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The Elementary School Principal's Influence on Teacher Hiring Practice & Decision Making

Courtney Goodman

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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER HIRING
PRACTICES & DECISION MAKING

Courtney Goodman

Educational Leadership

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

National College of Education
National Louis University
June, 2022

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Dissertation Hearing

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Approved:



Chair, Dissertation Committee



Program Director



Member, Dissertation Committee



Dean's Representative



Dean, National College of Education

03/03/2022

Date Approved

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Abstract

In the role of a building principal, the hiring process is among the most critical components of the job, particularly hiring the right people for the right positions. Yet, hiring approaches vary from principal to principal, building to building, district to district. This study surveyed and interviewed principals and administrators about their hiring processes to determine the most effective and evidence-based approaches to hiring. It identifies several strategies to streamline the hiring process, including using a common set of tools for hiring, adhering to a set timeline for the hiring process, and focusing on criteria for hiring decision-making. This research study also yields a recommendation for policy change related to hiring practices and procedures to better align them across the district. Better aligned hiring procedures will help ensure hiring decisions are most effective.

Preface

As I was finishing my Master's of Education and seeking my first teaching position, I found myself wondering how principals made their hiring decisions. I knew possibly hundreds of applicants had applied for the available positions. As I attended job fairs, I continued to wonder how this process could possibly yield the best candidate for each position. When I eventually participated in interviews with different districts, I realized that the art of hiring was a deeply imperfect. I was offered an interview for my first teaching position because of a connection through a friend who also worked at the school; for my next teaching position, I was not initially hired but was asked back months later because a hiring administrator had remembered me.

As I moved into an administrative position over nine years ago, I was asked to begin to assist with hiring by reviewing online applications and completing initial phone interviews. I asked my principal about the district process, training, and protocols to follow. She explained her system, sharing that she was using elements from a previous principal position, some elements from an external hiring tool, and some questions and processes that she had crafted on her own. She said that I could use any or all of her tools, while still giving me the freedom to use my own methods. This lack of protocol continued my interest in hiring protocols and procedures, including how varied they are and how potentially arbitrary they might be.

As I began as a principal nearly five years ago, I had the autonomy to craft my own hiring procedures. Each year, I changed my approach slightly, wondering whether what I had added or removed would yield the best results. I found myself talking to more principals about their approach to hiring, reading more about how to craft better questions, and involving my teachers more in the process.

When I began my doctoral journey, the focus for my dissertation seemed natural. My interest in hiring and the principal's role in that process had been on my mind since I began my career in education nearly 17 years ago. Through this research, I hope to have positively influenced the hiring process and clarified how principals may more uniformly approach this important task.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my husband Josh, alongside my two children Anderson and Amelia. When I began this program, our children were 7 and 5 years old. They were in kindergarten and second grade. As I entered year two of this program, the COVID-19 pandemic hit our country and changed our lives. My husband, children, and I were home together, in our house, for months on end. When the new school year began, I returned to my school building each day as a principal, while my husband and children remained at home, working remotely and attending school remotely. All the while, I continued as a doctoral student, a school principal, and a mother.

As a full-time working mother of two, I started my doctoral program knowing everyone in our family had to add extra tasks to their plates; this situation changed when the pandemic began. Thank you, Josh, for picking up most of those additional tasks so that I could fulfill this goal. Without your unwavering support, this goal would never have been attainable. Thank you for always providing that support; here's to our harmonious future. My desire to complete my doctorate was two-fold: for my personal development and growth, and as a role model for my children. Thank you, Anderson and Amelia, for always being proud of me, as I am of you. You can achieve your goals through hard work, focus, determination, and a rock-solid support system.

In addition, I'd like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Christine Nelson, my dissertation chair. Her constant support and cheerleading helped me to this finish line. Her eagerness to connect, offer feedback and guidance, and her encouragement helped me complete this dissertation.

Finally, thank you to my cohort-mate and dear friend Becky Mathison. She and I have known each other for over 15 years and decided to embark on this program together. Without her

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The role of the elementary school principal is complex, diverse, and multifaceted. A principal oversees the day-to-day operations of a school, instructional leadership, teacher professional development, student discipline and behavior, student learning, and budget management, to name a few of the many responsibilities. Each year principals engage in the hiring process to secure highly qualified teachers for their buildings, in addition to the educational leadership and managerial tasks a principal must balance. This dissertation will engage in a review of how principals approach the hiring process, best practices in hiring, and how the process can be improved. The goal of this study will seek to better understand how principals engage in the hiring process and recommend adjustments to policies and procedures related to hiring.

This study is rooted in the experiences of Spring Valley School District, which is located in the northern suburbs of Chicago, approximately 15 miles outside of downtown Chicago. The district comprises three schools: a primary school serving preschool and kindergarten; an elementary school serving Grades 1–5; and a middle school serving Grades 6–8. According to the Illinois Report Card (2018), there are 1,102 students enrolled in this three-school district. The students are racially diverse: 37% White, 7.5% Black, 13.8% Hispanic, 33.8% Asian, and 7.1% two or more races. The low-income population for the district is 30.8%, and 16% of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). English Language support and services are used by 18.3% of students, higher than the state average of 11.7%. This information reflects the diverse nature of the community, where English may not be the primary language spoken in the home and where many families speak more than one language. The student attendance rate is at 95%, and student mobility rates and chronic absenteeism rates are low. The district has 85 teachers

between the buildings, 89% of whom are White. Seven percent of teachers are Asian, and 2% are two or more races. Staff demographics have remained consistent however, the staff population mirrors neither the community population nor the school student population. Of the 85 teachers, 85% are female, 65% of teachers hold a Master's degree, and for the district the three-year average for teacher retention is 85%. This teacher retention rate is comparable to the state average. The district's pupil-to-teacher ratio is 16 to 1, lower than the state's average ratio of 19 to 1. According to their teacher evaluation ratings, 100% of teachers are rated proficient or excellent; this statistic is slightly higher than the state average of 97%. These statistical details help to set the stage for the district in which the research is conducted. Much of the staff-specific data is comparable to the state's data, which may be helpful when considering the application of this study's findings to other districts.

The Spring Valley School District has both a mission statement and a set of guiding principles which highlight priorities and initiatives for improvement; these statements and principles are found on their website. The mission statement is "Building a Foundation for Learning, Leadership & Life." The district's four guiding principles were created several years ago by a large group of students, staff, parents, and community members during a day-long Saturday meeting: (1) Our school will support and inspire our students. (2) Our students will be critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers. (3) Our community will demonstrate integrity and respect. (4) Our graduates will help make the world a better place. This mission statement and these guiding principles are posted on the district website and posters in the district's school buildings; however, they are neither revisited nor referred to regularly by staff, students, or community members. Certain staff members may be unaware that they even exist. A more actionable document is the district's strategic plan. This five-year document was crafted and

designed by a mixed group of stakeholders (parents, community members, Board of Education members, and staff), and was then used to design all professional development, guide the work of district committees, and direct the efforts of building leaders. The 2018 Strategic Plan was referenced during each Board of Education meeting, and different district committees were asked to prepare and present updates during these board meetings. The strategic plan set forth the academic or school-based initiatives most important for the district to pursue. The plan divided priorities into four sections based on the overall category of needs: academics, whole child, learning environment, and community engagement. The academics section contained several initiatives and goal statements, which then drove the work of the staff committee focused on each of the other sections of the Strategic Plan and directed the work of the building and district leaders. For example, one goal statement focused on the exploration of more science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) opportunities in the PreK-8 school day, so a group of administrators worked to spearhead this action item through research into best practices and information gathering from staff.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

The district's 2018 strategic plan included a section focused on hiring highly qualified staff. This section, along with many of its goals, centered on aligning district practices with the then-new legislation of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) and student growth as a component of teacher evaluation. In 2010, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed into law PERA, which changed how teachers were evaluated. PERA required that evaluators become certified as teacher evaluators through a series of online courses. PERA also required evaluation to include a component of student growth. In response to the legislation, a subcommittee was established to focus on the district's internal evaluation process for teachers, and to review and align the

district's internal hiring practices and procedures. The subcommittee then informed our Board of Education about student growth and which measures to use in determining evaluation ratings. This section of the previous strategic plan also focused on aligning the hiring practices used by the district and included developing interview questions, setting procedures for team interviews, and developing criteria to screen online applications. The subcommittee was tasked with working on these goal components, the rationale being that it was important to effectively hire quality teachers as the first step in the eventual evaluation of their performance. As Pillsbury (2005) says, "To have a major focus in any area other than teacher quality and selection is to miss the power behind the most important decision an educational leader makes – the hiring of a teacher" (p. 38). This subcommittee's work was shared with administrators and implemented with the intention to develop additional components, such as an online screener or rubric to assist with the selection of online applications and additional interview guidance documents.

However, the district's updated 2018 strategic plan did not include any goals or action steps focused on staff, hiring process, or evaluation of teachers, nor did it have a dedicated section focused on hiring highly qualified staff. This is particularly unique because the subcommittee did not complete each of the tasks they set out to accomplish in terms of aligning their hiring practices or developing tools to support the process. While the subcommittee did develop a bank of questions to use in team interviews and a list of do's and don'ts when participating in a team interview, they completed none of the following: the creation of the online screening process, the protocol for initial phone or administrative interviews, questions for subsequent interview rounds, the final decision-making process, or the reference check process. In short, the portion of the strategic plan centered on the district's hiring process was incomplete without plans for this subcommittee's work to continue.

One action statement in the updated strategic plan focused on the recruitment and retention of a diverse staff. The initiatives connected to this action statement were more closely aligned with work around diversity, equity, and inclusion and focused on partnerships with colleges and high schools to support a pipeline for the district's 8th-grade students who may be interested in a future in education. Specific language related to hiring practices and protocols, however, was not highlighted. While the addition of this focus on the recruitment and retention of diverse staff was an important addition, unclear hiring practices and protocols continued to lead to ineffective hiring practices and protocols within the district, and this updated strategic plan did not address this need.

Definition of Terms

My dissertation focuses on investigating and analyzing the principal's role and influence on hiring practices and decision-making used by school districts because principals shape teacher hiring, and direction in the work of hiring effective teachers helps ensure students' academic success. To understand the components of the hiring process, I define hiring practices to include the following: (1) the information requested in the online application, including personal information, professional experience, and responses to constructed prompts; (2) where the application is posted and how it is used during the screening process; (3) interviews, including the initial screening process (whose application is reviewed and pulled for an interview, and why), how many additional interviews are conducted, and who is involved in those interviews; (4) and what types of questions are asked in the online application and the interviews. Additionally, I include information about (5) what practices beyond interviews are used in hiring (writing samples, teaching demonstration lessons, role plays, etc.) as part of my definition of

hiring practices. I will also gather information about (6) reference checks (how many are conducted, what questions are asked?).

In order to have a shared and common understanding of each of the steps of the hiring process, I will further define each term. Ikemoto & Chiang (2019) state, “The selection process includes the series of steps used to assess candidates once they have expressed interest” (p. 17) By definition, this includes the process used to assess a candidate’s basic skills and qualifications, fit for the position, and competencies and skills. For this study the hiring process will encompass (1) screening of applicants, (2) selection process, (3) interviews, and (4) decision making. Screening of applicants means reviewing the online application, including a review of work history/past experiences and the resume (Ikemoto & Chiang, 2019). Selection process is defined as the determination of which candidates will move forward in the process. This selection process may include using a rubric, an online selection score generated by an external program, or reference phone call information. Interviews include phone and in-person interviews, both with administrators and teams of teachers. Decision-making is defined as determining the candidate to hire or recommend to the superintendent. Decision-making may be based on professional judgment or based on pre-determined evidence/answers from the interviews.

Rationale for the Study

In my role as a building principal, the hiring process is among the most critical components of the job – to hire the right people for the right positions. While some may contend that there are other conditions that impact student learning, research says that the teacher is most influential in terms of student achievement. Cawletlie in Strong and Hindman (2003) reported, “that curriculum, class size, district funding, family and community involvement, and many

other school-related factors all contribute to school improvement and student achievement, however, the most influential school-based factor is the teacher” (p. 48), which amplified the need to ensure that teachers are hired and selected via an effective process.

Principals do not hire throughout the year but at certain times, and the hiring process lasts only a few months. Teacher hiring typically begins in March, when the evaluation process concludes, and teacher hiring continues over the summer months when transitions between teaching positions occur more naturally due to the end of one school year and the start of another year. This means that hiring can be stressful, given the other demands placed on principals at that time of year. Tooms & Crowe (2004) state, “Historically, the teacher hiring process has always been pressure-filled because of...the short hiring window. Too often, interviews were (and in some cases continue to be) hasty rituals squeezed between other administrative tasks” (p. 50). Although the impact of effective hiring is beneficial, the amount of time principals spend hiring is small in comparison to the time they spend in other aspects of their role. “Given the time constraints and responsibilities of school administrators, the teacher selection and employment process occurs quickly and involves a relatively restricted amount of information and data” (Whitworth et al., 2016, p. 1). While this is the reality of many principals and hiring processes, ideally, given the significance of the hiring decisions, more time and attention should be allocated to hiring.

At the beginning of the hiring process, most principals aim to secure high-quality candidates rather than discussing their process with colleagues. Once the hiring is complete, principals typically move forward with their back-to-school preparations, without taking the time to collaborate with colleagues about the process or the outcomes of their hiring. The benefit of collaborative discussions regarding hiring practices would be to learn from one another, to share

approaches to attract and vet quality candidates, and to create consistency around hiring approaches.

The hiring process is of particular interest to me because it varies so much from school to school and from district to district. This variability makes the topic of hiring unique, especially when juxtaposed with teacher evaluation. Principal preparation programs forego explicit training focused on hiring processes and protocols, and most districts require no human resources training. Principals are required by PERA to be officially trained to engage in teacher evaluation. Hence, while the approach to teacher evaluation has become more uniform and consistent, hiring remains abstract and individualized. Most school leaders have not had significant training or mentoring regarding hiring practices, nor much preparation during their formal coursework to become principals. Courses on effective interview techniques and the use of scoring using rubrics to determine a candidate's fit for a particular job do not exist in a job-embedded or required way.

For further analysis of the approach to hiring and the principal's role in hiring, Wagner's (2010) framework describes seven survival skills, including critical thinking, collaboration across networks, and communication, that can be applied to the approach to hiring. Quality hiring seems to be based on similar skills and strategies: the need to scrutinize the candidates and their skillset, the need to effectively communicate with colleagues and candidates, and the need to collaborate with others in the hiring process. While Wagner's framework identifies these key skills, formal principal education does not prepare principals to engage in hiring in this critical and collaborative way.

Hiring the right teacher for each position is crucial to the overall success of the school and to students' growth and learning. "School leaders can have a tremendous effect on student

learning through the teachers they hire, how they assign those teachers to classrooms, how they retain teachers, and how they create opportunities for teachers to improve” (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 66-67). Student learning and achievement can increase as a result of the implementation of effective hiring practices. It is critical to hire effectively so that teachers can remain in the same position over time. This continuity allows for curricular development and improved instructional practices; it also allows for professional learning communities to develop and for strong teaming practices to occur (Clement, 2009). Through this work, I hope to recommend a revised hiring policy and to develop a set of actions and strategies for principals and districts to use that provide guidelines for effective and essential hiring practices, and define the principal’s role in the hiring process and in decision making. My research goal is to identify a set of hiring procedures for use by principals across the Spring Valley School District, so that we can best align our practices and influences in the hiring process. The impact of this study may result in actions and strategies, some standardized, and some that vary by grade band or school, as different hiring practices may be necessary for different grade levels or content expertise. My focus for the strategies is not to provide a strict formula that must be followed but rather a common set of guidelines and timelines for use in hiring.

I selected this topic because of my personal interest and connection hiring teachers. With a certified staff of approximately 50, I hire a handful of teachers each year. During the spring of 2019, I hired five fulltime certified staff members, and during the spring of 2020, I hired six fulltime certified staff members. Each time I hire, I use a slightly different process, making tweaks and changes based on past experience, or abridging parts of the process due to timeline constraints and other job responsibilities. I am interested in determining why there is so much variability between my colleagues’ hiring practices and my own. Hiring is a personal process for

both the person conducting the hiring and for the person seeking employment, so decisions often seem based on instinct or intuition. During my time as an administrator, I have interviewed candidates I deemed right for the position based on my judgment rather than on what he or she said or did not say. I recently spoke with a teacher who shared that a principal told her she did not match his vision for the candidate. These vague statements and procedures cloud hiring practices in many districts, including mine. As Clement (2015) details, hiring should be rooted in evidence-based processes. In her study of principal hiring practices, Donaldson (2011a) contends that “principals arguably play the most important role in ensuring that excellent teaching occurs in their school. How principals hire...for teachers likely has major ramifications regarding teacher quality” (p. 27). The direct connection between the principal’s hiring process and teacher quality validates the reason to further align the processes used. Following a more research-based, robust, and comprehensive process would ensure that all hired candidates were, in fact, the best candidates for the positions. As Kimbrel (2019b) explains in her study of hiring practices, “The probability of hiring teachers likely to impact student achievement may be greatly increased when effective screening and interview methods that are supposed by research are utilized” (p. 19). Working towards a consistent hiring process would help to ensure effective teachers were hired.

Goals

This dissertation examines various hiring practices and the principal’s role in that process so that in order to develop a set of strategies and actions for our district. The goal of these strategies would be to align and specify the principal’s role in hiring practices, as well as the decision-making process when working to attract and hire highly skilled teachers and place them in the position best aligned with their skills and experience. Ideally, these practices would be

used consistently and comprehensively across all district schools. The practices would allow for variability based on school needs, administrator style, timeline, and other factors while still accomplishing the same intended outcome. Utilizing a research-based set of hiring guidelines may lead to teacher retention, continued proficient and excellent teacher evaluation ratings, and an increase in students' academic success.

Research Questions

My primary research question is, How do principals engage in teacher hiring practices, and what factors influence their hiring decision-making? My secondary questions are as follows:

How do administrators screen online applications?

What are the criteria for selecting an applicant file for an interview?

How do administrators structure interviews?

Who do they include in the interviews, and why?

How many interviews do candidates participate in?

What types of questions are asked during interviews?

Who developed and determined the questions for the interviews?

How do hiring practices vary based on time of year?

How do hiring practices vary based on teaching position?

How do the practices vary across grade levels and/or content areas?

How do these hiring practices support teachers' effectiveness?

These questions will be addressed in subsequent chapters through a comprehensive literature review, a detailed explanation of methodology, data analysis and findings.

