

# Key Issue: Teacher Hiring, Placement, and Assignment Practices

All resources contained within the TQ Tips & Tools documents have been reviewed for their quality, relevance, and utility by TQ Center staff and three content-area experts. These experts usually have a policy, practice, or research background. The strategies and resources are provided to help regional comprehensive center and state education agency staff become aware of the initiatives, programs, or activities taking place in other settings. Our provision of the links to these resources are not an endorsement but a qualified suggestion that they be considered as an option to study and/or pursue, given the needs and context of the inquiring region, state, or district. Evidence of the impact of initiatives, programs, or activities is provided where available or appropriate.

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## Scenario

It is late August, and Arnold, the associate superintendent of human resources for the school district, is pulling his hair out! In his district, the high-performing schools are staffed and ready for the upcoming first day of class. However, several at-risk schools need to fill multiple teacher vacancies. During the spring and summer, many teachers transferred from the at-risk schools to other schools within the district. At this point, the best applicants have already been hired by neighboring districts, and the associate superintendent is struggling to find candidates willing and able to teach in the at-risk schools, especially in some key shortage areas.

The associate superintendent did not fully realize the negative impact of the hiring process until his neighbor's daughter applied to teach high school mathematics. Three months after she applied, the district contacted her to set up an interview. By that time, she had already received four job offers and accepted a position elsewhere. Every time the associate superintendent has been out mowing his lawn this summer, his neighbor saunters over and tells him that it is too bad his daughter was unable to get a job teaching in his district.

Adding to the associate superintendent's stress is the lack of a systematic, tried-and-true process for hiring candidates who are likely to be effective and stay in the schools where they start. Because the district lacks funding to implement an online applicant tracking system, paper applications are submitted to the human resource department, requiring principals to spend valuable time traveling downtown to examine the files. As a result, principal input, where it exists at all, is limited, and haphazard hiring decisions seem to result in poor teacher-school matches, leading to high mobility within the district. Arnold knows that if the district could just invest the time and energy into making the right hires from the start, much of the time spent on transfers and rehiring would be saved over the long run.

Each year the associate superintendent outlines a plan to work with the state and the teachers' union to improve the hiring process, and each year the plan is trampled by the chaos of August vacancies and contentious bargaining sessions. He is frustrated that, year in and year out, the neediest schools begin the school year with vacancies that are filled by long-term substitutes. He thinks about the principals scrambling to ensure a quality teaching and learning community and vows that this is the year he will transform the district's approach to hiring and placing teachers.

## Definitions

The literature on teacher hiring and assignment tends to omit definitions of these key terms. An exception exists in Cohen-Vogel and Osborne-Lampkin (2007), who define teacher assignment as “the reciprocal process between school management and teachers to guide decisions about who will teach, where they will teach, and what they will teach.” But the definition of teacher assignment is seen by scholars as not straightforward (Ingersoll, 1996). In some cases, the terms “hiring,” “selection,” “placement,” and “assignment” are sometimes used interchangeably.

This key issue uses the terms in the following ways:

**Hiring**—Hiring refers to the entire process, from determining vacant positions to making final decisions about who will fill them. It includes the narrowing of the candidate pool through the initial screening and interview phases and the final decision to make a job offer to the selected candidate.

**Selection**—Selection is a component of hiring that refers to the final choice of individuals to whom a district offers teaching positions after an iterative process of narrowing of the applicant pool has taken place.

**Placement**—Placement refers to the school for which teachers are hired. Although teachers may have a voice in this decision, the final decision often rests with district hiring officials.

**Assignment**—Assignment refers to the classes or course sections to which a teacher is matched.

## Benefits of Effective Teacher Hiring, Assignment, and Placement Practices

Private sector experts in talent management claim that if you have just one dollar to spend on either improving staff development practices or improving selection and hiring process, you should choose the latter because of the following:

- A strong match between employee and employer is critical to preventing high turnover; it is much more difficult to change the organization's work or culture than to hire individuals whose skills and interests are appropriate for the job.
- Some critical skills, such as judgment and adaptability, can take years to develop; it is more prudent to ensure that employees have these skills before they are hired.
- Even in cases where skills can be quickly and easily developed, assessing whether candidates have them at the time of hire is more cost-efficient than developing them later (Wellins & Schweyer, n.d.).

Implementing effective hiring and placement practices helps all schools and districts but is particularly important for those that are at risk. Improved hiring, assignment, and placement practices help districts to do the following:

**Hire strong applicants.** Research shows that through early and effective recruitment, at-risk districts and schools can generate a large applicant pool (Levin & Quinn, 2003). However, the typically tedious hiring process often causes the most qualified candidates to accept positions in other school districts. By streamlining human resource systems, removing the barriers to making early hiring decisions, and developing protocols to lead to strong hiring choices, schools and districts can select candidates from a larger and more qualified applicant pool (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). In addition, strong teachers are more likely to accept jobs with efficient application, screening, and selection processes (Levin & Quinn, 2003).

**Address the distribution of teachers within districts.** Although federal law now requires that highly qualified and experienced teachers be equitably distributed among students (see Section 111(b)(8)(C) of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*), research consistently shows that poor and minority students continue to have access to fewer such teachers (Imazeki & Goe, 2009). Long-standing traditions allow for and facilitate the placement and assignment of inexperienced teachers to the most challenging classrooms and schools. In high-need schools, almost half of the teachers believe they are assigned to the most difficult-to-teach students (Rochkind, Immerwahr, Ott, & Johnson, 2007). Research shows that teachers in their first five years tend not to be as effective as more experienced teachers and are more likely to leave their school or the profession (Walsh & O'Tracy, 2005). Teacher placement and transfer practices that congregate new teachers in at-risk schools are detrimental to the creation of a strong teaching force in these schools. The practices also are devastating to the inexperienced teacher, who often feels isolated and overwhelmed. In the end, it is high-need students who often pay the price for these arrangements (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005).

