

# The Urban Education Collaborative



## PRINCIPALS' HIRING OF TEACHERS IN PHILADELPHIA SCHOOLS

A Research Report on Improving Teacher Quality



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This report has been designed and edited by Stephen F. Page, Temple University College of Education, Urban Education Collaborative.

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**A Research Report on Improving Teacher Quality**

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**Urban Education Collaborative**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP), like many other urban school districts, struggles to increase its hiring and retention of experienced and highly qualified teachers in its low-performing/high-need schools. Toward the goal of improving teacher quality and the experience balance, particularly in hard-to-staff schools, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) and SDP agreed to a set of innovative approaches in their 2004 contract. That contract included new policies for school-based selection of teachers and the provision of incentives for teachers who seek employment in selected “incentive schools,” in selected subjects, and to teachers new to the district’s schools.

Although similar hiring and/or incentive policies have been used elsewhere, little is known about the role that districts and principals play in implementing these policies and how they affect teacher recruitment and overall teacher quality. The Urban Education Collaborative (UEC) at Temple University’s Institute for Schools and Society conducted a study of SDP’s effort to implement these new policies during 2005–06. This study reports, in particular, on how SDP’s principals responded to the district’s newly created district hiring and incentive policies.

## METHOD

With the assistance of SDP Human Resources Department and the cooperation of PFT, UEC sent web-based surveys to all SDP principals and to a sample of 1,000 teachers who had recently changed schools, were new to SDP, and were hired through site-based selection. Of the targeted teachers, only 177 responded to the survey, making data useful only for identifying themes for further exploration in interviews. In contrast, 207 principals, 77% of the SDP’s total, responded. In order to understand more about the nature of policy implementation, supports, strengths, and weaknesses, a randomized sample of survey participants—10 principals, 9 experienced teachers, and 9 new teachers—were interviewed.

## SCHOOL-BASED HIRING

School-based selection promises to make a more precise fit between schools and teachers. In Philadelphia, the school-based selection policy allows for principals and/or school-based committees to recruit, interview, select, and hire both new and experienced teachers into open positions within the school. This policy coexists with the seniority policy previously used in SDP. That policy allows experienced teachers to use their seniority to move to open positions in other schools.

The district provided materials about school-based hiring to all principals, including a letter from the superintendent, an orientation packet, a training manual and video, an interactive CD, and instructions on how to use the web-based tracking system. Training included four sessions on the policies, one of which was “mandatory” for all principals. In addition, two websites were set up to specifically answer questions regarding aspects of the site selection process.

## SATISFACTION WITH MATERIALS AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLICIES

Approximately 95% of principals reported satisfaction with each set of materials. Most principals—85%—were also very satisfied with the related trainings. A high rate (92%) of principals claimed understanding of new site selection policies. The relatively few principals who used site-based teacher selection to hire new teachers all said they would recommend the process to other principals. They felt it gave them more detail about candidates and that the process was good for their entire faculty. In addition, the majority of the principals found the site selection committee to be helpful or very helpful, particularly in reviewing résumés and interviewing candidates.

## LIMITED USE

Sixty percent of principals stated that they knew about the websites set up to answer questions, but only 31% used them for their intended purpose. Principals used the website selection tracking system at a much higher rate, 80%, but a majority accessed it only to check the number of candidates who were interested in their school or to verify that a candidate registered for site selection was eligible to do so. Furthermore, in spite of claiming to understand site-based selection, many principals did not take advantage of the new policy and left nearly all hiring to SDP's central office. Over one third of principals did not hire a single candidate through site-based selection.

One notable finding of the survey is that years of experience as a principal seemed to play a role in many of the results. Less experienced principals were more likely to report having more limited access to and greater dissatisfaction with the school-based selection materials and trainings, and were less likely to have attended any sort of training and to know about and use the websites.

Data from this study further suggests that the limited use of site-based selection might be explained by principals' belief that teacher recruitment and hiring is not the responsibility of the principal—a belief fostered by an ambiguity in responsibilities. Both SDP and site selection schools are charged with recruiting and hiring teachers, but SDP is responsible for assigning teachers to schools without site selection or when site selection positions are not filled. In addition, all teacher candidates must first be screened by the district and contract with SDP, leaving principals with little say over the salaries. In the survey, many principals indicated the process did not provide them with information of any greater value than what they already had.

## TEACHER INCENTIVES

The 2004 SDP–PFT contract specifies two sets of incentives for teachers to improve and distribute teacher quality within SDP. The first set targets teachers who wish to become or are already are National Board certified. The SDP will reimburse teachers up to \$2,500 for application fees for certification. Upon receiving certification, teachers are awarded an annual bonus of \$3,500. The other set of incentives concerns 25 SDP schools that are typically hard to staff. Teachers who choose to work at these “incentive schools” receive a maximum of \$2,400 per year in tuition reimbursement graduate course work. Teachers at incentive schools are also provided “targeted professional development dealing with managing disruptive pupil behavior.”

The district also offers two incentives not specified in the 2004 contract. Subject bonuses award teachers an extra \$1,500/year to teach in hard-to-staff subjects:

bilingual education (Spanish and Asian languages), chemistry, physics, special education, mathematics, and Spanish. A signing and retention bonus offers teachers new to SDP \$4,500 if they stay in the job for 37 months.

## UNDERSTANDING OF POLICIES

Rates of principals' expressed understanding of the four incentive policies lagged significantly behind that of the site-based selection policies. Only 37.4% to 49.5% of principals reported understanding each of the four incentives well or very well. Only 58% of principals working in hard-to-staff schools reported understanding the hard-to-staff school bonus well or very well, and only 46% of principals working in middle or high schools reported understanding the subject area bonus.

That principals understood the incentive policies less well than the site selection policies may be attributed to the focus of SDP's trainings and materials: All were focused on implementing site-based selection and not on the use of incentive policies to attract, recruit, and retain new teachers. It should also be noted that, just as with site-based hiring, experience may have played a role in understanding the policies. Although less experienced principals were more likely to believe in the importance of incentives for recruiting, retaining, and increasing the quality of teachers, they were also least likely to understand the policies well or very well. Principals early in their career were significantly less likely to have understood the subject bonus policy.

## LIMITED USE

A vast majority of the principals believed the incentives to be important or very important in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, yet only 20% who claimed to understand all of the policies well or very well explained the incentives to teacher candidates. Of those principals who taught in "incentive schools," 57% did not explain the incentive bonus to potential hires. Data from the surveys and interviews suggest explanations for the lack of principal proactivity in using incentives to appeal to potential hires. Principals tended to believe (a) good teachers are not motivated by financial incentives and doubted the effectiveness of teachers who are or (b) teachers should be rewarded according to the quality of their work, not their willingness to do it.

## CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the findings suggest positive steps forward for SDP in communicating and supporting the new policies. However, the findings also reflect different needs and responses of principals according to experience level, suggesting a need for customized information and training. What is especially striking is how few principals were proactive in using teacher hiring to improve teacher quality at their schools. They made limited use of web-based information, tracking of candidates, and communication. They did not "pitch" incentives to interested candidates, and many ceded hiring decisions to the central office rather than make use of site selection.

The study suggests that limited policy impacts resulted from lack of buy-in and accountability for implementation among principals. While the latter can be explained, in part, by a centralized hiring system that often makes accountability ambiguous, the former is not well explained by either the quality of the policies or the means by which they were communicated. Rather, principal dispositions affected their enthusiasm for and implementation of the innovations and incentives in teacher hiring. How such values emerge and are responded to remain important questions for policy implementation. §

# PRINCIPALS' HIRING OF TEACHERS IN PHILADELPHIA SCHOOLS

As many states and districts struggle to increase the number of quality teachers in their low-performing/high-need schools, policies that provide for financial incentives and other inducements flourish. The literature on these policies has been focused largely on their potential impacts—both theoretically (Stern, 1986; Bruno, 1986) and empirically described. While the kinds of impacts studied have been limited largely to effects in numbers of teachers recruited (e.g., Hansen, Lien, Cavalluzo, & Wenger, 2004; Hirsh, Koppich, & Knapp, 2001), researchers have increasingly drawn attention to impacts on teacher quality and student learning (e.g., Ballou & Podgursky, 1997; Hanushek, 1997; Kelley, Heneman, & Milanowski, 2000). Still less examined in the literature on teacher hiring are the conditions for full or effective implementation of such state or local policies. That is, researchers have tended to overlook questions about the conditions necessary to implement successfully specific teacher recruitment policies in favor of exploring new strategies or investigating the effects of the policies once implemented.<sup>1</sup>

Among policies that have gained favor in recent years are teacher incentives for teaching in specific schools or districts and site-based or decentralized teacher hiring. However, little is known about the role that districts and principals play in implementing these policies and affecting teacher recruitment. This report, therefore, describes the efforts of one urban school district—the School District of Philadelphia—to (a) raise awareness of and communicate information about new policies implementation and (b) support principals in their implementation of the new policies. The report also seeks to add to our understanding of how principals interpret, implement, and respond to newly created district hiring policies and the belief systems that influence these responses. It addresses the questions of what role principals see themselves playing in the overall recruitment, selection, and hiring of teachers and why principals highlight or fail to highlight available incentives in their recruitment efforts. Such information is important to understanding and improving implementation of specific policies and improving the supply of qualified teachers in hard-to-staff schools and districts.

