



Indicator: The district recruits, trains, places, supports, and retains high-quality personnel to competently address the problems of schools in need of improvement. (14)

Explanation: Districts must provide comprehensive frameworks of support that include the strategic management of personnel in its schools that are most in need of improvement. Districts must proactively plan to staff these schools and adopt earlier, aggressive recruitment practices. Information-rich hiring can help districts identify the most qualified candidates, and collaborations with colleges/universities or “grow your own” programs can help ensure a high quality pipeline of teachers and principals to the district. Districts must also work to enhance teacher working conditions by adopting strategies to improve leadership, collegiality, and time for collaboration and planning, and by offering high-quality mentors and induction programs for new teachers. Districts must also attend to the needs of effective principals in high needs schools by granting appropriate autonomy and human resource support for hiring and other school-level decisions, and providing professional learning through coaching and/or mentoring.

Questions: What policies/procedures are in place to attract and retain the best leaders and teachers for your schools in need of improvement? Does the district incorporate incentives to attract highly qualified teachers and principals to these schools? What if any incentives are provided to encourage these staff to remain in struggling schools? What is the timetable for staff recruitment, and what percentage of staff are considered “late hires” each school year? Does the district strategically use data to identify and hire the most effective staff? How does the district evaluate the working conditions in schools, and what strategies could be used to improve these conditions in high-needs schools so that high quality staff remain? Would the district’s induction program be characterized as primarily lower level, or are strategies in place that support, develop, and reward mentors for their work? Are mentors able to provide mid-level supports to help new teachers engage in day-to-day instructional decision-making? Does the district take proactive steps to ensure that high-quality principals are assigned to its schools in the greatest need of improvement? Does the district grant autonomy to these principals for staff and instructional decision-making as appropriate? What types of professional learning does the district provide for its principals, particularly those working in high-needs communities?

Districts must develop frameworks of support that provide effective practices that equip principals and schools with the direction and capacity to improve (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). One key component of this framework includes managing school personnel strategically so that effective staff are placed in schools with the greatest need for improvement. Research shows that the two strongest school factors that contribute to student outcomes are the role of the teacher and principal (Louis, et al., 2010). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that every classroom be staffed with an effective teacher, and every school with an effective leader (Fuller, Hollingworth, & Pendola, 2017). Districts must choose strong school leaders and high-performing teachers capable of achieving school reform. Hard-to-staff schools that need improvement often find it difficult to attract and retain effective personnel, particularly in rural or urban high-needs areas and in fields such as math, science and special education (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ), 2011). While challenging, districts must have policies and procedures

in place to identify, select, place, and retain high-quality school personnel in order to affect substantial school improvement (The Center on School Turnaround, 2017).

How Can Districts Effectively Attract and Retain High Quality Staff in Schools in Need of Improvement?

School districts play a critical role in ensuring high quality staff are strategically placed in schools with the highest level of need, and research suggests several opportunities for districts to improve their hiring processes (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). Offering financial incentives may effectively attract high quality teachers to low-performing schools. The Talent Transfer Initiative (TTI) offered a substantial financial incentive (\$20,000 across two years) to encourage highly effective teachers within a district to transfer to the lowest performing schools (Glazerman, Protik, Teh, Bruch, & Max, 2013). This initiative was successful at attracting high-performing (based on value-added data) teachers to fill the vacancies in these schools, and had a positive impact on student achievement in math and reading at the elementary, but not middle, school levels. Some studies have also shown that providing bonuses to teachers already teaching in high-poverty or low-achieving schools can lead to reductions in teacher attrition (Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2008; Springer, Swain, & Rodriguez, 2016). A study in Washington State also found similar effects for a program that paid teachers holding a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification a \$5,000 supplement for teaching in a high-poverty school, in addition to the same supplement teachers regularly received for simply attaining the credential (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015). It is important that districts provide targeted incentives for teachers with demonstrated positive impacts on student achievement to remain in hard-to-staff schools in order to ensure that these incentive programs are cost-effective (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017).

Many districts fail to be proactive in teacher recruitment and selection, and this failure is often most common in districts educating large numbers of disadvantaged children (DeArmond, Shaw, & Wright, 2009; Dee & Goldhaber, 2017; Liu & Johnson, 2006). This practice can often result in hiring teachers immediately before, or just after, the school year starts. Research demonstrates substantially lower retention of late-hire teachers, and poor achievement outcomes for students taught by teachers hired after the school year starts (Papay & Kraft, 2016).