**Fill shortage areas.** In every district, there are certain shortage positions that are especially difficult to fill. Without effective selection, hiring, assignment, and placement practices, these

candidates will be quickly hired away by other districts. A study of four urban districts showed that candidates accepted offers in adjoining districts as a result of tedious hiring processes (Levin & Quinn, 2003). Over half of these candidates had applied to teach in a critical shortage area.

**Create a better fit between an applicant and a school/classroom.** Research shows that the fit between a person and his or her job is linked to job satisfaction and intentions to quit (Liu, 2005). If a position does not closely match a new teacher's preparation, interests, and preferences, he or she may not stay in it for long. In addition to improving job satisfaction, an information-rich hiring and placement process can help to create trusting and effective learning communities (Liu & Johnson, 2006). New teachers should accept positions in schools where they want to work, and principals should choose staff who match the culture and needs of the school. Student achievement in at-risk schools is more likely to improve when teachers come together as a community of like-minded professionals.

**Facilitate teacher orientation, teacher induction, and the formation of learning teams.**

When schools and districts are unable to fill vacancies by the beginning of the school year, the ability of principals to develop their staff is limited. Late hires may miss critical opportunities to learn about the school, the students, and fellow teachers. Many schools introduce new teachers to their mentors and provide new teacher orientations prior to the beginning of the academic year. Without properly timed hiring procedures, new teachers lack adequate time to prepare for their teaching assignments and may perform poorly and be stressed as a result (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). Shifting the hiring process earlier in the year would ensure that teachers begin their professional development in a timely manner and have time to acclimate to the school staff, students, and environment well before the start of the school year.

**Reduce out-of-field teaching.** Some district human resource departments assign teachers to teach classes for which they are not qualified because there is a limited supply of candidates for the position, but oftentimes it is just a matter of convenience and cost, combined with lenient school management policies, that lead to out-of-field assignments (Ingersoll, 2003; Sizer, 1996). Developing strategic assignment processes for ensuring that teachers are only in classrooms for which they are well suited and highly qualified is, however, a low-cost, convenient method for improving teachers' effectiveness in improving student learning.

## Tips and Cautions

When implementing effective hiring, placement, and assignment practices, be sure to do the following:

- Use technology in the hiring process. In addition to streamlining the process and reducing paperwork for the district, a certain basic level of technology in the workplace is expected by the incoming generation of teachers.
- Collaborate with the teachers' union. Hiring, placement, and assignment policies are issues of high importance to teachers and their union representatives. Working collaboratively to improve these policies will ensure that reforms are effective and supported by staff.
- Take a systemic approach. Look at how salary policies, school leader assignment, and resource allocation might be affecting teachers' decisions to apply, accept offers at, and work where they are most needed in a district.
- Focus on retaining effective teachers, too. Effective hiring, placement, and assignment policies will improve teacher recruitment and will go some way to improving retention. However, good working conditions, salaries, and opportunities for professional growth also are needed if the benefits of better hiring are not to be lost through premature attrition.
- Keep student learning at the center of all decision making. Teachers' concerns and priorities should certainly be accommodated when changing policies that affect them. But the focus should remain on how changing incentive structures will affect not just teachers' satisfaction but, more importantly, the students who they teach.

## **Strategies for Improving Hiring, Placement, and Assignment Practices**

1. Create incentives for earlier retirement and transfer notification to allow for earlier hiring.
2. Reform the transfer process to prioritize effectiveness over seniority.
3. Make resource allocation transparent.
4. Encourage earlier and more predictable budgets.
5. Reform human resource departments.
6. Know the position and how to detect a successful candidate.
7. Develop a paperless applicant tracking system.
8. Consider who should be involved in the hiring committee.
9. Create equitable teacher placement and assignment policies that don't disadvantage at-risk schools or students.
10. Collaborate with district, union, school, board of education, and state stakeholders.
  - 10.1. Use interest-based bargaining to work effectively with teacher unions.



## **Strategy 1: Create Incentives for Earlier Retirement and Transfer Notification to Allow for Earlier Hiring**

Resigning, retiring, and transferring teachers are typically allowed to give notice of their decision to leave a school at a timepoint too late in the school year for the district to make adequate decisions for the following year. The late notification makes it difficult for districts to know which classrooms need to be filled for the following academic year and leads to late hiring practices. Qualitative research shows that districts with late hiring processes lose out on the most qualified teachers, many of whom are certified in shortage areas and very willing to work in high-need districts (Levin & Quinn, 2003). By implementing and enforcing an early notification deadline, at-risk districts will be able to compete for the most qualified teachers. In addition to moving up the deadline, some districts encourage early notification by providing incentives, such as a small salary stipend, and removing monetary disincentives that may cause hardship for teachers, such as loss of salary or benefits. Depending on the district, the requirements for notification are governed by any combination of union contracts, city codes, and state law. Each of these groups must work collaboratively with one another to build a sustainable, high-quality teaching force in all schools.

### **Resource 1: Missed opportunities**

Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed opportunities: How we keep high quality teachers out of urban classrooms*. New York: The New Teacher Project. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.tntp.org/docs/reportfinal9-29.pdf>

This paper looks at four hard-to-staff urban districts and the effect of hiring practices on applicant quality and attrition. Section 4 (pages 34–53) provides recommendations on how to implement earlier hiring timelines.

