National **Charter School**
Resource Center

Teacher Hiring and Assignment Practices in Charter Schools

Tips & Tools

Teacher Hiring and Assignment Practices in Charter Schools

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FOR TEACHER QUALITY

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SCENARIO

It is late August, and Arnold, the assistant principal of Central Heights Charter School, is pulling his hair out! In his charter school, the English and social studies positions are all staffed and ready for the upcoming first day of class. However, multiple teacher vacancies still need to be filled in the mathematics, science, and foreign language departments in his underperforming school. During the spring and summer, a number of teachers transferred from his at-risk school to other schools in the area. At this point, the best applicants have already been hired by neighboring schools and districts, and the assistant principal is struggling to find candidates willing and able to teach at Central Heights Charter in these key shortage areas.

Arnold did not fully realize the negative impact of the school's hiring process until his neighbor's daughter applied for one of the vacant mathematics positions. Three months after she applied, the school contacted her to set up an interview. By that time, she had already received four job offers and accepted a position elsewhere. Every time Arnold 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 at his charter school.

Adding to the assistant principal'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 school for the long haul. Because Central Heights Charter School lacks funding to implement an online applicant tracking system, paper applications are submitted to the assistant principal, requiring him to spend valuable time sorting, filing, and responding to the applications. Additional hiring input, where it exists at all, is minimal, and haphazard hiring decisions often result in poor teacher-school matches, leading to high turnover and occasional bouts of low morale among his staff. Arnold knows that if the school could just invest the time and energy into making the right hires from the start, much of the time spent on rehiring would be saved over time and students would be better served.

Each year, the assistant principal outlines a plan to work with a team of teacher leaders to improve the hiring process, and each year the plan is trampled by the chaos of August vacancies and the continual fires that need to be put out. He is frustrated that, year in and year out, his students, some of the neediest in the vicinity, are sometimes taught by long-term substitutes. He thinks about what the quality of teaching and the learning community at Central Heights Charter School would look like in an ideal world and vows that this is the year he will transform the school's approach to hiring new teachers.

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DEFINITIONS

The literature on teacher hiring and assignment tends to omit definitions of these key terms. An exception is 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 scholars see the definition of teacher assignment as not straightforward (Ingersoll & Gruber, 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 decision of which school a successful teacher candidate will work at. Although teachers may have a voice in this decision, the final decision often rests with hiring officials.

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

BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHER HIRING AND ASSIGNMENT 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 for the following reasons:

- A strong match between employee and employer is critical for 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 assignment practices helps all charter schools and is particularly important for those that are at risk. Improved hiring and assignment practices help charter schools to do the following:

Hire strong applicants. Research shows that through early and effective recruitment, at-risk 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 elsewhere. By streamlining human resource systems, removing the barriers to making early hiring decisions, and developing protocols to lead to strong hiring choices, charter schools 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).

Fill shortage areas. In most charter schools, there are certain shortage positions that are especially difficult to fill. Without effective selection, hiring, and assignment practices, these candidates will be quickly hired away by other schools seeking candidates in these high-need areas. For example, a study of four urban school districts showed that candidates accepted offers in adjoining districts as a result of tedious hiring processes (Levin & Quinn, 2003). More than half 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 those selecting new hires at charter schools 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.

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Facilitate teacher orientation, teacher induction, and the formation of learning teams. When charter schools 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 charter school's staff, students, and environment well before the start of the school year.

Reduce out-of-field teaching. Sometimes teachers are assigned to teach classes for which they are not qualified because there is an insufficient supply of candidates for the position, but often 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, 1992). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data from 1999 to 2000 reveal that, in contrast with traditional schools, charter school teachers on average have half as much experience and are 23 percent less likely to be certified in their main assignment field (Burian-Fitzgerald & Harris, 2004). Developing strategic assignment processes for ensuring that teachers are only in classrooms for which they are well suited and highly qualifed is a low-cost, convenient method for improving teachers' effectiveness in improving student learning.

TIPS AND CAUTIONS

When implementing effective hiring and placement practices in your charter school, be sure to do the following:

- Use technology in the hiring process. In addition to streamlining the process and reducing paperwork for the official leading the hiring process, a certain basic level of technology in the workplace is expected by the incoming generation of teachers.

