

Key Issue: Hiring and Placement Practices

Table of Contents

SCENARIO	3
BENEFITS	4
TIPS AND CONCERNS	7
STRATEGY 1	8
Require earlier retirement and transfer notification in order to allow for earlier hiring.	8
STRATEGY 2	9
Reform the transfer process.	9
Resource 1: See Sub-Strategy on interest-based bargaining	9
Resource 2: Missed Opportunities	9
Resource 3: Teacher unions as players in education reform	9
STRATEGY 3	10
Reform human resource departments.	10
Resource 4: The Gallup Organization	10
Resource 5: From Bystander to Ally	10
Resource 6: Effective teacher hiring	10
Resource 7: National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse	11
Resource 8: School Communities that Work Task Force	11
STRATEGY 4	12
Develop an applicant tracking system.	12
Resource 9: Missed Opportunities	12
Resource 10: DeKalb County Georgia's Paperless Applicant Tracking System	12
Resource 11: Kenexa Recruiter	12
STRATEGY 5	13
Give schools a larger role in hiring.	13
Resource 12: Developing the effective teacher	13
Resource 13: Haberman Education Foundation	13
Resource 14: Hiring the best teachers	13
STRATEGY 6	14
Give at-risk schools a leg up.	14
Resource 15: From the States	14

Resource 16: Teacher Turnover in At-Risk Schools	14
Resource 17: Committee for Economic Development	14
STRATEGY 7.....	15
Make resource allocation transparent.....	15
Resource 18: How Within District Spending Inequities Help Some Schools Fail.....	15
Resource 19: Assessing Patterns of Resource Distribution.....	15
Resource 20: School Communities that Work Task Force	15
STRATEGY 8.....	16
Produce earlier and more predictable budgets.	16
Resource 21: Legislative budget procedures.....	16
Resource 22: Fundamentals of Sound State Budgeting Practices	16
Resource 23: State Education Funding Formulas And Grade Weighting.....	16
STRATEGY 9.....	17
Collaborate with district, union, school, board of education, and state stakeholders.	17
Resource 24: Missed Opportunities	17
Resource 25: Education Commission of the States.....	17
...SUB-STRATEGY 9.1	18
For collaboration use interest-based bargaining to work effectively with teacher unions.	18
Resource 26: Kansas National Education Association	18
Resource 27: URN Locals with Contracts Online	18
Resource 28: Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	18
REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE 1:	19
REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE 2:	20

SCENARIO

It is late August and the Associate Superintendent of Human Resources is pulling his hair out! In his large urban 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 struggles to find candidates willing and able to teach in the at-risk schools, especially in some key shortage areas.

Adding to the associate superintendent's stress is the lack of adequate resources. Whenever state funding falls short, the human resource department is the first area to experience cuts. The lack of money has prevented the superintendent from implementing an on-line applicant tracking system. Prospective hires must fill out a paper application and submit it to the human resource department. Principals must travel downtown to examine the files, spending valuable time that could be used on other activities.

The associate superintendent did not fully realize the impact of the hiring process until his neighbor's daughter applied to teach high school math. 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 is out mowing his lawn this summer, his neighbor saunters over and tells him that it is too bad his daughter teaching in that district did not work out.

Each year the associate superintendent outlines plans to work with the state and the teachers' union to improve the hiring process, and each year these plans are trampled by the chaos of August vacancies and often 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 he vows that this is the year he will transform the district's approach to human resource management.

BENEFITS

Implementing effective hiring and placement practices help at-risk schools and districts:

