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An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies
of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri

by

Zebadiah Thomas Wallace

April 14, 2021

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies
of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri

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Zebadiah Thomas Wallace

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Lindenwood University, School of Education


Dr. Sherry DeVore, Dissertation Chair

4/14/2021
Date


Dr. Kathy Groves, Committee Member

4/14/2021
Date


Dr. Julie Williams, Committee Member

04/14/2021
Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Zebadiah Thomas Wallace

Signature:  Date: 4-14-21

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Abstract

Teachers are the most-significant controllable factor that leads to student achievement (Hattie & Anderman, 2013). Accordingly, recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers are the most-significant variables for student success that can be controlled by school leaders (Fraynd, 2013). The purpose of this study was to examine teacher recruitment and retention strategies of high-performing public school districts in Missouri. Specifically, this study was designed to compare the perceptions of human resource directors and teachers to identify trends, commonalities, and differences to more fully understand the recruitment and retention of teachers. Participants received an online survey to elicit their perceptions of effective recruitment and retention practices. The survey responses were reported and analyzed using descriptive statistics as the primary data analysis technique. The data were interpreted, explained, and expounded upon using numerical indices, tables, and figures. The most-prevalent consistencies of human resource director and teacher perceptions included “why teachers leave a district” and “effective methods to retain teachers.” However, findings revealed inconsistencies in terms of the most-influential teacher recruitment tool. The inconsistencies between the perceptions of human resource directors and teachers only further complicate and reinforce the need to align hiring practices between school districts and potential teaching candidates.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Quality teachers have consistently been recognized as the single most-important school factor to predict student success (Fitchett & Heafner, 2018). However, school leaders have different perceptions of talent or best fit and utilize a variety of strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers (Jabbar, 2018). An increasing number of human resource directors have identified human capital management as one of the most-important strategies for increasing student achievement (Donaldson, 2013). Although school leaders recognize the importance of recruiting and retaining effective teachers, they fail to elucidate qualities and implement procedures to make recruitment and retention a reality (Black, 2016). Selection methods are dependent on a variety of characteristics, including professional qualities, content knowledge, certification, and experience, but administrators often fail to consider fundamental human resource research or evidence-based hiring strategies that affect student outcomes (Jabbar, 2018)

The processes and procedures human resource directors utilize when recruiting, selecting, and hiring teachers are likely to have major ramifications on teacher effectiveness, and ultimately, student achievement (Donaldson, 2013). Additionally, beyond recruitment and selection, principals and human resource directors alike can influence overall teacher effectiveness in their schools by mastering teacher placement and assignments (Donaldson, 2013). When using conventional hiring practices and unreliable indicators to predict teacher effectiveness, the emphasis is on statistically proven, objective, pre-employment assessments when choosing teacher candidates (Fraynd, 2013).

Background of the Study

Considering teachers are the most-important school factor to promote student achievement, relatively little time is spent scrutinizing hiring criteria and even less time ensuring successful teachers are retained (Fraynd, 2013). According to Yaffe (2015), “Teacher quality is crucial to the success of schooling, yet the teacher hiring process is sometimes rushed and ad hoc” (p. 31). Public school enrollment is expected to reach record highs with each passing year, and two-thirds of new teachers leave their districts within three years (Sparks, 2018). Additional challenges include teacher turnover, lack of qualified teachers, declining teacher quality, strict educational policies, and unclear guidelines for identifying quality teachers throughout the hiring process (Fraynd, 2013).

Conceptual Framework

The human resource framework, as developed by Bolman and Deal (2017), was selected as an appropriate lens through which to view this study. This framework is applicable because successful organizations tend to recognize people, in this case, teachers, as their most-valuable asset (Bolman & Deal, 2017). It is the function of human resource personnel to hire, retain, and develop teachers to achieve common school goals (Rebore, 2015). According to Hattie and Anderman (2013), the greatest controllable source of variance in student achievement is the teacher.

The human resource conceptual framework, although complicated, can be summarized as what organizations and people do to, and for, one another (Bolman & Deal, 2017). It is the duty of school leaders to assist, facilitate, and maximize the career growth of employees toward the common goals of the organization (Rebore, 2015). Successful organizations recognize their most-valuable assets (people) and operate under

the premise all employees are talented, highly motivated, and wholeheartedly involved in the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017). For employees to be motivated and feel valued, organizations must recognize essential human needs (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Starting with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Table 1 depicts the models of motivation at work and how they have evolved (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Table 1

Models of Motivation at Work

Author(s)	Needs/Motives at Work
Maslow (1943, 1954)	“Hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, self-actualization)”
Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959); Herzberg (1966)	“Two-Factor Theory motivators/satisfiers: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, pay” “Hygiene factors/dissatisfiers: company policies, supervision, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, pay”
McClelland (1961)	“Three needs: achievement, power, affiliation”
Hackman and Oldham (1980)	“Three critical psychological states: meaningfulness of work, responsibility for outcomes, knowledge of results”
Lawrence and Nohria (2002)	“Four drives: D1 (acquire objects and experiences that improve our status relative to others); D2 (bond with others in mutually beneficial, long-term relationships); D3 (learn about and make sense of ourselves and the world around us); D4 (defend ourselves, our loved ones, our beliefs, and our resources)”
Pink (2009)	“Three drives: autonomy (people want to have control over their work); mastery (people want to get better at what they do); purpose (people want to be part of something bigger than themselves)”

Note. Models of motivation at work and how they have evolved (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 121).