- Collaborate with the teachers and with teachers' unions where relevant. Hiring 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 leadership, opportunities for growth, and resource allocation might be affecting teachers' decisions to apply to, accept offers at, and work where they are most needed in the school.

- Focus on retaining effective teachers, too. Effective hiring 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 important, the students in your charter school whom they teach.

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STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING HIRING AND ASSIGNMENT PRACTICES

1. Create incentives for earlier leaving notification to allow for earlier hiring.

2. Encourage earlier and more predictable budgets.

3. Reform human resources functions.

4. Know the position and how to detect a successful candidate.

5. Develop a paperless applicant tracking system.

6. Consider who should be involved in the hiring process.

7. Collaborate with all stakeholders.

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STRATEGY 1:
Create Incentives for Earlier Leaving Notification to Allow for Earlier Hiring

Resigning, retiring, and other teachers who voluntarily leave are typically allowed to give notice of their decision to leave a school at a timepoint too late in the school year for adequate decisions to be made for the following year. The late notification can make it difficult for charter schools to know which classrooms need to be filled for the following academic year and leads to late hiring practices. Qualitative research shows that school 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 areas (Levin & Quinn, 2003). Currently, charter schools tend to recruit and hire candidates on a timeline similar to or behind the timeline used by school districts in their geographic area (Gross & DeArmond, 2010). By implementing and enforcing an early notification deadline, charter schools will be better able to compete for the most qualified teachers. In addition to moving up the deadline, some charter schools can 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. The possibilities depend on the charter school: The requirements for notification are governed by any combination of contracts, codes, policies of their governing board or CMO, and state law.

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 January 21, 2011, 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. Section 4 (pages 34–49) provides recommendations on how to implement earlier hiring timelines.

Resource 2: Things to remember during the teacher hiring season

Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. (2005). *Things to remember during the teacher hiring season.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved January 21, 2011, 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.

STRATEGY 2:
Encourage Earlier and More Predictable Budgets

Charter schools need to know the level of resources they can expect for filling their 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 school districts and charter schools in the uncomfortable position of waiting for a budget agreement in order to fill teaching vacancies. To prevent delays, charters and state education agencies and districts can encourage state legislators and local budget authorities to move up the budget timetable and keep in regular communication about budgetary decisions so that they can offer job placements earlier.

Resource 3: Legislative budget procedures

National Conference of State Legislatures. (2008). *Legislative budget procedures: Budget framework* [Web page]. Retrieved January 21, 2011, from http://204.131.235.67/programs/fiscal/lbptabls/lbpc2t3.htm

This website provides information about state budget processes and procedures. It shows that 46 states begin the fiscal year in July, delaying the hiring process for schools that rely on state funding.

Resource 4: Fundamentals of sound state budgeting practices

National Conference of State Legislatures. (1995). *Fundamentals of sound state budgeting practices.* Retrieved January 21, 2011, 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 5: 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 January 21, 2011, from http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/59/81/5981.pdf

This Education Commission of the States Policy Brief describes the 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 3:
Reform Human Resource Functions

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

- Determining hiring goals on the basis of data

- Defining clear hiring deadlines

- Streamlining the application process

- Treating applicants professionally

- Reducing bureacracy

- Strategically addressing all HR functions comprehensively and in alignment

- Creating an information-rich hiring process that conveys to applicants an accurate view of the charter school, including its strong HR policies and practices (Campbell, DeArmond, & Schumwinger, 2004; DeArmond & Goldhaber, 2005).

Active leadership from principals, charter school governing boards, and charter management organizations plays a major role in transforming the HR duties into a more efficient system. To successfully reform HR practices, these leaders must make attracting top teacher talent an integral part of the school's improvement plan; they must invest in training and technology; and they must support difficult personnel decisions.

Resource 6: 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 those hiring teachers with a fast, effective way to sort and assess a large volume of applicants. The site also offers consulting services to help hiring committees analyze current recruitment practices and tailor a plan designed to meet specific needs.

Resource 7: 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 January 21, 2011, 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.

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Resource 8: 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 considering teacher 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 several 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.

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

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, 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.

