



## TALENT PIPELINE MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION: USING SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT TO CLOSE THE EDUCATOR EQUITY GAP

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### The Question

What can we learn from the experience of business and industry to help address the educator equity gap?

### Issue

Our 21st century economy demands a broad range of new skills and deeper knowledge in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to both sustain our existing society and be successful in the future. This imperative must drive our collective school improvement efforts to ensure that every graduate is college and career ready. Teacher quality has been identified as a key contributor to student success (Hanushek, 2010). Though we have the largest pool of teachers ever (Ingersoll, Merrill and Stuckey, 2014), supply gaps still remain for poor and minority schools, and some special needs populations; we stand far from the goal of having a qualified teacher in every classroom. New federal requirements are being implemented to compel state and local education agencies to make progress toward this important goal.

### Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to address the need expressed by many states for innovative state plans (as required by NCLB and Title I) to address educator equity gaps. The U.S. Department of Education has provided extensive guidance on the components of state plans, the necessary data to help them determine equity gaps, and examples of how various federal pools of funding can be used to implement their plans. However, states remain challenged by the fundamental task of identifying and addressing the *root causes* of the inequitable distribution of qualified teachers across schools and specific student populations. Recently, the Center for Great Teachers and Leaders released an *Equitable Access Toolkit* that provides many resources to help state and local education agencies address this challenge (Center for Great Teachers and Leaders, 2015). This *Solutions* issue suggests a perspective on the educator equity challenge, adapted from recent



lessons in business and industry, which can help strengthen the “actionability” of plans by positioning state and local education agencies as the drivers of demand, rather than as victims of teacher supply. In other words, strategically identifying the sources of highly quality teachers to meet specific needs, and managing the supply chain that results in those teachers being placed into the right positions, for both short-term and long-term success.

## Background

Employers have been engaged in what McKinsey & Company have termed “a war for talent” in recent years, which will continue as our economy shifts toward greater use of technology (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod, 2001). A recent survey of executives found that 92% believe there is a serious gap in workforce skills, and 50% of them are struggling to fill technical jobs (Adecco, 2013). At the same time, nearly 54% of bachelor’s degree holders age 25 and under are either unemployed or underemployed (USA Today, 2012). Education is competing with business, medicine, and other fields to capture the imagination and commitment of these potential workers.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (USCCF), Center for Education and the Workforce (2014) partnered with USA Funds, a major student loan company, to address the challenge of filling critical labor shortages in various industries while providing jobs for recent graduates. To link employers with potential employees, USCCF worked with companies and education providers in several communities to implement a *supply chain management* approach to find, attract, and keep the talent needed in the various businesses represented. Supply chain management has been used in virtually every sector of the economy that produces a product dependent on a series of suppliers that provide the components of the final product (e.g., manufacturing, financial services). This includes all the steps of designing, planning, executing, and monitoring activities to ensure quality is added at each step in a cost effective and efficient manner to meet the needs of the specific requirements of a company. *Talent pipeline management* applies this concept to the processes of human capital management, by shifting the focus from the supply of available talent to the demand for qualified talent, the result of an employer-driven strategic workforce plan.

How can educators tap into the supply chain management experience base to help them solve the educator equity challenge? Higher education has embraced this concept and begun to work closely with business leaders to bring high quality workers into critical positions (USCCF, 2014). What follows are suggestions for how state education agencies (SEAs) can apply supply chain management concepts to lead the educator equity challenge with new thinking and new tools.

USCCF’s work yielded several foundational principles—adapted here to the education environment—instructive to the educator equity challenge (USCCF, 2014).

1. ***Link Organizational Outcomes to Educator Equity***—State and local education agencies (and schools) can play a leadership role as the *end-customer* in closing the equity gap for those positions most critical to their success. For example, SEAs can use their clout with colleges and universities to demand more effort to recruit students in

- the teaching profession, or play a key role in developing state-level policies and strategies to smooth the way for qualified out-of-state teachers.
2. ***Organize and Manage Scalable Network Partnerships***—State and local agencies can organize and manage flexible and responsive talent pipeline partnerships with their preferred education and workforce partners.
  3. ***Measure and Incent Performance***—State and local agencies can work collaboratively with their partners to develop performance measures and incentives designed to reinforce and improve performance across all partners in the supply chain.