### **Resource 2: Things to remember during the teacher hiring season**

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. (2005). *Things to remember during the teacher hiring season*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/May%20newsletter.pdf>

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement suggests four key areas for schools and districts to consider during the teacher hiring season: start early, know your school/district and what it needs, recruit and market your school/district broadly and effectively, and allocate teachers in a way that will narrow rather than perpetuate achievement gaps.

### **Resource 3: Spotlight on hiring**

DC Voice. (2006). *Starting off right 2005: Spotlight on hiring*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.dcvoice.org/publications/pdf/RSPHiring-FINAL.pdf>

This newsletter from the DC Public Schools Ready Schools Project focuses on what districts are doing to improve teacher recruitment and hiring. It describes their hiring process, provides examples of promising initiatives in other districts, and outlines the challenges faced in DC. These challenges include inefficient central office practices, late notices of teacher resignations, and insufficient local school capacity for enforcing earlier hiring timelines.

## **Strategy 2: Reform the Transfer Process to Prioritize Effectiveness Over Seniority**

Many collective bargaining agreements force principals to consider transferring teachers prior to considering applicants outside of the transferring teacher pool (Cohen-Vogel & Osborne-Lampkin, 2007). These agreements fail to address that transferred teachers may not fit the culture that the principal is trying to create. They also create one more step in the hiring process that leads to late hiring. By the time principals are able to open positions to all applicants, the most qualified applicants have accepted other positions. By allowing schools to consider internal and external applicants at the same time, teacher unions and districts can provide principals with more options. A balance can be found between teachers' preferences and schools' needs. Districts should work with unions to reform transfer policies in collective bargaining agreements. In some cases, collective bargaining agreements are not as constraining in this regard as school and district leaders assume, so these agreements should be carefully reviewed so that the discretion that employers have over transfers and reassignments is fully understood.

### **Resource 4: See substrategy on interest-based bargaining**

Klingel, S. (2003). *Interest-based bargaining in education: A review of the literature and current practice*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=reports>

Provides information and resources on an alternative approach to working with teacher unions.

### **Resource 5: Missed opportunities**

Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed opportunities: How we keep high quality teachers out of urban classrooms*. New York: The New Teacher Project. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.tntp.org/docs/reportfinal9-29.pdf>

This paper looks at four hard-to-staff urban districts and the effect of hiring practices on applicant quality and attrition. Section 4 (pages 34–53) provides recommendations, including how to collaborate with teacher unions in reforming the transfer process.

### **Resource 6: Providence schools implement new approach to hiring**

Borg, L. (2009). Providence schools implement new approach to hiring. *The Providence Journal*. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from [http://www.projo.com/education/content/providence\\_teacher\\_hiring\\_07-13-09\\_5UEUCIS\\_v40.3b3c13e.html](http://www.projo.com/education/content/providence_teacher_hiring_07-13-09_5UEUCIS_v40.3b3c13e.html)

The State Education Commissioner of Rhode Island required that teachers in Providence Schools be hired based on their qualifications rather than seniority. Beginning with six schools (the entire district will move to the site-based hiring system in 2010–11), senior teachers are no longer allowed to bump teachers with less seniority when vacancies arise. Also for the first time, team

interviews are being conducted by the principal, two teachers selected by the principal, two teachers selected by the School Improvement Team, and, at the high school level, a department head. The union has threatened to sue, but the number of applications per vacancy is far above normal.

[see also Sawchuck, S. (2009). R.I. Chief orders Providence to relax staffing rules. *Education Week*. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.edweek.org/login.html?source=http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/03/18/25bump.h28.html&destination=http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/03/18/25bump.h28.html&levelId=2100>]

### **Resource 7: Teacher unions as players in education reform**

Litzcke, K. (2001). *Teacher unions as players in education reform: A Canadian look at an American reform*. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from [http://www.sae.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=700](http://www.sae.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=700)

Pages 18 and 19 illustrate new approaches to teacher seniority and transfer by examining the language of several contracts between school districts and unions.

### **Resource 8: Allocating quality**

Cohen-Vogel, L., & Osborne-Lampkin, L. (2007). Allocating quality: Collective bargaining agreements and administrative discretion over teacher assignment. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(4), 433–461.

This paper finds through reviewing 66 collective bargaining agreements in Florida that administrative discretion over transfers and reassignments is greater than is often suggested, even in the case of low-performing, large, poor, or high-minority districts.

### **Resource 9: A better bargain**

Hess, R., & West, M. (2006). *A better bargain: Overhauling teacher collective bargaining for the 21st century*. Cambridge, MA: Program on Education Policy and Governance. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/BetterBargain.pdf>

This resource recommends working with unions to overhaul collective bargaining agreements on five fronts, one of which relates to the transfer process. On page 42, the authors provide sample collective bargaining agreement language that they recommend using.

## Strategy 3: Make Resource Allocation Transparent

Districts and states are required to report the amount of resources they spend on teachers. Current practice often averages the salaries of teachers within a district, hiding the discrepancy in teacher salaries that exists between schools within a district (Roza & Hill, 2004). This is problematic because at-risk schools with novice teachers are provided less funding than schools with experienced teachers, but this inequity goes unaccounted for. By tracking real-dollar spending on a per-pupil basis, school leaders and policymakers can provide a clearer picture of how teacher placement impacts funding. Budget transparency can lead to policies that balance the funding of teachers within a district. A balance of human resource funding across schools would improve the distribution of high quality and experienced teachers.