Resource 9: Teachers-Teachers.com

Teachers-Teachers.com National Teacher Recruitment Service
Website: http://www.teachers-teachers.com/

This free online teacher recruitment service allows teachers to post résumés 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 10: 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 January 21, 2011, from http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/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 11: The back office

DeArmond, M., & Goldhaber, D. (2005, February 9). The back office: A neglected side of teacher quality. *Education Week.* Retrieved January 21, 2011, from http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/view/csr_pubs/207

This article highlights how bureacratic 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.

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STRATEGY 4:
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 is to clearly define 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, candidates should be carefully screened 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 candidate's abilities and expertise so as to make a selection decision that is not biased and is most likely to result in the right hire for the particular charter school position.

Resource 12: Mobilizing and Motivating Your Staff to Get Results

Hassel, B. C., Hassel, E. A., Isaacson, D., Krasnow, J., McNiff, M. G., & Walter, K. (2000). *Mobilizing and motivating your staff to get results: A technical assistance guide for charter school leaders.* St. Paul, MN: Hamline University, Charter Friends National Network. Retrieved January 21, 2011, from http://www.uscharterschools.org/pdf/gb/motivatingstaff.pdf

This guide from the Charter Friends National Network provides charter school leaders with a range of strategies for recruiting, selecting, rewarding, developing, and evaluating teachers. The section on recruiting and selecting staff outlines five detailed steps for identifying and recruiting candidates and then five additional steps to guide your selection of applicants. Throughout, resources and examples are provided to guide your work in selecting effective teachers.

Resource 13: Improving teacher selection with behavior-based interviewing

Clement, M. C. (2008, January/February). Improving teacher selection with behavior-based interviewing. *Principal, 83(*3), 44–47. Retrieved January 21, 2011, from http://www.naesp.org/resources/2/Principal/2008/J-Fp44.pdf

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 14: Developing the effective teacher

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

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 15: Hiring the best teachers

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

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

Resource 16: DSST Public Schools

Website: http://dsstpublicschools.org/jobs/teaching-at-dsst/

The DSST Public Schools in Denver has been recognized as a top model nationally for teaching subjects in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Fully 100 percent of the school's graduates are accepted to attend four-year colleges. It is a free and open-enrollment charter school and attracts a top-rate teaching force by focusing on the school's mission and values and seeking out candidates with a similar focus on student achievement. Its website highlights statements from teachers about what made DSST, with its laser-like focus on achievement, a place of employment for which they were willing to move cross-country.

Resource 17: Certify, blink, hire

Rutledge, S. A., Harris, D. N., Thompson, C. T., & 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*(3), 237–263.

This article examines the processes and tools used for teacher selection in its study of school principals and district administrators. Teacher hiring is compared with hiring in other occupations. The study 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 specific teacher-selection tools. The study also found that the interview is viewed by employers as central for ascertaining professional and personal characteristics of applicants, and yet the study found suggestions 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 on investment from the costs of researching and obtaining hiring tools, because they are applied to a greater number of teachers. The study also suggests that districts can take on a greater role at the initial screening stage of hiring, and principals can make the final selection on the basis of school-teacher fit.

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 considering teacher candidates and suggest what materials (e.g., résumés, portfolios, interviews, district-made tests) should be evaluated as well as what criteria to consider during evaluation at each level.

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

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, 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.

Resource 19: What principals look for when hiring teachers

Harris, D., Rutledge, S., Ingle, W., & Thompson, C. (2007). *Mix and match: What principals really look for when hiring teachers.* Tallahassee: Florida State University College of Education. Retrieved January 21, 2011, from http://www.coe.fsu.edu/symposiumseries/2009/papers/ Mix_and_Match_What_Principals_Really_Look_For_When_Hiring_Teachers.pdf

This publication describes research into what qualities principals look for when hiring teachers. This study of the principal's 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 20: 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 January 21, 2011, 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 21: A case study of teacher hiring practices in award-winning middle schools in Pennsylvania

Miller, C. L. (2004). *A case study of teacher hiring practices in award winning middle schools in Pennsylvania.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh. Retrieved January 21, 2011, from http://etd.library.pitt.edu/ETD/available/etd-12082004-145133/ unrestricted/001millercl09-04.pdf

This doctoral dissertation describes findings from interviews with principals in award-winning middle schools on 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.

