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Evaluating the Hiring Practices of a Small Suburban Chicago School District

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EVALUATING THE HIRING PRACTICES OF A

SMALL SUBURBAN CHICAGO SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

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April, 2019

A THREE-PART DISSERTATION

CHANGE PLAN:
RETHINKING THE HIRING PRACTICES
OF A SMALL SUBURBAN
CHICAGO SCHOOL DISTRICT

PROGRAM EVALUATION:
EVALUATING THE HIRING PRACTICES
OF A SMALL SUBURBAN
CHICAGO SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY ADVOCACY:
TRANSGENDER STUDENTS IN A
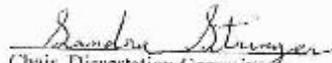PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING

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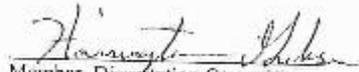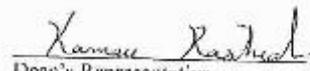Submitted for Approval

April 2019

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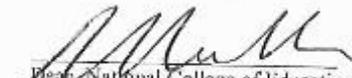
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Dean, National College of Education

April 22, 2019
Date Approved

NLU Digital Commons Document Origination Statement

This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The "program" can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

This document is an evaluation of the hiring practices of a small suburban school district located north of the city of Chicago. The district is routinely near the top of the list of any evaluation of elementary school districts in the area and is not in desperate need for large-scale change, but does have visionary leadership and is always striving for improvement. After extensive conversations with those who do the hiring in the school district, there were items uncovered that could use some attention. The plan to implement those changes is contained within the companion change plan to this document.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

One common task that all school districts, large or small, urban or rural, need to complete is the hiring of new faculty. The faculty of a school building is an ever-evolving collection of educators at various stages of their careers. Identifying and hiring the right people to add to that mix is a top priority for any building leader. Those who hire need to ensure that the candidate is child-centered, understands teaching and learning, is an expert in their content area(s), and will fit in with the others currently working in their team/department. It is a lot to manage, but investing time toward finding the right candidate will pay off in the end.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the hiring protocols of a small school district in the northern suburbs of Chicago. Often a job posting will have over 100 educators submit an online application for that position. Going through all of those applications can be an incredibly time-consuming process. Those overseeing the hiring process need to have clear expectations for what qualities a desirable candidate will possess. Without a clear focus, one is just looking for a needle in a haystack.

I also looked at the processes in place for interviewing candidates and selecting the best one for the job. There are as many interview processes in use as there are school districts. Hiring teams need to decide how they want to screen candidates for a position. Some districts use standardized screeners; others use self-generated questions. Whether or not to do the screening interviews face-to-face is another question that needs to be answered by the team. When interviewing, should a standardized list of questions be used or would the team prefer to adjust "on the fly" as the interview progresses? How

many rounds of interviews will be needed and will one of the rounds be a performance interview? Are teachers involved in the process, and when? All of these questions need to be answered by those tasked with hiring teachers in any school district.

Additionally, what data does the district collect on both hired and not hired candidates? Is there information they could gather that would help the district better pare down their future applicant pool to only the most qualified candidates? Much the same way we use data to track student growth, data on successful applicants can be monitored for common trends that can identify suitable candidates early in the process.

Rationale

When I began my career as an administrator six years ago, a mentor told me, in no uncertain terms, that the hiring of quality teachers was far and away the most important job of a building administrator. Many weaknesses can be shored up with quality professional development or a good school improvement plan. But, if you do not have the right people in your organization, it will make the principal's job of ensuring high-quality instruction incredibly difficult. Having lived in this role now for several years, I have seen firsthand how disruptive it can be to bring in a teacher for one unsuccessful year and then to move on. The amount of time and resources it takes to support that teacher for even one year is massive. On top of that, teachers are usually a tight-knit group and my experience is that they take the non-renewal of one of their own, even one with whom they may not be very impressed, as a slap in the face. Mentors feel like they did something wrong, and seasoned teachers wonder if they will be next.