Conclusion

Hiring is one of the most critical components of my job as a school principal. For an instructional leader, focusing on effective hiring demonstrates organizational management and the importance of high-quality instruction (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 66). Researching and reviewing the various practices and components used in my district and neighboring districts will help ensure that the best candidates are hired for the right jobs and that student learning and growth are maximized as a result of developing guidelines and procedures for effective hiring. The literature review will identify evidence-based practices related to hiring and the principal's role.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Effective hiring can impact a students' learning experience, the climate and culture of a team or school, and the overall success of a school system. Hiring teachers is a complex task spearheaded by the principal, with various approaches to the many different steps along the way. "Without question, the single most important task of a principal is to hire highly qualified, exceptional staff" (Mason & Schroeder, 2010). The problem of practice is most principals and other hiring administrators have crafted and developed their own hiring methods, which are not based on research, but often primary criteria for principals making hiring decisions. As Marzano in Clement (2015) writes, "Today 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. 1). Principals and hiring administrators must ensure that hiring decisions are valid and reproducible, so hiring cannot be arbitrary or based only on gut feeling.

Several major themes emerge in a review of literature related to the subject of hiring and the principal's role in hiring decisions. First, many studies and articles have been written about how principals determine what they seek in a new hire (Clement, 2015). Second, a great deal of literature focuses on principal hiring practices and procedures, which are varied and may include the use of screening tools, behavior-based interviewing, sample lessons, portfolios, and reference checks (Kimbrel, 2019b). A third major theme to review and consider focuses on the many internal and external variables influencing hiring decisions (Engel et al., 2018). A variable is a condition that changes over time, and internal variables might include the team dynamic, the administrator's approach to hiring, or the goals and initiatives of the district. External variables might include changes in a community population, the number of qualified candidates, or the location of the district or schools. Each of these themes is then reviewed through the lens of the

process and steps in hiring: selection of applicants, interviews, and decision-making; therefore, each section below will discuss how the identified theme from the literature applies to these steps in hiring. Principals' hiring practices must be better aligned, systematic, and rooted in best practices to ensure we hire the best teacher for the correct position.

The Many Factors One Must Consider When Determining Whom to Hire

Knowing that teachers have a profound and significant impact on student outcomes, it is essential to understand the many factors principals consider when engaging in hiring teachers. In other words, principals consider a number of different criteria when determining whom to hire. These factors include the overall hiring practices and policies, principals' training, the fit of candidates for the positions, as well as school climate or community interest in the candidates. These factors impact the hiring process at each step: initial screening of applicants, selection criteria, interview approaches, and decision making.

Principals consider numerous factors when hiring new teachers. In the study *Screen Twice, Cut Once: Assessing the Predictive Validity of Teacher Selection Tools*, "it is well documented that teachers can have profound effects on student outcomes" (Goldhaber et al., 2014). This study centers on this belief: Having the right people in the proper jobs can most favorably influence student learning. "There exists far less research or policy focus on the choices school systems make in the teacher hiring process, and what tools or policies may aid the process" (Goldhaber et al., 2014). The research is clear that effective hiring is essential; however, the most effective approach for that hiring activity has not been clarified.

Initial Screening

The first step for many hiring principals is to review applicant files as an initial screening process. In Goldhaber et al., 2014, researchers analyzed and studied one district's four-stage hiring process. The first stage was a review of online applications. Researchers asked administrators to use a teacher selection rubric for this first stage and a different rubric for each of the subsequent stages. Table 1 lists the criterion for the initial selection rubric, as well as a description of what the screener (principal) should look for when reviewing the applicant files.

Table 1

Evaluation Criteria on 21-Point Prescreening Rubric

Criterion	Screener should look for...
Experience related to position	Years of experience, type of experience, type of school/district, gaps in teaching experience
Depth of Skills	Evidence of strong content knowledge, strong classroom management, differentiates instruction, engages parents/families, strong rapport with students and colleagues, commitment to the school as a community, socially just practices, experience with diverse student populations, makes learning relevant, engages students in active learning, elementary level currently seeking those with experience using Fosnot, Calkins, GLAD strategies, response to intervention
Quality of recommendations	All items noted in above categories, does writer recommend/strongly recommend, personal or professional recommendation, does the writer regularly evaluate teachers (preference of letter from principal, asst. principal, instructional coach, supt.)

As Table 1 describes, many principals look at the experience related to the position, the depth of the skills, and the quality of the recommendations; these are examples of the factors, or criterion, that principals encounter and must weigh when making hiring decisions, and in this case, initial screening of an applicant. In Spring Valley School District, principals review online applications as the first step of the hiring process, but they do not use a selection rubric nor do they have a pre-determined set of criteria to inform their screening. So while all principals engage in the initial screening process, the factors that influence their approach to that initial screening process vary.

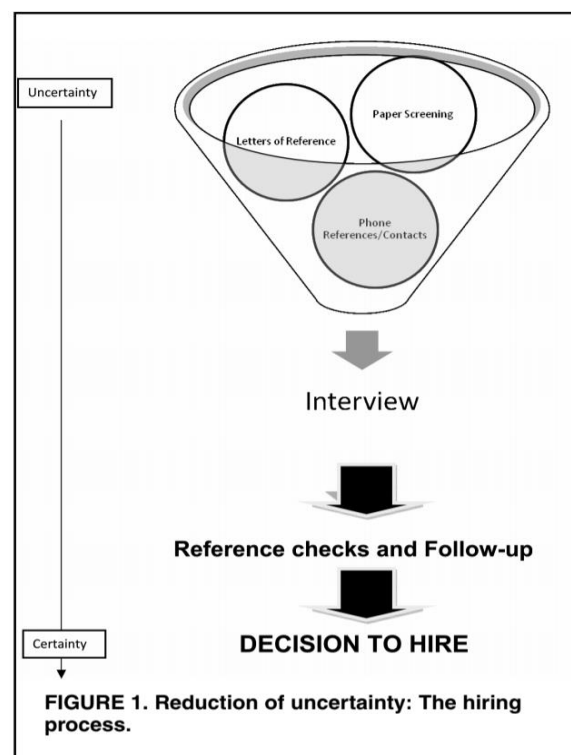
According to Braun et al (1987), researchers discuss that administrators focus most on written language (correct spelling, punctuation, and English usage) when reviewing applicant files. Some principals approach the review of these written responses for grammar and punctuation, while others are reviewing for content in the applicants' answers rather than punctuation and grammar. Researchers also found that confidential letters of recommendation and grade point average were considered when applicant files were reviewed (Braun et al, 1987). While "administrators rely on multiple tools to assess the qualities of applicants...important and necessary aspects of the process remain open to subjective assessment on the part of administrators" (Rutledge et al., 2007, p. 11). The subjectivity of the initial screening process leads to continued influence by multiple factors as the hiring process moves into the next phase.

Selection of Applicants

When principals are reviewing the applicant files, they are looking at the files through a specific lens, weighing the factors that are of importance. For example, they may be reviewing applicants for a primary teacher with a certain number of years of experience, or with experience working with EL students; these are the factors of importance for this position. Many principals are considering the school community and needs, as well as the District and school goals. Principals are also considering how to use community and staff input when beginning the hiring process. Principals also consider the specific student

Figure 1

Reduction of uncertainty: The hiring process



needs for the grade level, school, or classroom for which they are hiring a teacher (Braun et al., 1987). Mason and Schroeder (2010) use Figure 1 to depict “a visual representation of the hiring process”. As Figure 1 shows, as the hiring process moves from uncertainty to certainty about the candidates and the hiring decision, a number of factors are reviewed. In the figure, the funnel begins with paper screening (applicant file review), letters of reference, and the initial phone interviews or contacts and how that limits who is interviewed and ultimately offered a position captures the process of hiring. The research study goes on to discuss the differences and nuances of hiring, including the timing of the hiring, the size of the district, and the lack of a value-based system to screen high numbers of teacher candidates, echoing the previously discussed literature. In essence, the lack of a clear system to move the candidates through the funnel is evident. “No specific criteria exist to differentiate between teacher candidates” (Mason & Schroeder, 2010). In Spring Valley School District, principals use a variety of methods in funneling candidates from the general online application to interviews to hiring decisions.

Interview Approaches

The interview process is also impacted by the multiple factors principals must consider when hiring. According to Kimbrel, 2019a:

“Because no single tool is perfect and the traditional interview alone is unreliable...the literature advises the development and utilization of a selection system with multiple steps... (1) identification of key qualifications and prior experience necessary for success, (2) a structured interview process aligned to identified skills and abilities essential for success on the job and creation of interview questions and acceptable answers in order to assess whether the candidates possess the identified attributes, and (3) addition of other

predictive elements so that decisions are not based solely on paper screening and interviews” (p. 14).

Principals take into account the type of interview used, the number of candidates, as well as the specific fit for the position when engaging in the interview process. Principals must consider the factors that influenced and impacted their initial screening of candidates, as well as their selection criteria when they determine how to approach the interview process as well. Principals make decisions about whether to use multiple rounds of interviews, whether to include teachers in the process, and whether to use traditional questions or behavior-based questions (Clement, 2015). These decisions are based on professional judgment and personal preference. Clement (2015) states that principals have more success in selecting the best candidate when using behavior-based interview questions. These nuanced decisions related to interviewing alter and further vary the hiring process.

Decision Making

In terms of decision-making for principals during the hiring process, there are a variety of factors that influence and impact the decision-making. First, time plays a role in the decision-making process. Some districts delay posting and hiring based on collective bargaining agreements, retirements, central office influence, or other political factors. “Allowing for open hiring facilitates early hiring...ensuring a strong ‘fit’ for a job” (Papay & Kalejs Qazilbash, 2021, p. 2). Starting the hiring process earlier allows for principals to make decisions based on the fit of the candidate and the needs of the school, rather than simply the need to fill the vacancy. The use of rubrics or other tools is another factor that influences the decision-making process of principals when hiring. While some principals use formalized rubrics to assist in their decision-making, many more principals base their decisions on professional judgment. “The type of

selection tools is consistent with the qualities principals seem to prefer: enthusiasm, strong communication skills, and ability to work with others” (Rutledge et al., 2007, p. 11). Principals who make hiring decisions based on characteristics were less likely to follow a formalized process.

Professional Development and Training

In addition, “hiring effective teachers can be a challenging task that is made even more difficult by the fact that most principals do not have human resources training and they often create different hiring processes even in very similar schools” (Kimbrel, L., 2019a, p. 12). This is a factor that creates additional roadblocks and difficulty for principals. While many principals do approach the start of the hiring task in a similar fashion, the process of hiring varies from there. “Principals admitted to being largely self-taught or trained by a mentor, and described hiring practices that were heavily influenced by political and individual preferences” (Hughes, 2014). Principals approach hiring in different ways because of this lack of training and formalized structure.

The Process in Which Principals Approach Hiring is Varied

The many factors that influence hiring decisions also create a varied approach to the process. In Spring Valley School District, hiring practices and procedures are varied from school to school. Some principals use screening tools in the early stages of their hiring process, while others do not. This variability in the process of hiring – from initial screening to decision making – is echoed in the literature.

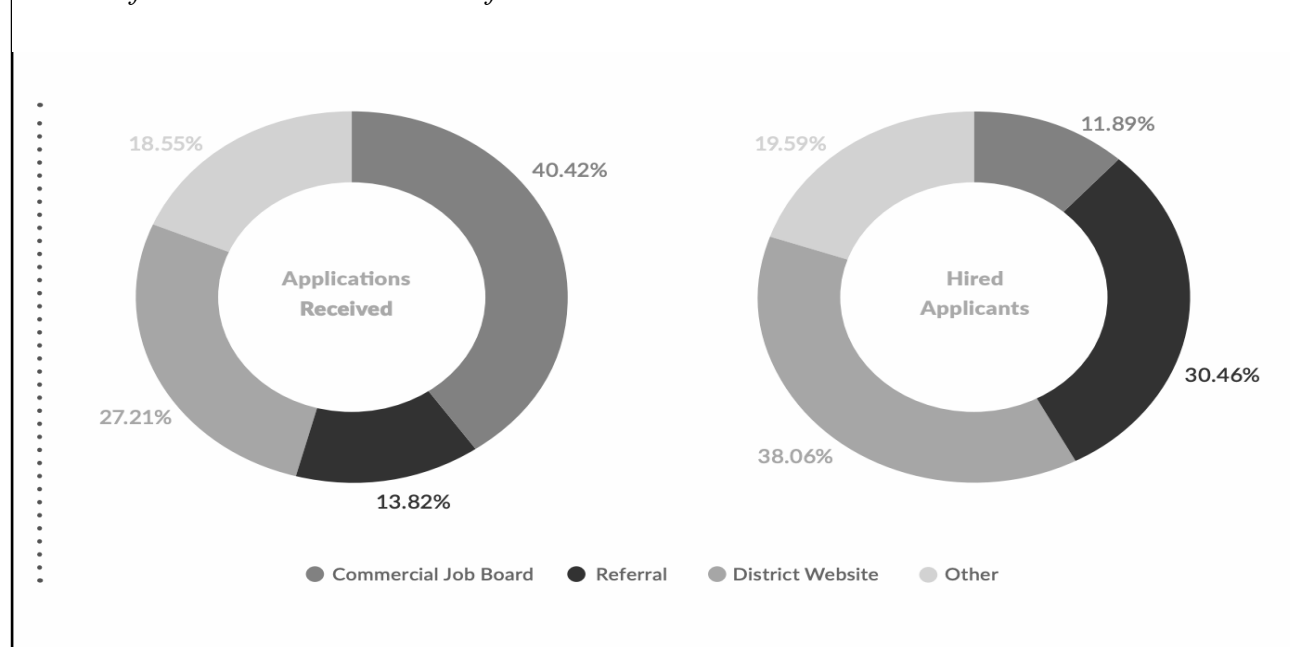
Initial Screening

In Goldhaber et al, researchers found that teacher hiring processes could be improved by implementing similar screening processes at an early stage in hiring (2015). The quantitative

study mentioned that other industry research backs this screening process as well (Goldhaber et al., 2015). Goldhaber et al. went on to indicate that only 13% of the 200 school districts used a performance-based screening process for applicants. The recommendation from the research was that using rigorous hiring practices and processes can dramatically improve teacher quality, and determining the best ways to screen candidates based on credentials and not perception or word of mouth is very beneficial (Leak in the Pipeline: Teacher Shortage Crisis: Recruiting Metrics). According to *Leak in the Pipeline: How hiring bias might be compounding the teacher shortage*, principals may already be limiting their pool of potential candidates based on this word of mouth referral process (see Figure 2). This image depicts the correlation between where applications come from and who is ultimately hired for the positions. In Figure 2, 13.82% of the applications received are from a referral source, and 30.46% of hired candidates are from that referral source. This is the largest difference between the percentages of applications received and the hired applicants; meaning that teacher candidates with a referral are much more likely to be hired. In

Figure 4

Percent of Teachers with Active Certifications



Spring Valley School District, this has often proven true. The district has partnerships with several local universities for student-teaching placements, and as a result, the student teachers are often the preferred candidates for full-time teaching positions within the school as they are considered referrals. When current teachers provide recommendations for candidates, the District provides those candidates with guaranteed interviews based on that relationship with a current employee; this negates or circumvents a uniform hiring process or protocol.

Selection of Applicants

Many principals or hiring administrators review candidate portfolios or written answers from online applications or in-person writing samples. This continuation of the hiring process is used as an additional way to measure candidates' fit for the positions. Similar to the varied approach towards interview questions, administrators approach the review of these materials in a varied way. While Clement (2015b) recommends using a rubric tool for all assessment aspects of hiring, including a review of portfolio or written answers, this is not common practice with principals, many of whom review the answers based on judgment and personal feelings. While many principals in Spring Valley do review written responses to questions posted in online applications, there is not a particular method or rubric to review those answers. Without a clear criterion, the purpose of these questions and this review remains unclear.

Additionally, some researchers state that the use of these written applications and responses is not the best method to select teaching candidates at all, and argue that this should be eliminated as part of the process. "School districts' application and selection processes often emphasize static application materials over performance-based methods" (Konoske-Graf et al., 2016, p. 2). This means that many principals spend a great deal of time reviewing online applications and written responses to determine whether the teaching candidate is the right fit for

the position. Konoske-Graf et al. suggest that including more performance-based elements into the hiring process and selection criteria may help principals hire more effectively. “For example, requiring candidates to perform a sample lesson or submit a video of a previous lesson – allows administrators to assess teacher style, management techniques, and cultural fit” (Konoske-Graf et al., 2016, p. 2). This further illustrates the varied approach to hiring.

Interview Approaches

The ways in which principals and hiring administrators approach interviewing candidates are also varied. “Despite its popularity, the traditional interview is among the most unreliable elements of the selection process in any industry and is particularly problematic in education because it offers a very limited opportunity to accurately assess a teacher’s pedagogical skills” (Kimbrel, L., 2019b, p. 15). Kimbrel continues to say, “interviews have long been the most popular method of employee selection and are likely to remain so. The validity and reliability of the interview process can be greatly improved if there is a reduction of bias and inconsistency, which can be accomplished through the addition of elements of structure” (2019b, p. 15). This aligns with principals’ use, and the continued use, of interviews as a part of their hiring process, though the structure of these interviews may need to change.

Some districts use a behavior-based approach to interviewing rather than a traditional interview, which focuses more on asking questions that are behavior-based or scenarios rather than “what” questions. “Long used in the business world, behavior-based interviewing (BBI) is built on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance” (Clement, M., 2015, p. 29). Some examples of behavior-based questions are as follows: Tell about a time when..., how have you..., describe how you have. These behavior-based questions may allow for candidates to share more detailed and accurate information. Most of Spring Valley School

District's interview questions use this behavior-based interviewing approach; however, this decision was not intentionally made or discussed. Training wasn't provided to administrators either. Without intentional discussion and training, the principals in the district may not understand the value of using behavior-based interview questions. The traditional approach to interviewing, which some principals and hiring administrators use, sounds like: what would you do if a student fell asleep in class? What are your feelings about discipline? Some principals choose to use these more traditional questions. Without proper training and understanding of the intentionality of the interview questions, this variability will continue.