### Resource 10: How within district spending inequities help some schools fail

Roza, M., & Hill, P. (2004). How within-district spending inequities help some schools to fail. In D. Ravitch (Ed.), *Brookings papers on education policy* (pp. 201–218). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

This paper provides a breakdown of what different stakeholders can do to improve resource allocation. The article is followed by a commentary that describes the Houston Independent School District's attempt to budget based on actual teacher salary costs.

### Resource 11: Assessing patterns of resource distribution

Assessing Patterns of Resource Distribution (APRD)

Website: <http://www.schoolcommunities.org/resources/APRD/welcome.php>

This is a free online tool from School Communities that Work that allows district officials and other stakeholders to compare district spending for schools with different students and programs, pinpointing possible inequities. Simply enter public data on spending and enrollment, and the tool does all the calculations.

### Resource 12: School Communities that Work Task Force

School Communities that Work Task Force. (2002). *First steps to a level playing field: An introduction to student-based budgeting*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://schoolcommunities.org/Archive/images/SBB.pdf>

This resource summarizes the efforts of three school districts to move to student-based budgeting. The study then provides tips for addressing implementation challenges.

## **Strategy 4: Encourage Earlier and More Predictable Budgets**

Districts must know whether the state will provide enough money to fill teacher vacancies. In 46 states, the fiscal year ends on June 30, and in many cases states can and do opt to extend the budget deadline. This puts districts in the uncomfortable position of waiting to fill teaching vacancies until a budget agreement is met. To prevent delays, state education agencies and districts can encourage state legislators and local budget authorities to move up the budget timetable so that districts can offer job placements earlier. Encouraging earlier budget and more predictable budgets is particularly important for high-need schools and districts, as they are especially dependent on state and federal funds.

### **Resource 13: Legislative budget procedures**

National Conference of State Legislatures. *Legislative budget procedures: A guide to appropriations and budget processes in the states, commonwealths and territories*. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://204.131.235.67/programs/fiscal/lbptabls/index.htm>

This guide provides an overview of state budget processes and procedures in a table format. The “Budget Calendars” table shows that 46 states begin the fiscal year in July, delaying the hiring process in districts that rely on state funding.

### **Resource 14: Fundamentals of sound state budgeting practices**

*Fundamentals of sound state budgeting practices*. National Conference of State Legislatures. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.ncsl.org/IssuesResearch/BudgetTax/FundamentalsofSoundStateBudgetingPractices/tabid/12653/Default.aspx>

This resource provides methods for making the state budget process work more smoothly. In one section, the report describes a North Carolina expenditure forecasting process that predicts the future costs of state programs. The model can be used to show how changes in school enrollment and employee benefits will affect the rest of the budget. A 1992 study using these techniques showed legislators that the state would face a \$313 million deficit by 1996.

### **Resource 15: State education funding formulas and grade weighting**

Griffith, M. (2005). *State education funding formulas and grade weighting*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/59/81/5981.pdf>

This Education Commission of the States StateNote describes the different types of funding formulas states use to determine the state share of funding for Grades K–12 public education and includes data on how states weight each grade level within the funding formula.

## Strategy 5: Reform Human Resource Departments

When the human resource (HR) system for receiving, processing, tracking, and placing applicants is effective, districts are better able to hire effective teachers and fill vacancies. A professional HR department improves the hiring process by doing the following:

- Determining hiring goals based on data
- Allowing applicants to apply to schools **or** the district
- Defining clear hiring deadlines
- Streamlining the application process
- Treating applicants professionally
- Reducing bureaucracy
- Strategically addressing all HR functions in a comprehensive and aligned manner
- Creating an information-rich hiring process that conveys to applicants an accurate view of the district, including its strong HR policies and practices (Campbell, DeArmond, & Schumwinger, 2004; DeArmond & Goldhaber, 2005).

Active leadership from superintendents and school boards plays a major role in transforming the HR department into an efficient resource. To successfully reform HR, these leaders must make the department an integral part of the district improvement plan; they must invest in training and technology; and they must support difficult personnel decisions.

### Resource 16: The Gallup Organization

The Gallup Organization, Education Division

Website: <http://education.gallup.com/>

This website provides a number of strategies and tools for human resource development. These tools include the TeacherInsight System, which provides districts with a fast, effective way to sort and assess a large volume of applicants. The site also offers consulting services to help districts analyze current recruitment practices and tailor a plan designed to meet specific needs.

### Resource 17: From bystander to ally

Campbell, C., DeArmond, M., & Schumwinger, A. (2004). *From bystander to ally: Transforming the district human resources department*. Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/WF/Knowledge%20Center/Attachments/PDF/FromBystanderToAlly.pdf>

This report follows the efforts of three urban districts to transform their human resource departments. It highlights the successes and the pitfalls of reorganizing the department,

developing the staff, and investing in technology. Chapter 3 focuses on the district leader's role in HR reform.

### **Resource 18: Effective teacher hiring**

Peterson, K. D. (2002). *Effective teacher hiring: A guide to getting the best*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Pages 6–11 provide guidance on how to create an effective teacher selection system and committees to ensure that necessary conditions are put in place for a school district to hire well.
- Chapters 2 and 3 present a three-level screening process for which to consider teaching candidates and suggest what materials (e.g., resumes, portfolios, interviews, district-made tests) should be evaluated as well as what criteria to consider during evaluation at each level.
- Chapter 4 is devoted entirely to interviews and includes commentary on the benefits and limitations of different types of interviews as well as principles of effective interviews, providing a sample of good questions to ask and how to be an effective interviewer.
- Chapter 5 focuses on ways to appropriately follow up with all candidates. Checklists and sample forms are provided throughout the book.