1. **Hire strong applicants.** Research shows that through early and effective recruitment, at-risk districts and schools can generate a large applicant pool. However, the typically tedious hiring process often causes the most qualified candidates to accept positions in other school districts. By streamlining human resource systems and removing the barriers to making early hiring decisions, schools and districts can select candidates from a larger and more qualified applicant pool. In addition, teachers are more likely to accept jobs with efficient application and screening processes.
2. **Address the distribution of teachers within districts.** Longstanding traditions allow for and facilitate the assignment of inexperienced teachers to the most challenging classrooms and schools. Research shows that inexperienced teachers are not as effective as experienced teachers, and are likely to leave their school or the profession within the first five years. Teacher placement and transfer practices, whether embedded in the union contract or in district policy, are often detrimental to the creation of a strong teaching force in an at-risk school. The practices are also devastating to the inexperienced teacher, who often feels isolated and overwhelmed. Some district leaders have taken steps to expose and change policies and practices that congregate new teachers in at-risk schools.
3. **Fill shortage areas.** Candidates for hard-to-staff positions are in the greatest demand. Without effective hiring 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 due to tedious hiring processes. Over half of these candidates had applied to teach in a critical shortage area.
4. **Create a better fit between an applicant and a school/classroom.** Research shows that the fit between a person and their job is linked to job satisfaction and intentions to quit. If a position does not closely match a new teacher's preparation, interests, and preferences, s/he may not stay in it for long. In addition to improving job satisfaction, an effective hiring and placement process can help to create trusting and effective learning communities. 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.
5. **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. Moving up the hiring process would ensure that teachers are well acclimated to the school staff, students, and environment well before the start of the school year.

6. **Reduce out-of-field teaching.** Research shows that ineffective placement practices contribute to the problem of out-of-field teaching. District human resource departments assign teachers to teach classes for which they are not prepared. The strategic assignment of teachers to their areas of expertise is a low-cost method for improving teaching quality. Out-of-field teaching, a critical reason for underqualified teaching in schools, can be reduced through effective placement practices.

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TIPS AND CONCERNS

DON'T BOTHER

Implementing effective hiring and placement practices IF YOU DON'T:

- Utilize technology to streamline the hiring process.
- Create a collaborative relationship between the district and the teachers' union.
- Begin hiring before the end of the school year.
- Support and retain your highly qualified teachers.
- Develop teacher pay policies that encourage teachers to go to and *remain* in at-risk schools.

STRATEGY 1

Require earlier retirement and transfer notification in order to allow for earlier hiring.

Resigning, retiring, and transferring teachers are typically allowed to give very late notice of their decision to leave a school. The late notification makes it difficult for districts to know which classrooms need to be filled. Qualitative research shows that districts with late hiring processes lose out on the most qualified teachers, many of whom are certified in shortage areas. 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 and removing disincentives. Early notification should not impact a teacher's retirement benefits and, in some cases, is accompanied by a small salary stipend. Depending on the district, the requirements for notification are governed by any combination of union contracts, city code, and state law. The goal is to build and grow a sustainable, high quality teaching force in all schools.

STRATEGY 2

Reform the transfer process.

Many collective bargaining agreements force principals to consider transferring teachers prior to considering any other applicants. The transferring teachers may not fit the culture that the principal is trying to create. 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 provide principals with more options. A balance can be found between teachers' preferences and schools' needs.

Resource 1: See Sub-Strategy on interest-based bargaining

[See Sub-Strategy on interest-based bargaining](#)

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

Resource 2: Missed Opportunities

Levin, Jessica; Quinn, Meredith (2003). *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms*. The New Teacher Project. pp. 1-50.

Section 4; pages 34-53 provides recommendations based on data from study. Some of the recommendations include how to implement earlier vacancy notifications and collaborate with teacher unions in reform.

Resource 3: Teacher unions as players in education reform

Litzcke, Karin (2001). *Teacher unions as players in education reform: A Canadian look at an American reform*. Available online: <http://www.sae.ca/pdfs/013.pdf>

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

STRATEGY 3

Reform human resource departments.

When the human resource (HR) system for receiving, processing, tracking, and placing applicants is effective, at-risk districts are able to hire high-quality teachers and fill shortage areas. The HR system can be made more effective by:

- Determining hiring goals based on data.
- Allowing applicants to apply to schools or the district.
- Defining clear hiring deadlines.
- Assigning teachers to teach subjects for which they are prepared.
- Improving the hiring process flow.
- Increasing training for HR staff.

Active leadership from superintendents and school boards plays a major role in transforming the HR department into an efficient resource. In order 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 4: The Gallup Organization

The Gallup Organization, Education Division Web site.

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

This web site 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 5: From Bystander to Ally

Campbell, C.; DeArmond, M.; & Schumwinger, A. *From Bystander to Ally: Transforming the District Human Resources Department*. Seattle, Washington: Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington. Available online:

http://www.crpe.org/pubs/pdf/BystanderToAlly_reportweb.pdf

Follows the efforts of three urban districts to transform their human resource departments. 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 6: 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. A wealth of checklists and sample forms are provided throughout the book.