Due to its importance, I decided early in this doctoral work that I wanted to look at the hiring process for my dissertation. I have worked in six different school districts as

either a teacher or administrator during my career, and I have never seen two districts that go about their hiring in the same manner. There are many similarities to the steps followed, but also many differences. Acknowledging that any personnel director will have his preferences for this process, it seems like there should be a "best practice" for this crucial task. What information is present in the application that correlates to a higher potential for success in the district and what information tells us that the candidate will not be successful? If my research can uncover the answer to those questions, I feel the district will be in a solid position to move forward with confidence that their process of identifying the best quality candidates is sound.

One of the things that drew me to this topic is the fact that my current district does not follow any set procedures for screening, narrowing down, interviewing or selecting candidates for a position. Each time I am involved in the hiring of a new person to fill a vacancy in my building, the process looks a little different. I also know that we do not track any data related to our successful new hires, nor do any analysis of their applications as they demonstrate strengths or weaknesses after being hired. It seems like there is a gold mine of data available here that could be used to assist in identifying quality candidates in the future.

Teachers are the adults who have the greatest amount of contact with students at school each day. Ensuring those people are of high character, well-schooled in the best practices of educating children, and are content area experts is of the utmost importance to all stakeholders in an educational community. A top-notch principal can lead a building to many places, but if the teachers who work with the children each day are not highly qualified, the caliber of teaching will only be so high. Additionally, you can have

the most innovative, engaging curriculum in the country but without quality teachers to deliver it, it is worthless.

The interview process is a multi-tiered activity with a myriad of variables, making it an incredibly complex task. This process has been taking place ever since there have been schools. Finding a way to identify any key characteristics that are common among high-quality teachers and efficiently sort through applications to find the candidates with those characteristics would be a benefit to all who hire teachers.

Goals

The goal of this evaluation is primarily to ensure the process followed by District 1 is an efficient and effective way to identify, interview, and hire top-notch teachers. The best way to ensure students are successful in school is to put the most talented, student-centered, hard-working teachers you can find in front of them. Along the way, I would like to learn if there are indicators available to us within the online application system that can assist administrators in identifying the best teachers to begin screening. Candidates spend a good deal of time filling out the online application when finding a position in which they have interest; it seems only logical that some of that data would be consistent among the more successful candidates. There should be some consistencies in the data among unsuccessful candidates, too. That information would be equally beneficial for those who do the hiring to understand. Identifying qualities in teachers who have been hired and have proven successful could lead to the creation of a screening tool or even interview questions that focus in on those qualities. Such a tool could significantly lower the chances of a candidate getting past an interview team because they know some current buzz-words that impress the team.

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Finally, I would like to see the creation of a protocol involving the collection and tracking of data from the application/screening/interview process that would allow the organization to continually evaluate the hiring process and properly identify the right candidate for the job. This step is essential for the long-term success of anything learned from the study. Each successful hire a district makes will provide more data to guide the team in identifying candidates with the best chance of being the next "rock star."

Research Questions

My primary research question: Is District 1 doing everything possible to ensure they are hiring the best possible teacher for each posted position? After all, that is what it comes down to; putting the best people in front of the students to ensure they have the largest opportunity for growth that a school district can provide. A reliable process should exist to ensure that from job posting to job offer, the best quality candidate is identified and brought on board.

The first step in the hiring process brings me to a secondary research question: What is the ideal structure of the hiring process to best identify the top candidate? Sorting through sometimes over 100 online applications is a challenging task, and the amount of information is substantial. I want to closely analyze the hiring process and determine if the structure is any different for candidates that prove to be long-term fits versus candidates that eventually do not work out.

Once the candidates worthy of further consideration are identified, they must efficiently be narrowed down to a smaller candidate pool. There are many private corporations in the country that have created standardized screening protocols, which are available to a district for a fee, in order to help with the screening process. The

advantage to these protocols is they are easy to administer. Many can be sent in an email, so they can be provided to a larger screening pool, therefore allowing a district to cast a wider net. Obviously, the wider the net, the better the chance you will find a high quality teacher to hire.

A final research question is: What information can a school district track for teachers they hire that will allow us to identify qualities in them that we would like to seek out in other applicants? Often, when you hire the exact right person for the job, it takes a few years before you realize what you have. That time delay is one of the reasons that finding those items in the application, which indicate a correlation with either good or bad teachers, would be so useful. It is also key to collect ongoing performance data on all new teachers to see if that information reveals anything as they move toward tenure.