Selections from the book are available online, including a [Bibliography on Teacher Hiring, Interviewing, Employment](#) and sections on [Principles of Effective Teacher Hiring](#), [Tips for Interviewing Teacher Candidates](#), [A Taxonomy and Examples of Teacher Interview Questions](#), [Study Guide for Expertise on Teacher Hiring](#), [A Bill of Rights for Teacher Hiring](#), [Topics for Training Teacher Selectors](#), [Forms for Teacher Selection and Hiring](#), [Links to Information on Teacher Hiring](#), and a [Sample Job Description](#).

Website: <http://www.teacherhiring.net/>

### **Resource 19: Teachers-Teachers.com**

Teachers-Teachers.com National Teacher Recruitment Service

Website: <http://rnt.org/channels/clearinghouse/audience/districtpersonnel/index.htm>

This free online teacher recruitment service allows teachers to post resumes and cover letters online and for schools to post positions and conduct searches for teacher candidates and other qualified education personnel. For some states, state-specific log-in pages are available and teacher certification requirements for all states are posted.



## **Resource 20: School Communities that Work Task Force**

School Communities that Work Task Force. (2002). *Find, deploy, and keep the best teachers and school leaders*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for school Reform at Brown University. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://schoolcommunities.org/Archive/images/FindDeploy.pdf>

This resource presents a comprehensive framework for examining human resource systems based on lessons learned from the private sector to better enable schools to attract and retain high-quality teachers and school leaders.

## **Resource 21: Spotlight on hiring**

DC Voice. (2006). *Starting off right 2005: Spotlight on hiring*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.dcvoice.org/publications/pdf/RSPHiring-FINAL.pdf>

This newsletter from the DC Public Schools Ready Schools Project focuses on what districts are doing to improve teacher recruitment and hiring. It describes their hiring process, provides examples of promising initiatives in other districts, and outlines the challenges faced in DC. These challenges include inefficient central office practices, late notices of teacher resignations, and insufficient local school capacity for enforcing earlier hiring timelines.

## **Resource 22: The back office**

DeArmond, M., & Goldhaber, D. (2005). The back office: A neglected side of teacher quality. *Education Week*. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from [http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/view/csr\\_pubs/207](http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/view/csr_pubs/207)

This article highlights how bureaucratic and inefficient human resources departments can hinder a district's ability to hire the best candidates. Among the factors associated with weak human resources departments are cultures that focus on compliance more than support; organizational structures that are siloed rather than working collaboratively; and inferior technology, insufficient expertise, and constraining collective bargaining agreements.

## **Strategy 6: Know the Position and How to Detect a Successful Candidate**

Perhaps the most important strategy related to teacher hiring is to be able to identify an effective candidate for the position. The first step in identifying the best candidate begins with clearly defining the position and the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences one would need to effectively teach that class (Clement, 2008). Then, bearing this in mind, the hiring committee should use rubrics and a rigorous screening process to determine objectively whether candidates possess these qualities. First, district officials should carefully screen candidates for evidence that they have the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to meet all aspects required of the vacant position. Second, the hiring committee should use an established rubric for gauging more precisely the extent of each screened candidates' abilities and expertise to make a selection decision that is not biased and is most likely to result in the right hire for the particular position.

### **Resource 23: Improving teacher selection with behavior-based interviewing**

Clement, M. (2008). Improving teacher selection with behavior-based interviewing. *Principal*, 83(3), 44–47.

This article highlights the importance of first envisioning and defining a new position as preparation for selecting among teacher candidates. By considering the specific skills and knowledge that are needed to succeed in the position, the interviewer can prepare stronger questions to ensure that the selected candidate possesses these skills and knowledge.

### **Resource 24: Developing the effective teacher**

Whaley, J., & Cox, C. (2002). *Developing the effective teacher: Hiring, evaluation, and retention practices for the school administrator*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.

Provides numerous sample materials relevant to the application process: application forms, letters, a checklist for filling a position, application score sheet, and so on (pp. 1:5–1:22). Also provides materials relevant to the interviewing process: checklists and sample forms to identify strong candidates, design interview questions, rating answers, writing sample forms, essay score sheet, and so on (pp. 1:23–1:46).

### **Resource 25: Hiring the best teachers**

Stronge, J. H., & Hindman, J. L. (2003). Hiring the best teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 48–52.

This paper provides six researched-based domains of teacher effectiveness and how they can guide the teacher-selection process.

## Resource 26: Certify, blink, hire

Rutledge, S., Harris, D., Thompson, C., & Ingle, W. K. (2008). Certify, blink, hire: An examination of the process and tools of teacher screening and selection. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 7, 237–263.

This paper examines the processes and tools used for teacher selection based on a study of school principals and district administrators. Teacher hiring is compared with hiring in other occupations. It is found that principals and districts receive mixed messages from the research community about what constitutes an effective teacher, and their individual opinions on the matter also differ. This ambiguity around teacher effectiveness makes it difficult to advocate for specific teacher-selection tools. It is found that the interview is viewed by employers as central for ascertaining professional and personal characteristics of applicants, and yet the paper suggests that the interview is underutilized. This and other effective hiring practices, such as cognitive tests, are more often found in large districts, where there is a greater return to investment on the costs of researching and obtaining hiring tools, because they are then applied to a greater number of teachers. It also is suggested that districts can take on a greater role in the initial screening stage of hiring, while principals can make the final selection based on school-teacher fit.

