagues and other professionals
6. Limited help with problem solving
7. Paperwork and legal issues
8. Low salary
9. Low status
10. Nonsupportive, negative working environments
11. Lack of collaboration
12. Infrequent interchanges with and isolation from peers
13. Social integration factors

Teachers Who Stay

Factors that most influence teachers to stay are administrative support, support from other professionals, and a positive first teaching experience; these factors correlate with special educators remaining in teaching. In a recent study, salary appeared to be an issue only when teachers were dissatisfied with other professional elements.

Teachers keep teaching for a variety of reasons:

1. Vocational satisfaction—opportunities to exercise skills and abilities, express values and attitudes, take on agreeable roles, and solve problems
2. Social integration—recognition and approval from family, close friends, and supervisors
3. Intrinsic rewards—belief that the rewards they get from teaching match their personal needs expectation
4. Enriched job responsibilities
5. Changes for career advancement
6. Recognition for excellence
7. Student time versus meeting time
8. Increased sense of achievement
9. Self-determination in decisions affecting teaching
10. Adequate time off
11. Good job security

School districts with high retention provide events and activities to increase teacher satisfaction by addressing these factors. Collaborative teams of administrators, parents, and teachers jointly identify key factors that increase teacher satisfaction and work to make these items available.

Provide New Staff with Orientation/Induction

Because teacher attrition rates are highest between the first and fifth year of teaching, a teacher's initial teaching experience is critical. Teacher induction programs help new teachers make a smooth transition professionally and personally—professionally from training to teaching and personally from campus to community.

Induction programs can help with the following:

1. Improving the teaching of beginning teachers (given ongoing support and assistance through clearly articulated, context-specific models of effective teaching)
2. Increasing the retention rate of promising beginning teachers
3. Screening out least effective teachers
4. Promoting the personal and professional well-being of teachers by fostering self-esteem and orienting teachers to the culture of the workplace

Designing Induction Programs

Strong induction programs reflect unique characteristics of each school district and community.

Program emphasis reflects norms. In one school district, the induction program uses a task orientation to help teachers successfully step into their new professional roles. Another school district is very “people oriented;” consequently, the induction program is designed to help new staff become integrated into the culture of the school system and community.

Induction activities vary and include both orientation activities and multiple events throughout a teacher's first five years of teaching. Examples include the following:

1. Coaching of new teachers
2. Frequent classroom observations and visitations
3. Providing intensive feedback
4. Frequent seminars for first year teachers
5. Periodic problem-solving sessions
6. Opportunities to work with a mentor teacher
7. Administrative support

The following illustrates examples of orientation/induction activities that school districts might use for each of the goals described above.

Strategies to Help Teachers Adjust to Professional Demands

Orientation Activities

1. A motivation session emphasizing school district and special education program opportunities
2. An orientation session providing information about the school district, individual schools, and special education programs (philosophy, structure, etc.).
3. Opportunities to discuss new teacher concerns
4. Opportunities to set individual professional development plans
5. Training in school district procedures for evaluation reports, IDEA—2004, NCLBA, etc.

Ongoing Support Activities

1. Mid-year motivational session
2. Reemphasis of school district/special education program goals
3. Frequent classroom observations with feedback
4. Opportunities to visit model classrooms
5. Demonstrations by veteran master teachers
6. Opportunities to view CDs and video tapes of common classroom challenges and discuss issues with other teachers
7. Weekly reviews of new staff members' classroom experiences
8. Subscriptions to professional periodicals
9. Weekly personal logs of observations and acquired knowledge
10. Mini-courses on topics of interest to new teachers
11. Inservice sessions
12. Sharing sessions featuring discussion of new teacher issues

Strategies to Help Teachers Develop Support Networks

Orientation Activities

1. Introductions to and opportunities to work with building staff members
2. Opportunities to interact with other special education personnel in the building and school district
3. Opportunities to meet with other new teachers
4. Help furnishing and setting up the classroom at the beginning of the year
5. A fund for initial classroom materials and supplies
6. Partnership with a master veteran teacher in the school district