When hiring teachers and principals for schools in the most need of improvement, districts must adopt earlier, aggressive recruiting practices (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017; Liu & Johnson, 2006; NCCTQ, 2011). The NCCTQ (2011) suggests that districts use the following best practices for attracting high quality teachers to high-needs schools:

1. Identify school/district characteristics that are attractive to teachers and market them for recruitment.
2. Identify schools with teacher recruitment challenges and set goals for quality and quantity, particularly for high-poverty/high minority schools where students may not have equitable access to high-quality teachers.
3. Establish university/community college partnerships that deliver teacher preparation, particularly for recruitment of teachers in high-needs areas (e.g., special education, ELL). For example, California State at Long Beach trains the vast majority of teachers within the local school system, and has worked to align its teacher preparation with expectations and student needs within the district (Knudson, Shambaugh, & O'Day, 2011).
4. Establish "grow-your-own" programs to recruit future educators from the pool of current high school students, paraprofessionals, teacher aides, and community members.
5. Provide financial incentives (e.g., salary increases, bonuses, housing assistance, loan repayment, etc.) for educators willing to work in high-needs schools or subject areas (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2008).
6. Use "information rich" recruitment and hiring processes by creating, for example, a model of selection and placement of teachers and school leaders with turnaround competencies, and ensure that high-needs schools have preferential access to those with these competencies (The Center for School Turnaround, 2017). Data-focused hiring practices in general may further help districts recruit and hire high-quality candidates, and more accurately predict whether a teacher will be effective within a particular school (see Flanagan, 2016).

What Supports Are Needed to Keep High Quality Staff in Schools in Need of Improvement?

While efforts to attract high quality staff to high-needs schools have shown promise, districts must also attend to supporting and retaining them in order to avoid higher

turnover rates, and overcome challenges to sustained improvement (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Ingersoll & May, 2011). Research shows that teachers entering low-performing, high-poverty schools are committed to teach in underserved communities, but often leave due to poor working conditions that impede their teaching and their students' capacity for learning (Kraft, Papay, Charner-Laird, Johnson, Ng, & Reinhorn, 2012; Johnson, 2006). Important teacher working conditions include school leadership, time for collaboration and planning, and collegiality (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Ladd, 2011), and districts must focus resources towards these areas. In addition, districts can further enhance teacher working conditions by addressing the quality of their induction programs for novice teachers.

Induction Programs. High-quality induction programs serve as a critical component to support teachers in schools in need of improvement, and contribute to lower levels of attrition (Ingersoll, 2012). Unfortunately while induction programs are common, they typically are informal and low intensity programs that pair the new teacher with another more experienced one, without providing training, supplemental activities or release time for the induction process and this is particularly true in low-performing, high-needs schools (Glazerman et al., 2008). Research suggests that many of these teachers do not have mentors, and even when they do they are less likely to indicate that they have meaningful interactions with them about their instruction, partially because their mentors often teach different grades or subjects, or are not teaching at the same school (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010). In addition, the teaching load in many high-poverty schools results in high levels of attrition due to assignment of large classes, or classes outside of teachers' fields or that span multiple subjects or grade levels. This is especially common for new teachers within these schools, who often deal with several aspects of mis-assignment simultaneously, resulting in lower levels of professional efficacy and student achievement (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010).

The Southern Regional Education Board (2018) suggest the following district/school action areas:

1. Rethink program elements that affect mentors:

Consider mentor selection criteria, plan for continuous mentor growth through professional learning (e.g., building interpersonal relationships and building coaching skills), and reevaluate human capital

structure (e.g., identify barriers and make mentoring doable).

2. Address challenges that new teachers *really* face:

Ensure mentors selected are empathic and understanding, talk to teachers about their experiences through surveys and focus groups, review district and school induction activities for added stressors, and train mentors to provide people-driven, rather than compliance-driven, support.

3. Use a tiered process to respond to needs:

While mentors must address novice teachers' low-level needs (e.g., by serving as information providers), they must also address mid-level needs (e.g., by serving as thought partners to help novice teachers make daily decisions such as classroom layout and the best way to collect, grade, and enter assignments) and high-level needs (e.g., by developing new teachers' skills in areas such as differentiating instruction). New teachers most often need, but do not receive, mid-level supports.

The New Teacher Center (NTC) offers an induction model incorporating many of the comprehensive program features described above, and is particularly relevant for hard-to-staff schools that serve primarily low-income and minority students, where teacher turnover is often high (Alliance for Excellent Education (2014). This program and others can help build capacity and provide the support critical for new teachers within high-needs schools.

Principal Support. The cost of principal turnover is also quite high (School Leaders Network, 2014), and districts must retain effective principals in schools in substantial need of improvement. Research shows that high-needs schools tend to be staffed by less experienced and effective principals, leading to subsequent difficulties in attracting and retaining high-quality teachers (Grissom, 2011; Loeb, Kalogrides, & Béteille, 2012). Retaining effective principals in schools in need of improvement can be a challenge, as research shows that principals are more likely to leave schools with high proportions of low-income and minority students (Rangal, 2018). Studies also show that principals who report lacking autonomy are more likely to leave their position or school (Rangal, 2018), and this lack of autonomy can promote negative outcomes. For example, Donaldson (2013) found that district personnel, rather than principals, were selecting professional development (PD) for teachers, and this process subsequently reduced the PD's efficacy.

Principals should be given “defined autonomy” that allows them flexibility in addressing challenges in their own buildings while still being aligned with other district schools (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Principals in high-needs schools likely have less time than those in low-needs schools for teacher recruitment and hiring (Ingle, Rutledge, & Bishop, 2011). Districts should give these principals the authority to hire their own staff, and provide effective and flexible human resources support for hiring processes (Campbell, DeArmond & Schumwinger, 2004; Sigler & Kashyap, 2008). Some evidence also suggests that providing principal PD such as coaching and mentoring holds promise for improving principal practice and reducing teacher attrition (Lochmiller, 2013; Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2015).

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