This study of the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) focuses specifically on the nature of the implementation of a new system of hiring incentives and site-based selection. It asks questions in four areas of concern: communication of the new policies, their implementation, and behavioral and organizational factors affecting implementation.

## BACKGROUND

Although teacher quality is often cited as the most significant in-school factor in student achievement, it is also one of the most inequitably distributed. Low-performing

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<sup>1</sup> For an exception, see Kellor's 2005 study of performance pay implementation, though the focus is largely on teacher needs, knowledge, and behaviors.



schools and those with high concentrations of high-poverty and minority students, often called “hard-to-staff schools,” are more likely to have less qualified and less experienced teachers (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Because high-poverty, urban schools average an annual turnover rate of more than one fifth of their teachers (Ingersoll, 2004), poor and minority students are particularly disadvantaged. As summarized by the Learning First Alliance (2005), on measures of teacher certification, content knowledge, and experience, disadvantaged students fail to get their fair share of qualified teachers. These students are 2.67 times more likely than their more affluent peers to have an uncertified teacher (Ingersoll, 2002). In fact, about one third of classes in high-poverty secondary schools were taught by teachers “out of field” in 1999–2000, compared to 1 in 5 in low-poverty schools. Shields et al. (2001) found that teacher shortages in California were concentrated in high-poverty, high-minority, underperforming urban schools, with more than twice the percentage of uncertified teachers (19%) than schools in more affluent neighborhoods.

And despite what is known about the relationship between teacher effectiveness and experience, students in high-poverty and high-minority schools are about twice as likely to have teachers with 3 years or fewer of teaching experience (Ingersoll, 2002). For example, in SDP in 2003–04, “new teachers had almost a 60% chance of being assigned to schools at which 80% or more of the students were low income,” compared to about 45% of teachers with at least 1 year of experience (Neild, Useem, & Farley, 2005, p. 19).

These gaps between high- and low-poverty schools and districts are all the more significant in hard-to-staff teaching areas like mathematics, science, and special education. For example, Ingersoll’s 2004 analysis of NCES data found that, for 1999–2000, about 40% of all secondary schools had trouble filling positions for mathematics teachers, 34% had difficulty filling special education vacancies, and rates were much higher for high-versus low-poverty schools. In Pennsylvania, 75% of urban superintendents report having too few applicants for teacher vacancies (Governor’s Commission on Training America’s Teachers, 2006). Murphy, DeArmond, and Guin similarly report that “the challenge of hiring teachers becomes less difficult as one moves away from the central city. The late fill rate for urban school districts was more than 50% higher than that for suburban school districts and twice as high as the figure for rural schools” (2003, pp. 10–11).<sup>2</sup>

Research demonstrates a host of school conditions (e.g., school demographics and achievement, levels of administrative support, new teacher mentoring, instructional support, perceived safety) and district policies (e.g., transfer policies, hiring practices) contribute to this maldistribution of qualified teachers. An equally varied set of interventions to improve both teacher supply and quality has been implemented across the country. Among these are changes in the recruitment and compensation of teachers.

Most U. S. school districts compensate their teachers by means of a fixed-step salary system that rewards teachers for longevity of service in a district or for obtaining higher levels of education. Bruno summarizes the salary system: “The fixed-step compensation program has resulted in a salary structure for the teaching profession where (1) salary increments are largely automatic with experience and training; (2) teachers have to move into administrative positions to earn higher salaries; and (3) the disparity between administrators’ and teachers’ salaries widens over time” (1986, p. 425).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> “Late fill rate” refers to the share of total teachers hired after the start of the school year.

<sup>3</sup> Odden & Kelley (2000) remind us that the single salary schedule, when first introduced, was

Recently, economists and policymakers have called for reforms of this system, arguing that it does not sufficiently motivate and reward teachers for increasing student achievement, taking on extra duties, or providing instruction in shortage areas; nor does it provide adequate incentive for prospective teachers.

Thus, new recruitment and compensation systems, despite the lack of conclusive evidence on their impacts, are capturing national attention. For example, in addition to reforming their recruitment and hiring practices, many states and districts currently have or have experimented with signing bonuses for new teachers. In 1998, the Massachusetts Signing Bonus Program for New Teachers authorized a \$20,000 signing bonus over at least 3 years, with at least \$8,000 provided in the 1st year (Learning First Alliance, 2005). Other districts use incentives to encourage teachers to work in low-performing schools. For example, New York City provides a 12% bonus for teachers in hard-to-staff, low-performing schools; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC, offers a stepped 6% increase for teachers in low-performing schools; and Hamilton County, TN, provides high-performing teachers with an additional \$5,000 per year for teaching in low-performing schools. Districts' difficulties in staffing teachers for certain subject areas also has prompted incentive pay, such as annual salary differentials of at least \$5,000 per year in San Francisco and Cincinnati and \$3,400 for up to 4 years in New York's Teachers of Tomorrow Program.<sup>4</sup> A small number of districts offer home mortgage assistance and/or subsidized housing. And many offer financial rewards to teachers who earn National Board certification, rewards such as a one-time bonus or a salary increase that lasts the life of the renewable certification. In addition to these, many schools and districts have in place or are developing knowledge- and skill-based pay initiatives that would link teacher earnings to some measure(s) of their relevant expertise and/or impact on student performance. The federal Teacher Incentive Fund grants have also encouraged new pay-for-performance pilot programs in districts across the country.

## NEW HIRING POLICIES IN PHILADELPHIA

Among the nation's largest urban districts trying to improve teacher quality through new hiring policies, SDP has been developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for teacher recruitment and retention that includes efforts in each of the types of innovations described above.<sup>5</sup> Toward the goal of improving overall teacher quality across Philadelphia schools, and particularly experience balance (more than 70% of teachers with 5 or more years of full-time teaching experience), the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and the SDP reached agreement on a set of new approaches. Agreed to in the fall of 2004, a 4-year contract set the terms and conditions of employment for teachers in Philadelphia public schools that included new policies instituting an innovation that ensured against unequal pay for equal qualifications—years of experience, educational degrees and credits—of women and minorities. They add, though, that experience and training are often not aligned to school reform goals or the expertise needed to teach to student standards.

<sup>4</sup>Bruno (1986) notes that as early as the 1960's, researchers had suggested that teacher salaries should better reflect market demands, including difficulty in staffing classrooms in high-poverty, high-minority schools.

<sup>5</sup>SDP was recently awarded a federal grant for a pay-for-performance initiative; the pilot is currently being developed.

school-based selection of teachers and salary augmentation for teachers to seek employment in selected “incentive schools” (including hard-to-staff schools) and in selected subjects, and to attract new teachers to the district’s schools in general.

## SCHOOL-BASED SELECTION

Johnson and Liu (2004) describe site-based hiring as providing individual schools with opportunities “from the start” to review teacher candidates and decide if they fit the specific needs and culture of the school. The process likewise promises to provide candidates with an understanding of the school context and culture—students, teachers, leadership, and community.

According to the 2004 contract in Philadelphia, schools hire teachers through either a fully site-based process or a partially site-based process. In the latter, the new school-based hiring policy coexists with an established seniority policy that allows experienced teachers to move to certain open positions in schools if they desire. In short, the type of school determines whether it is to use full or partial site-based selection of teachers, and all newly created positions must be filled by site-based selection. These school types and their corresponding guidelines for hiring either by school-based selection or by the seniority system are presented in Table 1.

The new school-based hiring policy allows principals and/or school-based committees to recruit, interview, select, and hire new and experienced teachers into open positions within the school. According to Simmons’ 2004 report on the contract, “The district estimates that principals will have the power to select in 75% to 80% of all teacher-hiring instances.”