Ongoing Support Activities

1. Opportunities to attend out-of-district trainings
2. Monthly meetings with other new staff members
3. Regular meetings with other special education personnel
4. Weekly meetings with building principal
5. Periodic meetings with the director of special education
6. Ongoing contact with a mentor teacher
7. Coaching from college or university faculty
8. Opportunities to serve on school district committees

Strategies to Help Teachers Join the Community

Induction Staff

1. A school district education director
2. Higher education faculty members
3. Building principals
4. School district staff development personnel
5. Experienced teachers
6. Superintendents
7. Community leaders

Orientation Activities

1. Providing information about social, religious, cultural, and ethnic community traits
2. Access to community information sources (medical, financial, etc.)
3. Providing information about common standards or unusual characteristics of the community
4. Help locating housing or purchasing property
5. Support helping other family members become involved in the community

Ongoing Support Activities

1. Visits to local institutions (libraries, museums, etc.)
2. Social activities involving teachers in nonschool community activities
3. Opportunities for new staff to be guests of community groups and organizations
4. Complimentary tickets to special community events

While induction programs can significantly enrich a teacher's first teaching experience, induction programs will not help with these problems:

1. Overcoming major problems in school programs (misplacements, overloads, overcrowded classes, etc.)

2. Helping beginning teachers (who enter teaching without the background, ability, and personal characteristics necessary to become acceptable teachers) become successful teachers
3. Substantially influencing long-term retention if additional changes are not made in the education system at large

Provide Special Support for Veteran Teachers

School districts with strong retention programs enhance vocational satisfaction, social integration, and intrinsic rewards by providing opportunities for veteran teachers to participate in these activities:

1. Increasing and using professional skills
2. Maintaining a strong support network within the school and membership in the community
3. Receiving recognition

Increasing and Using Professional Skills

1. Graduate work
2. Local inservice training
3. School district payment of professional dues in professional organizations
4. Subscriptions to professional publications
5. Attendance at professional meetings and conferences
6. Classroom materials bonuses
7. Acting as mentor teachers
8. Developing new curriculum
9. Developing program policies and procedures

Alternatives for helping teachers maintain strong support networks and affirm community membership

1. Opportunities to meet and work with other mentor teachers
2. Regular meetings with administrators, supervisors, and peer teachers
3. Teacher-teacher exchanges within and outside of the school district
4. Summer employment for teachers
5. Honoring teachers for nonschool activities
6. Community events that honor schools, teachers, and special programs
7. Recognition of teacher participation in nonschool community activities
8. Regular local newspaper features showcasing teachers and programs in the school district
9. Events involving teachers' families

Ideas for Teacher Recognition

1. Teacher of the month/year programs
2. Short-term leaves of absence
3. Financial bonuses
4. Bonus release time
5. Organized parent/student thank-you programs
6. Personal letters recognizing special efforts
7. Personal calls from administrators/supervisors
8. Newspaper ads recognizing individual teachers
9. Community group recognition programs

Creative Retention Strategies

Creativity may be the only limiting factor to increasing retention. Districts across the country have to increase teacher satisfaction by adopting innovative strategies.

Here are some examples:

1. Freeing special educators from routine paperwork, by assigning such work to special education secretaries or paraprofessionals, allows teachers to spend more time on professional tasks.
2. Providing personal subscriptions to professional publications increases teacher access to current information in the field.
3. Inter- and intra-district teacher exchange programs provide teachers first-hand opportunities to experience alternative programs.
4. Creative sabbaticals of a month or semester provide teachers opportunities to gain new skills. In a similar program, special educators who are “burned out” might take an internal sabbatical during which they leave special education and teach general classes for a year or switch to an alternate special education program in the district.
5. Job sharing sometimes allows districts to employ qualified teachers who would be unwilling to take full-time positions. In some school districts, teachers spend half-time in special education; and half-time in general education programs.