Decision Making

Some principals and hiring administrators base their hiring decisions on personal feelings and judgment, rather than a systematic or structured approach. In school-based hiring decisions the individuals involved in judging candidates, from the start of the interview, begin to consider whether or not they believed there was a value match between the applicants and organizations (Cranston, J., 2012, p. 20). The data indicated that one-third of teachers who had a connection to the building (a friend or someone they knew who may have helped them get an interview) left within the first three years (to go to another position). This connects with one of the other perceptions, based on data analysis, which was that hiring managers seem to have a bias towards hiring candidates they like, as well as candidates that are reflections of themselves. These factors of likeability and commonality are both important in the hiring process (Leak in the Pipeline: Teacher Shortage Crisis: Recruiting Metrics. (n.d.)). In reviewing the transcripts from the principal interviews, Ingle et al. (2011) determined that principals' personal beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences helped to shape their preferences when it came to teacher characteristics. Researchers in this qualitative study also determined that school type (elementary, low-income

students) influenced principals' preferences for specific types of candidates or teacher characteristics. "Principals in the sample, however, showed surprising consistency towards certain characteristics (caring, subject matter knowledge, strong teaching skills) and job fit (person-job)" (Ingle, K. et al., 2011, p. 600). The findings also stated that principals said that each teacher vacancy is different and much of the hiring is dependent on the position itself, the team's needs, and the students' needs. Spring Valley School District approaches hiring in a way that is specific to the individual position, the dynamics of a certain team, and what the principal may know about the students in that grade level. The research also found that principals look at personal rather than professional traits more, like excitement, appearance, and confidence (Mason et al., 2010). Principals in Spring Valley School District use candidates' personal traits as a way to funnel candidates through the process. In addition, Kimbrel's study found that "Principals indicated that 'my opinion as a leader based on what is important at the time of hiring' was the most important determinant of the structure of the hiring process" (Kimbrel, L., 2019b, pg. 19). Principals shape the hiring process and shape it differently each time.

Professional Development and Training

Some principals and hiring administrators do not have proper training in hiring practices and procedures, which may lead to word of mouth and judgment-based hiring decisions. This is relevant in Spring Valley School District, as the principals there have never received formal training nor have they ever been observed while engaged in hiring practices. According to Cranston (2012), it is essential to "illustrate the critical role that principals play in assessing applicants along various dimensions of fit even though they may have little formal preparation that would increase the reliability of such assessments" (p. 15). This further validates the fact that principals in Spring Valley School District use their professional judgment in their hiring

decisions, and do not typically engage in professional development to support this work, but should. Ramirez et al. (2009) stressed the importance of this training. “Access to useful information and training should be ensured among all principals. Principals varied considerably in the resources they reported having available to them, suggesting that the distribution mechanisms were different for different resources or different principal groups” (p. 23). While valued and important, principals receive varied professional development and training in hiring processes.

External and Internal Variables Influence Hiring Decisions

Many internal and external variables influence hiring decisions in schools, and the role of a principal is to determine which of those variables warrant attention and focus and which do not. According to Alsobaie (2016), the main findings were that the process which the superintendent used was heavily influenced by the Board of Education’s demands, rather than what was best for the community-at-large or what the superintendent knew was best for all students and the school. In addition, the superintendent succumbed to political and systemic influences during the hiring process, rather than engaging in a cleaner and more objective hiring process (Alsobaie, 2016). The element of external influence on a principal or hiring administrator's hiring decision is an important element to consider and plan for in a hiring process. While one cannot ignore the external demands, a hiring process must have a space and procedure for taking these external factors into play. Similarly, there may be internal demands that influence the hiring process and decision-making. Internal variables may be student teaching candidates or teachers who ask for grade-level transfers. In this leadership analysis, the recommendation was to develop a system and way to capture and use feedback from external

stakeholders, such as the Board of Education, community members, and parents (Alsobaie, 2016). A similar process should be used in relation to internal factors.

Initial Screening

Principals use online applications to review candidates' credentials and experience. According to Rutledge et al., principals give too little weight to subject knowledge when hiring; this is an example of an external variable. Some "principals believe that most teacher candidates have sufficient content knowledge to raise student achievement" and so they do not focus on that as an element in the hiring process (Rutledge et al., 2010, p. 236). The principal's perception of the importance of content knowledge and the direct correlation to their hiring process and how it includes (or does not include) content knowledge is an example of a variable in the initial screening stage. Another external variable related to the initial screening of applicants is the number of applicants received for the vacancy. In some cases, a large number of applicants are available while in other cases there are only a few qualified candidates. This variable changes the approach to screening applicants (Rutledge et al., 2007). Another variable related to the initial screening process is time. When principals engaged in the hiring process in the spring months, they had more time to participate in the process of hiring. When hiring was relegated to July and August, principals used a condensed approach to hiring (Buttner, 2020). These variables impact the initial screening process that is used.

Selection of Applicants

The element of professional judgment is another variable that influences the hiring process, in particular the selection criteria a principal uses. Rutledge et al. state that the "current federal and state policy climate emphasizes teachers' professional characteristics" in terms of an external factor in hiring (2010, p. 237). This study validates the actual practice of principals,

which does, indeed, weigh and balance the credentials of teachers, the candidates' "fit" for the role, and the teacher teams' influence or feedback in the hiring process. Principals consider the candidate "fit" when determining which candidate will move along in the process. "Principals indicated that 'my opinion as a leader based on what is important at the time of hiring' was the most important determinant of the structure of the hiring process" (Kimbrel, 2019b, p. 19). These external and internal variables shape and change how hiring is conducted from building to building, from principal to principal. Principals are considering candidates' "fit" and personal characteristics as part of the selection criteria.

Interview Approaches

It has also been determined that "the principal is nearly always involved in the interview. Fifty-five percent stated that grade level and content area teachers are involved. Forty-two percent stated that additional teachers are also involved, and 20 percent stated that special education teachers...are involved" (Mason et al., 2010, p. 190). This means that principals are leading the hiring process at their buildings, and balancing the external and internal variables that play into hiring. The principal's approach to hiring can be an internal variable. If a principal uses a traditional approach to interviewing, that may create one outcome related to hiring (Rutledge et al., 2007). If a behavior-based approach to hiring is used, the principal may feel like they have a greater base of information to use regarding the teacher's capacity for the position (Cranston, J., 2019). Teacher teams are also often involved in the hiring process, which is another internal variable. "We provide evidence of the degree to which district and school administrators negotiate teacher quality and test-based accountability in teacher hiring. We find that the principals generally bridged to policies, aimed directly at teacher quality - teacher certification and credentials" (Rutledge et al., p. 234). When teacher teams participate in the hiring process,

this changes the dynamic of the interview process, as well as the feedback gathered about the candidates.

Decision Making

External and internal variables impact the principal's decision-making process when hiring. The concept of bridging and buffering is another concept that must be attended to when hiring. First, district administrators bridge or buffer policy messages, which are external and internal variables. According to Rutledge et al., 2010:

“We build on Honig and Hatch's (2004) conceptualization of ‘bridging and buffering.’ This framework, rooted in organizational and institutional theory, explains how organizations respond to external regulation and control. In this framework, districts and schools are understood as organizations in which members collectively negotiate external policies with their own internal goals and strategies. Bridging entails accommodating policy demands through initiative and structures directly aimed at meeting policy goals. Buffering, in contrast, represents resistance to policy goals by forcing on local objectives and priorities...This framework provides a way to quantitatively link principals' understanding of their school's response to external policy with the characteristics they prefer in applicants and illustrates the complexities involved...” (p. 213)

When principals are making decisions about candidates, they must consider these external variables and influences. Administrators bridge and buffer indirect policy efforts, like high-stakes accountability (Rutledge et al, 2010). This can have an influence on their hiring decisions.

Conclusion

Based on this review of literature, there is a need for additional research on the most effective process to use when hiring, the specific tools to use during the hiring process, and the most impactful timeline in which to follow. Overall, there is a need for additional research on what are the most effective hiring practices for teachers - to ensure the right person is in the right job, and to ensure effective teaching is evident. Principals and hiring administrators are often the sole determinants of what we are looking for in a candidate. Principals use a wide variety of hiring practices, which are often varied within an organization, and most often widely varied between districts. Principals are also influenced by internal and external factors that sometimes have negative impacts on hiring decisions. Additional research into what are the most effective hiring practices will help provide direction for principals and other hiring administrators.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

While the literature validates the principal's role in hiring is important, it also demonstrates how varied the principal's approach is to the hiring process, how external and internal variables can influence that process, and how principals approach hiring in a personal and nuanced manner. Though the process in which principals use varies widely, the process includes the review of online applications, the selection criteria, interviews, and decision-making protocols. Through a qualitative approach, this study gathered insights from principals, analyzed those insights, and drew conclusions to inform the recommendations and action steps to follow. Using both surveys and semi-structured interviews, this data from principals assisted in answering the primary research question of how principals influence teacher hiring practices and hiring decision-making. This chapter provides an overview of the research design, the participants of the study, data gathering techniques, and data analysis techniques.

Research Design Overview

Focusing on program evaluation is a critical component of effective research. According to Michael Quinn Patton (2008), outcomes are particularly important to program evaluation. Patton defines the use of goals in the evaluation as starting with three questions: the baseline ("Where are we now?") the ideal ("Where do we want to go?") and the results, ("Where do we actually end up?") (p. 233). This represents the most fundamental goals-based logic of evaluation. Reflection on the Spring Valley School District's current hiring practices answers the question of where are we now and will be detailed in the "as-is" portion of chapter four (see figure 3), but the district's ideal (or goal) and results are unclear. As Patton (2008) details, difficulty setting a clearly articulated goal is a common problem that can cause stress and anxiety (p. 233). Having a clearly articulated goal related to hiring is valuable, and connects directly to

the question of where we want to go. An essential part of the process is to focus on developing a process to hiring and being able to determine where we actually end up.

Patton focuses notably on the end-user, participants, and programs during an evaluation. He claims that “The power of evaluation varies directly with the degree to which the findings reduce the uncertainty of action for specific stakeholders” (Patton, 2008, p. 532). This notion that the end user or intended user of the data and program evaluation matters during research and reporting of findings is valuable. As this relates to hiring, more information and knowledge is not always better; there is a healthy limitation to the knowledge that some people need or can use. This belief impacts the hiring process in that the process should be designed to gather the most relevant and applicable information about the candidates, therefore, this research study should target that mindset.

Data Collection

In this research, information was collected from principals via an electronic survey to gather data on how principals conduct hiring processes. The questions probed how online applications are screened, what criteria are used to select applications, how principals determine whom to interview, how many interview rounds candidates participate in, what types of questions they ask, and who is a part of the hiring team.

The participants in this study are divided into two related groups: the survey respondents and the interviewees. In terms of the survey respondents, I sent the digital survey to principals in both Spring Valley School District and the neighboring districts. I received nine completed surveys in response. For the interviews, I conducted three virtual interviews.

Given that my research question focused on the principal’s role and influence in hiring practices and decision making, my research intended to gather information and insights from the

principals who make these hiring decisions. The survey provided the anonymity that some participants may wish to have, as some may find hiring practices to be sensitive matters. My plan to conduct in-person interviews with a few candidates was based on confidentiality and anonymity in my reporting of the findings. I protected my interviewees' identities by referring to them as "interviewees 1, 2, and 3" rather than by name. I held the in-person interviews with the principals with whom I work directly and have a positive professional relationship. This trust promoted honest and robust responses about hiring practices. The additional interviewee was a former colleague with whom I have a similar relationship.

Participants

My study's key participants are nine principals involved in the hiring process for their school buildings. More specifically, I surveyed both the other two principals in Spring Valley School District and principals within the regional area. I included only principals from elementary (K–8) school buildings, as hiring needs and teacher candidate profiles and backgrounds change between elementary and high school. While some elements of hiring may be consistent from elementary to high school, the culture and context differ and may impact principals' approaches. Table 2 presents the demographics of participants. Participants one, two, and four were the interviewees.

Table 2
Participant demographics

Participant #	Age	Gender	Years of experience	Role	School Level	Education
1	40s	Female	7	Principal	Middle	Master's
2	40s	Female	7	Principal	Elementary	PhD
3	60s	Female	25	Retired principal	Elementary	EdD
4	40s	Female	13	Dir. of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	District (elementary)	Coursework for EdD
5	40s	Female	15	Former principal	District (elementary); former Middle school principal	Master's plus Supt courses
6	40s	Male	5+	Principal	Elementary	Master's
7	40s	Female	5+	Principal	Elementary	Master's
8	40s	Female	5+	Principal	Elementary	Master's
9	50s	Female	5+	Principal	Elementary	Master's
10	50s	Female	10+	Principal	Elementary	Master's

I selected principals in my district because they are most familiar with our district's needs and students. I also selected principals in neighboring districts who had similar demographics to Spring Valley. Patton (2008) refers to this as purposeful sampling, where candidate selection occurs on the basis of the most information-rich research candidates for a given study. These principals are also familiar with our general hiring process, yet each is unique in his or her approach. One principal had been an administrator in our district for seven years, and the other principal was in her first year as principal in our district, but had been a principal in a previous district. The district-level administrator in my district contributed to hiring at the district level and had been an administrator in our district for 13 years. The district-level administrator from another district was a principal for seven years in our district, had been a principal in another district, and had helped to develop many of our current hiring protocols based on these

experiences. The additional six principals from outside of my district served as a counterpoint, offering a wider view of hiring practices in the Chicago suburban area.

Data Gathering Techniques

Survey

Data was gathered via a survey, as well as via interviews. The survey was a Google survey sent via email. Results were auto-populated on a Google spreadsheet. The survey was issued to the selected participants detailed in the above section, for a total of nine respondents. The survey contained four different sections, all related to hiring: (1) Online Application, (2) Interviews, (3) References, (4) Demographics. I asked explicitly about the principals' role in hiring. In this series of questions, I inquired about how the principal is involved, asking specifically about which parts of the hiring process the principal is solely responsible for or is jointly responsible for leading. I also included a section on the survey about the specific parts of hiring (application review, interviews, reference checks). Within each of these sections, I asked a series of questions about the principals' use of each part or component of hiring. For example, in the application review section, I asked questions about the number of applications received on average for a vacancy, the principal's applications review process, and what determines which applicants are then interviewed. While there were nine survey questions that were open-ended, two questions offered Likert-scale answers. For example, one question asked for the average number of online applications received for a vacancy, providing ranges such as less than 10, 10-25, 26-50, or 50+. At the end of the survey, I asked a series of demographic questions, including information about the respondent's length of time as an administrator. I included this demographic information to determine if there were differences in answers based on the length

of time as an administrator. I also included a question in the survey regarding participation in a follow-up interview.

Interviews

I planned to interview two to four principals. From my survey, I had three principals indicate that they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview. The interviews were conducted virtually, recorded, semi-structured, and lasted no more than 45 minutes. Survey participants one, two, and four were my interviewees. During the interview, I asked more open-ended questions about the hiring process. For example, I asked questions such as, How do you develop interview questions and what changes have you made to your hiring practices over time? I asked follow-up questions during the interview; specifically, I could ask participants to elaborate the reason for a certain answer or clarify an answer. I selected this open-ended, loosely structured interview style so that I could be responsive to my participants' responses and customize the questions I asked based on these responses. According to Patton (2008), interviews offer flexibility and responsiveness that can garner interesting and more detailed data.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data collection occurred in two stages. The first data set was collected from the principal surveys, and the second stage was the follow-up, virtual interviews.

In terms of the analysis of the survey data, I used a coding system for the open-ended answers to look for commonalities in responses. I looked for themes from the written responses and developed this coding system. "This step encourages practitioners to see new overarching themes congregated under the ideas captured in codes and memos" (James et al., 2008, pg. 90). When reviewing the written survey responses, I identified the themes of professional judgment, process variation, and principal's role. For questions with a Likert scale, I report the overall

statistical mean of all surveys completed. I did no quantitative analysis of the data, as the sample size was small and as my research questions did not pertain to the demographic details of the respondents.

Virtual interviews were conducted one-on-one between a principal and me; two follow-up interviews were conducted via video conference, and one was conducted via phone. I audio recorded each interview and transcribed the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. After transcribing the interviews, I coded the responses using the themes I had identified from my analysis of the survey results to draw patterns and comparisons between the respondents from the survey's open-ended questions and the details from the virtual interviews, as well to the Likert scales data. This triangulation of data helped to confirm the identified patterns. Triangulation is a method of analysis that helps to check for these correlations in findings (Patton, 2008). Via my identified themes and use of triangulation, I was confident that my research would help answer the question of how principals engage in the teacher hiring process and decision-making.

Limitations

The sample size for this study was the most significant limitation. With nine survey responses from a particular region, the results of this study may not be easily applied to a broader context. While the interviews were intended to be in-person, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented that, so the virtual setting may have been another limitation for the depth and detail of the interviewee's answers. Finally, with a larger sample size, a quantitative analysis of the respondent's answers and the demographics of their school district would have been an effective and interesting comparison. This comparison may have helped the research outcomes be more widely applied.

Ethical Considerations

Given that hiring can be a sensitive topic for both hiring principals and districts overall, I was mindful to gather the information confidentially. The surveys were sent to principals electronically, via email. Principals could complete them without any identifying information (e.g., name or district). I did not retain a record stating who completed which online survey, so no identifying information connects a survey participant and his or her specific answers. I also ensured all participants would receive information about informed consent in the opening paragraph of the survey. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and without judgment or retribution. In the introductory paragraph, I included a purpose statement in the introductory paragraph with a few sentences examining my motivation and my goals as a researcher (James et al., 2008, p. 25). This purpose statement helped clarify the goal of my research and its intended use. My research did not involve any minors, and there were no identified risks or benefits to participating in the study.

Conclusion

Evaluating programs, processes, or procedures is a valuable endeavor. This study served to gather more information about hiring practices, the benefits of certain hiring practices, and the drawbacks of others. The study also looked to examine the principals' role in these hiring practices, and inform policy changes for our district in terms of hiring practices. Survey data will inform these potential policy changes.

