

Recruiting Staff and Attracting High-Quality Staff to Hard-to-Staff Schools

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality

Many schools, particularly hard-to-staff schools, continually face difficulties in recruiting enough effective teachers and school leaders for all students. Attracting high-quality staff has traditionally been especially problematic for rural and urban schools and for certain subject areas (e.g., mathematics, science, foreign languages, and special education). These subject- and geographic-specific recruitment problems result in less rigorous educational experiences for all students affected. These shortages also contribute to an inequitable distribution of teachers between high- and low-need student populations; research consistently finds that students from poor and minority backgrounds have less access to highly qualified and experienced teachers than do their peers from low-poverty, non-minority backgrounds (Imazeki & Goe, 2009).

To more successfully recruit effective educators for all students, districts must actively and strategically market their strengths (e.g., attractive compensation packages or working conditions), develop high and unyielding standards for the identification and selection of candidates, and aggressively reach out to all possible candidate pools when recruiting for difficult-to-staff positions (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Simmons et al., 2007; Spradlin & Prendergast, 2006). Districts must address some of the hidden costs of teaching in hard-to-staff areas; for example, although the cost of living in rural areas tends to be comparatively low, the lack of public transportation, suitable housing, and other services may require teachers to spend more than they would otherwise have to on an automobile, home ownership, and other expenses. In addition, the recruitment and hiring phases should be information-rich. An information-rich recruitment and hiring process allows employers and applicants to collect detailed information over time through interviews and exchanges, so as to form accurate impressions of one another. This enhances the likelihood that both the employer and teachers' expectations will be met, thereby minimizing the risk of premature attrition (Liu & Johnson, 2003).

Action Principles

For District

1. Identify the characteristics of the district and its schools that are attractive to teachers and seek to both market and build upon them to recruit new staff.
2. Identify schools within the district that have challenges in teacher recruitment.
3. Establish recruitment goals in terms of teacher quality and quantity for the district as a whole.
4. Establish recruitment goals in terms of teacher quality and quantity for high poverty and high minority schools to ensure that students in those schools do not have unequal access to high-quality teachers.
5. Develop and sustain partnerships with universities and community colleges that deliver teacher preparation, particularly for the recruitment of teachers in high-need areas, such as teachers of students with disabilities and English language learners.
6. Create programs to recruit former teachers, including those recently retired, and ensure that policies related to teacher retirement do not prohibit these actions.
7. Establish "grow-your-own" programs to recruit future educators from the pool of current high school students, paraprofessionals, teacher aides, and community members.
8. Provide financial incentives (e.g., salary increases, bonuses, housing assistance, etc.) for educators willing to work in high-need schools or subject areas. This strategy might include incentives for general education teachers to switch to special education, teaching English language learners, or becoming certified in other high-need subjects.
9. Alter hiring procedures and budget timelines to ensure that the appropriate number and types of teachers can be recruited and hired before they seek employment elsewhere.

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