**Table 1: Hiring Process by School Type**

School Type	Policy on Filling Open Positions in the Schools
New School	School-based selection initially and during the 1st year after opening. Thereafter, 50% school-based selection and 50% seniority.
Replacement School	Current faculty moved. School-based selection for others during 1st year. Thereafter, 50% school-based selection and 50% seniority.
Military Academy	School-based selection for all positions.
Transition School	School-based selection for the additional grades being added for transition year only. 50% school-based selection and 50% seniority for other grades during transition year. After transition year, 50% school-based selection and 50% seniority for all grades.
Hard-to-Fill Middle Schools: Five Pilot Schools	School-based selection for all positions until the program is assessed after 2 years.
Full School-based Selection School (determined by a vote of full-time faculty)	School-based selection for all positions.
Out-of-Experience-Balance School	50% school-based selection and 50% seniority.
Other Schools	50% school-based selection and 50% seniority.
Incentive Schools	School-based selection for all positions.

When school-based selection is used, principals convene a staff selection committee, comprised of the principal, an assistant principal (where applicable), two teachers, and a parent who is a member of the school's home and school association. The principal will consult with the school council, or when there is no school council, the building committee, for recommendations to the staff selection committee. The principal and the staff selection committee will be responsible for establishing "appropriate, objective criteria and procedures to identify candidates for filling positions, including maintenance of racial balance," which must be maintained at all schools regardless of the way in which the position is filled.<sup>6</sup> The principal is also responsible for determining which positions will be hired according to the school-based hiring policy and which will be hired according to the seniority-based policy. The staff selection committee then screens and interviews potential candidates and makes a recommendation to the principal. The principal has final authority on whom to hire. If two teachers equally meet the established criteria chosen by the principal and staff selection committee, the teacher with greater seniority shall be awarded the position.<sup>7</sup>

Teachers from outside SDP, as well as those currently teaching in the district who are considering transferring to another school within the district, may view a listing of open teaching positions on the district's website ([www.philsch.k12.pa.us/offices/prof-staffing](http://www.philsch.k12.pa.us/offices/prof-staffing)). The listing is searchable by school name, curricular subject, and school level. It indicates whether a school needs to be balanced by race and/or by experience, and which openings at the school will be filled by seniority ("traditional" vacancies) and which by school-based selection. The listing is updated daily, and interested teachers may apply for positions online. Teachers who wish to transfer may apply in one application for up to 10 positions, in order of preference.

The district's schedule for filling positions changed when the new school-based selection policy was instituted; Table 2 outlines the revised hiring schedule for 2005–06. Prior to the school-based selection policy, all new hires were assigned their positions within SDP after all voluntary and forced transfers had determined their positions for the upcoming school year. This meant that the most sought after positions were often taken by teachers with more experience in the district. With the new schedule, principals can begin the hiring process for non-SDP teachers in January instead of waiting for voluntary transfers to respond.

## INCENTIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The 2004 contract describes two sets of incentives designed to increase the number of teachers and more equitably distribute teacher quality within SDP. The first incentive is for teachers who are National Board certified or who wish to become so. For the latter, SDP will reimburse up to \$2,500 for application fees and expenses if teachers receive the National Board Certification. While applying, teachers can request 1 day of substitute service within the 30 days before their portfolios are due. Once a teacher receives

<sup>6</sup> According to the 2004 contract, "The faculty in a school shall be deemed to be racially balanced if the percentage of African American teachers is between seventy-five percent (75%) and one hundred twenty-five percent (125%) of the city-wide percentage of such minority teachers at that organizational level (i.e., elementary, middle or high school)."

<sup>7</sup> 2004 PFT and SDP contract at: <http://pa.aft.org/pft/index.cfm?action=cat&categoryID=baff0a69-fd51-4f45-8040-5025a4e648bc>, retrieved 8/4/09.

**Table 2: Posting, Selection, and Hiring/Assignment Schedule**

<b>Month or Date</b>	<b>Filling Open Positions in the Schools</b>
January	Vacancy list for the upcoming school year is posted on SDP website. Principals can begin interviewing for school-based selection positions.
May	First wave of forced and voluntary transfers are completed. Teachers who are forced transfers can choose to go into the school-based selection process, but once they choose school-based selection, they cannot return to being a forced transfer. Those individuals who did not like their forced transfer position can delay until the second round of forced transfers.
July 31	School-based selection interviewing must be completed.
August 1-August 14	SDP's Office of Human Resources determines what positions are still open (both school-based selected positions and seniority positions). Any additional voluntary transfers are completed.
August 15	Second wave of forced transfers. All people assigned after this point are considered as being on special assignment.
After August 15	Any positions remaining open are now deemed school-based selections, even if they were initially seniority based. Principals can also opt to have the SDP's Office of Human Resources fill any positions. These positions are classified as special assignment and after 1 year are re-evaluated.

National Board Certification, he or she will receive an annual bonus of \$3,500 for the duration of the 10-year certification, which is renewable.

The other set of incentives described in the 2004 contract concern SDP's "incentive schools." According to the contract, a joint teachers' union-SDP committee would establish criteria to determine a list of no more than 25 incentive schools, which would remain designated as such for at least 3 years. Teachers choosing to work at an incentive school would receive a maximum of \$2,400 per year in reimbursement for tuition for up to six credits. Teachers with a master's degree plus 30 hours of graduate coursework or beyond could choose to have three additional personal leave days instead of the tuition reimbursement. Teachers at incentive schools would be provided "targeted professional development dealing with managing disruptive pupil behavior." Teachers who volunteer to transfer to an incentive school would not lose their building seniority.

While not described directly in the contract, two additional incentives are offered by SDP. The first is a "subject bonus," \$1,500 per year to teach in content areas deemed hard to staff by the district. The district annually reassesses its list of hard-to-staff subjects, though the subjects listed have not changed in recent years. The subject areas for which teachers were eligible for bonuses in the 2005-06 school year included bilingual education (Asian and Spanish languages), chemistry, physics, special education, mathematics, and Spanish. The second unspecified incentive SDP offers is a signing and retention bonus of \$4,500 for teachers new to the district. The first third of this bonus is given after 5 months of service, the remaining \$3,000 after the 37th month of service.

## STUDY PURPOSE

Over the last few years, SDP has made considerable strides in its efforts to improve teacher recruitment and retention. The district has increased the number of applicants for teaching jobs, the retention rate of newly hired teachers, and the total number of teachers certified (Neild et al., 2005). Despite this progress, considerable work remains to be done. The innovations of the 2004 contract promised much, but their impact is yet to be determined. Likewise, questions about the quality and depth of implementation of these new policies remain unanswered. If site-based selection and/or specific SDP teacher incentives prove powerful in improving teacher quality, what needs to be done to ensure widespread and effective implementation? If, on the other hand, outcomes prove less than hoped, will enough be learned about whether the policies or the implementation of said policies failed?

To help SDP begin to consider these questions and understand the nature of implementation of school-based hiring, National Board Certification bonuses, incentive school and subject bonuses, as well as strategies for improving the implementation of these new policies, this study addressed the following questions:

- **Communication:** What activities (training, handouts, etc.) were conducted to communicate these new policies (for the 2005–06 academic year)? What are the perceptions of the principals and teachers about their participation in and value of these activities?
- **Implementation:** To what extent did principals and teachers make use of the new policies, and what rationales did they offer regarding their participation? What were their reactions to the initial activities related to implementation? What suggestions could they offer for future activities conducted to implement new policies?
- **Behavioral Factors:** What factors affected particular principal decision making and behaviors in the hiring process? What beliefs and behaviors affected how the hiring policies were implemented?
- **Organizational Factors:** What role did the division of labor between district/central office administration and schools play?

## METHODS

The study, conducted by the Urban Education Collaborative at Temple University's College of Education,<sup>8</sup> was designed as a fast response to the SDP's questions about the implementation of its various strategies for improving teacher recruitment, particularly in high-need subjects and schools. The researchers met several times with various district staff to discuss SDP's hiring incentives and site-based selection policies and were provided with information on the dates and purposes of site-based selection training sessions and related materials (e.g., site selection training CDs, training announcement fliers, letters, and websites explaining the policies). The information and materials, as well as related press coverage of the new contract, were reviewed by the research team and used to design a plan for data collection and analysis.

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<sup>8</sup>Data collection support was provided by an outside contractor.

## DATA COLLECTION DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Web-based surveys and interview protocols were designed by the researchers with assistance from the SDP's Office of Human Resources. These instruments, described below, sought to elicit teachers' and principals' perceptions of the new district site-based selection and incentive policies in teacher recruitment, hiring, and placement.