## Recommendations for Getting Started

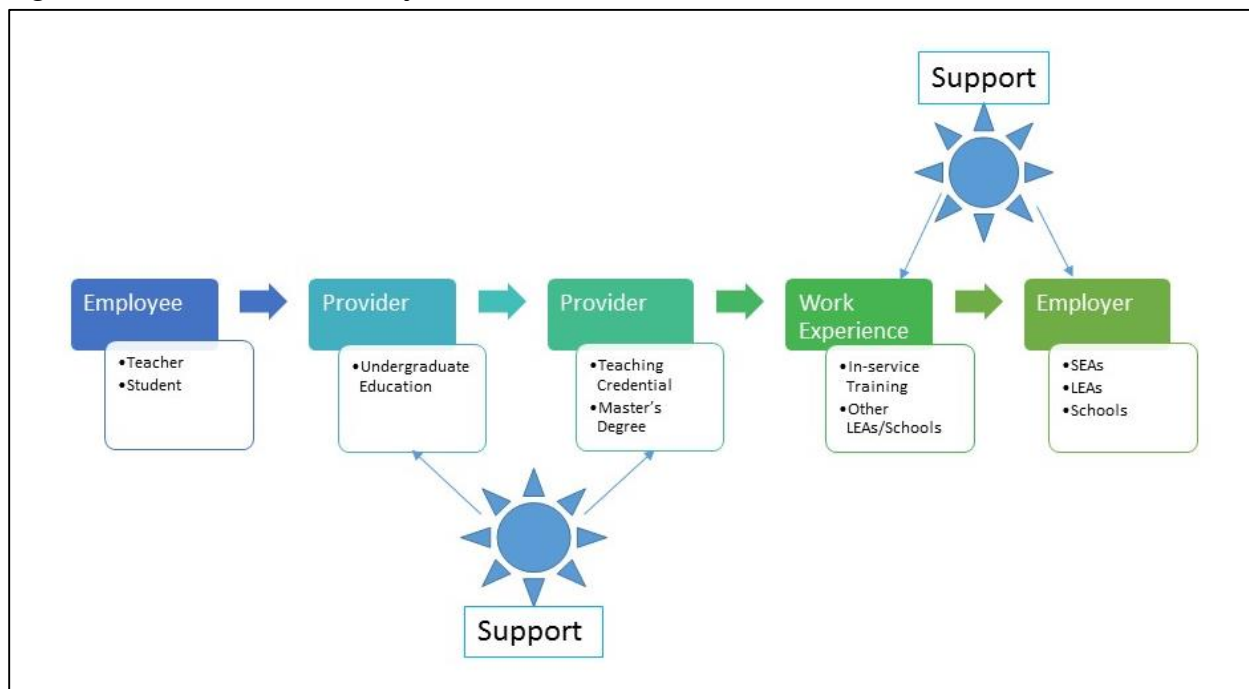
### 1. *Flip your thinking*

The first challenge in applying these concepts to education is the need to reframe the debate by shifting from a *deficit mode* of thinking (i.e., reducing the percentage of unqualified teachers in schools) to a *positive mode* (i.e., increasing the percentage of qualified teachers). The model of thinking brought to this challenge colors the perception of what can or cannot be done. The emphasis on a deficit model leads naturally to thinking about how to get rid of “bad teachers”; whereas, an improvement model leads to identifying ways to find, attract, and keep good teachers, which is far more actionable. Instead of being bound by an intractable problem, we are free to consider new approaches that can lead to productive steps to be taken. The educator equity challenge is not an easy one to fix, nor will it be solved quickly. By flipping the equation to a positive focus, we can begin on the right path.