Financial rewards may influence a person’s commitment to the school district.

Here are some alternatives.

1. Separate salary schedules for OTs, PTs, speech/language therapists, and psychologists that reflect their increased training.
2. Special stipends for special education personnel to compensate for their longer working days, increased paperwork load, conferencing time with parents, and team meetings for developing student IEPs.

3. Monetary bonuses for special educators upon completion of their fifth year in the school district
4. Earned credit toward loan forgiveness for teachers who remain in the district

With the decreasing number of special education graduates, retention becomes a more critical factor. If today's teachers are going to be tomorrow's teachers, districts need to provide positive work environments, ample recognition and ongoing support to special education personnel.

Section IV Summary: Retention

Although many conduct recruiting programs, school districts often neglect retention programs. Effective retention programs include the following:

1. Identify factors that motivate teachers to stay/leave.
2. Provide new staff orientation/induction.
3. Provide special support for veteran teachers.
4. Provide strong mentoring support during the first to fifth year of employment.
5. Provide creative retention strategies



Planning Worksheets

Attrition and Retention Factors

List the factors that influence teachers in the school district as they consider leaving/staying in the boxes below:

Staying

Leaving

Induction

Prioritize the focus of the school district’s induction program.

Helping teachers adjust to their new professional work environment

Helping teachers develop a support network

Helping teachers join the community

Other

Describe induction activities the school district will carry out to orient new teachers and support them throughout their first year.

Activity	Involves who	Target Date(s)	Expected Outcomes

Retention

What can the school district/community do to support veteran special educators?

Increasing professional skills

Maintaining strong support networks

Affirming community membership

Knowing they are valued and appreciated

Policies

Does the district have a written policy that addresses each of the following?

Y/N	Policy	Current policy is fine or needs revision	Proposed Change
	Employment of relatives, veterans, part-time staff		
	Rehiring former employees		
	Race, national background, age, sex, and mental or physical handicaps of employees		
	Any probationary employment period		
	Payment of relocation expenses for candidates		
	Recruitment of teachers from other organizations (other districts, outside education, i.e., private schools, etc.)		
	Filling vacancies above starting levels from internal sources		
	District employees residing within the district		
	Bonus pay for teaching in certain areas (buildings, subject areas, etc.)		
	Personnel promotions		
	Providing training to help teachers perform better in current positions		
	Leaves of absence		
	Incentives for veteran teachers		

Section V

Recruitment and Retention of Special Education Personnel Resources

Centers and Sources of Technical Assistance

No Child Left Behind—A Toolkit for Teachers

Describes the provisions describing “highly qualified teachers” and answers questions teachers might have on the issue as well as noting resources available to help in the process.

<http://www.ed.gov/teachers/nclbguide/nclb-teachers-toolkit.pdf>

The Personnel Center

The National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers (Personnel Center) works to increase the nation's capacity to successfully recruit and retain special educators, early intervention, and related service providers to serve the needs of infants, young children, and youth with disabilities and their families. To this end, the Personnel Center is conducting a national recruitment campaign to attract a diverse pool of interested candidates to these professions. Information on careers, personnel preparation programs, State certification requirements, financial aid, and employment opportunities is maintained and continually updated on this Web site. Their resource section is excellent.

<http://www.personnelcenter.org/>

Center for Improving Teacher Quality – CTQ

A national center to work with States on developing models for improving the preparation, licensing, and professional development of both GENERAL and SPECIAL education teachers of students with disabilities. It is housed at CCSSO.

http://www.ccsso.org/Projects/Interstate_New_Teacher_Assessment_and_Support_Consortium/Projects/Center_for_Improving_Teacher_Quality/

Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE)

A USDE funded project conducting teacher education research, including the beginning teacher quality, alternative route programs for special education, etc.