*Web-based Teacher Survey.* The survey consisted of 41 fill-in, open-ended, and Likert-scaled questions, the whole taking 15–20 minutes to complete. Certain questions isolated the different types of teachers in order to identify the types of schools they currently work in and the type of teaching positions they hold, such as new teachers, voluntary transfer teachers, and forced transfer teachers. The survey was designed to determine what attracted new teachers to the district schools, the reasons why teachers transferred to incentive schools, and the impact the new policies and programs had on teachers' decisions to apply to or change schools.

*Web-based Principal Survey.* The survey consisted of 50 fill-in, open-ended, and Likert-scaled questions designed to assess principals' understanding of and success with filling vacant teaching positions using the new policies and programs, that is, site-based selection, site-based selection committees, incentive policies, and bonuses. The survey also requested explanations of principals' reasons to use or not use the new policies and programs.

*Teacher Interviews.* This interview protocol was designed to obtain detailed information concerning the hiring process of the teacher, how he or she changed positions, his or her familiarity with site selection and incentives, reasons for taking the current position, level of seniority, and school culture. The interviews, conducted over the telephone, consisted of approximately 10 discussion topics.

*Principal Interviews.* The purpose of the telephone interviews was to obtain detailed information concerning the number of teachers hired through site selection, the future use of site selection, and the role of financial incentives. The telephone interviews consisted of approximately 5–10 discussion topics.

*Procedures.* The district provided the names and e-mail addresses of its principals, teachers new to the district, forced transfer teachers, and voluntary transfer teachers for 2005–06. In order to maximize teachers' understanding of the survey and the response to it, SDP's Office of Human Resources and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers sent a joint e-mail to the entire subpopulation of teachers (as identified by SDP), explaining the purpose of the study and assuring confidentiality of responses. The web-based surveys were e-mailed to a stratified sample of 1,000 teachers. This stratified sample included the following targeted groups:

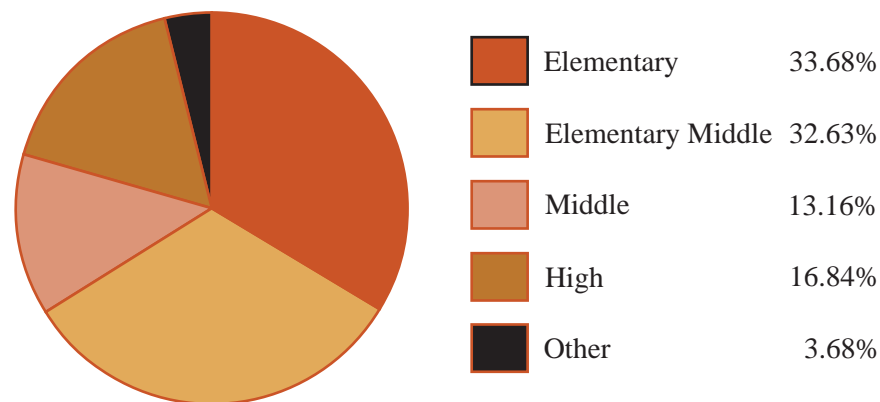
- SDP-experienced teachers who moved within the district, through site-based selection or involuntary or voluntary/seniority moves; and
- teachers new to SDP who were hired through site-based selection.

Subsequent reminders, from the president of the teachers' union and SDP leaders, among others, were e-mailed to those who had not responded to the survey. As an incentive to complete the survey, a gift certificate to a local school supply store was offered to a randomly selected subset of respondents.

Regrettably, many of the teachers who received e-mails about the survey were mis-identified as targeted participants (e.g., district staff not currently in full-time teaching positions), affecting the number of eligible survey respondents. Although small survey samples are often the result of limited response rates due to lack of participant interest, the electronic survey administration was challenged by two additional problems: (a) incomplete and inaccurate new teacher lists and contact information provided by the district, and (b) non-uniform computer security/firewall configurations, preventing many interested respondents from accessing the web survey link from their school and classroom computers. Of the targeted teachers, only a small sample of 177 responded to the survey. Consequently, the study was, in part, methodologically limited by the small size and inadequate representativeness of the teacher sample, and data from the teacher survey were only used to identify themes for further exploration in the interviews and to inform analyses of principal survey data.

Web-based surveys also were sent to all SDP principals. In contrast to the response from the survey of teachers, 207 principals—77% of the district’s total, 224—responded. Comparisons of the principal sample to the total SDP principal population by respondent race, gender, experience, type of school, and educational background indicate these respondents were representative of principals in the district. For example, as Figure 1 depicts, the majority of responding SDP principals were from schools serving students in Grades K–8 in a district in which 60% of principals lead elementary or elementary/middle schools, 13% lead middle schools, and 15% lead high schools. Furthermore, the sample of principals included 33% males and 67% females ( $n = 197$ , missing = 27). As illustrated in Figure 2, more than half the responding principals were from minority backgrounds.

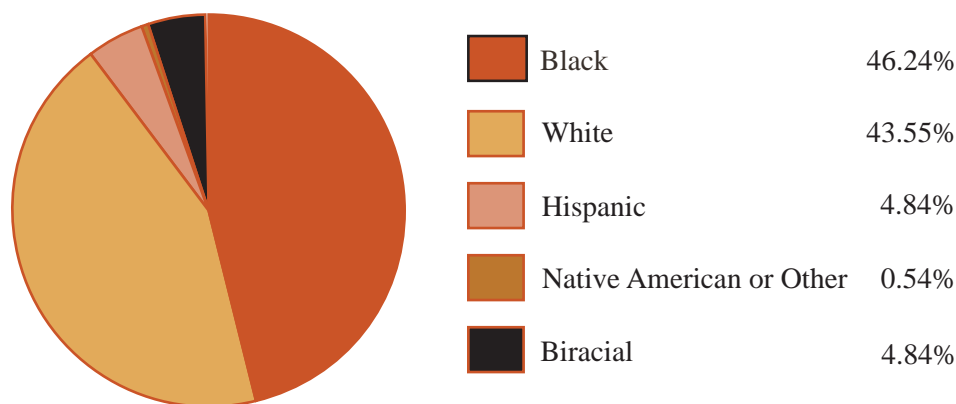
**Figure 1: Responding Principals by School Type**



In order to triangulate survey data and learn more about the nature of the policy implementation, a randomized sample of participants was interviewed. Initially a computerized randomizer was used to select principals and teachers who had participated in the survey to participate in telephone interviews. However, due to a low response rate for the interviews, additional participants were contacted and later interviewed by phone using one of three semi-structured interview protocols (principal, experienced teacher moving within district, or new teacher). Qualitative data from the interviews of 10 principals, 9 experienced teachers, and 9 new teachers were coded by key research themes in Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program, and analyzed in order to understand the nature of policy implementation, supports, strengths, and weaknesses.



**Figure 2: Principals by Race/Ethnicity**



## FINDINGS

Overall, the findings from the surveys and interviews suggest some positive steps forward for SDP. The district was generally successful in its outreach and information campaign concerning site-based selection, but less so in communicating incentive policies. Principals' expressed understanding of policies generally mirrored the SDP's success in disseminating them, with incentive policies being less well understood. Nevertheless, despite the considerable outreach and information efforts by SDP and despite principals' expressed understanding of most policies, principals made limited use of site-based selection and incentives to recruit potential new teachers to district schools. Below, an analysis of the interviews and surveys related to the two policy areas present the evidence supporting these findings, as well as possible reasons for the lack of policy implementation and recommendations for improvement.

## SITE-BASED SELECTION

The following sections offer further details of the results of the survey and interviews concerning, especially, principals' access to information about site-based hiring policies, their understanding of those policies, and their use of the policies in recruiting and hiring teachers.

### PRINCIPALS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The district provided a variety of materials to all principals regarding the new policy on site-based selection: a letter from then-CEO Paul Vallas, an orientation packet, a training manual and video, an interactive CD, and four training sessions on the policies, one of which was "mandatory" for all principals. In addition, two websites were set up specifically to aid principals with the site-based hiring. One allowed principals to ask their regional superintendents questions about any hiring processes and policies. The other website provided a teacher candidate tracking system and a number of other features designed to facilitate site-based selection; it enabled principals to:

- check the number of teacher candidates interested in site selection at their schools

**Table 3: Access to Materials by Principals’ Characteristics**

	<b>Interactive CD</b>	<b>Training Video</b>	<b>Directions for Site Selection Tracking System</b>	<b>Letter from CEO</b>	<b>Orientation Packet</b>	<b>Training Manual</b>
<b>Percentage of principals who reported not receiving materials</b>	37%	26%	18%	18%	6%	5%
<b>Mean number of years of experience for principals not receiving materials</b>	6.1	5.7	5.3	5.0	2.5	2.8
<b>Mean number of years of experience for principals receiving materials</b>	7.5	7.4	7.3	7.4	7.2	7.2

- verify candidates’ eligibility for school-based hiring
- follow up with candidates who had expressed interest but who did not provide résumés
- guide planning efforts with their school’s Site Selection Committee
- respond to questions from principals’ regional superintendent
- identify positions for targeted recruitment

The district’s training efforts included explicit instructions on how to use the website tracking system.