CHAPTER FOUR: Results (As Is)

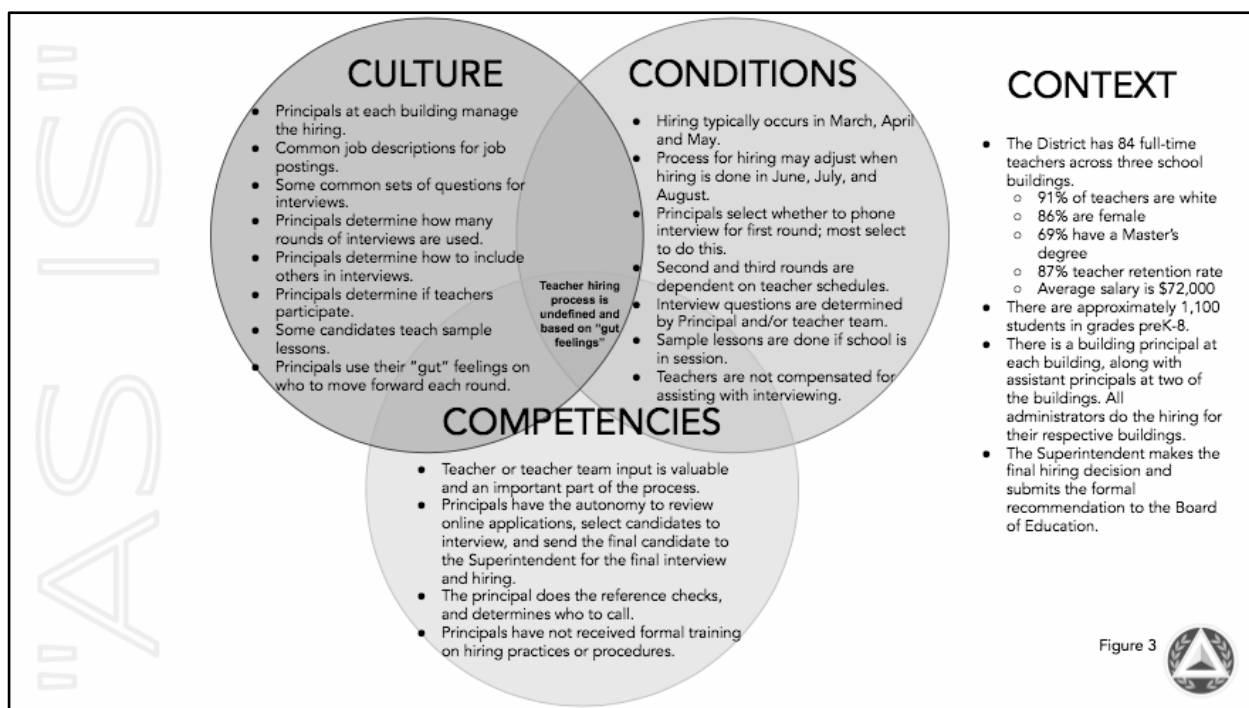
In reviewing and analyzing the survey results, it is important to use a framework to assist in understanding the data and its patterns. Wagner (2010) “offers an approach to thinking systemically about the challenges and goals of change in schools and districts, which we call the 4 C’s – competency, conditions, culture, and context” (p. 98). I used this framework, coupled with the themes from my literature review and the steps of the hiring process, to analyze and explain the current status of the district’s hiring practices, as well as to frame and discuss the research findings and data collected via surveys and interviews.

4 C’s: Competency, Condition, Culture, and Context

Competency is defined “as the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning...competencies are most effectively built when professional development is focused, job-embedded, continuous, constructed, and collaborative” (Wagner, 2010, p. 99). In terms of the principals’ role in hiring, competency relates directly to professional development about hiring practices, as well as to the principals’ ability to follow and adhere to guidelines and procedures. Wagner (2010) describes conditions as “the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources” (p. 101). This architecture includes structures within the day, such as the bell schedule or the time allotted to each subject area, teacher-to-student ratios, and time spent with students. In terms of principals and hiring practices, conditions refer to the timelines related to hiring and the processes of interviews. Wagner (2010) defines culture “as the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (p. 102). Culture is a key piece of the principals’ role in hiring, as the culture of the building influences hiring decisions because team

dynamics factor into hiring decisions, as do school and community values and beliefs. This importance of culture impacting hiring also directly connects to principals' use of professional judgment or their "gut" feelings. Finally, context refers to the "skill demands' all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens and the particular aspirations, needs, and concerns of the families and community that the school or district serves" (Wagner, 2010, p. 104). To connect context to the hiring process, principals are tasked with hiring teachers who can be successful at creating skilled learners.

To further understand the current status of the district in which this research was largely conducted, Figure 3 depicts the current environment (as-is). Spring Valley School District's hiring practices are evidently not fully developed, aligned, or implemented, as each principal approaches the hiring process differently, there has been no job-embedded training or professional development associated with the hiring process, and the approaches to interviewing vary between buildings and principals. Consequently, the hiring practices and outcomes vary between the three school buildings and between hiring administrators. Hiring administrators make instinctive hiring decisions. Via my survey of principals and follow-up interviews with three of those administrators, the data demonstrates how varied the approach is to hiring while highlighting key commonalities between the different hiring approaches. These commonalities found a better aligned and more uniform hiring process.

Figure 7*As-Is Diagram*

The surveys and interviews focused on the primary research question of how principals engage in teacher hiring practices and what factors influence their hiring decision making. The secondary questions are as follows:

How do administrators screen online applications?

What are the criteria for selecting an applicant file for an interview?

How do administrators structure interviews?

Who do they include in the interviews, and why?

How many interviews do candidates participate in?

What types of questions are asked during interviews?

Who developed and determined the questions for the interviews?

How do hiring practices vary based on time of year?

How do hiring practices vary based on teaching position?

How do the practices vary across grade levels and/or content areas?

How do these hiring practices support teachers' effectiveness?

The findings from my survey and interviews provide insight into these questions. This section will also include interpretations of the data, the judgment of that data and its application, and further recommendations based on those interpretations and judgments.

Literature Review Themes Related to Findings

Three themes that emerged from my literature review included the following: First, many factors must be considered when hiring. Principals have a wide variety of factors to review, analyze, and measure when making hiring decisions, constituting a key theme evident in much of the literature and emergent during the data collection (Goldhaber et al., 2014). The second theme from the literature was that principals approach hiring in various ways (Ramirez et al., 2009). Principals approach hiring from nuanced and varied perspectives, working through each stage of the hiring process based on their perspectives. The third theme from the literature was that internal and external variables influence hiring decisions (Alsobaie, 2016), namely school or team dynamics, initiatives, or school-based needs. External variables include the number of applicants or available candidates within an area. Before we review the findings, it is also important to define the four C's.

Table 3 showcases the survey questions, responses, and connections of these responses to the 4 C's. Hiring culture regards the principals' role in the culture as it relates to hiring, specifically the autonomy of the principal in terms of hiring decisions. As Table 3 shows, the majority of the respondents have broad autonomy in hiring decisions. Hiring context regards the

external and internal variables that influence hiring decisions for principals. Table 3 summarizes respondents' answers to questions about the number of applicants for positions, which relates to the context. Competencies focus on the processes and procedures used by principals when engaging in the hiring process, and context relates to the external and internal variables related to hiring.

Table 3
Survey Questions with Responses Connected to the 4 C's

Survey question	Response $N = 9$	Connection to 4 C's
On average, how many online applications do you receive for a teaching vacancy?	78% of the 9 survey respondents receive 25 or more online applications for a teaching vacancy.	<i>Culture:</i> principals determine how to review the online applications; principal autonomy in hiring <i>Context:</i> there is a high number of applicants for most positions; external variable/condition
How do you separate out candidates before you call them in for an interview?	44% of the 9 survey respondents use "professional judgment" to separate out candidates. 37.5% use an online and/or phone screener to separate out candidates.	<i>Culture:</i> principals use their "gut" feelings to review applications; principal autonomy in hiring <i>Competencies:</i> principals have autonomy to review applications and make decisions; autonomy of process and procedures
Who reviews online applications?	88% of respondents said the principal and/or assistant principal review the online applications.	<i>Culture:</i> principals determine how to review the online applications; principal autonomy in hiring <i>Competencies:</i> principals have autonomy to review applications and make decisions; autonomy of process and procedures
Who determines who is interviewed?	As with the online application review, 88% said the principal and/or assistant principal determine who is interviewed.	<i>Culture:</i> principals determine who to interview and if those candidates move ahead in the process; principal autonomy in hiring
What aspect of the online application is most important to you?	33% said the resume; 33% said the application/employment history section.	<i>Culture:</i> principals determine what to review from the online application; principal autonomy in hiring <i>Conditions:</i> principals follow timelines that relate to the vacancy and the needs of the

		building; principal autonomy in determining building needs as they relate to hiring
How many rounds of interviews do candidates participate in, on average?	66.7% said three rounds of interviews is typical.	<i>Conditions:</i> principals determine the number of rounds of interviews; principal autonomy in determining building needs as they relate to hiring, including process for hiring
Who participates in the first interview?	88% said the principal, and sometimes the assistant principal joins.	<i>Culture:</i> principals manage the hiring process within the building; principal autonomy in hiring process
Who determines if a candidate moves forward in an interview?	88% said the principal does, at times with input from the online screener or a team.	<i>Culture:</i> principals manage the hiring process within the building; principal autonomy in hiring process <i>Conditions:</i> principals determine the interview team and how to gather feedback
What's your role in hiring for your building?	44% said they make the final decision in hiring.	<i>Context:</i> principals make the final hiring decisions or recommendations to the superintendent

Steps in the Hiring Process

In alignment with the survey and interview questions, the findings are also organized by the steps in the hiring process. Principals first review online applications to determine which candidates to interview. From there, the selection of applicants occurs in a variety of ways. Interviewing is the next step of the process including how principals engage in the interviewing process, as well the format for the interviews. Decision-making is the next step of the hiring process. This includes how decisions are made, as well as when and who. The findings from this study will be organized by these steps of the hiring process.

Findings

As the literature review details, principals must consider many factors when engaging in the hiring process, approach the process in varied ways, and manage internal and external

variables when hiring. The hiring process includes candidate selection from the online applications, considering whom to interview, and determining which candidates continue throughout the hiring process (decision making). This hiring process directly relates to the context, culture, conditions, and competencies of the principal and the district.

Application Review

Factors considered in selecting applicants

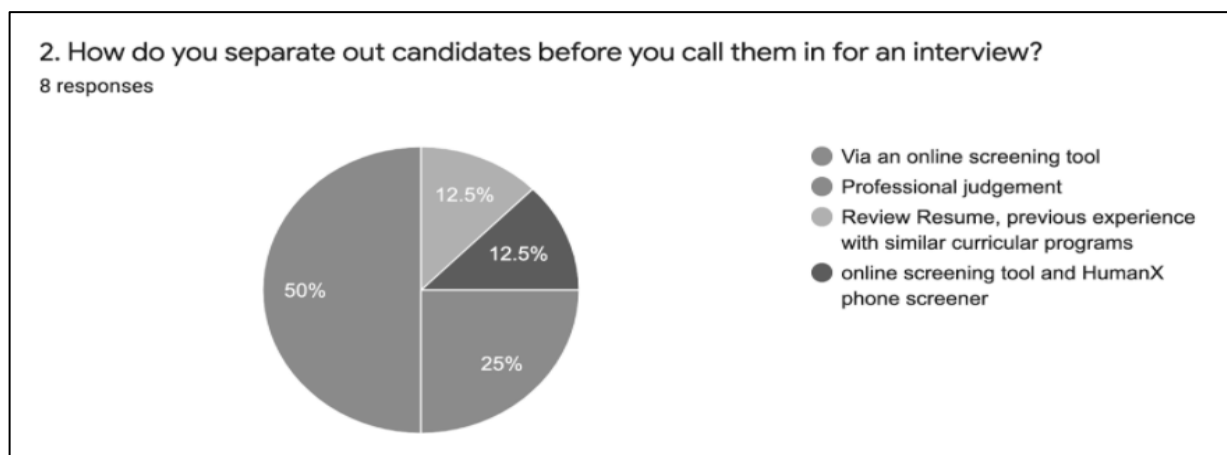
As Table 3 displays, the principal is often the sole decision-maker selecting who is interviewed, the number of rounds of interviews, who moves ahead, and ultimately who is offered the position. In terms of who reviews the online applications, 88% of respondents said the principal or assistant principal reviews them. The same proportion reported that the principal determines which candidates move ahead in the process, at times with input from the online screener or a team. The competing and varied factors to consider relate to the culture of hiring.

Varied approach to reviewing applicants

The survey results reveal that principals within both this district and other districts have a similar level of autonomy in the hiring process and adhere to a similar belief in professional judgment as to the means of determining which candidates advance in the selection process. As Figure 4 indicates, 50% of eight respondents shared that they use professional judgment to determine which online applicants to move ahead to the interview stage of the hiring process; one survey respondent did not answer this question. On the other hand, 37.5% of respondents use

Figure 4

Survey responses on how to separate candidates before an interview

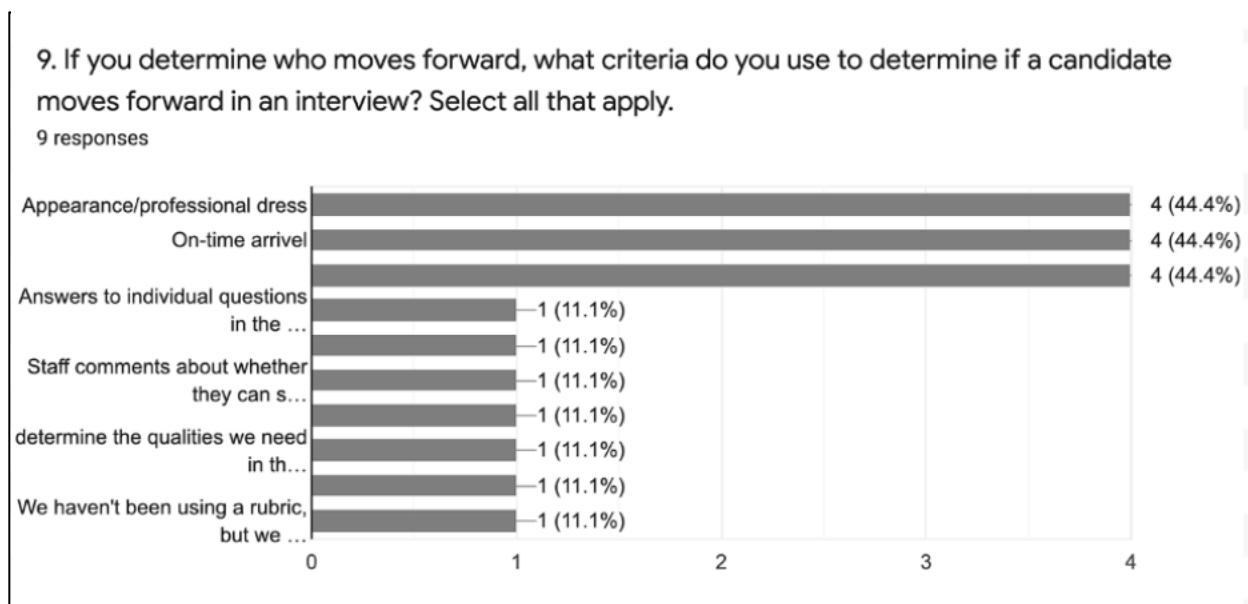


an online screening tool or phone screening tool to select which candidates should advance in the hiring process. These screening tools provide ratings for candidates based on how they answer. This demonstrates a variation in terms of which selection criteria is used.

The culture of the school, district, or team impacts the approach to hiring. Interviewee 3 shared, “I go through each online application, as well as the attachments as the first step...I just focus on current experience, and whether or not those skill sets are a match for what we’re looking for.” This nuanced approach is focusing on the culture of the building and the team as the means for application selection. Further, 44% of survey responses indicated that the principal was the sole person to review the online applications. Concerning the criteria to determine who proceeds to an interview, most survey responses indicated the use of professional judgment (Figure 5). Additionally, principals reported that they determine which candidates proceed based on their appearance and professional dress, as well as their answers to individual questions during the interview. Survey respondents described that their use of professional judgment encompassed a review of an applicant’s professional experiences, a review of essay questions, and a review of their educational background.

Figure 5

Survey responses related to determining if a candidate moves forward



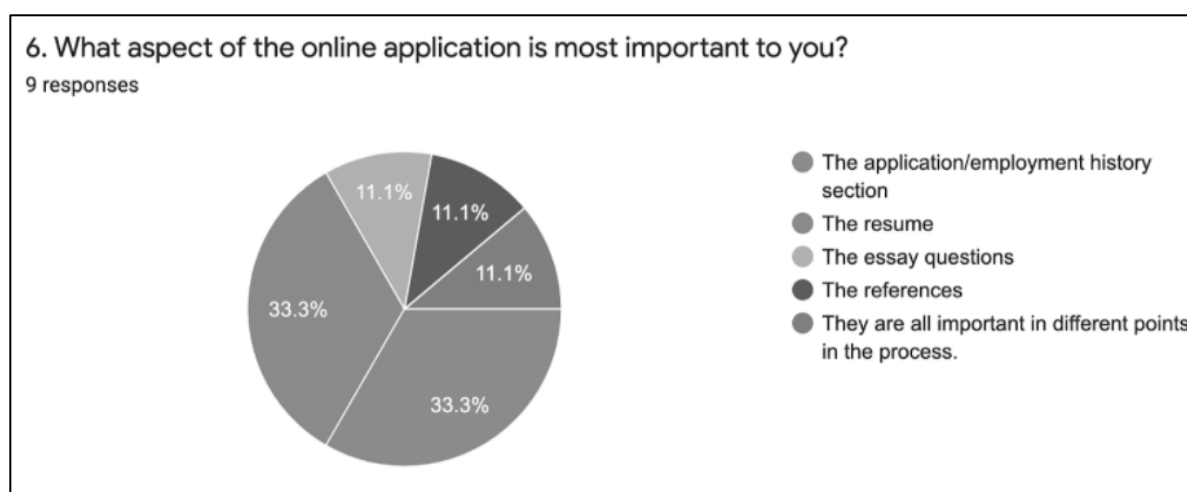
Internal and External factors

As it connects to the literature theme of the influence of multiple factors, the competency of the principals in the hiring process is variable. Goldhaber et al. (2014) found that using screening tools and other research-based methods produced successful hiring results. Goldhaber et al.'s study implemented a research-based hiring methodology and then studied the success of the teachers' performance over time. Goldhaber's research validates the need to consider how to quantify professional judgment, and how to use a more uniform, research-based approach to vetting online applications. Interviewee 1 shared that she used a formal screening tool and found value in the numerical score provided. Such a nonbiased and neutral way to screen the online applications was helpful, she said, given the high quantity of online applications she receives for some openings. From there, she said she can review the components of the applications in more depth, such as a review of the written components or essays. In addition to the comments from

interviewee 1, the survey results (see Figure 6) show that respondents provided mixed answers concerning the most important aspect of the online application, stating that the resume and application/employment section was most important for 66% of respondents. This mixed result validates the need for an online screening tool to assist with the initial vetting of candidates to allow more focus on each section of the prescreened applicants.

Figure 10

Survey responses related on the online application



External and internal variables contribute to hiring decisions and actions. Often the conditions surrounding hiring comprise external variables. These conditions may include the number of candidates or applicants for the position or the community's involvement in the school's initiatives. Hiring typically occurs in March, April, and May for known positions. These positions open where a teacher retires, moves, resigns or does not have their contract renewed. Hiring also occurs in the summer months of June, July, and August. In these months, principals often adjust their typical hiring practices or the hiring culture. In these months, principals may select fewer candidates from the online applications, conduct fewer rounds of interviews, or eliminate portions of the process. The external variable of timing influences how principals

approach hiring and how their hiring decisions are made. This external variable also connects to hiring conditions. These conditions dictate many of the decisions about when and how hiring occurs.