SECTION TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a great deal written about the importance of a school leader hiring new teachers, with Mary Clement being one of those at the forefront of this area of research (Clement, 1999; Clement, 2008; Clement, 2009; Clement, 2015). In her 2008 book, *Recruiting and Hiring Effective Teachers*, Clement shared her view on the importance of finding the right candidate for the job:

> Schools with high faculty turnover will quickly develop bad reputations, which
> will make it even harder to keep quality teachers. Parent complaints may grow
> with high faculty turnover, further lessening community support. Above all else,
> students deserve quality teachers—ones who are committed to the best
> professional practices. (p. 4)

There is more at stake than just subjective perceptions or overall level of teacher quality. Linda Darling-Hammond tells of almost one-third of new teachers leaving the profession within five years at an annual national cost in the billions (Darling-Hammond & Ducommun, 2011). She points to several reasons for this migration, such as low salaries, poor working conditions, and a lack of resources in less affluent areas. As a nation, we cannot afford to be losing money in this area. Ensuring we are doing all we can do as educators to identify and hire high-quality candidates is of the utmost importance.

Clement is not the only one who has shared findings in this area. Robert Marzano (2010), currently one of the more published educational researchers out there said that, "it is considered common knowledge that a classroom teacher is probably the single most powerful influence on student achievement that is within the control of the educational system" (p. 213). Rose, English and Finney agree with Marzano's position, as evidenced

by their 2014 book, *Hire Better Teachers Now*, where they shared that, "One of the single greatest opportunities to improve educational outcomes at any school or school district is to make better hiring decisions" (p. 9).

There is little disagreement on the level of importance of the task of hiring teachers. So why is it often so difficult? Many authors (Clement, 2008; Marzano, 2010; Sawchuk, 2011) discuss the imprecision of identifying predictors of future success. Other authors write of disagreements among educators about what are the most important qualities an effective educator possesses (Rutledge, Thompson, & Ingle, 2008). Most administrators can identify good teaching, as well as poor teaching, when they see it. Based on current research, it seems to be much more difficult to identify traits in a teacher candidate that will produce a high-quality teacher. Researcher Marlene Cain-Caston (1999) completed a study in North Carolina where she did find some evidence, based on surveys with administrators, about what could prove insightful about new teaching candidates. Her work uncovered that a student teacher's evaluation by his or her supervising principal was deemed by North Carolina administrators to be the greatest factor in hiring a quality new teacher.

At the heart of any hiring process is the interview. Districts are making a staffing decision worth tens of thousands of dollars based on a matter of a few hours of exposure to a candidate. That time and the questions asked during those times are beyond valuable. William Goldstein (1986) discusses the mindset interviewers need when they approach an interview:

> Interviewers are well advised to think like candidates, anticipating their emotions and tensions, if they wish to recruit outstanding people for their schools. If the

candidates are truly outstanding, they will surely have multiple offers; their

decision may well be based on how they were treated during the interview. (p. 22)

Mary Clement (1999) also tells us to pay close attention to what candidates wear to the

interview, as it is indicative of how they may dress for formal school activities, such as

parent conferences. She also suggests that we pay attention to a candidate's demeanor.

She says, "Students take note of everything their teacher does, and a teacher with a vague

expression and inaudible voice will not be well received by students" (p. 23).

When speaking to either teachers or principals; Bigham, Hively, and Toole (2014)

discovered that the most desirable quality they look for in a prospective teacher is a

passion for teaching. Dillon, McCaughtry, and Hummel (2014) studied the hiring

practices specifically for physical education teachers and found that the most desirable

characteristic in those candidates was interpersonal skills. This information seems to

point toward a higher value on the more intangible skills than on content area knowledge

or understanding of instructional pedagogy. Ziebarth-Bovill, Kritzer, and Bovill (2012)

reinforce that idea in their work,

Hiring officials understand the importance of the science of teaching, but in the

final decision-making process, they are looking for the intangibles found in all

effective teachers. They are considering the elements that make teaching both an

art and a science. (p. 138)

Much of the current research on developing questions for interviews focus on

writing questions that focus on behaviors, not theory (Azzaam, 2016; Clement, 2009;

Yaffe, 2015). Mary Clement (2009) goes so far as to say, "Past behavior is the best

predictor of future performance, so educators would be wise to craft interview questions

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that explore past experiences" (p. 22). In *Recruiting and Hiring Effective Teachers* (2008), Mary Clement also shares:

> Teacher candidates should be able to describe teaching situations, sorting out what is significant and what is not significant to the situation. With a brief description of a situation, the candidate should be able to talk about the task that had to be done, the action of implementing the task, and the results. (p. 64)

Yaffe (2015) also provides a warning about using abstract questions instead of concrete behavioral ones.