### 2. *Define your talent pipeline*

The education talent pipeline is not simple. There are many players, several of which serve in multiple roles, as both employers (end-customers) and as providers (suppliers). Figure 1 depicts the extended value chain for teachers/principals in K-12 education. A teacher who is designated as a *qualified* or *highly qualified* teacher and employed in a school, has accumulated knowledge and experience through a series of *providers*, including colleges and universities for degrees and credentials, and work-based learning.

**Figure 1. Extended Value Chain for Education**



### 3. Determine your role

In the design of a state plan for the equitable distribution of qualified teachers, SEAs play the role of leader by modeling the process and behavior expected of local education agencies (LEAs) and schools. Using its mandate by federal and state law, an SEA can develop model processes to share with districts and schools to modify policies, rules, legislation, and incentives that address the root causes of inequitable distribution of teachers.

### 4. Demonstrate how to build an effective talent pipeline

Partee (2014) identifies the root causes that states and local communities face in closing equity gaps. In all of these cases, there are basically three talent pipeline strategies that can be employed to find, attract, and retain teachers:

1. Provide rewards and incentives to qualified teachers to work in designated schools.
2. Hire experienced teachers from other schools who are already qualified.
3. Provide talent development opportunities for new teachers to become qualified teachers.

Each of these strategies are being used to address educator equity and many examples are available of successful practices used by state and local education employers. The challenge is implementation to achieve the desired outcome. Although it is important to understand the problem (root cause), it is more important to determine what can be done about it. The focus must shift to action and execution. After the plan is written, then what?



## Plan for Action

Steps to building and sustaining an effective teacher talent pipeline include the following:

1. Connect your talent strategy to your organizational strategy:
  - a. Elevate the importance of teacher quality in achieving targeted student outcomes.
  - b. Promote shared leadership, including responsibility to site principals, and align the state systems of support to the talent strategy
2. Establish flexible and responsive partnership networks:
  - a. Identify your best talent and back-map to understand where they come from (i.e., who are your best suppliers of highly qualified talent?).
  - b. Establish employer cooperatives to link providers (e.g., colleges, universities, unions, teacher training programs) to develop and implement workforce solutions.
3. Promote effective programs that supply quality teachers and develop a *preferred partner* program with them.
  - a. Identify and publicize federal and state funding sources that can help offset the cost of teacher training and development (e.g., partner with colleges and universities that tailor their teacher education programs based on your input, then use available funding sources to subsidize teacher education programs).
4. Plan and communicate your workforce needs:
  - a. Conduct analysis of current teacher distribution and root-cause analysis to forecast both short- and long-term needs.
  - b. Share results with partners and update credentialing and other requirements to address needs; remove any unnecessary barriers.
4. Develop balanced end-to-end pipeline performance measures:
  - a. Develop end-to-end measures that balance time, cost, and quality, including such measures as time-to-full productivity.
  - b. Develop scorecards and dashboard tools that manage and communicate partner performance.
  - c. Promote continuous improvement by developing lagging and leading pipeline measures that promote fair and equitable employment practices and leverage the power of predictive analytics.
5. Align incentives to improve talent pipeline performance and recruitment:
  - a. Examine current rewards and incentives and modify to incent principals, human resources, finance, accounting, and other internal partners to improve performance



in cooperation with external partners, and to apply needs-based placement decisions.

- b. Provide incentives (e.g., internships, equipment purchases) for education and workforce partners to continuously improve performance.
- c. Communicate preferred providers to students, teachers, public funders, and aspiring providers to improve recruitment and signal where to invest.

SEAs can also play a role as support for LEAs and schools by working with them to develop effective talent solutions by removing barriers to innovation, delivering training and development as needed by these employers, implementing accelerated and work-based solutions to improve time-to-full employment, sharing integrated service delivery strategies among partners, and aligning data systems and reporting infrastructure across their states (adapted from Center for Education and the Workforce, 2014).

## Conclusion

By taking a positive, improvement oriented approach to talent pipeline management, SEAs can play a leadership role in orienting partners and LEAs to actionable strategies that address both short- and longer-term causes of inequitable teacher distribution. Educators can benefit a great deal by thinking outside the box to learn about advances made by the business sector in using supply chain management as a key strategy for competing for bright, capable teachers to support all students.



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