During one interview, a principal described the changes she made to the hiring process because of the conditions or the external and internal variables. She said that at the beginning of the summer they had three rounds of interviews and a demonstration lesson: “What I’ve been trying to do is kind of condense that to three steps on my side instead of four, so combining the demo lesson and then the interview...it’s been really difficult to find times for...the team to meet” (Interviewee 1). Another administrator described having created and changed her hiring practices over the years to create a multistep process. She said that in previous years, she might have called a few candidates and done one interview before offering the candidate the position. She said, “I think part of that is the system itself changing...and also me growing as an administrator and the understanding the hiring process more, making sure that each candidate is asked the same set of questions” (Interviewee 2). In sum, hiring conditions shape the hiring process.

Competencies refer to the abilities of the principals who are engaged in the hiring process. External and internal variables impact these competencies, as well as how principals approach each step of the hiring process. When asked to describe the application review process, interviewee 2 shared the following:

Review of all applications submitted is the first step. I review work experiences, job history/mobility, grades in preparatory programs, and references. I also eliminate candidates with incomplete applications and substantial spelling and grammatical errors in their applications.

This pattern of the review was similar in most of the survey and interview responses. All three principals I interviewed focused on the essay question responses on the online application. Each administrator shared specific ways she reviewed the essay questions on the online application. Interviewee 3 said, “What I’m looking for there is writing ability and level of specificity when answering the questions.” I asked this interviewee to explain the importance of writing ability, and the administrator shared that strong communication skills are critical for educators to have and that email communication has become so prevalent. When asked about the rationale for the focus on written responses, grades, and/or job experiences when screening, all three interviewees answered that this focus was based on professional judgment rather than training or professional development.

Interviews

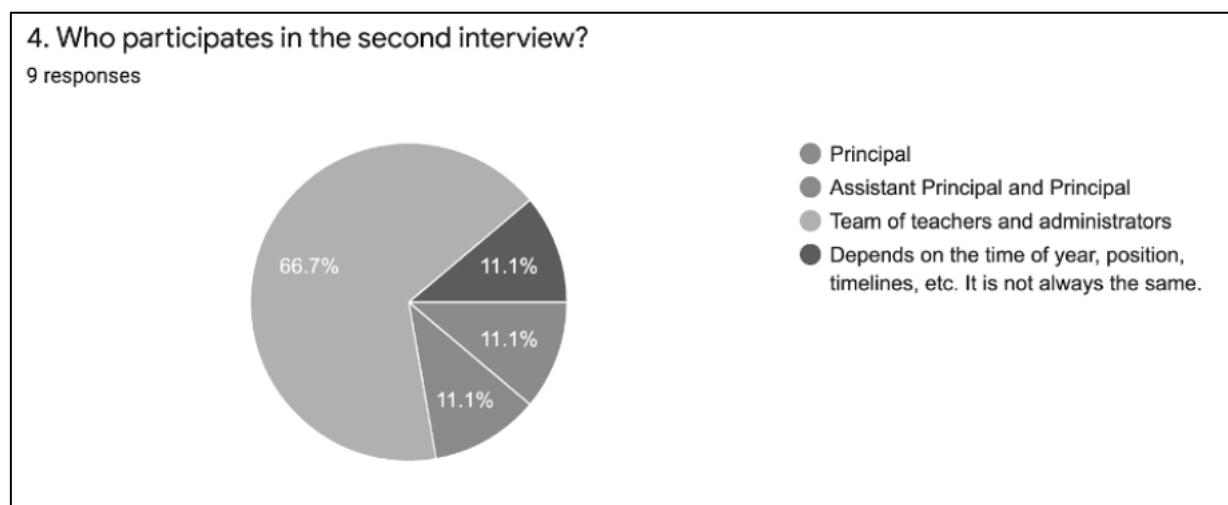
Factors considered in interviewing applicants

Hiring culture varies with the principal in a given school, since different principals in each building manage hiring and influence related ideas and beliefs. To assist with some of this cultural alignment, Spring Valley School District uses standard job descriptions for job postings, alongside common sets of questions for interviews. These resources have not been widely revisited since they were developed by a district-wide committee several years ago. In addition, new principals and assistant principals have been hired, and no onboarding process existed to share the hiring structures and processes with these new administrators, so some did not know about the team interview questions until after their first rounds of hiring. As mentioned, principals determine how many rounds of interviews are used and how to include others in interviews. Principals also determine whether and how many teachers participate in the interviews and which teachers participate. As Figure 7 depicts, 66.7% of principals reported that

the second interview includes a team of teachers and administrators. Beyond the interview, some candidates teach sample lessons observed by other teachers, similar to this second interview process. Principals intuit whom to advance each round, rather than applying a set of criteria or objective standards.

Figure 7

Survey responses on who participates in the second interview



In terms of competencies, as related to hiring practices, Spring Valley School District values teachers' feedback and input in the hiring process. Each building involves teachers and teams in the interview process at various steps. Of the nine survey respondents, six reported that teacher teams are utilized in the interview process, typically at the second stage of the interviews (see Figure 7).

Varied approach to interviewing applicants

The three principals with whom I conducted phone interviews each indicated that they had curated a set of interview questions, an interview process, and a reference check process through practice and experience, rather than through professional development or a set district guideline. As one administrator, interviewee 2, shared,

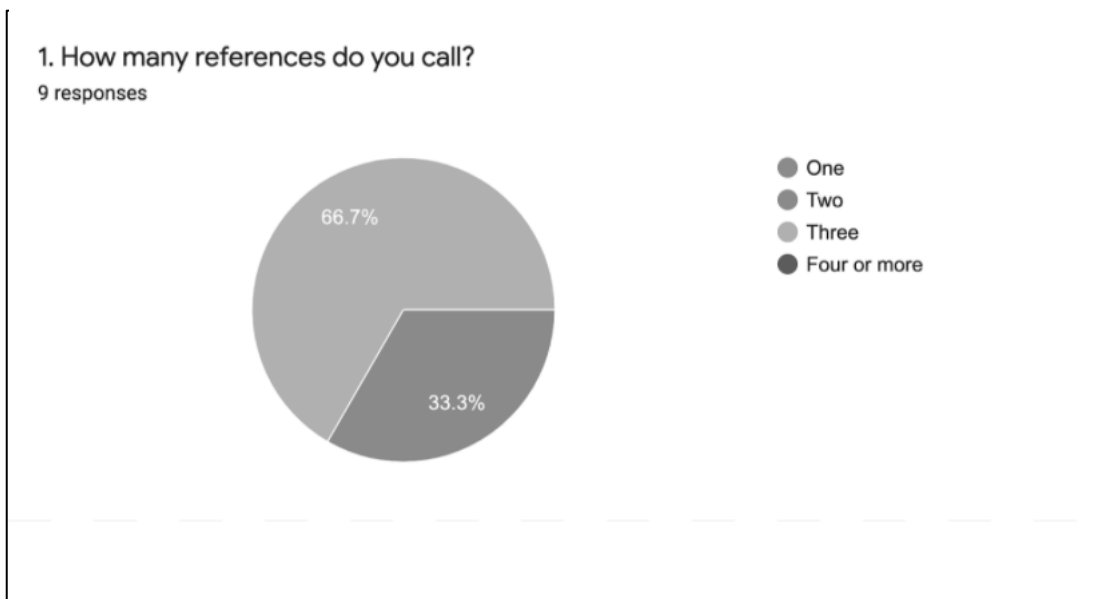
Hiring is a lot of work. It is also one of the most important things that an organizational leader does. Oftentimes, in education, because of the timeline where we put hiring – whether it be waiting for a resignation or retirement, or we have to fill a position by whatever time or we have so many positions to fill in – it’s the busiest time of the year. It can be tempting to cut corners or work too fast. I think putting in the extra work really pays off because then the way you work with and support the staff member...is going to be much more productive...with the right person.

The context impacts the approach to hiring, as does the variation in the approach to hiring.

Moreover, principals in the district can review online applications and select candidates to interview however they choose, sending the final candidate to the superintendent for an interview and offer/hire without a dictated process or procedure, or without boundaries or barriers. At each step, the principal is the sole decision-maker regarding candidates and their progression through the interview process. The principal as the sole decision-maker relates to the context outlined in the “As Is” chart (Figure 3). The context within the district allows for administrators to operate autonomously. In Spring Valley School District, the principal does the reference checks for the final candidate(s). The survey responses similarly indicated that the surveyed principals also completed reference checks, with a minimum of two phone calls (see Figure 8). In these reference checks, the principals call former supervisors and ask myriad questions to help determine whether the candidate is the right fit for the position.

Figure 8

Survey responses related to role in hiring



Spending the necessary time on hiring is crucial to ensure you are hiring the right teachers for the right positions. As one survey respondent said, “it is important to our district to hire teachers with excellent prior experience.” Understanding the context related to hiring is critical.

Internal and External factors

Principals determine whether to phone interview candidates for the first-round interview or rather to conduct that interview in person; they often make this determination based on the time of year or the type of position, which are examples of external and internal variables. This belief also relates to the culture of hiring or the principal’s autonomy as associated with the culture of hiring. From March–May, second- and third-round interviews often depend on teachers’ schedules, as teachers are involved in these interviews. Principals determine the interview questions, and teachers can add questions. If hiring is done in March–May, candidates teach sample lessons. When hiring occurs over the summer, sample lessons are often eliminated

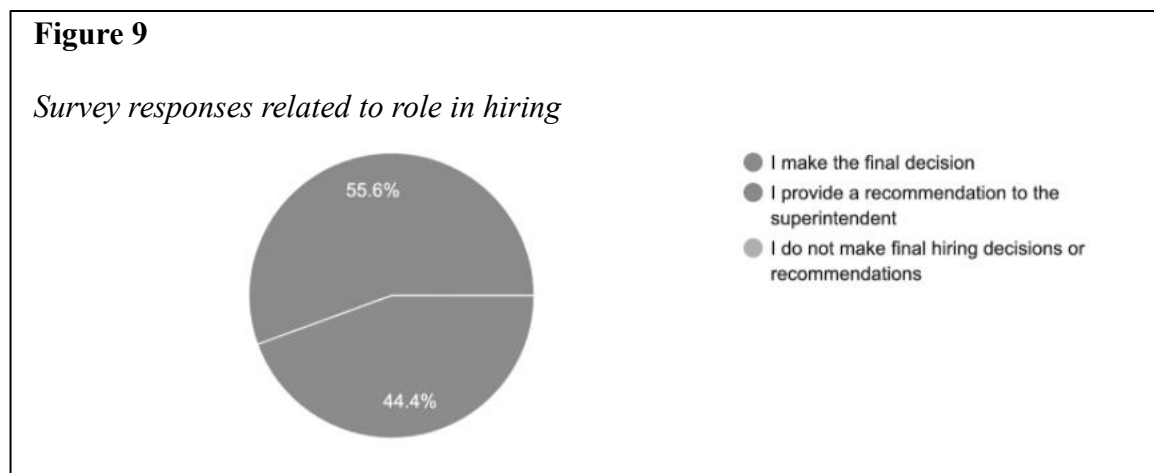
from the process. When teachers participate in the interview teams, they are not compensated for their participation.

Furthermore, the culture of the district influences the hiring process and the principal's role in it. Cranston (2012) found that "in school-based hiring decisions the individuals involved in judging candidates, from the start of the interview, begin to consider whether or not they believed there was a value match between the applicants and organization. In other words, they considered whether an applicant fits not only the requirements of a particular position but also the specific needs and culture of a school" (p. 8). This belief was further validated by these research findings. As Table 3 shows, principals often lead the hiring process; however, they consider various factors in their hiring decisions, approach hiring processes and decisions in varying ways, and must account for relevant external and internal variables.

Decision-Making

Factors considered in selecting applicants

The hiring context is another important variable. To provide context for Spring Valley School District, it is important to know and understand more about the demographics of the teaching staff. The district has 84 fulltime teachers across three school buildings. Of those 84 teachers, 91% are White and 86% are female. Across all schools, 69% of teachers have a



Master's degree. Teacher retention is 87%, and the average salary is \$72,000. Approximately 1,100 students attend the school, from grades PreK–8. Each building has its own principal; the elementary building and the middle school each have an assistant principal, as well. All administrators hire for their respective buildings. The superintendent makes the final hiring decision and submits the formal recommendation to the Board of Education. In the survey, the principals either make the final hiring determination or provide the recommendation to the superintendent (see Figure 9). This process mirrors the current practice in Spring Valley School District, where principals make final recommendations to the superintendent.

Varied approach to decision-making with applicants

As the culture influences principals' approach to hiring, the condition in which the hiring occurs also impacts the process. Another survey respondent said, "While pedagogical and content knowledge are important, I am also attempting to gauge a person's ability to collaborate and demonstrate a growth mindset early on in the process." These findings validate the literature in that principals approach their hiring decisions to align with their professional judgment and intangibles related to the vacancy or to the school's needs. According to Cranston (2012), "The initial screening seeks to identify candidates who meet the technical requirements of the job, meaning applicants are assessed against a list of preferred qualifications and attributes" (p. 7). Pappano in Cranston (2012), "suggested that those who lead schools are slowly coming to the 'aha' conclusion that hiring smarter involves a critical focus on hiring for fit" (p. 7). Further, Cranston (2012) found that:

"participants [in interviews] acted as gatekeepers to both the profession and their schools, assuming responsibility for judging whether or not applicants demonstrate the

knowledge, skills, and dispositions that match their beliefs of what it means to be a teacher in general, and specifically to be hired as a teacher for their schools” (p. 15).

This gatekeeping mentality connects to the use of professional judgment. Fifty percent of the survey respondents use “professional judgment” to separate candidates.

Internal and External factors

Another theme from the literature says that principals approach hiring divergently. In the Spring Valley School District, there are no set questions to ask during the reference check, and the principal determines which references to call and how many references to check; this approach to the hiring process exemplifies internal and external variables (context) in hiring. According to my research survey, most principals either ask preset reference questions they create, or they use an external tool to guide the reference check. Principals in Spring Valley School District have received formal training on neither hiring practices nor procedures; the professional development is minimal and not embedded in the job.

From there, principals determined whether or not to advance the candidate in the hiring process. As participant 3 indicated, “Often, we are hiring for intangibles that are not present on any one of these [online application] documents.” This belief of hiring based on intangibles is further illustrated by Figure 7, which details that some principals seek specific characteristics for available positions while others decide based on staff input from the interviews. Culture within the building plays a factor in hiring processes and decisions.

Interpretations, Judgments, and Recommendations

With consideration for the climate, culture, context, and competencies as they relate to hiring and the principals’ use of professional judgment in those hiring decisions, there are various interpretations, judgments, and recommendations for the next steps. This study finds an

inconsistent approach to hiring and that principals determine how hiring is managed and conducted. This variability in hiring can be attributed to a number of reasons. Principals have not been adequately trained, nor have they been provided with tools to engage in the hiring process with uniformity and objectivity. As Kimbrel (2019a) defines:

“Hiring effective teachers can be a challenging task that is made even more difficult by the fact that most principals do not have human resources training and they often create different hiring processes even in similar schools. In addition, principals tend to hire teachers based on their interpretations and perceptions of the candidates’ competency, character, and chemistry (Bourke, 2012), rather than candidates who are a close match for the vision of the school” (p. 12).

Another reason for the variability in the findings is that principals are creating their systems, using varied timelines, basing decision making on “gut feelings” and using myriad of tools and resources throughout the process. These self-created systems and hiring choices derive from a lack of training and time rather than a lack of interest or desire; principals often lack human resources training, and they are always working on short timelines. “Given the time constraints and responsibilities of school administrators, the teacher selection and employment process occurs quickly and involves a relatively restricted amount of information and data” (Whitworth et al., 2016). The variability of the hiring process can create a number of difficulties. In Spring Valley, each principal has the autonomy to approach hiring as she sees fit. This means that some principals are spending a great deal of time on hiring, while others are moving through it more quickly. This variation in the timeline could impact the quality of the candidates hired or available for hire. A more streamlined system would assist with these fast decisions. Improving the system and approach to hiring would lead to more consistent and effective hiring, which

would have a positive impact on students' learning and growth.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for further development of the hiring processes, based on these findings. First, the district should define and quantify professional judgment, as it pertains to hiring actions and decisions. Referencing the professional literature, as well as the survey responses, Spring Valley School District should create a set of criteria that defines professional judgment and include a list of example characteristics for principals would be a beneficial next step. Second, the use of an online screening tool to help sift through online applications more objectively should be implemented. The hiring process itself should be articulated and set as a firm guideline. Professional development should be provided for principals to ensure that the hiring process is implemented with fidelity. Finally, principals should measure the effectiveness of their hiring practices via teacher performance and retention.

The similarities between the responses are that principals define professional judgment as a review of certain experiences and making a personal determination about the qualifications from there. This notion of professional judgment is what makes hiring processes and decision making so varied. "If the idea of strategic hiring makes sense, it's complicated by the fact that predicting who will go on to be an excellent teacher is a relatively imprecise science" (Sawchuk, 2011, p. 11). Principals make educated guesses about the teacher candidates using the information available to them during the hiring process. "Research has yet to identify any 'silver bullet' feature that strongly predicts which teachers will go on to do well or poorly" (Sawchuk, 2011, p. 11). In my survey, explaining how they used professional judgment in the interview process, principals described the characteristics they were seeking in candidates, stating that when they saw candidates exhibit these characteristics, they felt that the candidates would be a

good fit for the positions. Principals shared the following characteristics:

- professional and concise communication,
- the ability to make personal connections,
- professionalism,
- a focus on students,
- a professional appearance,
- a sense of calm,
- an ability to listen to questions,
- smiles and positivity, and
- a strong work ethic.

Some of the descriptors on this list of characteristics are difficult to observe in a written online application or in a phone interview, further illustrating the complexity of the hiring process. Creating a clear and concise definition of what professional judgment means, as well as how principals can use their judgment in making hiring decisions would help to align these hiring practices. Furthermore, “research-informed screening protocols and interview questions enable an interview team to form objective, job-relevant judgments – and not just impressions – in making difficult and important hiring decisions” (Stronge & Hindmen, 2003, p. 51). Principals require some continued autonomy in the hiring process, including a role for professional judgment. Adding a structured and practical definition of professional judgment would help in the hiring process; it would add structure to the process while allowing flexibility.

The second recommendation relates to the use of an online screening tool to help sort online applications more objectively. In the survey of principals, three of the nine respondents shared that they currently use an online screening tool, in some cases a phone screening tool as

well. One survey response read, “Once they pass the online screening tool and the...phone screener they are placed in a preferred hiring pool. I pull candidates from this pool and look at their experience, university, and overall presentation of their resume.” This online screening tool provided a score as a first way to sort qualified candidates. Since 88% of principals surveyed would be sorting through 25 or more online applications, using a screening tool for initial sorting would be helpful. Clement suggests, “Develop an instrument or rubric for evaluation before the interviews. The instrument does not have to be elaborate. An effective one...has three categories – unacceptable, acceptable, target” (2009, p. 24). In addition, perhaps creating a system where the online screener was a required element when there were more than 50 online applications would be helpful. This screening tool could also key in on specific words or attributes from online applications to assist in the vetting. These keywords or attributes could be connected to the list of descriptors provided when principals were asked about professional judgment and the characteristics they sought. “Principals can no longer lean on their gut reactions from simple ‘describe yourself’ job interviews. Instead, they should draw on techniques that have shown promise in job selection, including situational and experience-based interview, work sample, portfolios, references, and rating systems” (Kimball, 2011, p. 15).