Only four principals (2%) claimed to have received none of the materials. Of these four, three (1.5%) also claimed to not have attended any of the site selection trainings. Of the 98% of principals who did receive some of the materials, there was some variation in the reported distribution of materials (see Table 3).

As Table 3 demonstrates, less experienced principals were more likely to report having less access to some of the school-based selection materials. Statistically significant differences were seen in the mean number of years of experience for principals who reported receiving materials, particularly the letter from the CEO ( $p$ -value = 0.025), the orientation packet ( $p$ -value = 0.006), and the training manual ( $p$ -value = 0.016). There were not statistically significant differences in the reported reception of the training video, the interactive CD, or the directions for the site selection tracking system by experience level, though in each case, the mean number of years for those who did not receive the materials was lower than the mean of those who did. The receipt of the materials was not correlated with race, gender, or school type (elementary, K–8, middle, or high school). Since these data are self-reported, it is possible that less experienced principals did receive the materials but, confronted with a myriad of new responsibilities, simply did not recall receiving them.

In addition to variation in the receipt of materials, some variation is evident in principals’ participation in the trainings:

- 90% attended a site selection training program.

- 86% attended mandatory regional training for site selection.
- 48% attended SDP central office training.
- 38% attended a training for schools with partial site selection.
- 29% attended a training for schools with full site selection.

It is not surprising that a smaller percentage of principals attended either the partial or full site selection trainings because these targeted a specific set of principals and not the entire population. Of the 19 principals who did not attend any training, 9 (47%) claimed not to have received any notification or to have received the notification too late to attend; 8 (42%) were either new to the district or told to attend a training starting in January, 2005; and 2 (11%) stated that their faculty had just voted to become full site selection schools.

Principals were also generally aware of the websites set up to answer questions. Sixty percent of principals stated that they knew about the websites. Principals with more years of experience were more likely to report knowing about the websites; the mean number of years of experience as a principal of those who knew about the websites (7.84 years) was statistically significantly higher than those who did not know about the websites (5.45 years).

Clearly, the outreach efforts by the district were substantial and mostly successful. Principals reported access to numerous sources of information through the trainings, materials, or websites. However, one general trend emerged concerning the access to information for principals newer to the district: They were less likely to report receiving materials and more likely to have not attended any training. Stratton (2003) suggests that this phenomenon is not only true in Philadelphia but elsewhere as well. In fact, many new principals are left “on their own to discover what they need to know to be effective.”

**Table 4: Principal Dissatisfaction With Resources by Years of Experience**

Years of Experience	0-2	3-7	8-15	15+	Total
<b>Materials</b>					
<b>Letter from CEO Paul Vallas</b>	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2
<b>Orientation Packet</b>	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4
<b>Training Manual</b>	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4
<b>Training Video</b>	0 (0%)	4 (57%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	7
<b>Interactive CD</b>	0 (0%)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	4
<b>Directions for Tracking System</b>	0 (0%)	5 (71%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	7
<b>Aspects of Training</b>					
<b>Training Overall</b>	1 (4%)	16 (67%)	7 (29%)	0 (0%)	24
<b>Course Appropriateness</b>	0 (0%)	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	0 (0%)	13
<b>Pace of Course</b>	2 (7%)	15 (54%)	8 (29%)	3 (11%)	28
<b>Knowledge of Trainers</b>	2 (9%)	14 (61%)	7 (30%)	0 (0%)	23
<b>Location of Training</b>	4 (15%)	12 (46%)	8 (31%)	2 (8%)	26
<b>Scheduling of Training</b>	4 (16%)	9 (36%)	11 (44%)	1 (4%)	25

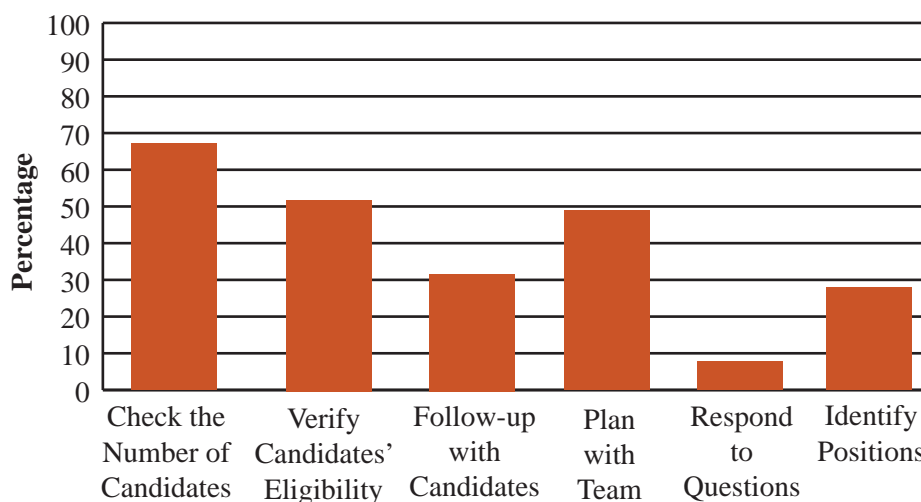
## SATISFACTION WITH INFORMATION AND TOOLS FOR SITE-BASED SELECTION

Principals were generally satisfied with information about site-based hiring policies and processes. Ninety-five percent reported satisfaction with each set of materials. Most (85%) principals were also very satisfied with the related trainings, though satisfaction with some characteristics of the training (e.g., pacing, knowledge of trainer, location, scheduling) was more varied.

Table 4 shows that no early-career principals (0–2 years) were dissatisfied with the materials, and few early-career principals showed dissatisfaction with aspects of training. The most experienced principals tended to be satisfied with both. However, principals in the midrange of experience, 3–15 years, registered higher rates of dissatisfaction than their colleagues of less and greater experience. Interestingly, principals who had 3–7 years of experience overwhelmingly registered the highest rates of dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction with web-based resources lagged significantly behind satisfaction with materials and training. According to the surveys, principals tended to regard the websites as “not useful,” but their particular objections were not identified. Despite this dissatisfaction, over 80% of the principals did access and use the site selection tracking system. As Figure 3 indicates, a majority of principals accessed it to check the number of candidates interested in site selection at their schools or to verify that a candidate who had registered for site selection was eligible. Very few used the system to respond to or raise questions with their regional superintendent (perhaps reflecting limited use by superintendents, too). For the web-based resources, only 61 principals (31% of all responding principals; 60% of those aware of the websites) reported that they had used either of the two websites. Although data reveal a statistically significant difference in the years of experience of those principals who knew about the website, there was no statistically significant difference in those who accessed them.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 3: Principals Use of the Site Selection Tracking System**



Overall, principals reported satisfaction not just with the availability of resources, but also with the information within the resources. However, a general trend emerged

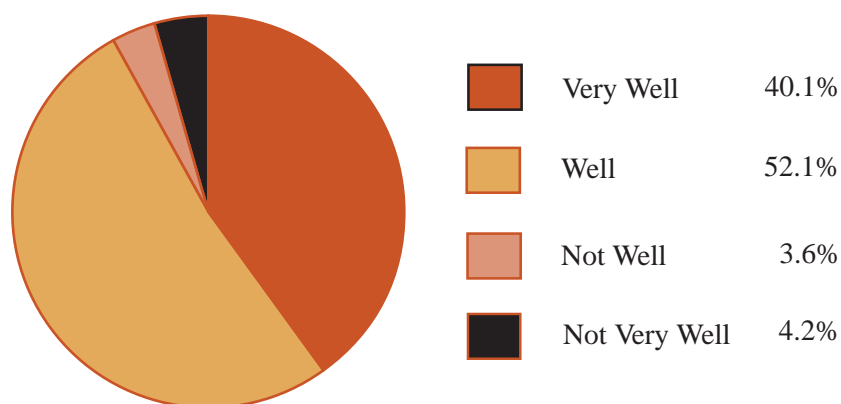
<sup>9</sup>Teachers also seemed to find district resources less useful. For example, although 83% of responding teachers used the online school profiles, only 57% of those teachers found the profiles useful. Teachers likewise noted ongoing problems accessing web-based materials.

about the mechanisms with which principals could discuss questions about the policies with the SDP staff. Principals also described confusion concerning the schedule (see Table 2) by which they could implement various hiring procedures and other site selection processes. Few principals accessed the websites set up to answer questions or used the district’s tracking system to contact their regional superintendents. Given this response, SDP may want to consider how to establish better two-way communications between central office staff and its principals.