Resource 7: National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse

National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse for District Hiring Personnel Web site. <http://rnt.org/channels/clearinghouse/audience/districtpersonnel/index.htm>

Provides research, tools, and advice to district hiring personnel, helping them to expand the outreach of their school and district and cope with competition, among other things.

Resource 8: 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. Available online: <http://schoolcommunities.org/Archive/images/FindDeploy.pdf>

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.

STRATEGY 4

Develop an applicant tracking system.

In order to improve the collection and review of applications, several districts have implemented an applicant tracking system. When a candidate applies on-line, their information enters 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 and fit into the learning community.

Resource 9: Missed Opportunities

Levin, Jessica; Quinn, Meredith (2003). *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms*. The New Teacher Project. p. 45.

Lists the key components of an effective applicant tracking system.

Resource 10: DeKalb County Georgia's Paperless Applicant Tracking System

DeKalb County Georgia's Paperless Applicant Tracking System. Available online:

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

Provides an example of an on-line system that acts as an information hub for applicants, principals, and human resource department personnel.

Resource 11: Kenexa Recruiter

Kenexa (2004). *Kenexa Recruiter*. Wayne, PA: Author.

http://www.kenexa.com/solu_rec.html

Kenexa Recruiter is an applicant tracking system, integrating assessment technologies to identify the most qualified candidates and designed to automate an organization's recruitment process. As profiled in newsobserver.com, the Wake County school system has used Kenexa to screen candidates for how well they match their school system's profile for an ideal educator.

STRATEGY 5

Give schools a larger role in hiring.

In order to build an effective learning community, districts must do more than hire a qualified teacher. They must hire the right teacher. Involving principals and teachers in the selection process improves the likelihood that the applicant and the school are satisfied with the hiring and placement processes. An applicant wants a connection with a specific school, and a school leader wants an applicant whose attitude and ability are a good fit with the school's needs and culture. In addition, school involvement in the hiring process will limit job dissatisfaction and the misassignment of teachers that can lead to out-of-field teaching.

Resource 12: 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, etc. (p 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, etc. (p. 1:23 – p.1:46).

Resource 13: Haberman Education Foundation

Haberman Education Foundation. <http://www.altcert.org/>

The Haberman Education Foundation (HEF) provides hiring and training tools and services to schools and districts. Its best know tool is the *Star Teacher Interview*, which helps districts identify which teachers are likely to succeed. They also have a *Star Classroom Management Protocol*, which is designed to help determine how well a candidate will be managing a classroom.

Resource 14: Hiring the best teachers

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

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

STRATEGY 6

Give at-risk schools a leg up.

Improving hiring and placement practices will benefit the district as a whole, but more focused, strategies are needed for the most at-risk schools. A large teaching quality gap exists among schools in many districts. In order to improve student achievement in at-risk schools, districts must adopt creative initiatives that close the teaching quality gap. These initiatives include head starts on hiring, financial incentives, and increased support from the HR department. Until districts take bold steps, teaching quality will continue to flow from low performing to high performing schools.

Resource 15: From the States

Pughsley, J. (2005). *From the States: On Closing the Teacher Gap*. The Center for American Progress. Available online:

<http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=biJRJ8OVF&b=494131>

The Superintendent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools presents the initiatives that his school system is implementing to deal with the teacher quality gap.

Resource 16: Teacher Turnover in At-Risk Schools

Teacher Turnover in At-Risk Schools: Accurate Diagnosis, Promising Solutions. National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (NPTARS) and National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF).

<http://www.learningpt.org/webcast/index.html>

On September 22, 2005, the National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) co-hosted *Teacher Turnover in At-Risk Schools*, a live Webcast focused on promising solutions in teacher recruitment and retention efforts in our nation's low-performing, high-poverty schools. Several local, state, and national experts contributed, and a recording of the live broadcast and slide presentations are available.

Resource 17: Committee for Economic Development

Committee for Economic Development. Washington, D.C. 2004. Investing in Learning: School Funding Policies To Foster High Performance: a Statement on National Policy by the Research and Policy Committee of CED. www.ced.org

Pp 18-26, Chapter 3: Teacher Pay and the Teacher Labor Market
Addresses such topics such as labor market changes and their implications for compensation, different approaches to teacher pay and reducing penalties imposed on mobile teachers

STRATEGY 7

Make resource allocation transparent.