One of the reasons hiring high-quality teachers with each job posting proves to be so challenging is uncovered somewhat by Hindman and Stronge (2009) who found that 73% of principals have no formal training on how to conduct interviews. No wonder it proves to be such a challenging task! Mary Clement (2015) suggests that all districts should have some sort of hiring manual that delineates all of the responsibilities of each administrator in the hiring of a new teacher. This manual would not be a replacement for solid professional development but would help in creating a well-defined process for all to follow. Having a clear process is important not just to those involved in the hiring, but also those who get hired. Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson (2005) found "reports from research and practice may suggest that a teacher's hiring experience may influence her satisfaction and retention in teaching" (p. 28).

Another way to ensure quality teachers are hired and retained is through the providing of incentives. Balter and Ducombe (2006) found that incentives like bonuses, graduate school tuition reimbursement, or pay for extra duties does correlate with a district retaining quality teachers. Mary Clement (1999) wrote about New Zealand, a

country with a relatively high teacher stability rate, providing first-year teachers with one day per week of release time so that they can observe or co-teach with their mentor teacher.

Like most processes inside of any organization, it is important that the hiring of new teachers into a school district has a consistent process. Mason and Schroeder (2010) found that the best way to reduce uncertainty in the process is to have a consistent process for each candidate and for each position hired. In their 2008 research, Rutledge, Harris, and Thompson agreed that having a process that can be relied on each time would be beneficial to a school district when looking for a top candidate. What most of the literature does agree on is that there is still a great need for more definitive research in this area. There is still a good deal of uncertainty about many areas of hiring quality teachers: what to look for when screening candidates, what goes into the interview process, and who is involved in that process just to name a few.

SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

Michael Quinn Patton (2008), in his book Utilization-Focused Evaluation, states, "As a utilization-focused evaluator, I find it helpful to replace the traditional scientific search for the objective truth with a search for useful and balanced information" (p. 451). This very point posed some challenges for me as a researcher as I attempted to narrow the focus of my work. When I originally set out on this journey, I very much wanted to "discover" the best possible way to lead a district through the hiring process. I wanted to find the best screening tools, interview protocols, and data collection processes being used out there and put them all in one place for the betterment of Human Resources Departments everywhere.

What it took me far too long to figure out, even while immersing myself in Patton's work, was that I needed to start with evaluating a program, just like the assigned task stated. I just had to take a close look at all of the stages of the hiring process for a single school district, analyze what it is they are doing, and determine possible areas for improvement. It was essential for me to use Patton's work and base my evaluation on what would make it the most useful to practitioners.

The primary focus of my research consisted of semi-structured interviews with various personnel people on the protocols they followed as they looked to hire new teachers. As I honed in on simply evaluating a single district, the idea of looking at quantitative data available to me to see if there are indicators of good or bad teachers became clearer, and I was able to see the added benefit that could add to my research. To use Patton's words again, "Evaluators should be able to use a variety of tools if they can

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be sophisticated and flexible in matching research methods to the nuances of particular evaluation questions" (p. 438). This quantitative data was simply Likert scale ratings of newly hired teachers provided directly from the principals based on their performance, not taken off of any summative evaluations.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the assistant superintendent of personnel, as well as the building principals. These interviews provided me with a clear picture of the current procedures followed for hiring a new teacher. The principals provided me with information regarding the success of the teachers hired over the past several years. The questions posed during those interviews can be found in Appendix A for the building principals and in Appendix B for the assistant superintendent.

Participants

A key person who was extensively involved in this research with me was the assistant superintendent of District 1, Dr. Susan Frederick. She has been in her role for 15 years and has welcomed a closer study of the hiring practices in District 1. I sat down with Dr. Frederick, on multiple occasions and learned more about the current processes to better understand the goals she has for her district.