<http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/index.php>

Some of their Research Synthesis include the following:

The Supply of and Demand for Special Education Teachers: A Review of Research Regarding the Nature of the Chronic Shortage of Special Education (October 2003)

<http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/pubfiles/RS-1.pdf>

New Teacher Induction in Special Education (September 2003)
<http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/pubfiles/RS-5.pdf>

Getting Teachers Where They're Needed Most: The Case for Licensure Reciprocity (May 2003)
<http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/pubfiles/RS-8.pdf>

SPeNSE

The Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE) was designed to address concerns about nationwide shortages in the number of personnel serving students with disabilities and the need for improvement in the qualifications of those employed.

<http://ferdig.coe.ufl.edu/spense/>

SIGNetwork

This site is a one-stop connection to resources about the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) and State Improvement Grants (SIG).

<http://www.signetwork.org/>

Utah Mentor Academy

One State's mentoring program, which has the purpose to refine and enhance the leadership skills and knowledge of highly qualified educators through training focused on interpersonal and communication skills, effective school practices, modeling, effective presentations, coaching, collaboration, and facilitation techniques.

<http://www.updc.org/frame.html?content=http%3A//www.updc.org/cspd/mentor/>

Job Finders

The Educational Employment Board Network

This site provides a link to State education job listings as well as job fairs.

<http://www.usu.edu/mprrc/njf/index.cfm>

National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse

This long-standing site includes a job-finder component as well as employment advice and considerations.

<http://www.rnt.org/channels/clearinghouse/>

Teachers-Teachers.com

This is a free service designed to help educators find new and exciting teaching jobs, administrative jobs, and other related service positions.

<http://teachersteachers.com/>

National Job Finder—MPRRC

<http://www.usu.edu/mprrc/njf/index.cfm>

Articles and Issues

Special Education Teacher Retention and Attrition—A Critical Analysis of the Literature (April 2003) by Bonnie Billingsly
<http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/pubfiles/RS-2.pdf>

MPRRRC Today—Recruitment and Retention of Quality Special Education Staff (May 2003)
<http://www.usu.edu/mprrc/infoserv/mprrcoday/0503.pdf>

The Teacher Recruitment Act—Summary (2003)
<http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/108th/education/teachers/438billsummary.htm>

State Efforts Regarding Teacher Preparation, Certification, Recruitment and Retention (October 2003)—Education Commission of the States (ECS)—*specific to Special Education*
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/49/02/4902.htm>

Publications and Training Opportunities

Teacher-to-Teacher workshops
U.S. Department of Education has brought together some of the nation's most effective teachers and education experts to share with their colleagues research-based practices and proven methods of using data to inform instruction.
<http://www.paec.org/teacher2teacher/>

Teachers Wanted—Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers
2004, Daniel A. Heller, ASCD

Taming Turnover—Best Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Staff
Angela Childers, 2002, LRP Publications. Book 57 pgs.

Book offers creative hiring techniques in the search for new teachers, discusses teacher incentives and contracts, and offers suggestions for retaining the ones currently on staff. It gives pointers and insight to what some districts have successfully tried on their campuses.

The Shortage of Special Education Faculty—Why It Is Happening, Why It Matters, and What We Can Do About It, 2002, Deborah Deutsch Smith, et.al., Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. Booklet

Report focuses on the three ways the faculty shortage affects children with disabilities: fewer teachers available to educate children with disabilities, fewer faculty members available to conduct research and generate new knowledge about serving children, and

because faculty members play an important leadership role in the field of special education, the loss of faculty creates a corresponding leadership loss.

10 Traits of Highly Effective Teachers—How to Hire, Coach, and Mentor
Successful Teachers
2002, Elaine K. McEwan Corwin Press

Retaining Great Teachers—Schoolwide Strategies for Supporting and Mentoring New
and Veteran Teachers
2002, Michael J. Lovett MASTER Teacher publishers

Induction—Connecting Teacher Recruitment to Retention
2003, Roberta Richin, Richard Banyon, Rita P. Stein, Francine Banyon Corwin Press

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