

Improving Human Capital Practices in Indianapolis Public Schools

In the winter and spring of 2008-2009, The New Teacher Project (TNTP) partnered with the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) and the Indianapolis Education Association (IEA), at the request of The Mind Trust, to analyze district human capital policies and practices and make recommendations to increase the concentration of high-quality teachers in IPS schools. TNTP's analysis included the following components:

- Review of relevant policy documents, including current IPS procedures, IPS Board policies, and the agreement between IPS and the Indianapolis Education Association;
- Stakeholder interviews with district administrators, principals and teachers;
- Online surveys of district teachers, principals and teacher applicants (1,697 teachers, 57 principals and 205 teacher applicants responded to the survey with response rates of 75 percent, 85 percent, and 9 percent respectively); and
- Analysis of teacher evaluation data from the 2007-2008 school year.

TNTP's analysis reveals that Indianapolis Public Schools' current human capital policies fail to ensure that a teacher's impact on student learning is the primary factor in school staffing decisions. There are four primary findings.

Findings

1. IPS layoff policies are based exclusively on seniority, despite strong teacher preferences for other factors to be considered.

The agreement between IPS and IEA requires that layoffs consider only a teacher's length of service in the district. However, TNTP found that 74 percent teachers believe that additional factors should be considered when a Reduction in Force is necessary. Support for this change cuts across teachers at all experience levels, even the most senior. When asked which additional factors should be considered, teachers most frequently selected factors closely related to teacher effectiveness, such as classroom management, teacher attendance and instructional performance based upon an evaluation rating. The implications of these findings are important, given that 90 percent of principals report losing a teacher they wanted to keep due to the current layoff policy.

2. Forced-placement and late hiring practices hamper the creation of effective instructional teams and destabilize schools.

Ninety-one percent of all IPS teachers who have changed schools or attempted to change schools in the past five years say it is important that the administrator wanted them to come to their school. And while IPS provides opportunities for displaced teachers to find placements through an interview and select process, more than one third of all placements in the district are still made without any opportunity for a

teacher to interview with a school. Eighty-five percent of principals have had at least one teacher placed at their school by the district without an interview and almost all principals (98 percent) surveyed find that requirements to displace and/or accept displaced teachers “negatively impacts” their ability to build strong instructional teams at their schools. Additionally, nearly one in three new teachers reports being hired by IPS in August, likely right before or after the start of the school year. Due to such late hiring, 77 percent of principals report losing desirable teacher candidates because they could not make a timely offer. Delayed hiring is the direct result of district rules that prohibit principals from interviewing new hires until all displaced teachers have been placed.

3. Inflated evaluations ignore teachers’ professional development needs.

Only 21 percent of IPS teachers surveyed had areas identified as unsatisfactory or in need of improvement on their last three evaluations. And even less, 6 out of the 587 teachers evaluated in 2008, were recommended for “non-renewal” (dismissal) due to poor performance. IPS has recently instituted a new evaluation system but significant room for improvement exists as only 40 percent of teachers believe the current process helps improve teacher performance.

4. Poor customer service frustrates teachers and principals in the staffing process.

Teachers and principals report receiving inconsistent levels of support and information when working with the IPS Human Resources department on hiring, transfers, displacements and layoffs. Fifty-five percent of displaced teachers did not feel supported by Human Resources when looking for a new placement, and only 51 percent of principals agree that they feel supported when trying to fill vacancies at their school. In addition, only 14 percent of laid-off teachers received helpful information from Human Resources about the process, and only 22 of principals received up-to-date information on teacher candidates from Human Resources when trying to fill vacancies.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and ensure that every IPS classroom is lead by a highly-effective teacher, TNTP has identified two primary objectives for IPS:

1. Promote instructional quality through the IPS staffing process; and
2. Improve IPS’ human capital infrastructure.

To meet these goals, the report advises Indianapolis Public Schools and the Indianapolis Education Association to work together to:

- Renegotiate terms on teacher layoffs so that instructional effectiveness is a factor in who is retained;
- Eliminate forced-placement of teachers so that all teacher vacancies are filled through an interview and select process;
- Complete 50% of teacher hiring, and 80% of teacher hiring in math, science and other shortage areas, by May 1st, when the best teaching candidates are still available;
- Implement a rigorous evaluation system that provides teachers with frequent constructive feedback and support, and evaluates them based on their ability to promote student learning; and
- Create an online data management system for Human Resources that allows the district to provide timely and responsive information to teachers and principals about staffing processes.

To view the report in its entirety, including more detailed data and a full description of the recommendations, please visit www.tntp.org/indianapolis.

About The New Teacher Project

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) is a national nonprofit dedicated to closing the achievement gap by ensuring that poor and minority students get outstanding teachers. Founded by teachers in 1997, TNTP partners with school districts and states to implement scalable responses to their most acute teacher quality challenges. TNTP recruits and trains thousands of exceptional new teachers annually, supports school principals in staffing their classrooms, provides teacher certification in high-need subjects, and documents the policy barriers that keep students from getting the teachers they need. Since its inception, TNTP has trained or hired approximately 33,000 teachers, benefiting an estimated 4.8 million students nationwide. It has established more than 70 programs and initiatives in 28 states and published a series of studies on the policies and practices that determine the quality of the nation's teacher workforce, most recently including *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness*. For more information, please visit www.tntp.org.