## UNDERSTANDING OF POLICIES

Ninety-two percent of principals claimed to understand the new site selection policies well or very well (see Figure 4).<sup>10</sup> Of the few principals who claimed they did not well understand school-based selection, there were no recognizable subgroup (e.g., race, gender, experience, school type) patterns. That is, the district’s outreach efforts seem to be equitably distributed across principals.

**Figure 4: Percentage of Principals Who Understood Site Selection**



Principals who attended one of the site selection trainings (see pp. 14-15, above) were more likely to claim an understanding of site selection than those who did not attend the trainings, except in the case of the partial site selection committee training. For example, of those who attended the regional training, only 4.2% claimed to not understand site selection well or very well, whereas of those who did not attend the regional training, 18.4% claimed to not understand site selection well or very well.

## USE OF SITE-BASED SELECTION

Many principals did not take full advantage of the site-based selection policies and left some if not all of the hiring to the district. Despite satisfaction with the materials and trainings as well as a belief in their understanding of the site-based selection policies, over one third of principals did not hire a single candidate through site-based selection. Principals who took advantage of site-based teacher selection in filling school positions were very satisfied with the process: 92% of those who used it to hire new teachers said they would recommend the process to other principals. They felt it gave them more detail about possible candidates and that the process was good for their entire faculty. In addition, despite some complaints about the burden of implementing

<sup>10</sup> Only 51% of the responding teachers felt they understood site selection well or very well.

site selection, none of the principals found any aspect of the site selection committee obstructive; the majority of the principals found the site selection committee to be helpful or very helpful, particularly in reviewing résumés and interviewing candidates.

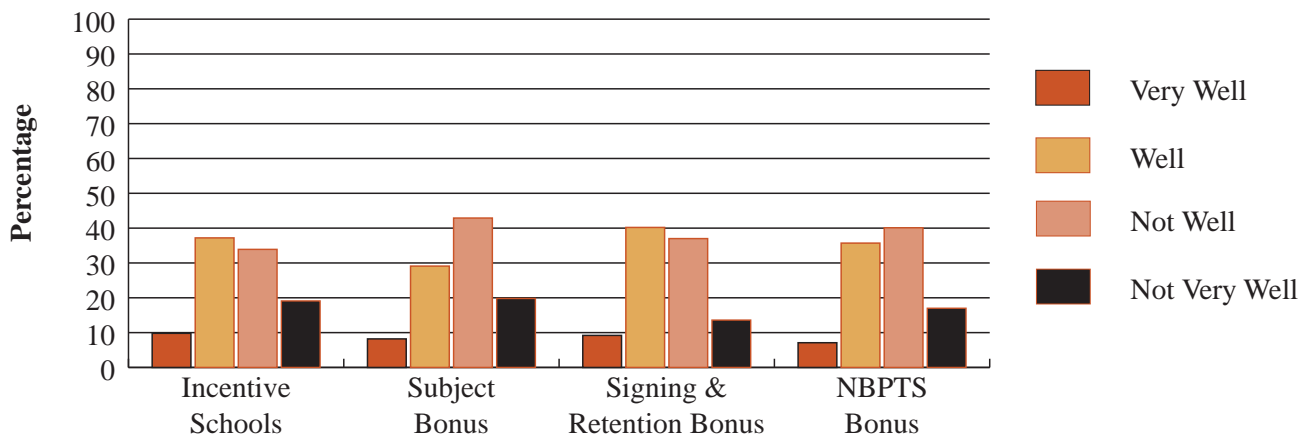
## INCENTIVE POLICIES

The following sections offer further details of the results of the survey and interviews concerning, especially, principals’ access to information about incentive policies, their understanding of those policies, and their use of the policies in hiring teachers.

### UNDERSTANDING OF INCENTIVE POLICIES

Principals’ understanding of incentive policies lagged significantly behind their understanding of the new site-based selection policies. Their understanding also varied by incentive type (see Figure 5). The majority of principals claimed that they did not understand at least one of SDP’s teacher hiring incentive policies. Only 37.4% to 49.5% of principals reported understanding each of the four incentive policies (NBPTS, hard-to-staff schools bonus, subject-area bonus, and signing and retention bonus) well or very well. Even when the population was narrowed to those principals for whom a particular incentive policy was especially relevant, understanding was limited. For example, when the sample was restricted to principals working in hard-to-staff schools, only 58% of principals reported understanding the hard-to-staff schools bonus well or very well. In addition, when the sample was restricted to principals working in middle or high schools, only 46% of principals reported understanding the subject area bonus.

**Figure 5: Principals Understanding of Incentive Policies**



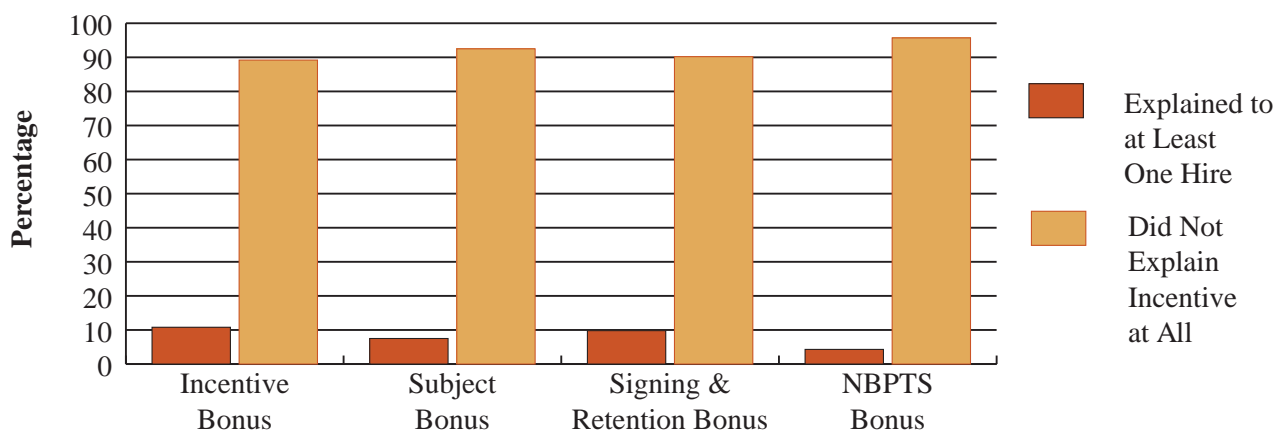
Although understanding was not correlated with gender, race, or type of school (elementary, K–8, middle, or high school), experience played a role in understanding the incentive policies. There was significant difference ( $p = 0.010$ ) in the years of experience for principals who understood the subject bonus policy, with principals early in their career more likely than their more experienced peers to not understand the policy well. No statistically significant differences emerged for other incentives, though the mean number of years of experience was higher for principals who claimed to understand each of the policies.

That principals claimed to understand the incentive policies less well than the site selection policies could have been predicted because SDP’s outreach efforts, trainings, and materials were far more focused on implementing the new site selection policies than on incentive policies or procedures to attract, recruit, and retain new teachers.

## USE OF INCENTIVES IN HIRING TEACHERS

A vast majority of SDP’s principals believed that the incentives are important or very important in recruiting high-quality teachers (73%), retaining high-quality teachers (68%), and increasing the quality of continuing teachers (73%). Nevertheless, as Figure 6 shows, very few principals proffered district incentives to teachers to join their school staffs. Despite their belief in the usefulness of incentives, only 11% of principals explained the incentive policy to prospective hires. Although the group of principals who reported believing the incentives were important or very important in recruiting, retaining, or increasing the quality of teachers had less experience than those who believed they were unimportant or very unimportant, these differences were not statistically significant. When principals were asked how the incentive policies could be made more effective, they responded with the following suggestions: publicizing the policies (20.6%), basing pay incentives on merit (15.9%), and increasing the amount of financial incentives or including loan forgiveness to give the teachers more financial assistance (14.0%). (In fact, many SDP teachers are already eligible for federal loan forgiveness.)

**Figure 6: Principals Outreach to Prospective Hires by Incentive Type**



Limited understanding does not explain the principals’ limited offering of incentives to prospective teachers. Even among principals who claimed to understand the policy well or very well, only 20% explained the incentives to teacher candidates. Even when taking into account that some incentive policies would be relevant only to a subset of principals (i.e., subject area or hard-to-staff schools bonuses), very few principals explained the policies to applicants. Of those principals who taught in “incentive schools,” 57% did not explain the incentive bonus to potential hires.

# ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPALS' LIMITED USE OF HIRING POLICIES

For the most part, Philadelphia principals had considerable access to, satisfaction with, and understanding of information about and resources for implementing these policies and yet failed to take advantage of the opportunities to affect teacher hiring. Principals used the site-based selection tracking system only to access limited information, not ask questions of superintendents or follow up with potential candidates. They did not “pitch” incentives to interested candidates, and many ceded hiring decisions to the central office rather than make use of site selection. Factors contributing to this lack of involvement with and implementation of the new policies are discussed below.

## EXPERIENCE

As noted above, experience played an important role in access to information about, understanding of, belief in the use of, and the use of the site-based selection and incentive policies. Although less experienced principals claimed to have less access to materials, and trainings, and knowledge of the websites set up to answer questions about site selection and the incentive policies, they were also more likely to believe in the importance of these policies for recruiting, retaining, and increasing the quality of teachers. In addition, the least experienced principals were the least likely to express dissatisfaction in the materials or trainings available, but were most likely to not understand the incentive policies well or very well. Dissatisfaction in the materials and trainings was highest for the principals who had 3–7 years of experience. This may suggest that SDP needs to be more thoughtful about the types of materials and trainings that it provides to its principals based on their experience to ensure that newer principals have access to the information, while principals with more years of experience are receiving trainings in how to better use the knowledge they already have.

## GENERAL LACK OF PROACTIVE EFFORTS

In addition to findings on the different needs and responses of principals of varying tenure, what is especially striking here is how few principals were proactive in improving teacher quality at their schools. In conjunction with the teachers' union, SDP developed a repertoire of teacher recruitment, selection, and hiring policies to help schools improve the quality of their teachers. A Research for Action report summarized the SDP's efforts, “Since 2002, the district has pursued an impressive and ever-expanding number of avenues to increase the number of prospective teachers applying to Philadelphia schools,” including a marketing campaign that included “billboards and other branding activities; greater responsiveness by the human resources staff to applicants; introductions of an electronic application; refinement of a user-friendly website with a daily listing of vacancies; ... [and] a ‘Teacher Welcome Center’ in the Office of Human Resources” (Neild et al., 2005, pp. 25–26). Following the 2004 contract, efforts also included policies for a site selection hiring process and a variety of teacher incentives.

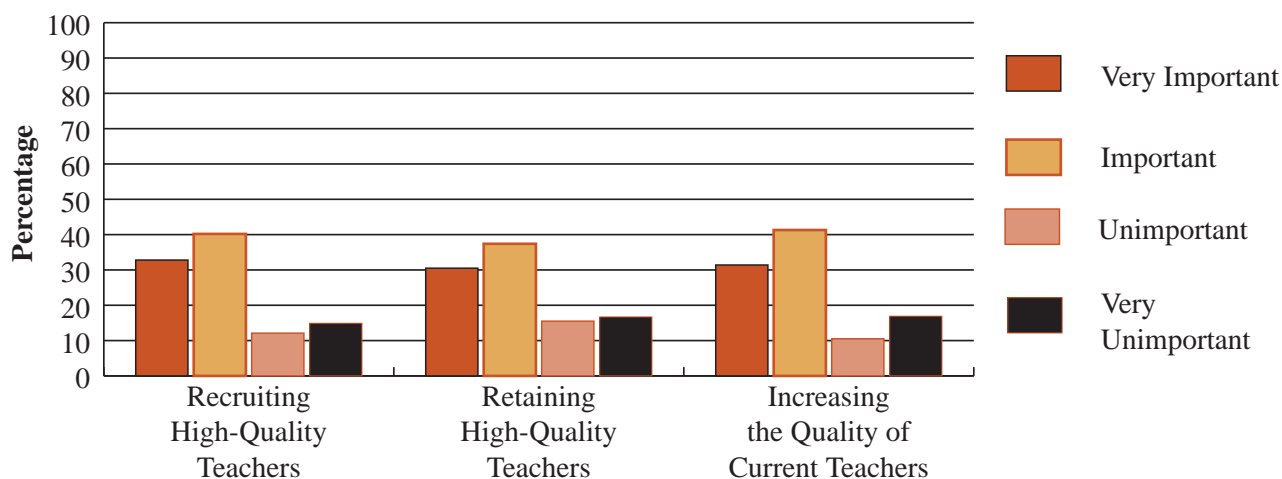


Quantitative and qualitative data suggest a few possible, not mutually exclusive explanations for the lack of principal proactivity. Many principals may have failed to use incentives to appeal to potential hires because they believed (a) good teachers are not motivated by financial incentives (appropriateness of motivators); or (b) teachers should be rewarded for the quality of what they do, not their willingness to do it (appropriateness of rewards). Limited use of site-based selection might be explained by principals' belief that (c) teacher recruitment and hiring is not the responsibility of the principal (ambiguity of responsibility), and (d) the process does not provide them with any more valuable information than they already have (limited value of hiring process).

*Appropriateness of Motivators.* Principals expressed disinterest in hiring and working with teachers who were financially motivated. The commitment and potential effectiveness of such teachers was frequently called into question. Principals reported wanting to work with teachers whose motivation was intrinsic (i.e., working with students from disadvantaged backgrounds, or improving student learning) and assumed that those who might be encouraged by additional dollars were not committed or suited to their school or students.

*Appropriateness of Rewards.* As depicted in Figure 7, the majority of Philadelphia principals recognized the potential of various financial incentives to affect teacher recruitment and retention. But principals also questioned the appropriateness of hiring incentives rather than rewards for performance (i.e., merit pay).

**Figure 7: Principals' Valuing Incentives by Type**



*Ambiguity of Responsibilities.* Over the last few years, SDP's central office, particularly its Office of Human Resources, has taken a more visible and strategic role in reaching out to potential teacher candidates (e.g., flyers, job fairs, "Roll Out the Red Carpet" school visits) and standardizing and streamlining the hiring process, including screening and interviewing potential candidates before a school can consider them. At the same time and consistent with a decentralized approach, SDP's principals have been increasingly expected to be actively engaged in the staffing process (recruiting, interviewing, etc.). "In a decentralized hiring process," according to a U. S. Department of Education description, "a candidate will interview at a specific school, rather than with a personnel official located at the school district headquarters," and principals are given much more authority for the recruitment and hiring of teachers (2004, p. 47). In Philadelphia,

both the central office and site selection schools have been charged with recruiting and selecting teachers. The lines between centralized and decentralized teacher hiring responsibilities have been further blurred by the district's assigning teachers to schools that have not voted for full site selection or when site selection positions are not filled by the school/principal.

In addition, as in most school districts, Philadelphia's teachers contract with SDP, not with individual schools, leaving principals with little say over the teachers' salaries and benefits. Principals, consequently, feel they are not "in charge of the money," and have little sense of connection to financial incentives for teachers.

The conflation of centralized and decentralized, school-based recruitment and hiring policies has resulted in fragmented control and, for principals, ambiguity in their responsibilities and a limited sense of their empowerment. Consequently, they often cede these responsibilities to the district. This fragmentation and blurring of roles and responsibilities is further compounded by principals' limited accountability for improving teacher quality in their schools or engaging in explicit efforts to do so. For example, less than 40% of principals attended a single SDP-organized job fair—regarded by the district as a key strategy for identifying potential teachers for site-based selection schools. Clune (1993), summarizing Cohen's and Spillane's (1992) work on centralized educational governance, observes that fragmentation is the

result of and in proportion to the level of policy making...ambitious policies are implemented in the context of decentralized and pluralistic governance...each new policy tends to create new administrative structures that cut across governing levels and add new layers of complexity. (p. 244)

Philadelphia's ambitions for improving teacher quality demonstrate such increased complexity in structures and role delineation.

*Limited Value of Hiring Process.* Principals may not have seen SDP's reformed hiring process as a source of particularly valuable, additional information.

In contrast to the emerging literature on teacher hiring and the importance of the school-teacher fit, SDP principals seemed especially uninterested in processes that ensure "substantive, accurate exchange of information between candidate and school." At the same time, though teacher data were limited, many teachers seemed to be unclear about the criteria by which and purposes for which the site selection interview and selection process is in place.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, principals and central office staff have different standards by which they are judging and recruiting teachers, and teachers and principals have very different information needs when it comes to determining whether or not the candidate and school are a good fit. It is not clear that principals define and value a "meaningful" hiring process in the same way as the district or teachers, and therefore take a less active role in the effort.