Also involved in this study were the three building-level principals in District 1. I interviewed them to learn their processes for hiring new teachers. I wanted to know if they all followed the same protocols, with Dr. Frederick overseeing the whole process, or if each building did their own thing? I also wanted them to help me understand which recent hires have worked out in their eyes, which did not, ending in termination, and which hires had yet to have their success determined.

I did not interview any teachers during this process. I was more concerned with the process of identifying teachers and the satisfaction of the principals with the candidates brought on board. I also did not look at student growth at this point in the research. I acknowledge that the mark of any quality teacher is whether or not the students taught by that teacher are learning, but that type of indicator will take a few years to show itself as more than just an anomaly, especially in a middle school environment where students have many teachers in a given day. For this research, I judged the quality of a hired teacher based on the impressions of the building leader.

Data Gathering Techniques

The majority of my data was collected through interviews with the assistant superintendent of personnel, Dr. Frederick. She gave me the most detailed information about the hiring process both for the current arrangement and in the recent past. With her wealth of experience, she has a comprehensive understanding of all of the procedures tried in the recent past. I explored the entire hiring process with her. We discussed the review of applications, the screening of candidates, every round of interviews, and the final decision-making process. I conducted an extensive semi-structured interview with her that started with some focused questions but segued into other related areas. As James, Milenkiewicz, and Bucknam (2008) mentioned on the topic of semi-structured interviews, "Semi-structured interviews allow the opportunity to digress from the primary question and probe a response to understand more clearly what is seen as a provocative remark on the part of the interviewee" (p. 73).

Similarly, I interviewed the building principals in the district. These interviews were also of the semi-structured variety. My goal for these interviews focused on the

candidates hired for positions over the past five years. I wanted them to share the quality

of those new employees as they got to know them. They also provided their input on the

process of hiring a new teacher that proved valuable to this research.

I provided the assurance of confidentiality in hopes that it would allow me to get

honest, fully developed answers from the building administrators and they would not feel

like they were sharing negative aspects of a program belonging to a senior administrator.

Since my end goal was to attempt to improve upon current practices, the intended use of

my data was relatively clear. As Patton (2008) referred mentioned in his book, "…there

are no absolute rules an evaluator can follow to know exactly what to do with specific

users in a particular situation" (p. 199).

Data Analysis Techniques

I recorded my interviews with all of the administrators I interviewed during this

research. I developed coding for their responses on the current teacher hiring practices

and looked for relationships, positive or negative, between their answers. What I wanted

to know was what structures were currently in place and were they working? As is often

true with any program, the cause of less than desirable results is just in a lack of

consistency with implementation. The analysis of administrative interviews showed me

if there was a clear process in place and if that process was followed.

No statistical analysis of the Likert ratings of new hires was conducted. Using the

data, I wanted to get a quantitative rating of the teacher from the principal's eyes to

determine how satisfied they were with the performance of that teacher. For teachers

who received a lower score, I probed the specific hiring process further to learn from the

principal if there was anything that stood out as different from that process. I also asked

them to contrast that process with the processes of those teachers who proved to be more successful to see if there was anything that stood out about that process.

SECTION FOUR: FINDING AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

Each of the interviews conducted with the leadership team in District 1 revealed a belief that the hiring process was working for them. However, it also uncovered some areas of concern that, if addressed, could improve the process. Following the completion of the four interviews, the responses were studied and coded to identify similarities and differences. There was more consistency than inconsistency in the answers from the building level and the assistant superintendent. The responses from the three building leaders in the district were very similar.

When it came to rating the performance of the new hires over the past five years, the majority of ratings were in the top thirty percent of the scale. The average rating provided by the principal for a new hire was 7.3 out of ten. This average did not include teachers who were hired to fill part-time positions as it was revealed that the "normal" hiring process was not always followed with part-time hires due to time constraints.

The Hiring Process

After coding the interview transcripts from my conversations with the principals in District 1, one item stood out above all others as far as similar themes: a lack of consistency in the hiring process. All three principals came back to this fact on multiple instances. They reported that "the process is different every time," and "it is just never the same," among other comments. The principals noted differences in the number of candidates screened, the number of rounds that made up the interview process, the people involved in the interviews, and the communication among the interview team during the process. There was also inconsistency reported around the reviewing of applications and

how to determine which candidates would be screened for the position. All of the

principals reported the assistant superintendent generally handled the screening of

applications, but two of them stated being involved in that process in some manner as

well.