## Resource 27: Effective teacher hiring

Peterson, K. D. (2002). *Effective teacher hiring: A guide to getting the best*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Pages 6–11 provide guidance on how to create an effective teacher selection system and committees to ensure that necessary conditions are put in place for a school district to hire well.
- Chapters 2 and 3 present a three-level screening process for which to consider teaching candidates and suggest what materials (e.g., resumes, portfolios, interviews, district-made tests) should be evaluated as well as what criteria to consider during evaluation at each level.
- Chapter 4 is devoted entirely to interviews and includes commentary on the benefits and limitations of different types of interviews as well as principles of effective interviews, providing a sample of good questions to ask and how to be an effective interviewer.

Selections from the book are available online, including a [Bibliography on Teacher Hiring](#), [Interviewing, Employment](#) and sections on [Principles of Effective Teacher Hiring](#), [Tips for Interviewing Teacher Candidates](#), [A Taxonomy and Examples of Teacher Interview Questions](#), [Study Guide for Expertise on Teacher Hiring](#), [A Bill of Rights for Teacher Hiring](#), [Topics for Training Teacher Selectors](#), [Forms for Teacher Selection and Hiring](#), [Links to Information on Teacher Hiring](#), and a [Sample Job Description](#).

Website: <http://www.teacherhiring.net/>

### **Resource 28: What principals look for when hiring teachers**

Harris, D., Rutledge, S., Ingle, W., & Thompson, C. (2007). *Mix and match: What principals look for when hiring teachers and what this means for teacher quality policies*. Teacher Quality Research. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from [http://www.teacherqualityresearch.org/mix\\_match.pdf](http://www.teacherqualityresearch.org/mix_match.pdf)

This publication describes research into what qualities principals look for when hiring teachers. This study of the principals' perspective in hiring teachers has important implications for districts that do rely on principals in hiring the hiring process. For example, of the four characteristics that policy and research tend to associate with teacher quality—intelligence, knowledge of subject, pedagogical skill, and experience—principals are found not to value intelligence. Meanwhile, principals do emphasize the “fit” between the teacher and the school. The article suggests that districts screen applicants to establish that a minimum level of quality is met and that principals select from the district pool to match their particular school's needs.

### **Resource 29: Only the best**

Pillsbury, P. (2005). Only the best: Hiring outstanding teachers: a great curriculum in the hands of a mediocre teacher—even one with a credential—is nothing more than a mediocre curriculum. *Leadership*. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://outstanding-lessons.wikispaces.com/file/view/article.Only+the+best.+hiring+outstanding+teachers.doc>

This short article lists characteristics to consider looking for when selecting teachers. These relate to their motivations for joining the profession, their relationships with children, and their approaches to teaching.

### **Resource 30: A case study of teacher hiring practices in award winning middle schools in Pennsylvania**

Miller, C. (2004). *A case study of teacher hiring practices in award winning middle schools in Pennsylvania*. Doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Pittsburgh. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://etd.library.pitt.edu/ETD/available/etd-12082004-145133/unrestricted/001millercl09-04.pdf>

This doctoral dissertation describes the findings of interviews with principals in award-winning middle schools regarding teacher selection, mentoring, and induction. It was found that principals utilized a unique teacher interviewing process, prioritizing their personal qualities above their pedagogical knowledge and experience. It was concluded that hiring the right teachers was key to the success of these middle schools. Pages 48–57 and 75–76 focus on the findings relevant to the hiring practices in effective middle schools.

## **Strategy 7: Develop a Paperless Applicant Tracking System**

To improve the collection and review of applications, districts should implement an applicant tracking system (Levin & Quinn, 2003). When a candidate applies online, their information should enter a database that can be accessed by HR staff, principals, and the candidate. HR staff can review applications based on any criteria and respond to applicants quickly. Principals can search the database to find teachers who can fill vacancies. Bureacracy is cut down, and the hiring process becomes more professional.

### **Resource 31: Missed opportunities**

Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed opportunities: How we keep high quality teachers out of urban classrooms*. New York: The New Teacher Project. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.tntp.org/docs/reportfinal9-29.pdf>

This paper looks at four hard-to-staff urban districts and the effect of hiring practices on applicant quality and attrition. In so doing, it summarizes the key components of an effective applicant tracking system.

### **Resource 32: DeKalb County Georgia’s paperless applicant tracking system**

DeKalb County Georgia’s Paperless Applicant Tracking System

Website: <https://pats.dekalb.k12.ga.us/pats/pats.nsf/MainWebFrameset?OpenFrameset>

This online teacher application and tracking system provides an example of how postings can be listed, applications completed, and candidates tracked in a streamlined and efficient manner.

## **Strategy 8: Consider Who Should be Involved in the Hiring Process**

To secure an effective teacher for every child, districts must do more than hire a qualified teacher. They must select the right teacher for the context, and then make appropriate classroom assignments. Involving principals and teachers in the selection and assignment process can improve the likelihood that the applicant and the school are satisfied with the match between new teachers and existing staff. Not only do school leaders want an applicant whose attitude and ability are a good fit with the school's needs and culture, but applicants also want to feel comfortable in their new workplace. In addition, school involvement in the hiring process can limit job dissatisfaction and the misassignment of teachers that can lead to out-of-field teaching. Conversely, there can be drawbacks to school-level involvement in the hiring process, such as focusing on fit over effectiveness and the arbitrariness of what some school leaders value in a teacher (Liu & Johnson, 2006).

### **Resource 33: Principals' hiring of teachers in Philadelphia**

Ramirez, H. A., Schofield, L. S., & Black, M. (2008). *A research brief: Principals' hiring of teachers in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: The Urban Education Collaborative. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.temple.edu/education/UEC/HiringBrief.pdf>

In 2004 the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and the School District of Philadelphia agreed to a new contract that included school-based teacher selection. This research brief by the Urban Education Collaborative outlines the policies they adopted and some problems with implementation that arose. Namely, principals were not proactive about hiring the best teachers, failing to pitch available incentives, using district-provided hiring resources only limitedly, and viewing the districts as the more important player in the hiring process.