*Principals' Belief Systems.* Each of the above categories of principal concern represents a set of beliefs or values tightly held by district principals. Although these belief systems

<sup>11</sup> The lack of transparency presents its own problems. For example, when teachers with experience or multiple certifications are not selected through the school-based process, some assume it is because another candidate was already pre-selected or because of some level of disingenuous behavior on the part of the school or its leadership.

seem to be value-laden, there was no evidence of these being culturally determined. For example, responses showed little distinction between African American and White principals, new and experienced principals, elementary and secondary principals, or males and females. How such values emerge and can best be understood and responded to remain important questions for policy implementation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the district are provided with an eye toward how other districts attempting to use site-based selection or incentive policies may learn from the SDP experience. While more research is warranted to fully appreciate the complexity of and direct improvements in implementing new hiring policies in Philadelphia, a few areas for consideration have emerged in this study.

### INFORMATION AND TRAINING

Access to useful information and training should be ensured among all principals. Principals varied considerably in the resources they reported having available to them, suggesting that the distribution mechanisms were different for different resources or different principal groups. Understanding more about which delivery methods were most effective and/or standardizing delivery approaches may help to ensure that all principals receive the same information. In addition, the accessibility and usability of relevant websites—as well as principals' disposition to use online resources—need attention. The district may also need to be aware of how newer principals are receiving the information regarding the site selection policies and the extent to which information should be customized to the experience level of individual principals. Much the same can be urged for information regarding incentive policies, with a foregrounding of policies appropriate to the context of each principal's school. In addition, it is not clear that the synergies that exist between the incentives and the site-based selection policies were explored in any of the trainings or materials on site-based selection.

### DISTRICT EFFORTS AND OUTCOMES

Relationships between information and implementation outcomes need to be better understood. The study described here primarily examined the links between district efforts and principal's self-reported behaviors. Further examination of the relationship between district efforts and actual outcomes in recruited and reassigned teachers and overall and school-specific changes in teacher quality would provide additional, valuable information. For example, SDP could learn not just whether or not principals have access to the information, like and/or understand it, and act on it, but how well they act on it and to what effect. District leaders could learn what more would they need to know in order to have a more significant or different kind of effect.

Information wanted by teachers and principals needs to be better understood and responded to in order to improve the hiring process and making a good school-teacher fit. While this study focused primarily on the dissemination and reach of information about hiring policies, the information that principals and teachers need or think they need to make smart decisions about teacher fit with the school is also important in affecting whether or not the incentive and site selection policies have the desired

impacts. Further study of the kinds of information exchange needed to support better hiring practices at the site level could serve to guide future principal trainings and the kinds of resources made available to them and teachers. For example, at least one district staff member conceded that few principals have training in how to interview prospective teachers, and teacher data suggest their limited knowledge of specific schools. Are there processes or supports in place to help teacher candidates and principals/site selection committees learn more (of value) about each other? Future trainings might focus on helping principals implement improved (e.g., two-way, information-rich) teacher recruitment, selection/hiring, and retention strategies.

## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

Implementation progress should be assessed over time. This study represents only a brief snapshot of the 2005–06 implementation of SDP hiring policies. Monitoring trends in implementation over time and in relation to changes in district supports promises to provide useful information for continuous program improvement.

The validity and reliability—and therefore the usefulness—of any study’s findings are directly related to the quality of the study design, particularly data collection. This particular effort was especially dependent on and challenged by the district’s information management systems in identifying and contacting appropriate study respondents. The lack of timely, complete, and accurate lists of new and transfer teachers and their e-mail addresses presented considerable problems for the study sample. Likewise, inconsistent computer configurations/security standards meant that many teachers did not have access to the web-based surveys, just as they could not easily access SDP’s web-based resources on the hiring process. Future efforts will require greater consideration of the limitations of the district’s information management systems. In short, the district should maintain complete lists of teachers, their status, and contact information.

Of greater import, SDP had no deliberate system for tracking principals’ hiring efforts and outcomes. Consequently, the district had no mechanism for holding school leaders accountable for implementing new policies and being proactive in improving teacher quality through the means provided to them by the district.

## QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Districts should consider the quality of policy implementation in assessing the value of different recruitment and hiring strategies. The Philadelphia example reminds us that it is not the policy that creates change, but rather the people charged with creating the accountability systems and ensuring their effective implementation. In Philadelphia, no systematic monitoring determined when, how many, or which principals hired teachers using either incentives or site-based selection. In fact, when principals failed to fill designated site-based selection vacancies, the central office filled those positions for them. In addition, principals were not held accountable for improving overall teacher quality (e.g., percentage of certified and/or highly qualified, average years of experience, rate of turnover) at their schools. Until participants in schools achieve fidelity—that is, understand the strategy and implement it with intensity and consistency—with a treatment’s design, the integrity of any effort to assess its impact will be challenged. More specifically, the role of the principal in implementing innovative recruitment and hiring policies and practices requires more attention on the

part of researchers, policymakers, and district leaders. Principals promise to help our understanding of the space between policy and practice in improving teacher quality.

## PRINCIPALS' BELIEFS

Districts need to consider principals' beliefs (and skills), not just their knowledge (and access to information) about new policy implementation. Preliminary data analysis suggests that implementation of district policies is influenced, at least in part, by specific principal values and beliefs. Further exploration of principals' predispositions through more intensive qualitative data collection, for example, would provide more information to guide district outreach and training efforts. That is, with greater clarity about why principals do not take a more active role in the recruiting and hiring processes, materials and trainings might be better designed to respond to their concerns. Such information might also prove valuable for districts in determining the value and challenges of adopting various policy approaches.

## CONCLUSIONS

The last decade of research on teacher staffing has raised concerns about and served as an impetus for reforms in school staffing rules; budget, vacancy notification, and hiring timetables; and hiring, assignment, and transfer processes. Much of this work has focused on critiques of district central office organization and policies (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Levin, Mulhern, & Schunck, 2005; Murphy, et al., 2003; Podgursky, 2006), describing the needs of teachers (McCarthy & Guiney, 2004; Johnson & Liu, 2004), and proposing policy alternatives (Odden & Kelley, 2000). This study of the hiring innovations in Philadelphia serves as an important reminder of the important role of the principal in implementing new policies and practices. In particular, the study suggests that limited policy impacts resulted from specific implementation challenges at the principal level, notably lack of accountability for implementation and lack of principal buy-in. While the former can be explained, in part, by a centralized hiring system that often makes accountability ambiguous, the latter is not well explained by either the quality of the policies or the means by which they were communicated. Rather, principal dispositions affected their enthusiasm for and implementation of the innovations and incentives in teacher hiring. Principals challenged the appropriateness of the motivators, appropriateness of rewards, and value of the information generated by the new hiring process.

While this study sheds some light on the nature of implementation of a variety of recruitment and hiring policies in one urban district, it is worth noting what it does not address. The study looked at efforts to bring teachers into particular schools and the district generally; it did not examine outcomes—neither the effectiveness of the particular strategies (e.g., signing bonuses, site-based selection) in affecting teacher recruitment and distribution nor their long-term effects on teacher retention or satisfaction. Districts like Philadelphia present rich opportunities to learn about these important questions as well. But the study also raises concerns about the extent to which key stakeholders are both informed about new initiatives and also—crucially—engaged in the decisions to pursue them and the processes for designing and implementing them. Principal buy-in deserves broader definition and consideration at multiple stages. §

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## THE URBAN EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

The Urban Education Collaborative was established in 2004 by the College of Education at Temple University, with support from the William Penn Foundation. Collaborating with the School District of Philadelphia, as well as with other districts and schools in the Philadelphia region, the UEC was founded in order to develop a mutually supportive educational reform strategy, one that simultaneously improves both the work of schools and institutions like the college. In particular, UEC's strategy is designed to correct a lack of coordination between school improvement efforts—as pursued by district leaders and staff, principals, and teachers—and educational research and training of educators—as conducted in institutions of higher learning.

This coordinated effort supports urban school reform focused on (a) improving the quality of teaching, (b) developing leaders, and (c) ensuring safe schools conducive to learning. Within each of these areas of its focus, the UEC seeks to:

- conduct continuous monitoring in order to develop a thorough understanding of the specific needs of preK–12 practitioners;
- pursue rigorous research in response to specific school or district problems; and
- encourage and support the application of practices demonstrated to be effective by research—practices that will improve the system of education, particularly in the professional education of teachers and school leaders.

Through the effort of the UEC, it is hoped that the college, districts, and schools will identify and develop innovations in urban education and the preparation of urban educators to significantly improve school conditions and student learning.

*For full descriptions of these and other programs, see the UEC website at*

**[www.temple.edu/education/uec](http://www.temple.edu/education/uec)**