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STRATEGY 5:
Develop a Paperless Applicant Tracking System

To improve the collection and review of applications, charter schools 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. Hiring staff can review applications for 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. In cases where charter management organizations lead the hiring process, online application systems certainly make sense. For stand-alone charter schools, the costs associated with developing such a strategy should be compared with the costs associated with manual handling of candidate applications, including time, stress, the costs of human error, and the potential costs of turning away candidates that see paper applications as outdated.

Resource 22: 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 January 21, 2011, 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. In so doing, it summarizes the key components of an effective applicant tracking system.

Resource 23: The DeKalb County, Georgia, paperless applicant tracking system

The DeKalb County, Georgia, 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 6:
Consider Who Should Be Involved in the Hiring Process

To secure an effective teacher for every child, charter schools 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 charter 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 24: 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: Temple University, Urban Education Collaborative. Retrieved January 21, 2011, 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 minimally, and viewing the districts as the more important player in the hiring process.

Resource 25: 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 than district officers. Using the examples of 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 7:
Collaborate With All Stakeholders

Each stakeholder plays a vital role and can take specific steps toward improving the hiring and assignment of effective teacher candidates at charter schools. 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. This includes institutions of higher education, alternative teacher preparation programs, community organizations, and other networks. It is of note that in many states, universities authorize charter schools, opening a door for charter schools and universities to partner on initiatives related to teacher recruitment and hiring. With this common goal in mind of hiring outstanding teachers for every student, stakeholders can break out of traditional roles of opposition and work together for a better system of education (Levin & Quinn, 2003).

Resource 26: 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 January 21, 2011, 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.

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE:
NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) was founded in 2000 to significantly enhance the quality of our nation's public school system by attracting, preparing, and supporting outstanding new urban school principals. At NLNS, one aspect of the principal's job, hiring effective teachers, is viewed as a "sacred responsibility" in the task of changing the quality of education that students receive (Fenton, 2009). The organization has established a three-stage approach to hiring the best teachers:

1. Define the selection criteria

2. Recruit the right candidates

3. Select candidates appropriately

The hiring and selection process can be time-consuming, so NLNS trains principals to clearly identify the characteristics they are looking for. NLNS suggests that content knowledge and strong pedagogy of course be at the top of the list, but that principals also look for teachers who strive to constantly learn and improve, focus on improving measurable student outcomes, are deeply connected to and concerned about their students, strongly believe that every student can succeed, demonstrate leadership potential, and view teaching as an open, teamwork-based activity (Fenton, 2009).

The defined selection criteria guide the recruitment process, whereby principals may seek out relationships with applicant pools, such as alternative preparation programs, that they believe train prospective teachers in these ways. Principals may engage in recruiting teachers all year long, as opposed to waiting until vacancies arise, to increase the chances of identifying candidates who meet the very specific, and stringent, selection criteria (Fenton, 2009).

To make sure that the candidates with the most potential to improve student outcomes and the school's success are hired, NLNS principals augment their application process with interviews by leadership teams who focus specifically on the unique criteria needed for the position. The application process also involves sample lessons with teachers and students and even sometimes parents. Candidates also are asked to demonstrate measurable student achievement from their prior teaching experiences and, in some cases, to analyze student achievement data from their school to which they are applying and make suggestions to improve it (Fenton, 2009).

By training principals to hire and select teachers effectively and much more, NLNS has achieved the following in the schools its principals lead:

- Elementary and middle school student academic gains have grown faster than in other schools, by statistically significant margins

- High school graduation rates have far exceeded districtwide rates

- In five cities, the most improved or highest performing school has been led by an NLNS principal

- In two states, the most improved or highest performing school has been led by an NLNS principal (NLNS, n.d.)

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The U.S. Department of Education is committed to promoting effective practices, providing technical assistance, and disseminating the resources critical to ensuring the success of charter schools across the country. To that end, the U.S. Department of Education, under a contract with Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research, has developed the National Charter School Resource Center. The Resource Center provides on-demand resources, information, and technical assistance to support successful planning, authorizing, implementation, and sustainability of high-quality charter schools; to share evaluations on the effects of charter schools; and to disseminate information about successful practices in charter schools.

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