The next recommendation relates to the hiring process, specifically the number of interviews, the types of questions, the number and type of reference calls, and the timeline. In considering the 4 C’s, setting a formal and structured process for hiring that is specific to the district will ensure hiring suits the context and culture of the district. Karren & Graves in Cranston (2012), said, “Indeed, the findings of [his] study suggest that these eight principals regarded that their key responsibility in the selection process was choosing individuals who appeared to fit the vocation, job, organization, culture, and existing staff of their schools.

Perceptions of fit mattered to these principals, and these views influenced how they assessed applicants and also affected their decisions of who to hire (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005)” (p. 21). The need for a routine and structured approach to hiring is evident. If a timeline was created, then principals would follow a similar pattern of events and outcomes, creating a more uniform and consistent approach to hiring. To create such a timeline, principals should attend to the interview process. “At the school level, interviewers should develop and implement an interview protocol that draws on...effective teacher qualities” (Stronge & Hindman, 2003, p. 51). Creating a toolkit of research-based resources would help to strengthen the hiring processes.

An additional recommendation focuses on professional development for principals. This professional development should be action-based and job-embedded using guided questions or rubrics to engage in discussion and collaborative reflection about hiring practices. According to Hawley Miles et al. (2016), “Principal supervisors can use these questions as a common framework to structure coaching conversations, and to collect and spread the best practices of the most effective principals. Connecting decisions to guiding questions and data ensures a structure for feedback and accountability for principals, making the logic of those choices more explicit and based on evidence” (p. 20). These coaching conversations would allow for principals to reflect on their hiring practices and their success. Similarly, principals may watch sample interviews, use a rubric to rate the answers of the video candidate, and then discuss their ratings to calibrate how they use the rubric. These collaborative conversations would assist in inter-rater reliability as it pertains to hiring. Principals could also review example online applications using a rubric, and then discuss their assessment of the online applications. This professional development would also focus on an understanding of the rubrics, selection tools, and interview questions, as well as an inter-rater calibration of implementing the new procedures.

The final recommendation is focused on measuring the effectiveness of the new hiring processes. Principals should connect with one another to discuss the resources, timelines, rubrics, interview questions, and other components of the process (Hawley et al., 2016). These conversations should focus on what is working well with the new process and what needs to be adjusted. In addition, Spring Valley should review teacher evaluation performance ratings each year for newly hired teachers, and compare them to the district average. A final measure to review is the retention rate of newly hired teachers. This would help to inform whether the changes in the hiring processes were effective and impactful.

Conclusion

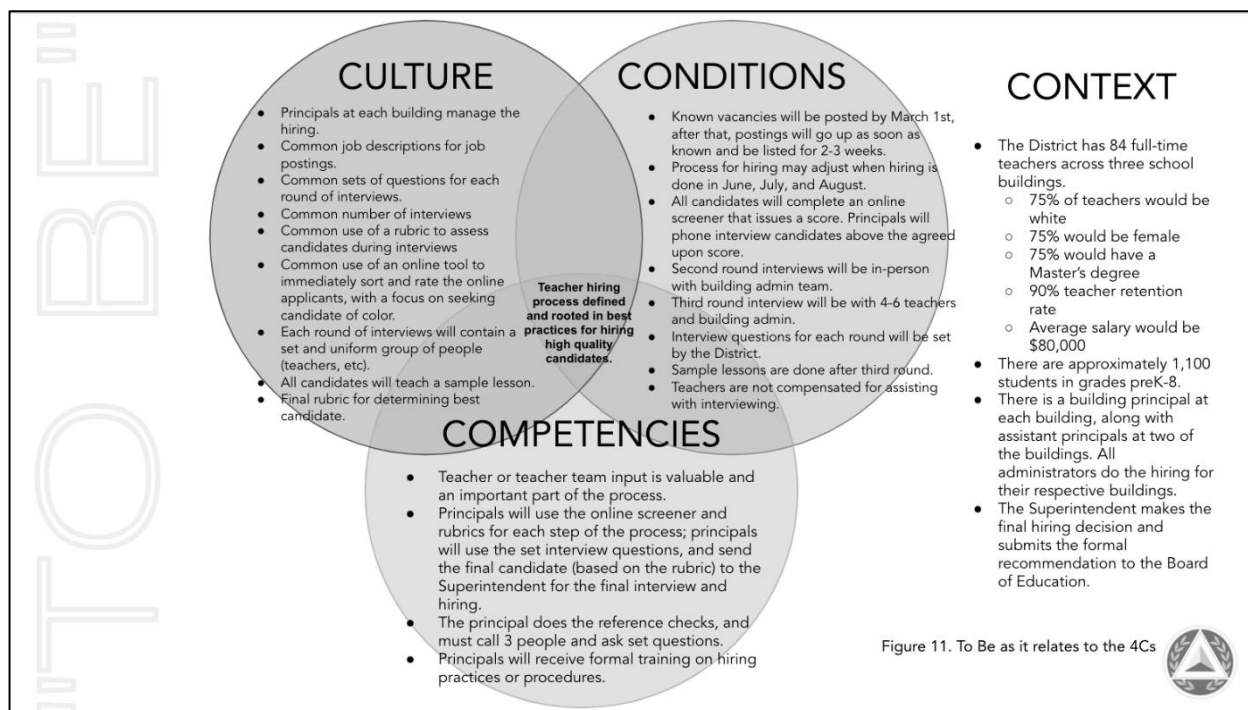
This section explained the current results available for this research. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the principal's role and influence in the hiring practices and decision-making process. Via a review of the current practices (As Is) and an analysis of the survey data, these recommendations will help guide the district towards a more idealized state (To Be) as it relates to the principals' role in hiring practices and procedures, as well as decision making.

CHAPTER FIVE: To Be

While the previous chapter mapped out the current practice as it relates to hiring practices and processes and the findings from the research study, this chapter details an idealized state for how the teacher hiring process should be defined and how principals engage in that process. By following practices and procedures, Spring Valley School District will ensure high-quality candidates are hired and retained for continued academic success, and that the principals follow a consistent hiring process. Figure 10 shares these details for a more idealized state of being in Spring Valley. This chapter will explain how competencies, conditions, culture, and context (Wagner’s 4 C’s) can be used as a framework to specify improvements in Spring Valley’s approach to hiring.

Figure 10

To Be as it relates to the 4Cs



Competencies

When Wagner discusses competencies, he refers to them as job-embedded and continuous. Input from teachers or teacher teams improves and strengthens the hiring process. Determining how to ensure teachers are prepared for interviews, understand the process, and provided with professional development as it relates to hiring is an important part of the process. If teachers have been trained as participants, their competency increases. Similarly, principals should receive similar training in hiring and facilitating the hiring process. As stated earlier, participating principals did not receive intensive hiring training as part of their principal preparation programs, so embedding professional development focused on hiring practices and protocols is necessary. Principals should use an online screener tool for the first step of the process. This online screener would provide a numerical distinction next to candidates so that the online application review process is less about the “gut” feeling in review of the application (Cranston, 2012). Cranston (2012) goes on to say that principals or hiring agents “acted as gatekeepers to both the profession and their schools, assuming responsibility for judging whether or not applicants demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that match their beliefs of what it means to be a teacher in general, and specifically to be hired as a teacher for their schools” (p. 15). This role as “gatekeeper” can be supported by the use of an unbiased tool, such as an online screener. According to the survey data, two of the nine respondents currently use an online screener tool to assist in this screening process. The other seven respondents described their personal reviews of the applications and candidates’ interviews. The principal who shared her use of the online tool (participant #3) said, “Once they [have] passed the online screening tool and the HumanX phone screener, they are placed in a preferred hiring pool. I pull candidates from this pool and look at their experience, University, and overall presentation of their resume.”

This process allows candidates to be “prescreened” via this online screening tool. Five of the nine principals shared that they typically receive over 50 online applications for one vacancy, so having a defined way to vet the online applications would be valid and useful.

Ideally, principals might use rubrics for each step of the process. The rubric would be universal, shared with teachers in their training and professional development, and used at each interview stage. The rubric could be developed as a companion to the online screening tool, the list of characteristics related to professional judgment, and/or the specifics of the vacancy. The rubric would add an additional layer of evidence to support decisions about candidates’ abilities and performance.

Principals could also use a static and well-developed set of questions. Such a set may differ between interview rounds, but would be assigned by district policy for use at specific interview rounds for consistency. According to the principals surveyed and interviewed, while interview questions remain standard from candidate to candidate, the set of interview questions is personally crafted by either the principal or the interview team. One principal described using her learning from professional readings to help adjust and add questions, while another described a process of trial and error to create and use open-ended questions. Additional research would be necessary to determine which questions yield the most specific evidence during an interview and to determine how to vary questions at each round of the interview process.

In this adapted, more uniform process of hiring, the principal would still send the final candidate to the superintendent for a final interview and hiring decision; however, this final candidate selection would be determined based on the compilation of scores – the online screener score, the interview rubric scores, and perhaps an overall score. The principal would do the reference checks and would be required to call three people to ask a series of uniform and preset

questions. At least one of the references would require a direct supervisor. These reference checks would be a final step in the process to ensure the quantified evidence (screener, rubric scores) accurately represented the candidate. For these procedures to work and be implemented, they would need to be written down, and principals would need to receive formal training on these hiring practices or procedures.

Conditions

Given that there are hiring constraints and time-bound needs, certain elements of the hiring conditions can be established while others may need to be more fluid. In terms of a timeline, known vacancies, such as retirements, life events, and resignations, will be posted by March 1st. Postings would go online as soon as the vacancy was known or approved by the Board of Education, and the posting would be listed for two to three weeks. The hiring process may be adjusted when hiring is done in June, July, and August, as the conditions for hiring have changed. Summer month hiring impacts the number of candidates, the process used, and the time frame for hiring.

All candidates would complete an online screener that issues a score. The score from the online screener would allow qualified candidates to be a part of a vetted candidate pool, as some of the survey respondents described as current practice. Principals would phone interview candidates who had earned the agreed-upon score or higher on the online screener. Second-round interviews would occur in person with the building administrative team. Third-round interviews include four to six teachers and building administrators. The interview questions for each round would be set by the district.

In research related to the structure of interviews, one of Cranston's (2012) participants shared, "You can certainly get a sense during the interview if a person is a teacher at heart and

that her or his passion is to teach. It burns so strongly you can sense it” (p. 14). This similar sentiment was found in my survey responses and interviews. Interviewee 1 shared that while hiring consumes much time, especially the multiple rounds of interviews, she appreciates the checkpoints involved in the system to ensure that one gets to know the candidates, including how student-centered they are in their approach to instruction. The element of time was one that principals shared repeatedly, both in that it takes a great deal of time to do the hiring and that hiring was often bound by time constraints.

Culture

Hiring culture may be the area that leaves the most room for professional development, learning, and training. Principals at each building should continue to manage the hiring process because principals know and understand their school’s needs and culture. The district has developed and will continue to use common job descriptions for job postings. The district will develop, through district-wide committees, common sets of questions for each round of interviews. In addition, this district-wide committee will determine the number of interviews used, providing adjusted timelines and details based on whether the hiring occurs in March–May or June–August. This same committee will develop a common rubric to assess candidates during interviews. This rubric should be aligned with the job description, Danielson’s framework for teacher evaluation, and the interview questions. The committee would also determine a common use of an online tool to immediately sort and rate the online applicants. This online tool would then be reviewed by principals and used as the first step of the candidate selection process. Each round of interviews will contain a uniform group of people, including teachers and administrators. All candidates will teach a sample lesson, regardless of the hiring season, so the committee will develop two sets of materials for the March–May hiring and June–August hiring.

The committee will also develop a final rubric to assist in determining the best candidate. By developing a uniform system, providing ongoing training and professional development, and seeking teacher input in the system, the culture of hiring will become collaborative.

Given that the culture of hiring has been driven by principals, it is key to focus on this element of professional learning and development. According to Papa & Baxter (2008), “if a principal is to be effective within the teacher hiring process, a principal must be able to be effective within the (existing) organizational structure, culture, and situational context of a school” (p. 108). Thus, the principal conducting the hiring requires the prerequisite skills and knowledge to conduct the hiring, but the principal must also keenly understand the climate, culture, competencies, and conditions associated with the school and district as a whole.

Context

Given the size of the district, there are always hiring needs, whether to fill fulltime positions or to cover a leave. The district has 84 fulltime teachers across three school buildings, with approximately 1,100 students in grades PreK-8. With proper hiring processes and procedures, the teacher retention rate would increase. Building-based administrators would continue to manage hiring for their respective buildings. The superintendent would make the final hiring decision and submit the formal recommendation to the Board of Education.

This practice was validated by the survey responses in all nine surveyed principals either made the final decision about hiring or made the final recommendation about hiring to the superintendent. In addition to the context surrounding the hiring timelines, it is important to consider the context of the principal who is conducting the hiring. “It may be that hiring principals who are effective recruiters of high-quality teachers...is a more cost-effective approach... [and that] principal effectiveness with regard to hiring highly-qualified teachers is

determined by the interaction of the traits and attributes of principals with the organizational structure, culture, and situational context of a school” (Papa & Baxter, 2008, p. 110). Hence, the skill level and ability of the principal influence the context for hiring practices. The principal must be able to follow the defined hiring process, adhere to timelines, use the interview questions, check references, and make a recommendation to the superintendent. The principal’s role in hiring is critical, and objectively conducting hiring is also cost effective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, if Spring Valley School District transitions from the current state (As-Is) to the vision outlined in this “to be” framework, many factors will be required to ensure positive and lasting change. Keeping in mind the climate, culture, context, and competencies as they relate to hiring and the principal’s role will be key in creating this lasting change.

CHAPTER SIX: Strategies and Actions

Although hiring is critical to the job of a principal, a gap currently exists between the practice and the ideal of the principal's role and influence in hiring practices and decision making. For change to occur, a clear path of strategies and actions must be identified and actualized. Table 4 details six strategies, as well as the steps to fully implement them, and this chapter details each strategy and action plan.

Table 4

Strategies and Actions to Improve Hiring Processes

Strategy	Action
Strategy 1 Define professional judgment as it relates to the hiring process	1. Via a committee of district and building administrators, engage in discussion to develop and set a common definition of professional judgment as it relates to hiring.
Strategy 2 Develop a set of research-based interview questions and a specific process for hiring.	2. Via a committee, research the most effective hiring questions, discuss those findings, and determine the set list of questions for each component of the hiring process. 3. Via a committee, determine the specific process for hiring, including steps and numbers of interviews.
Strategy 3 Create timelines for hiring that are agreed upon and followed.	4. Via a group of administrators, create the timelines and review and publish them. 5. Adhere to the timelines.
Strategy 4 Develop common hiring tools, such as rubrics, online screeners, timelines, and interview questions.	6. Via a district committee, develop tools. Seek input from teachers and district administrators.
Strategy 5 Provide professional development and training for principals	7. Provide professional development on hiring practices and procedures for administrators and teachers involved in the hiring interviews.
Strategy 6 Use common tools consistently and review them for effectiveness.	8. Have principals follow a uniform hiring process. 9. Determine a review process for principals to discuss the effectiveness of the hiring process and make adjustments.

Strategy 1: Professional Judgment Definition

For the first action item, principals should define professional judgment and how it will be applied to hiring decision-making. Professional judgment is most commonly understood to mean forming an opinion based on one's own background, experiences, or knowledge. In conjunction with teacher hiring practices, principals use professional judgment when making hiring decisions. Because so much of the hiring process is based on judgment, a committee of administrators should review various definitions of professional judgment as it relates to hiring and come to a consensus about how they will apply professional judgment in the hiring process, including what the term means to them and when it is appropriate to defer to professional judgment in the hiring process. According to Clement (2015), principals influence all aspects of the hiring process, based on their previous experiences. A discussion of professional judgment will help set the foundation for the group's approach to hiring and will assist in their work in implementing the following strategies.

Strategy 2: Process & Interview Questions

As a second step towards the creation of a more uniform system for hiring and equalizing the principals' influence in decision making, a committee should engage in research and discussion about the most effective questions to use in each stage of the interviews: "Most principals rely on interviews as their primary source of information regarding a candidate" (Kimbrel, 2019b, p. 5), so the process and format of the interviews are particularly important. Researchers state that many principals rely on a traditional interview, which can be unreliable (Kimbrel, 2019b). Clement (2009) states,

"interviewers no longer have the luxury of asking candidates to 'tell about themselves' or to ask random hypothetical questions. Employers need to determine the skills for the

teaching position, write the questions, have an evaluation system, and then ask questions that determine if the candidate has the experience, knowledge, and skills to do the job” (p. 24).

Interviews need to ask thoughtful questions that connect to the specific job for which the candidate is interviewing. Moving away from traditional questions to more behavior-based questioning will be an important part of the work of this committee and their research. Appendix E contains sample interview questions that could be referenced during this committee work (Hawley et al., 2016). As Tooms & Crowe explain, “Thoughtful questions allow candidates to demonstrate their strengths, admit their weaknesses, and reveal their beliefs about curriculum, classroom discipline, school culture, collegiality, and commitment to the profession” (p. 52). Principals value questions that elicit detail and specificity, so that they have evidence on which to base their hiring decisions. Example questions include, Why did you want to become a teacher? In your view, what is the purpose of discipline in the classroom? What sort of assessments do you use in the classroom? (Tooms & Crowe, 2004, p. 52). Developing questions should be a collaborative process that involves both principals and teachers.

To engage in the work of developing a set of interview questions, the committee should involve building-based administrators, district-based administrators, and teachers from various grade levels. The committee should craft sets of interview questions to be used at each step of the hiring process. Kimbrel (2019a) has identified six essential elements of interviews:

“(1) job analysis used to create questions, (2) identical questions asked of each candidate, (3) variety of question formats, including situational questions based on past behavior, (4) individual answers rated with a predetermined scale, (5) presence of anchor answers, and (6) presence of trained interviewers” (p. 15).

The creation and use of a set of uniform questions with each candidate follows best practices in the current research. The questions should also align with job characteristics. The committee would recommend a specific number of interviews and a process the principal should follow for hiring. As Kimball (2011) found in her study, principals worked with teachers to align the selection process. Kimball states,

“The selection process includes a standard resume screen that eliminates about 50% of the applicants. This is followed by a phone interview that focuses on the six attributes, typically yielding five to 10 candidates for serious consideration. The principal and relevant department chair then interview each candidate. Those who get over these hurdles are invited back for ‘finalist day.’ On finalist day, the candidates participate in a group exercise on student data with other final applicants” (Kimball, 2011, p. 15-16).