Districts and states need to report the amount of money that is actually spent on teaching at each school. The current practice of averaging teacher salaries hides the discrepancy in teacher salaries among schools in a district. At-risk schools with novice teachers are provided less funding than schools with experienced teachers. 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 18: How Within District Spending Inequities Help Some Schools Fail

Roza and Hill, *How Within District Spending Inequities Help Some Schools Fail*, p. 216-223.

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 19: Assessing Patterns of Resource Distribution

Assessing Patterns of Resource Distribution (APRD)

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

A free online tool 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 20: 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. Available online: <http://schoolcommunities.org/Archive/images/SBB.pdf>

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

STRATEGY 8

Produce 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. In addition, states can opt to extend the budget deadline. State legislators and local budget authorities must move up the budget timetable so that districts can offer job placements earlier. At-risk schools and districts are especially dependent on state and federal funds, and they can not afford to begin hiring in July and August.

Resource 21: Legislative budget procedures

Legislative budget procedures: A guide to appropriations and budget processes in the states, commonwealths and territories.

National Conference of State Legislatures.

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/fiscal/lbptabs/index.htm>

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 22: Fundamentals of Sound State Budgeting Practices

Fundamentals of Sound State Budgeting Practices.

National Conference of State Legislatures.

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/fiscal/fpfssbp.htm>

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 23: State Education Funding Formulas And Grade Weighting

Griffith, M. (March, 2005). State Education Funding Formulas And Grade Weighting. Education Commission of the States. Denver, CO

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

STRATEGY 9

Collaborate with district, union, school, board of education, and state stakeholders.

Each stakeholder plays a vital role and can take specific steps towards improving hiring and placement practices. At the same time, each stakeholder can disrupt the efforts of other stakeholders to improve the quality and quantity of teaching hires. A strong collaborative relationship at all levels must be focused on the goal of raising student achievement. With this common goal, stakeholders can break out of traditional roles of opposition and work together for a better system of education.

Resource 24: Missed Opportunities

Levin, Jessica; Quinn, Meredith (2003). *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms*. The New Teacher Project. pp. 52-53.

Presents the roles of various stakeholders (superintendent, union, human resources staff, principals, state officials) in reforming hiring practices.

Resource 25: Education Commission of the States

Education Commission of the States (2002). Tools & Resources: Governance Matrix. Available online:
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/35/17/3517.htm>

Provides a format for education stakeholders to examine “who makes what decisions” and “who should make what decisions.” The matrix allows state, district, and school leaders to identify gaps between their current and ideal situations. The leaders can then collaborate to fill these gaps.

...SUB-STRATEGY 9.1

For collaboration 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 hiring 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 (ex. student achievement, teacher retention, etc.).

Resource 26: Kansas National Education Association

Kansas National Education Association: Interest-based bargaining.
http://www.knea.org/news/stories/2002/interest_based.htm

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

Resource 27: URN Locals with Contracts Online

TURN Locals with Contracts Online
<http://www.turnexchange.net/resources/localcontracts.html>

Provides links to on-line contractual agreements between school districts and teachers' unions. All of the agreements were created by members of the Teachers Union Reform Network (TURN).

Resource 28: Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service
<http://www.fmcs.gov/internet/>

Describes interest-based bargaining and provides cameos of organizations that have used the method:

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

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 pre-K 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 move up its hiring to secure more and better teachers. In order 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 HR department simply reviews an applicant's background and credentials. Once an applicant clears this initial screening process, an interested school 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.

Sources:

Levin, J. & Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed opportunities: How we keep high quality teachers out of urban classrooms*. New York: The New Teacher Project. Retrieved September 2005, 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. In order 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 on-line, uploaded into the main system, and can be turned around in one day. A principal can search and review the applicant database, finding pre-approved candidates that match the school's needs.

While 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 experience of the teaching staff was just over one year. The district and the teachers' union recognized that in order 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 overcome the kryptonite-like obstacle known as 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 4-year contracts, which is unheard of in urban districts. The latest collective bargaining agreement was ratified by 99% of the teachers.

The union and the district established a pilot program which provided the principals in 13 at-risk schools with a 5-6 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% of the teachers remained at their school after one year. The program was so successful that the district and the union have agreed to expand the pilot to an additional 7 schools for the 2005-2006 school year.

Sources:

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