In terms of the conceptual framework, the invaluable relationship between people and organizations cannot be understated (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The human resource function is essentially the same for every school district: hire, retain, develop, and motivate personnel to achieve school objectives; assist staff to reach the highest level of achievement; and maximize career development (Rebore, 2015). According to Bolman and Deal (2017), “Organizations need people (for their energy, effort, and talent), and people need organizations (for many intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they offer), but their respective needs are not always well aligned” (p. 133). Many organizations are misaligned, but if employees find their work meaningful and satisfying, organizations get the talent and energy needed to succeed (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Teacher recruitment and the retention of highly qualified teachers were the two variables examined in this study. Since quality teachers are the single most-important factor that affects student learning, and too often, the process of teacher recruitment and retention is left to chance, this topic was worthy of investigation (Fraynd, 2013). Hattie and Anderman (2013) described teachers as the most-significant controllable factor in student achievement; accordingly, recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers is an essential variable for student success.

Over time, the severity of teacher shortages has varied by region, labor market, and state (Castro et al., 2018). Still, teacher shortages have consistently been a major concern for policymakers, district leaders, and school leaders (Castro et al., 2018).

According to Sparks (2018):

By the end of their third year of teaching, a little more than one in three novice educators are still teaching in the school where they started their careers, and a quarter of those do not wait for the end of the school year to leave. (p. 4)

Former President Barack Obama asserted, "...from the moment students enter school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents, it's the person standing in front of the classroom" (as cited in O'Donovan, 2012, p. 22). Given national policy, along with many other recurring issues related to the teacher candidate pool, the need for effective classroom teachers remains constant (Fraynd, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher recruitment and retention strategies of high-performing public school districts in Missouri. High-performing school districts were identified as those districts that scored in the top 10% of Missouri public schools according to cumulative Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) and End-of-Course Assessment (EOC) scores from 2019 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2019). Once identified, human resource directors and teachers within the top 10% of districts were surveyed about their perceptions of the most-effective recruitment and retention strategies.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective teacher recruitment strategies?

2. What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-common reasons teachers leave the profession?
3. What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective district strategies for retaining high-quality teachers?

Significance of the Study

According to Hattie and Anderman (2013), the teacher is the most-significant contributing factor to student learning, ahead of the student, home, school, curricula, and teaching. While many factors contribute to student learning, and individual influences fluctuate, the teacher is consistently the most-influential of Hattie and Anderman's (2013) six primary factors. Bolman and Deal (2017) also declared successful organizations recognize human capital as one of the greatest factors to their success. The findings of this study may aid in identifying, understanding, and evaluating the hiring practices of the most-effective school districts in Missouri. Additionally, the findings of this study may provide human resource directors and school districts in Missouri with practical knowledge for finding and retaining quality teachers.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

End-of-Course Assessment (EOC)

Missouri end-of-course (EOC) assessments are a series of assessments taken when students receive instruction in English I, English II, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, American History, Government, Biology, and Physical Science (MODESE,

2019). Of the aforementioned EOC assessments, Algebra I, English II, Biology, and Government are required prior to high school graduation (MODESE, 2019).

Highly Qualified Teacher

A highly qualified teacher has obtained full state certification and holds a certificate to teach in Missouri but does not have certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis (MODESE, 2019). A highly qualified teacher also holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree and has demonstrated subject-matter competency in each of the academic subjects taught (MODESE, 2019).

High-Performing Public School District

High-performing public school districts are those districts scoring in the top 10% of Missouri public schools, according to cumulative MAP and EOC scores for 2019 (MODESE, 2019). Cumulative MAP and EOC scores include any combination of mathematics, English language arts, and/or science assessment results (MODESE, 2019).

Mentoring

Mentoring, when built on collaborative relationships between new and experienced teachers with good communication, trust, and respect, is powerful in supporting, developing, and retaining quality teachers in the profession (MODESE, 2019).

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)

The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) is a series of assessments for English language arts, mathematics, and science administered to students in grades 3–8 (MODESE, 2019).

Teacher Tenure

Teachers who have been employed full-time in the same Missouri school district for five consecutive years acquire tenure or permanent teacher status when they receive their sixth consecutive contract (Missouri National Education Association [MNEA], 2020).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The scope of the study was bounded by the following delimitations:

Factors Beyond the Scope of the Study

There was an expectation of the survey sample participants to respond honestly on survey questions; however, it should be taken into consideration survey bias can occur when dishonest answers are provided by survey participants. Due to the failure of some respondents to answer honestly, results may not accurately reflect the opinions of all members of the included population. It was assumed that during this study, participant gender did not significantly affect perceptions.