If principals consistently used a process like the one Kimball outlines, it would be more predictable and involve teachers. By engaging in the practice of setting a uniform number of interviews, along with a set of questions, principals would begin to follow a more uniform and consistent approach to hiring, and various stakeholders would have input into the process.

Strategy 3: Timelines

Once the district committee sets the interview questions and the process regarding number of interviews, a group of administrators should create specific timelines for hiring. These timelines should include dates for hiring early in the hiring season (February and March), as well as dates for when hiring is done later in the school year or over the summer. Buttner (2020) advises, “keep in mind that the best teachers do tend to be hired early in the spring, so it’s a good idea to move your hiring timeline up as much as possible” (p. 6). Creating these timelines will support uniformity in hiring conditions and in principals’ hiring contexts. Appendix F contains a

sample timeline; this sample can serve as a starting point for this committee work (Hawley et al., 2016).

Timelines for the hiring process will help align each school principal's process and ensure that a principal is not taking too much time or too little time to complete a hiring cycle. Research suggests that "early hiring leads to better hiring outcomes and better teacher-school matches. When hiring is done early, students and teachers benefit. In February and March, a larger, diverse pool of strong teachers is actively applying for jobs. Once these candidates receive an offer, they need to accept quickly and cannot wait for other schools to post positions. Early hiring affords time for schools to conduct better screening, for candidates to get a better sense of the school and its culture, for onboarding of the new position to start earlier, and for newly hired teachers to prepare for the start of the school year" (Papay & Qazilbash, 2021, p. 2). The newly created hiring timelines would align with the determined set number of interviews to help reiterate the clear and consistent practice and process, as well. Once developed, principals would adhere to the hiring timelines as much as possible.

Strategy 4: Common Hiring Tools

The fourth strategy is to develop a common set of tools to be used during the hiring process. This set of tools would include rubrics, online screeners, timelines, and interview questions. A district committee (perhaps the same as in Strategy 1) would develop or select these tools. The tools may not need to be developed from scratch; in fact, using a preset program may be beneficial. Appendix G contains an example of a rubric (Zeller, 2019). Engel et al. (2018) say,

Researchers have found that principals emphasize the importance of "fit" when they have autonomy in teacher hiring (Harris et al., 2010) and have argued that this may lead to more optimal hire. Principals are more likely now than ever before to have access to data

and information about teachers (e.g. past value-added estimates) that might help them select the best teachers for their schools. Further recent evidence indicates that screening information now collected by some school districts is a valid predictor of teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber et al., 2014). Thus, if principals are the best candidates for assessing the fit of teacher applicants (Harris et al., 2010, Levin et al., 2005), access to more and better data on applicants has the potential to further improve principal decision-making. (p. 287)

This research validates this strategy to develop a set of tools to hone in on the online application and the information shared by candidates in the interview process. Making the most of this data will help principals effectively engage in hiring.

As the committee develops or adopts tools to use, it will be important to seek input also from district administrators and teachers. This input will help the committee recognize whether the tools align with the culture and context of the district. “A professionally conducted interview builds a cultural dynamic that may eventually result in larger and stronger candidate pools because you have set the tone for a school environment in which people want to work” (Tooms & Crowe, 2004, p. 53).

Strategy 5: Professional Development & Training

Once the various tools are created or adopted, it will be essential to provide professional development for administrators and teachers involved in the interviews. Knowing how to use the various tools, such as interview screeners or rubrics, is critical to the success of these tools.

Many researchers recommend adding “course work on teacher selection at the preparatory level for administrators” (Hughes, 2014, p. 5), though they recognize the difficulty of implementing this recommendation. A more realistically implemented suggestion is to provide job-embedded

training via professional development sessions: “Training programs that specialize in preparing educational leaders, and provide courses in personnel and staff supervision” are proven to be successful, especially when coupled with “ongoing professional development in this critical area” (Hughes, 2014, p. 5). The committee should plan to develop a series of professional development sessions to train principals to use the tools. Principals should engage in in-depth “professional developing around best practices in equitable hiring” or “additional time for teachers and school-based staff to participate intensively in the hiring process” (Papay & Qazilbash, 2021, p. 6). Principals could engage in a similar professional development structure to what many encountered with teacher evaluation. Principals could watch sample interview videos and use a scoring rubric to determine the fit of that candidate. After this process, principals could discuss their ratings to calibrate their understanding of the tool, as well as their use of professional judgment in determining the fit of the candidate. Hawley et al. (2016) suggest using this evidence-based data and discussion assists with effective hiring, and helps principals feel supported in the process. These professional development sessions and conversations should be ongoing, so that principals can consult one another before, during, and after hiring.

Strategy 6: Implementation & Monitoring

Centering on the implementation of the previous strategies and action plans, Strategy 6 focuses on the consistent implementation and monitoring of the use of the common tools, as well as their effectiveness in hiring quality candidates. Once a process is developed, timelines are created, tools are adopted, and training is provided, principals must adhere to these processes and procedures uniformly and consistently in order for success to be achieved in hiring. “The percentage of principals who reported having a major influence over teacher hiring increased from 47 percent in 1987 to 85 percent in 2011” (Engel et al., 2018, p. 283). Since the hiring

process is very much managed by principals, adhering to a system and timeline is also their responsibility. To this end, the process largely depends on opportunities for collaboration and discussion amongst principals; these conversations would focus on a review of the processes and how they are working (or not working) in their application. “Regardless of the screening process and who does it, improvements in screening and selection largely rest of training, support, and capacity for school-based hiring teams” (Papay & Qazilbash, 2021, p. 6). This means that continued collaborative conversation amongst principals via regular meetings is essential for comprehensive implementation and monitoring. Similarly, principals should allow for time to review teacher evaluation ratings of their new hires, along with the retention rates. These pieces of data would help to inform their hiring processes’ effectiveness as well (Hawley et al, 2016).

The above strategies and actions have considered culture and context, preserving space for professional judgment in a more quantified way and principal voice in the development of the tools. The result is a realistic process and procedure for hiring.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the strategies and actions currently planned will help move Spring Valley School District from the current state (As-Is) into the idealized state (To-Be) over the next several years. These strategies and actions are directly and closely tied to the research in this study, and seek to answer the stated research question focused on the principal’s role and influence in hiring practices.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Policy Recommendations and Implications

Spring Valley School District should adopt a consistent policy as it relates to teacher hiring. This policy should include a clear and agreed-upon definition of professional judgment as it pertains to principals' hiring decisions and discretion. Professional judgment should be quantified via a rubric or rating scale that principals use during the interview process. This policy should also detail the specific screening tool or method to be used by principals in the initial vetting of online applications, as well as through subsequent stages of the interview process. Finally, the overall timeline and process for hiring should be specified. While the timeline may vary based on hiring needs, the overall process can be outlined and followed to ensure that the principals' influence on hiring decisions is uniform and as influential in each school and during each hiring experience.

This adjusted policy will carry educational, economic, social, political, legal, moral, and ethical implications. From an educational perspective, the policy will help ensure more effective teachers are hired and carry positive economic implications, reducing costly turnover of teachers. The hiring process will include other stakeholders beyond the principal, having a positive social impact. The policy will ensure that hiring is completed legally, recognizing the moral and ethical responsibilities.

Policy Statement

While current board policy in the district relates to the hiring process and criteria, this policy is not specific to the principals' role, nor does it specify the steps in the process or the role of the principal in decision making. The board policy currently reads as follows:

5:30 Hiring Process and Criteria

The District hires the most qualified personnel consistent with budget and staffing requirements and in compliance with School Board policy on equal employment opportunity and minority recruitment. The Superintendent is responsible for recruiting personnel and making hiring recommendations to the Board. If the Superintendent's recommendation is rejected, the Superintendent must submit another. The Superintendent may select personnel on a short-term basis for a specific project or emergency condition before the Board's approval. No individual will be employed who has been convicted of a criminal offense listed in 105 ILCS 5/21B-80(c). All applicants must complete a District application in order to be considered for employment.

The policy also includes information about job postings, job descriptions, and investigations. The job postings section specifies that the superintendent posts the vacancy; further, "Vacancies for all positions (certified and classified) are posted on the District's website and applicants may be required to complete an on-line District application. Following the initial screening of the on-line application, additional information or materials may be requested of the applicant such as a cover letter, resume, portfolio, etc." Furthermore, this policy elaborates the investigation, or criminal background check, of newly hired employees.

A newly proposed policy would concern hiring practices and processes for the principals when engaging in teacher or staff hiring. It would specify the steps in the hiring process, from the posting of the vacancy online to its content and ways to screen the online applicants, alongside how many rounds of interviews and specific questions to use (see Table 5). The new policy would read:

5:31 Updated Hiring Process and Criteria

The District hires the most qualified personnel consistent with budget and staffing requirements and in compliance with School Board policy on equal employment opportunity and minority recruitment. While the Superintendent is responsible for recruiting personnel and making hiring recommendations to the Board, the school principals will conduct the steps of the hiring process. The steps of the hiring process are described in Table 5. At the completion of step 7, the Superintendent will recommend the candidate to the Board of Education. If the Superintendent's recommendation is rejected, the Superintendent must submit another. No individual will be employed who has been convicted of a criminal offense listed in 105 ILCS 5/21B-80(c).

Table 5

Steps in the hiring process

Steps to follow, in order	
1.	Post the vacancy online using the agreed-upon posting language. Maintain posting for 3 weeks.
2.	Use the agreed-upon rubric to review and rate the online applications.
3.	Conduct phone interviews using the agreed-upon interview questions and corresponding rubric to rate responses.
4.	Conduct in-person interviews using the agreed-upon interview questions and corresponding rubric to rate the responses.
5.	Conduct team interviews, including teachers and staff, using the agreed-upon interview questions and the corresponding rubric to rate the responses.
6.	Ensure you adhere to the timeline from review of online application to team interview (3 weeks).
7.	Check references using the guiding questions, and make recommendations to the superintendent.

Most importantly, the policy will define professional judgment as it relates to the principals' role in hiring and hiring decisions. Professional judgment will be further quantified

via a rubric or rating scale that each principal would use when interacting with candidates and determining which candidates would advance in the process. This rubric or rating scale would be included in the administrative procedure of the board policy, as would the specific interview questions. Including these specific items in the administrative procedure would allow for continual review and refining of these items by the administrative team without an overall change or review of the board policy itself.

This policy recommendation derives from my research findings and from the literature surrounding the principals' role and influence in teacher hiring decisions (Will, 2019, pp. 1–13). In interviews with current principals, most shared that their process was varied and influenced by internal and external factors, such as difficulties with timelines, incomplete processes for hiring, interview questions not matching the position, and incomplete processes to determine the fit of the candidates. In a 2018 survey from the Frontline Research and Learning Institute that focused on principals and their hiring preferences, “just about 5 percent said they had a quality protocol in place to assess applicants” (Will, 2019, p. 2). This board policy would help align practices among principals in various district school buildings, helping to level the internal and external variables by using a set process, timeline, and cluster of interview questions. “Principals can’t rely on happenstance for their staff decisions. Making critical staff decisions involved a number of steps, including...enacting careful selection procedures” (Kimball, 2011, p. 15).

Principals also identified diverse factors influencing their decision-making in hiring. This policy would provide more concrete guidance regarding what professional judgment means and how it can be used in hiring decisions. Stronge & Hindman (2003) state:

“Research-informed screening protocols and interview questions enable an interview team to form objective, job-relevant judgments – and not just impressions – in making

difficult and important hiring decisions...A well-constructed selection process helps schools hire teachers who have the qualities that enhance student achievement” (p. 51).

The improved hiring process I have proposed would do just that for principals.

By developing a more comprehensive board policy, principals will enjoy clear guidelines around how to approach hiring and how to effectively determine their recommendation to the superintendent for hiring. This policy will ensure that the most highly qualified and best-fit candidates are selected during the process, from online application to final interview with the superintendent.

Analysis of Needs

The policy change necessitates an analysis of the implications of this change as they relate to educational, economic, social, political, legal, and ethical demands. The analysis of needs will help to understand choices as they relate to hiring and trace the implications of these decisions.

Educational Analysis

“Good teachers have a profound effect on student success” (Cranston, 2012, p. 2). To provide these good teachers for students, principals have to hire well. Because the hiring process can be determined by the principal and his or her style and preferences, the outcomes depend on the principal. Hence, what makes a “good” teacher hinges on the principal’s beliefs and, even more so, on how that principal determines which candidate fits that notion of a “good teacher” during the interview process. “Feelings can play an important part in hiring preferences – but shouldn’t we use a more definitive set of criteria to guide decisions for selecting effective teachers?” (Stronge & Hindman, 2003, p. 48). Professional judgment is the descriptive term most principals used to describe how they used their “gut feeling” to determine which candidate felt

right to move forward in the interview process. The resulting variation means that principals cannot always know that they are hiring the best candidate for their school. The hiring process is not rooted in data, and so principals make these judgment calls based on a wide variety of measures, feelings, or beliefs (Kimball, 2011, p. 15). Kimball (2011) goes on to say, “Principals must use sound selection techniques to assess the fit of job candidates with the teaching competencies needed in the school...they should draw on techniques that have shown promise in job selection, including situation and experience-based interview, work sample, portfolios, references, and rating systems” (p. 15). If the recommended board policy was instituted, a more systematic approach with concrete information would help principals to identify the best teacher for the vacancy. Ultimately, this board policy would positively impact student growth and learning.

Economic Analysis

Adjusting the hiring policy carries an economic impact. “You can’t afford to bring just anyone in” (Sawchuk, 2011, p. 11). While there is a cost associated with implementing a new hiring process and practice, there is a more significant cost associated with poor hiring. “Teacher turnover costs significant resources estimated from \$7,000 to \$12,000 per teacher” (Odden et al., 2012, p. 83). Spending the additional time on high-quality hiring will eventually save money for the district. “Hiring a teacher who proves to be ineffective and must be dismissed or counseled out within a few years creates a monetary and emotional drain on a school community...This financial burden creates a devastating impact on any school budget” (Kimbrel, 2019b, pg. 6). The greatest expenses for school districts are in staffing, and principals want to comprise sure that money is well spent. If principals are to adhere to a set process, professional development will be needed. Principals will need to be trained on how to use their professional judgment

rubric or tool, as well as on how to use the online screener tool or other structured elements of the interview process. Ongoing collaboration and checks for consistency between the principals will also be needed. As Odden et al. (2012) states, we must be “smarter and more strategic about the 85 percent of funds spent on staff – dollars that are almost spent unconsciously” (p. 5). While training principals with the new hiring process and procedures would carry costs, the cost can eventually be offset by quality hiring and highly effective teachers who remain in the district. Overall, a more robust and comprehensive hiring process would be cost effective.

Social Analysis

There will be positive social implications for adjusting hiring practices. First, certain candidates may be more attracted to the district based on the interview questions or style of the process. Asking clear and specific questions will allow candidates to determine whether the position is the right fit for them, as well as enable the district to determine whether the candidate is the right fit for the district. “Finding the right match between teacher candidates and the needs of your school is crucial” (Eller & Eller, 2018, p. 45). An appropriate match of a candidate and school need helps the climate and culture of the building. Second, currently employed teachers who have participated in previous interview teams may notice a difference in how the principal gathers feedback about candidates and how the questions are worded in the interview. According to Eller & Eller (2018):

“The more stakeholder involvement you can have in the interview process, the wider the ‘lens’ to view candidates. A teacher group iterating with a candidate may see different things than you. By charging stakeholder groups with certain responsibilities during the interview process, you capitalize on their unique views” (p. 45).

Teacher participation in the interview process will have positive social implications because of

the element of staff voice and input. In Cranston (2012) one participant shared, “You can certainly get a sense during the interview if a person is a teacher at heart and that her or his passion is to teach. It burns so strongly you can sense it” (p. 14). The new policy would work to quantify that feeling into a measurable outcome. Overall, the adjustment to hiring and the policy will positively impact the interview team’s ability to measure the candidates’ fit for the position and the school.

Political Analysis

The current Board of Education policy from Spring Valley states, “The Superintendent is responsible for recruiting personnel and making hiring recommendations to the board. If the Superintendent’s recommendation is rejected, the Superintendent must submit another.” Given that the superintendent ultimately makes the hiring decision, the principal’s role in the hiring process can be political in nature. That is, —the principal’s relationship with the superintendent can influence the outcome of the hiring process, and the principal’s approach to hiring can also impact the process. The recommended policy change would limit this political or relational impact, as the principal would adhere to a set process, including how their professional judgment was factored into the final recommendation to the superintendent. According to Papa & Baxter (2008), “if a principal is to be effective within the teacher hiring process, a principal must be able to be effective within the (existing) organizational structure, culture, and situational context of a school” (p. 108). Therefore, the principal must know and understand the landscape and relationships both between the principal and the superintendent and between the superintendent and the Board of Education.

Legal Analysis

The current board policy related to hiring focuses on the legality of hiring once the candidate is selected. This policy details how candidates must be background checked and indicates that the district can terminate employment contracts if criminal behavior is determined via the checks. My recommended policy on hiring would focus on the legality of the process of hiring, specifically focusing on the screening process, including interviews. From a legal standpoint, it is recommended “that initial interviews are performed by someone trained in interviewing techniques” (Hachiya et al., 2014, p. 67). This legal perspective validates the need for professional development and training for hiring principals, as well as the recommendation to use a screening tool or rubric to measure professional judgment. This tool would help to eliminate or check bias from the principal in the interview process.

Most surveyed principals shared that they used professional their judgment, or their “gut,” to determine which candidates to advance. Principals could use a quantifiable tool to eliminate the perception of bias or discrimination in hiring decisions. “Make all hiring decisions without regard for race, color, national origin, gender, and religion, and evaluate all hiring decisions to detect any biases that might create an adverse impact on a protected group” (Hachiya et al., 2014, p. 68). In addition, a set of interview questions and a uniform way to determine whether candidates move forward in the process would help to eliminate bias in hiring decisions. A connection to the nondiscrimination board policy would be important to integrate the legal references and footnotes of this newly recommended hiring policy. “Employment decisions must be based on nondiscriminatory factors or factors that can be justified as legitimate exemptions under the law” (Hachiya et al., 2014, p. 64). Ensuring a systematic approach to hiring helps to protect the principals engaged in hiring, as well as the district.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

According to Cranston (2012), principals act as “gatekeepers to both the profession and their schools, assuming responsibility for judging whether or not applicants demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that match their beliefs of what it means to be a teacher in general, and specifically to be hired as a teacher for their schools” (p. 15). Principals face a moral and ethical obligation to address hiring systematically and logically to ensure this “gatekeeping” is effective. The recommended policy adjustment would ensure that each principal in the district approaches this moral obligation with the same timeline, process, and professional judgment.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

This policy will support staff and community relationships because it will clarify the process and the principals’ role in decision making as it pertains to hiring. It will also improve staff relationships because highly skilled candidates will be hired, bolstering and improving the overall climate and culture of the schools.