Based on these conversations, the general process seemed to start with the

assistant superintendent screening the applicant pool. It sounded like some of the

principals were a part of that on occasion, but not all of them and not always. Once a

pool of about eight was identified, a short screening interview was conducted, either on

the phone or in person, sometimes with the principal, sometimes not. Then there were

two additional rounds of interviews with varying participants. Teachers were usually

involved, but not always. Approximately half of the time (based on responses from the

three principals), a performance interview was conducted where the candidate(s) come in

and teach a class lesson in the grade/subject of the vacancy, followed by a debrief with

the interview team afterward. The assistant superintendent reported that a performance

interview was "usually" part of the process unless school was not in session and there

was no class to teach. This performance interview seemed to be one of the greatest areas

of uncertainty surrounding the hiring process in District 1.

At the junior high level, the principal reported that there had been some teachers

who did well in the performance interview who did not turn out to be a long term fit in

the building. At the intermediate school, while performance interviews were not

consistently implemented, the principal reported that the process itself had proven to

present evidence, either for or against a candidate, which assisted in the selection process.

The early elementary principal reported the performance interview was not a commonly

used tool, as well as some confusion as to when it was implemented and when it was not. It was also shared that the process generally seemed staged.

Regarding the questions asked at the various interviews, the assistant superintendent reported that there is a bank of questions for each type of position in the district. Dr. Frederick stated that not all questions on the list were always asked, but the interviewers selected questions from the list that followed the flow of the interview or the specific qualities of the candidate. All three principals referred to a list of questions supplied by the assistant superintendent, and that questions were often added to the list as the interview progressed based on responses from the candidate. Everyone involved in the process acknowledged that there was little objective data collected from these interviews. Responses were not rated or even compared to an "ideal response," but notes were kept to document the interview. A database was maintained in the personnel office for each candidate who was interviewed for each position, but there was little data collected from the process; candidates simply moved forward or did not.

A question posed to Dr. Frederick that was not asked to the principals was regarding the packaged screening protocols offered by several different human resources groups. She was familiar with several of them, including the one built into the software currently in use by the district for the application process. She does not think any of them are a good fit for the district. It was her experience that some of the questions are so widely known that there are ways for a candidate to go online and "study" for the interview, providing answers that will receive a high score on the rubric.

I spent time with each principal discussing all of the newly hired teachers in their buildings over the past five years. They each provided a simple, 10-point Likert rating

for each new hire, and we discussed their performance in the years since their hire. Not surprisingly, the objective data clearly correlated to which teachers were still employed by the district. Those with lower scores were no longer employed, those with higher scores, with a few exceptions, were still employed. The exceptions were for understandable reasons such as the original hire being for part-time work or the position was no longer needed.

Each principal interview was concluded with a question about any perceived areas of needed improvement in the hiring process in their building. All three said that there was nothing that was not already discussed in the above questions. One principal did comment about the desire for teachers to be a consistent part of the process saying, "It's an area where I think our teachers want to be involved." The other two teachers also mentioned this earlier in their interviews when discussing the makeup of interview committee. This is an area that should be addressed going forward.

Given the inconsistencies consistently reported among those interviewed, the surprising factor was that everyone involved in the hiring within District 1 reported that the current process was working for them. Each principal referred to the success rate they have had in hiring good teachers while in their current role as evidence that the process, while inconsistent, did seem to be working.

SECTION FIVE: JUDGMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary research question in this study was: Is District 1 doing everything

possible to ensure they are hiring the best possible teacher for each posted position? In

short, based on my conversations with those who are most heavily involved in this

process, the answer is, "No." The three building principals each seemed to have a

different view of the process and the various steps within that process. Whether it was in

regard to the posting of the position, the questions asked at any phase, the number of

rounds, or the presence of a performance interview, there did not seem to be much

consistency to the process. There certainly seemed like there could be much more done

to create that consistency, allowing the principals to have more faith that the process

would ensure a top hire. Interestingly, even with the concerns about consistency or

uncertainty about structure, the assistant superintendent and all three principals expressed

that the process was currently working for them, based primarily on their success in

hiring long-term teachers for job openings. That would lead one to the adage, "If it ain't

broke, don't fix it."