### **Resource 34: New teachers' experiences of hiring**

Liu, E., & Johnson, S. (2006). New teachers' experiences of hiring: Late, rushed and information-poor. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(3), 324–360.

This paper describes the findings from a survey of new teachers regarding their hiring experiences. Pages 332–333 describe the pros and cons of providing school principals a greater role in teacher hiring compared with district officers. Focusing on California, Massachusetts, Florida, and Michigan, pages 338–341 describe who was involved in the hiring process, focusing on the balance between school- and district-level involvement.

## **Strategy 9: Create Equitable Teacher Placement and Assignment Policies That Don't Disadvantage At-Risk Schools or Students**

Improving hiring and placement practices will benefit the district as a whole, but more focused strategies are needed for at-risk schools. A large teaching quality gap exists among schools in many districts, resulting in a situation where poor and minority children are systematically provided less access to high quality teachers than their peers (Goe, 2009). To improve student achievement in at-risk schools, districts must adopt approaches to teacher hiring and assignment that close the teacher quality gap.

### **Resource 35: Things to remember during the teacher hiring season**

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. (2005). *Things to remember during the teacher hiring season*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/May%20newsletter.pdf>

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement suggests four key areas to for schools and districts to consider during the teacher hiring season: start early, know your school/district and what it needs, recruit and market your school/district broadly and effectively, and allocate teachers in a way that will narrow rather than perpetuate achievement gaps.

### **Resource 36: Allocating quality**

Cohen-Vogel, L., & Osborne-Lampkin, L. (2007). Allocating quality: Collective bargaining agreements and administrative discretion over teacher assignment. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43, 433–461.

This article suggests that collective bargaining agreements are often more lenient than people think when it comes to administrators' discretion over teacher assignment. This is the case even in large, at-risk school districts. Yet in many cases administrators do not take advantage of the flexibilities in their union contracts because of ingrained practices and pressures by teachers and parents for the most effective teachers to teach the least high-need children. It is suggested that improvements in the distribution of teachers might require changes in the norms and practices within districts and schools with respect to the hiring and assignment of teachers.

### **Resource 37: Systems and strategies for addressing the inequitable distribution of teachers**

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. (2009). *Systems and strategies for addressing the inequitable distribution of teachers* (Webcast). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.tqsource.org/webcasts/equitableDistribution/>

This webcast highlights research conducted on the nature of the teacher distribution problem by Charles Clotfelter and colleagues as well as the sources of federal funding that are available from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to assist states and districts in creating a more equitable distribution of teachers.

### **Resource 38: The Equitable distribution of teachers: Strategies and results**

Goe, L. (2009). **The Equitable distribution of teachers: Strategies and results**. In L. Goe, *America's opportunity: Teacher effectiveness and equity in K–12 classrooms*. Retrieved December 8, 2009, from [http://www.tqsource.org/publications/2009TQBiennial/2009BiennialReport\\_Intro.pdf](http://www.tqsource.org/publications/2009TQBiennial/2009BiennialReport_Intro.pdf)

This chapter of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality biannual report provides guidelines on the following topics: what data districts and states should obtain about equitable teacher distribution; targeting resources to assist schools with teacher recruitment and retention; and working systemically so that efforts to improve teacher distribution are not at cross purposes but rather complement one another. It also provides a matrix of four types of conditions of inequitable distribution and their solutions and challenges. The proposed solutions are then described in greater detail.

### **Resource 39: The distribution of teachers in Delaware**

Goe, L., & Parker, C. (2009). *The Distribution of Teachers in Delaware*. In L. Goe, *America's opportunity: Teacher effectiveness and equity in K–12 classrooms*. Retrieved December 8, 2009, from [http://www.tqsource.org/publications/2009TQBiennial/2009BiennialReport\\_Intro.pdf](http://www.tqsource.org/publications/2009TQBiennial/2009BiennialReport_Intro.pdf)

This chapter of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality biannual report describes a collaborative project in Delaware that aimed to improve the equitable distribution of teachers. Surveys and interviews of teachers and human resource officers were used to collect information about this problem. This state-level initiative addresses the following questions:

- What are some of the reasons that out-of-field teaching occurs at the secondary level?
- What are the student characteristics of schools that differentially recruit and retain experienced highly qualified teachers (HQTs)?
- What are the working conditions that contribute to recruiting and retaining experienced HQTs?
- What are some of the local education agency and state education agency policies, perceived and real, that present barriers to equity? Which policies facilitate equity?



## **Strategy 10: Collaborate With District, Union, School, Board of Education, and State Stakeholders**

Each stakeholder plays a vital role and can take specific steps toward improving the placement and assignment of effective teacher candidates. At the same time, each stakeholder can disrupt the efforts of other stakeholders to improve the quality and quantity of teacher hires. A strong collaborative relationship at all levels must be focused on the goal of raising student achievement for all. With this common goal, stakeholders can break out of traditional roles of opposition and work together for a better system of education (Levin & Quinn, 2003).

### **Resource 38: Missed opportunities**

Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed opportunities: How we keep high-quality teachers out of urban classrooms*. New York: The New Teacher Project. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.tntp.org/files/MissedOpportunities.pdf>

This paper looks at four hard-to-staff urban districts and the effect of hiring practices on applicant quality and attrition. It presents the roles of various stakeholders (superintendent, union, human resources staff, principals, state officials) in reforming hiring practices.