Staff often have a role in the interview and hiring process. Teams of teachers typically participate in one a round of interviews. Providing some professional development or information to staff about the hiring process will help them to understand the steps that preceded their involvement. Having the board policy in place, with an accompanying administrative procedure, will help staff members to understand the hiring process and how the principals determine which candidates move forward in the process.

Additionally, when hiring is done well, climate and culture within the building can be positively impacted. Teachers may collaborate more with one another, and the overall climate of the school may improve. In one study, Odden et al. (2012), who studies hiring and its impacts on staff, found that, “teachers were organized into collaborative teams as a way both to reduce

teacher isolation in schools and to change the school culture” (p. 21). This hiring policy would assist with these staff relationships.

In terms of community relationships, the financial implications might be positive points of connection for the community. Odden et al. (2012) discuss resources, stating that, “in this area of limited resources, districts and schools need to rethink how they recruit, hire, place, develop, evaluate, retain, dismiss, and pay educator talent” (p. 82). Based on this rethinking, the adoption of this policy would help the district perceive hiring and placing teachers differently. As stated above, while there would be costs associated with training the principals, over time the costs associated with hiring should decrease as high-quality candidates are hired and retained.

Another relationship to consider is that of principals with each other. Currently, each principal uniquely manages hiring. No established process exists to screen online candidates, nor is there a set way to determine which candidate proceeds to the final interview with the superintendent. Providing a more concrete approach to hiring would allow relationships between principals to flourish. The principals could then discuss and reflect upon the process, making adjustments as needed and collaborating to ensure that the process works for each building and principal. This shared approach would create a stronger team of principals.

The relationship between the principals and the superintendent may also be strengthened. While the final candidates are interviewed by the superintendent in a usually smooth process, at times that final interview does not yield the result of hiring the candidate based on the superintendent’s feedback, and the superintendent asks the principal to select another from the candidate pool. This outcome can damage the relationship between the principal and the superintendent, and this policy would align the system and process used for hiring and to eliminate these surprise outcomes during the final interview with the superintendent.

Finally, the relationship between the principal and the students may also be impacted by this policy. Odden (2012) explains how effective teachers and principals are necessary, further stating that, “changes in teacher and principal talent also have been a key element of improved student performance” (p. 25). When principals hire effectively and teachers meet the needs of students, the rapport between the principal and students grows as well.

Conclusion

This updated hiring policy will help to clarify the role of the principal in the hiring decision making, as well as to clarify the principal’s influence in that decision making. As a result, hiring can be made smoother and more effective. The identified tools and timelines will assist in this process while continuing to afford administrators some autonomy in the hiring process, which is both the desire of the principals and a necessary element to ensure hiring is done in a timely fashion.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Discussion & Conclusion

This research study sought to answer the question: how do principals engage in teacher hiring practices, and what factors influence their hiring decision-making? The literature review confirmed that the role of the principal in hiring is varied. Through the analysis of survey results and interview responses, it was clear that principals are integral to the hiring process. It was also clear that principals approached hiring in myriad ways, with little consistency or evidence-based practices. Throughout this study, the importance of hiring effectively remained at the forefront and evidence emerged that this effective hiring falls on the principal at all stages of the process. Principals spend time engaged in the hiring process through reviews of online applications, facilitating multiple interviews, review of online artifacts, and connection with candidates and other stakeholders. Developing a more uniform, streamlined, and research-based approach to these multiple hiring steps will ultimately lead to more-effective hiring outcomes.

Discussion

My study has aimed to determine how principals engage in teacher hiring practices and what factors influence the decisions they make in hiring and to identify an effective and research-based hiring process for principals to employ. The purpose was also to detail how principals engage in hiring, including their role in each step of the process and the tools and timelines most useful at each stage in the hiring process. After gathering that information, I developed a process for principals to follow.

I've determined six strategies to address the need to create a more uniform hiring policy and practice: (1) Define professional judgment as it relates to the hiring process. (2) Develop a set of research-based interview questions and a specific process for hiring. (3) Create timelines for hiring that are agreed upon and followed by the principals. (4) Develop or select common

tools for hiring, such as rubrics, online screeners, timelines, and interview questions. (5) provide professional development and training for principals (6) Use the common tools consistently, and review them for effectiveness.

The policy proposed would pertain to hiring practices and processes for the principals when engaged in teacher or staff hiring. This policy recommendation is rooted in my research findings alongside the literature surrounding the principals' role and influence in teacher hiring decisions (Will, 2019, pp. 1–13). When interviewing current principals, most shared that their process was varied and influenced by internal and external factors, such as difficulties with timelines, incomplete processes for hiring, interview questions not matching the position, and incomplete processes for determining the fit of the candidates. My policy recommendation honors principals' autonomy at the same time as it supports positive organizational change.

Leadership Lessons

There are several valuable leadership lessons I have learned throughout this dissertation process. These key leadership takeaways relate to shared responsibility, buy-in and voice, clear communication, and adherence to timelines. In terms of shared responsibility, all principals contribute to hiring and adhering to a more uniform process. While some principals have a preferred method, following an evidenced-based method is essential and can positively impact on the district as a whole. Principals would feel a shared commitment to one another and to the process of hiring. This shared responsibility could help to further foster a positive climate and culture as principals would feel more interconnected with one another. Another lesson concerns buy-in. All principals use and engage in the hiring process, so the protocols and policy require buy-in from all principals. For principals to follow the process, they must find it easy to use and adhere to, and it must yield successful hiring outcomes.

Another value leadership lesson connects to the idea of honoring voice. Hiring is an important task for a principal. It is a part of what makes the element of professional judgment critical to the process. When the committee crafts the policy and the district implements the new policy, it will allow for the principals' voice throughout; this is a critical component. For this policy to be successfully followed, it must honor the voices, and opinions, of the principals. Similarly, clear and effective communication is a valuable leadership lesson from this research process. Effective communication is vital in all aspects of a principal's job, but clear communication among administrators is even more important during hiring. Clear, direct, and effective communication among members of the interview team is also vital. While principals have a great deal of autonomy in the hiring process, it cannot happen in a vacuum, as the survey responses and the literature review affirm. A further lesson relates to adherence to timelines. As hiring agents, principals often make adjustments and decisions about hiring timelines and protocols. Following a timeline is important, which is why the recommended policy includes a time.

Throughout this dissertation process, as a leader I've learned about the importance of honoring principal autonomy while still participating in a larger system. I've learned the importance of honoring voice and collaboration during the hiring process so that principals can learn from one another. Moving forward, I hope to implement my recommended hiring procedures so that my principal colleagues and I can continue to collaborate, strengthen, and improve these protocols.

Conclusion

As a principal, I think about my short-term and long-term impacts on my building, my staff, my students, and my district. When I think about improving my approach to hiring and the

long-term implications of that improved hiring, it further validates the reasons this change is necessary. From acknowledging and understanding the shared responsibility of hiring to the importance of effective communication and adherence to timelines, following a more research-based, uniform hiring process will create long-lasting, positive change for our school district. As a leader, I cannot think of a better legacy than ensuring that the teachers you hire are the best ones for the children of your district.

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Appendix A: Principal Survey Questions

Principal Survey Draft

My name is Courtney Goodman, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am conducting a research study on effective hiring practices. I am interested in principals' feedback about their process when hiring teachers. The average time to complete this survey is 20 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential. The delivery method used will not allow me to match the survey answers to any specific respondent. You may withdraw from completing the survey at any time. There are no known risks related to participating in this survey. The results of this survey may help you or your district with effective hiring practices. Completing this survey indicates your willingness to participate in this research. If you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact me via email at cgoodman6@my.nl.edu. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Section 1: Online Applications

1. On average, how many online applications do you receive for a teaching vacancy?
 - a. Less than 10
 - b. 11-25
 - c. 26-50
 - d. More than 50
2. How do you separate out candidates before you call them in for an interview?
 - a. Via an online screening tool
 - b. Professional judgement
 - c. Other: _____
3. Describe your criteria for determining to interview a candidate (online tool, professional judgement, other):
4. Who reviews online applications?
 - a. Principal
 - b. Assistant Principal
 - c. Team of teachers
 - d. Other: _____
5. Who determines who is interviewed?
 - a. Principal
 - b. Assistant Principal

- c. Team of teachers
 - d. Other: _____
6. What aspect of the online application is most important to you?
 - a. The application/employment history section
 - b. The resume
 - c. The essay questions
 - d. The references
 - e. Other: _____
 7. Why is this the most important aspect of the online application (application/employment history portion, resume, essay questions, references, other)?

Section 2: Interviews

1. How many rounds of interviews do candidates participate in, on average?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four
2. Is the first interview over the phone or in-person?
 - a. Phone
 - b. In-person
 - c. Video
 - d. Other: _____
3. Who participates in the first interview?
 - a. Principal
 - b. Assistant Principal and Principal
 - c. Team of teachers and administrators
 - d. Other: _____
4. Who participates in the second interview?
 - a. Principal
 - b. Assistant Principal and Principal
 - c. Team of teachers and administrators
5. Describe your interview technique.
6. What about candidate first impressions are important to you?
7. If you use a team of teachers in an interview, how do they share feedback about candidates?
8. Who determines if a candidate moves forward in an interview?
9. If you determine who moves forward, what criteria do you use to determine if a candidate moves forward in an interview? Select all that apply.
 - a. Appearance/professional dress
 - b. On-time arrival
 - c. A rubric that assessed the candidates answers to questions
 - d. Other:

Section 3: References

1. How many references do you call?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four or more
2. How do you determine how many references to call?
3. What information do you use to make that determination?
4. Do you only call references listed on the application?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, I call others
5. What questions do you ask when you call a reference?
6. How important are reference letters? (very important to not important)
 - a. Likert scale with 1 being very important and 4 being not important

Section 4: Demographic Questions

1. How long have you been an administrator?
 - a. Less than 3 years
 - b. 4-10 years
 - c. More than 10 years
2. What's your role in hiring for your building?
 - a. I make the final decision
 - b. I provide a recommendation to the superintendent
 - c. I do not make final hiring decisions or recommendations
3. What's your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Non-binary

Appendix B: In-Person Interview Questions

1. Describe your process for reviewing online applications.
2. Name three characteristics that initially impress you about a candidate's application.
3. What are three negative characteristics that change your impression of a candidate's application?
4. How do you develop interview questions?
5. How do your teachers participate in the interview process?
6. What works well about your hiring process?
7. What changes have you made to your hiring process?
8. Is there anything else you'd like me to know about your hiring process?

Appendix C: Informed Consent Interview

Consent Observation Interview

My name is Courtney Goodman, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, “Effective Hiring Practices: For teacher retention and for student growth and achievement,” occurring from May 2020 to May 2021. The purpose of this study is to understand how principals hire teachers and determine what the most effective hiring practices. This study will help me to develop a deeper understanding of effective hiring practices. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Courtney Goodman, a doctoral student at National Louis University, Wheeling.

Please understand that the purpose of the study is to understand how principals hire teachers and not to evaluate principals or their work. Participation in this study will include the following:

1. 1 individual interview scheduled at your convenience in the summer of 2020 or fall of 2020.
 1. The interview will last up to 45 min and include approximately 15–20 questions to understand how principals screen online applications, conduct interviews, and make hiring decisions.
 2. Interviews will be recorded.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences and used to inform hiring practices at a Chicago suburban school district. Participants will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will secure recordings and transcripts in a password-protected electronic file on a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher will have access to data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits to individuals who participate in the study. The information gained from this study could be useful to the researcher and other schools and school districts looking to refine their hiring process.

You may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur upon request. Please email the researcher, Courtney Goodman, at cgoodman6@my.nl.edu to request results from this study or with additional questions.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that has not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Dr. Christine Nelson, dissertation chair, at (847) 658-5669 or by email at cnelson34@nl.edu. Or you may contact Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D., Director of Engaged Research, IRB Chair at National Louis, at shaunti.knauth@nl.edu or (312) 261-3526 or Kathleen Cornett, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, National College of Education at National Louis, IRB Co-Chair, at kcornett@nl.edu or (844) 380-5001.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study “Effective Hiring Practices: For teacher retention and for student growth and achievement.” My participation will consist of one (1) 45-minute in-person interview during the summer or fall of 2020.

Participant’s Signature

Date

Researcher’s Signature

Date

Appendix D: Informed Consent Online Survey

Informed Consent Online Survey

My name is Courtney Goodman, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, “Effective Hiring Practices: For teacher retention and for student growth and achievement,” occurring from May 2020 to May 2021. The purpose of this study is to understand how principals hire teachers and determine the most effective hiring practices. This study will help researchers develop a deeper understanding of effective hiring practices. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

Please understand that the purpose of the study is to understand how principals hire teachers and not to evaluate principals or their work. Participation in this study will include the following:

1. Completion of the following online survey, expected to take approximately 20–25 minutes to complete.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences and employed to inform hiring practices at a Chicago suburban school district, but participants’ identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will secure recordings and transcripts in a password-protected file on a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher will have access to data.

This study involves no anticipated risks or benefits greater than those encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to the researcher and other schools and school districts looking to refine their hiring process.

Upon request, you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, Courtney Goodman, at cgoodman6@my.nl.edu to request results from this study or with additional questions.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that has not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Dr. Christine Nelson, dissertation chair, at (847) 658-5669 or by email at cnelson34@nl.edu. Or you may contact Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D., Director of Engaged Research, IRB Chair at National Louis, at shaunti.knauth@nl.edu or (312) 261-3526 or Kathleen Cornett, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, National College of Education at National Louis, IRB Co-Chair, at kcornett@nl.edu or (844) 380-5001.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by checking ‘Yes’ below, I am agreeing to participate in the study “Effective Hiring Practices: For teacher retention and for student growth and achievement.” My participation will consist of the completion of an online survey taking approximately 20–25 minutes to complete.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that

1. You have read the above information.
2. You voluntarily agree to participate
3. You are 18 years of age or older

- Agree
- Disagree

Appendix E: Sample Interview Questions



Indicators

- Consistently demonstrates and communicates commitment to becoming an excellent instructor and describes examples of professional development and learning to support that growth
- Demonstrates strong self-reflection and formative inquiry while taking ownership over and learning from failures/experiences
- Openly accepts and incorporates feedback on sample teaching
- Incorporates a variety of resources to achieve results
- Generates strategies that involve a range of resources
- Seeks out and welcomes feedback from others
- Describes examples of professional development and other learning in order to become a more effective teacher
- Reflects on previous professional experiences and how they relate to teaching

Sample Interview Questions

- Give me an example of a time when you received difficult professional feedback. How did you feel about someone criticizing you? What was your response? How did you handle the feedback?
- Think about your last performance review. What are your three biggest areas for improvement? How have you addressed these issues? If I spoke with your manager, how would they say you are doing on your progress in these areas?
- Reflect on a time when you had to acclimate to a new environment or experience. What challenges did you face? How did you overcome these challenges? What did you learn from the experience?
- How do you ensure you continue to improve as a teacher? Where do you go for resources or help? How would you like to develop as a teacher?
- Tell me about a time when you failed at something (e.g., an ineffective lesson, low mastery on an assessment). What factors contributed to that failure? What do you think was the primary cause?
 - How did you handle the failure personally and professionally? What did you learn from it? How can that experience deepen your experience next year as a teacher?

Sample Selection Activities

- Provide feedback to candidate in role-plays/scenarios and/or a demo lesson. Have the candidate redo and assess the extent to which they incorporate feedback.

School Fit

Criteria

- Demonstrates interests and skills that match the school's culture and needs

Indicators

- Meshes with and wants to be a part of the school community
- Demonstrates interests, teaching styles, and experiences that match the school's culture and needs
- Recognizes that families influence student achievement
- Interacts appropriately with supervisors, colleagues, parents, and students at all times
- Possesses applicable skills that match the needs of the school: technology, language, professional background, etc.

Sample Interview Questions

- How can I, as the school leader, best support you as a teacher?
- How often do you expect to be observed/receive feedback on your teaching?
- If I walked into your classroom and you were in the midst of a successful lesson, what would I see?
- Our school has/is (insert specific feature, like open space, block scheduling, or elongated day etc.). What's your reaction to that? How would you adapt to this school setting?
- At my school, we have (describe the student population—special education, ESL, mild learning disabilities)
 - Ask them to define more specifically what you think this will be like/involve and why you want to do it.

Appendix F: Sample Timeline for Hiring



Hiring Process and Timeline

Suggested Process and Timeline

Activity	How Long	What Day	Who?
Candidate Referred		1	HR
Referral Reviewed	10 min	2	AP
Resume Review	15 min	2	AP
Candidate contacted for phone interview		2	Admin. Assistant
Phone interview conducted	30 min	4	AP
Candidate contacted for school-site interview		4	Admin. Assistant
Student data exercise reviewed and evaluated	15 min	7	AP
School tour	20 min	7	AP
Demo lesson completed and evaluated	30 min	7	Hiring Team
Interview conducted and evaluated	60 min	7	Hiring Team
Candidate is rejected or offered position		8	Principal

Appendix G: Sample Rubric for Selecting Candidates (Interview)

INTERVIEW RUBRIC						
POSITION TITLE						
INTERVIEWER'S NAME		DATE				
Scale =	1 – Unsatisfactory	2 – Below Average	3 – Average	4 – Above Average	5 – Exceptional	
FACTORS	Candidates					Sample Questions
	James	Aliyah	Michael	Marie	Steven	
Cultural Fit	4	5	4	3	5	How would you describe your ideal organizational structure? What attributes of an institution's culture do you value?
Career Motivation	2	5	4	5	5	Why is our organization and its role attractive to you? What are your short- and long-term career goals?
Social Skills	3	4	3	4	4	Which personality traits do you value in the workplace? Are there behaviors or attitudes that you particularly like or dislike?
Teamwork	4	4	2	5	5	How do you build rapport with colleagues, direct reports and your manager? Describe the relationships you have with them.
Technical Skills	3	4	5	4	5	TBD by role.
Leadership Capabilities	5	4	3	5	4	What experience do you have in hiring and training staff? How do you maintain positivity in the workplace?
Critical Thinking / Problem Solving	4	3	5	3	5	Tell me about a time when you identified a problem and describe your role in the solution.
Self-Awareness	4	2	4	5	5	Describe your strengths and how you leverage them. Describe your weaknesses and how you improve upon them. How would your colleagues describe you?
AVERAGE SCORE	3.625	3.875	3.750	4.250	4.750	