The variety in responses received in regard to the performance interview was one

finding that I did not expect to uncover. It was a tool not commonly used, but when used,

it often produced mixed results. Given the interruption to the classroom environment, it

deserved some discussion as to the return on investment this activity produces.

One of my secondary research questions focused on uncovering an "ideal"

structure for hiring a new teacher. After my conversations with the District 1

administrative team, I was not sure if that ideal exists. Certainly, before making any

absolute statements, additional structures should be studied and compared to the basic

structure applied by District 1. What I do think is desirable is a standardized process that can be implemented similarly each time a job is posted. In this case, it is clear that the building leaders yearn for a process on which they can depend to be the same for each posting. If nothing else, it will decrease the anxiety around the hiring process reported by some of these leaders.

The final research question centered on the data collected during the interview process. In District 1, the only real data tracked throughout this process is demographic in nature. I talked to the assistant superintendent about her thoughts on scoring responses and keeping that data. She reported that District 1 tried that at one point in the past, but inter-rater reliability was always a challenge and it was the thought of the team at that time that collecting that data would not provide them with anything useful. Instead, the leaders at that time chose to look for key words in the responses of a candidate.

My recommendation to the administrative team at District 1 is to develop a standard process for the posting of any teaching position and to publish that process internally. An administrative procedure on this could easily be developed, delineating the responsibilities of each administrator throughout the process. The administrators should make decisions about the questions at each stage and the number of rounds before a job offer is made. While sets of questions do exist for a variety of different jobs in the district, there still seems to be some mystery surrounding them when it comes to the perspective of the building leaders.

The other big question to be answered surrounded the performance interview. The opinion of each building leader varied greatly on the value of this portion of the hiring process. I would recommend the team sits down and creates a list of the pros and

cons of this part of the process. In my mind, there is no need for each building to have

the same steps to the hiring process. If the junior high feels strongly that it is beneficial,

but the elementary building does not, they could have a different process. At this time,

the importance of the inclusion of a performance interview is uncertain. Given that it is a

significant intrusion on classroom instruction, especially if more than one lesson is

needed, the value of this part of the hiring process would need to be high before making it

a consistent part of the District 1 process.

The addition of a formalized, documented process for posting a teaching job in

District 1 would provide building leaders with a sense of security that they know what

stage any posting is currently in and how the process will be moving forward. Some

important conversations should take place among those who hire in District 1 and then

associated decisions made. The good news is, as stated earlier, all involved feel the

current process is working for them. So, even if nothing were to change, District 1 is

hiring quality teachers.

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APPENDIX A: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please state your name, title, and years of service at this District, please. Remember, neither you nor the District will be identified by name in this research.

2. Describe for me the hiring process used when you have a teaching vacancy in your building.

3. What is your role in that process?

4. What are your thoughts on the use of the performance interview during the hiring process?

5. How many new teachers have been hired in your building in the past five years?

6. How many of those teachers are still employed in this district?

7. For the teachers who have been hired in the past five years and are still employed, I would like to ask you to anonymously (without naming names) rate their overall job performance on a scale of 1-10, with one being unacceptable and ten being exceptional?

8. For the teachers who either did not remain employed in the district or the ones who turned out to be solid teachers, do you think the hiring process did a good job of predicting that performance?

9. Are there any improvements you feel need to be made to the hiring process for your building?

10. Do you feel the process currently in place is working for you?

APPENDIX B: ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please state your name, title, and years of service at this District, please. Remember, neither you nor the District will be identified by name in this research.

2. Can you provide a summary of the hiring process for a vacant teaching position from the initial posting through the acceptance of a job offer?

3. Thinking of the initial part of the process, what procedure is followed in order to sort through the applications and determine which candidates to start in the process?

4. Once candidates are identified for an initial screening, what does that step entail? Are there standardized questions? Is it electronic? Face to face? Is there a score generated for that candidate, or is it simply pass/fail?

5. In your mind, what are the pros and cons to some of the packaged screening protocols available on the market today?

6. How big of a group of candidates are brought to an interview?

7. How many stages of the interview process are there?

8. Who makes up the interview team?

9. Is there a performance component to the interview?

10. Who makes the final decision on the hiring of a new teacher?

11. What data is collected during this process? Is data on hired teachers collected and tracked?