### **Substrategy 10.1: Use Interest-Based Bargaining to Work Effectively With Teacher Unions**

Collaboration at all levels is important, but the relationship between the district and the teachers' union is crucial to improving the assignment and placement of teachers. Traditional bargaining creates an adversarial relationship, with each side submitting padded initial proposals and “digging in their heels.” Negotiation is seen as a series of trade-offs where the opportunity to find creative, mutually beneficial solutions is lost. Interest-based bargaining focuses on meeting the underlying needs and concerns of both parties. Rather than arguing for a position, negotiators focus on why an issue is important and how it can be solved. Also known as mutual gains bargaining, the interest-based method acknowledges that the union and employer share a number of common interests (e.g., student achievement, teacher retention, and so on) (Klingel, 2003).

### **Resource 39: Interest-based bargaining in education**

Klingel, S. (2003). *Interest-based bargaining in education: A review of the literature and current practice*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=reports>

This resource describes interest-based bargaining in terms of its history, current practices, and published literature about its effectiveness. The resource also provides sample interest-based bargaining documents as well as case studies of districts and teachers' unions that have successfully worked together using this collaborative form of bargaining.

#### **Resource 40: Kansas National Education Association**

Kansas National Education Association: Interest-based bargaining

Website: <http://www.knea.org/resources/bargaining/about-ibb.html>

This resource describes the process of interest-based bargaining and provides examples and advice from affiliates who are using the technique.

#### **Resource 41: TURN locals with contracts online**

TURN Locals with Contracts Online

Website: <http://www.turnexchange.net/resources/localcontracts2.html>

This website provides links to online contractual agreements between a number of school districts and teachers' unions throughout the country. All of the agreements were created by members of the Teachers Union Reform Network (TURN).

#### **Resource 42: Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service**

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Joint problem-solving (interest-based bargaining, IBB)

Website: <http://www.fmcs.gov/internet/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=140&itemID=15950>

This resource describes interest-based bargaining and provides cameos of organizations that have used the method. It also offers training in using interest-based bargaining and other approaches to negotiate contracts.

## **Real-Life Example 1**

### **The Early District Gets the Teachers, But Only If the School Wants Them**

Rochester City School District (RCSD) in New York has more than 34,000 students in PK through Grade 12. The district found that it was losing teachers to neighbors that had earlier and more effective hiring processes. In 2001, the district decided to implement an earlier hiring timeline to secure more and better teachers. To do this, the district offered monetary incentives to retiring teachers who provided notification by March 1. Teachers began to notify the district in a timely fashion, eager to take advantage of a continuation of benefits and other incentives. Knowing of upcoming vacancies allowed Rochester to begin hiring new teachers in March. The district is now able to compete with neighboring districts for high-quality teachers in shortage areas.

In addition to hiring earlier, RCSD gave school hiring committees a greater role in the process. Instead of conducting the entire hiring and placement process, the human resources department simply reviews an applicant's background and credentials. Once an applicant clears this initial screening process, a school-based hiring committee sets up an interview. The committee then decides the quality of the applicant and whether s/he will fit the needs and culture of the learning community.

Source:

Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed opportunities: How we keep high quality teachers out of urban classrooms*. New York: The New Teacher Project. Retrieved November 27, 2009, from <http://www.tntp.org/docs/reportfinal9-29.pdf>

## **Real-Life Example 2**

### **Leaping Large Teacher Vacancies in a Single Bound**

The Clark County School District (CCSD), a large urban system that encompasses Las Vegas and surrounding areas, is the fastest growing school district in the country. To fill more than 1,600 teacher openings each year, Clark County used technology to streamline the hiring and placement processes. Whereas processing applications used to take months, applications are now submitted online, uploaded into the main system, and can be turned around in one day. A principal can search and review the applicant database, finding preapproved candidates that match the school's needs.

Although the technology helped improved the overall hiring process, Dr. George Ann Rice, associate superintendent for Human Resources, realized that certain schools needed more assistance. Two years ago, she identified 13 chronically low-performing schools that faced overwhelming teacher vacancies at the start of each school year. Teachers did not want to apply to teach in the schools, and those that did ended up leaving soon after. In one school, the average length of teacher experience was just over one year. The district and the teachers' union recognized that to improve student achievement in at-risk schools, they needed to work together to improve the hiring and placement processes.

How did the district and the teachers' union work together to modify the collective bargaining agreement? They used interest-based bargaining to break free from the typical adversarial relationship. As Dr. Rice explains,

For years we had not been able to settle any contracts with our labor unions. We had to go to arbitration year after year. One year was particularly contentious. We ask the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to mediate for us. The head of that office in Las Vegas said our groups were harder to deal with than the gaming industry unions and management. She said if we could ever agree to attend training sessions, they would teach us how to use interest-based bargaining (IBB). I was given the additional responsibility of lead negotiator in 2003. I went to each union executive director and asked if they were willing, fresh start and all, to go to the training for IBB. They all agreed. We have settled two contracts in a row and just ratified three four-year contracts, which is unheard of in urban districts. The latest collective bargaining agreement was ratified by 99 percent of the teachers. (G. A. Rice, personal communication, 2009)

The union and the district established a pilot program that provided the principals in 13 at-risk schools with a five- to six-week head start in the hiring process. The principals were able to access a large applicant pool and choose teachers who fit their improvement plan. The principals had time to fill vacancies and hold a summer urban studies program to prepare the newly hired teachers. The pilot program also offers new teachers a higher salary and full-time mentoring. Of the first cohort, 92 percent of the teachers remained at their school after one year. The program was so successful that the district and the union agreed to expand the pilot to an additional seven schools for the 2005–06 school year.

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