Time Frame

Data were collected during the spring of 2020 but included data from 2019. Spring of 2020 was the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many schools were scrambling to serve students prior to Missouri releasing schools for the summer. It was assumed that these extenuating circumstances did not significantly affect perceptions or participation.

Location of Study

The study was limited to high-achieving public school districts in Missouri.

Sample

Only teachers and human resource directors of high-performing school districts in Missouri were surveyed. Of the 90 districts identified as high-performing in 2019, a minimum of 20 teachers and 20 human resource directors for a total minimum of 40 participants, and a maximum of 90 teachers and 90 human resource directors for a total maximum of 180 participants, were selected as the sample. The 90 school districts meeting the criteria were given the opportunity to participate in this study. In all, 12 school superintendents agreed to participate, with 11 human resource directors and 59 teachers completing their respective surveys (not every respondent completed every question). Responses from the surveys provided quantitative data that were reviewed and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Criteria

Only teachers and human resource directors employed in school districts identified as high-performing in 2019 were surveyed. For the purposes of this study, high-performing public schools were identified as achieving in the top 10% on cumulative MAP and EOC scores for 2019 (MODESE, 2019). Cumulative MAP and EOC scores consisted of results from mathematics, English language arts, and science assessments.

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample Demographics

Not all teachers and human resource directors in schools recognized as high-performing responded to the survey. Additionally, the socioeconomic status of districts was not taken into consideration as a factor affecting cumulative MAP and EOC scores.

Instrument

The survey was a limitation, as questions were developed by the primary researcher.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The participants were serving as teachers or human resource directors in their districts.
2. The participants' responses to the survey were honest and without bias.

Summary

Recruiting quality teachers is one of the most-crucial components in offering students a quality education (Black, 2016). Further, no in-school intervention has a greater impact on student learning than being taught by an effective teacher (Bigham et al., 2014). As a result, making wise decisions about teacher selection from the available teacher supply is one of the most-impactful dimensions of a principal's job (Engel, 2013).

In this chapter, the background of the study was presented, followed by a description of the conceptual framework. The statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions were provided. The significance of the study was delineated, and key terms were defined. Lastly, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions were detailed, including the time frame, location, sample, criteria, and instrument.

Chapter Two begins with an in-depth examination of current teacher recruitment processes. Next, school image and reputation, teacher contracts, teacher pay, and grow-your-own programs are investigated. Hiring and interview processes, selection criteria,

teacher evaluation, and barriers to teacher effectiveness are discussed. Finally, to conclude Chapter Two, teacher retention and culture and climate are explored.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

No in-school intervention has a greater impact on student learning than a highly effective teacher (Bigham et al., 2014). Regardless of sector, organizations rely heavily on large numbers of employees who are highly talented and motivated to give their best effort (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Although research on effective teacher characteristics has increased, many school district human resource directors remain concerned about identifying candidates who possess the necessary qualities during interviews (Whitworth et al., 2016). Additionally, human resource directors struggle to match beliefs about teachers with actual teacher performance, which ultimately exposes a plethora of issues in hiring practices (Finch, 2014).

Although there are inconsistencies, teacher quality remains the most-crucial component of promoting and increasing student achievement (O'Donovan, 2010). Further, human resource directors and principals find hiring and retaining quality teachers to be one of the most-challenging tasks associated with their jobs (Young, 2018). Young (2018) determined, "Research has shown the hiring process does not have to be hit or miss; there are certain traits school leaders can look for when hiring teachers" (p. 16). In this chapter, the primary topics investigated include recruitment, school image and reputation, teacher contracts, teacher pay, hiring/interview processes, selection criteria, teacher evaluation, barriers to teacher effectiveness, retention, grow-your-own programs, and culture and climate.

Conceptual Framework

Through various school improvement models and state mandates, teacher effectiveness has been a constant, crucial component in determining student achievement

and learning (Goldhaber et al., 2019). Young (2018) related, “Hiring and retaining the best teachers is an important, complex, and difficult task, but it does not have to be haphazard” (p. 20). Knowing which traits are required and how to identify potential candidates who possess those traits can lessen teacher turnover, improve the performance of school personnel, provide consistency, and result in increased student achievement (Young, 2018).

The human resource conceptual framework, while complicated, can best be summarized as the constant pursuit of a relationship between employee and employer, which is beneficial and advantageous to both sides (Bolman & Deal, 2017). As stated by Bolman and Deal (2017), the human resource conceptual framework is built on several core assumptions:

- Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse.
- People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities.
- When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer. Individuals are exploited or exploit the organization – or both become victims.
- A good fit benefits both. Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed. (p. 118)

Additionally, for organizations to find sustained success, a sound understanding of people and their symbiotic relationship with organizations must be present (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

As displayed in Table 1 depicting models of motivation at work, factors that motivate employees have evolved from Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to Pink’s autonomy

and purpose. While the verbiage in Bolman and Deal's (2017) models of motivation at work varies, the common themes for highly motivated employees include the need for self-actualization, fulfillment, and autonomy. Additionally, teachers are most motivated by good working conditions, a sense of autonomy, and opportunities for advancement (Yaffe, 2015). The most-successful organizations not only hire well but most importantly, invest in their people on the premise that a highly skilled and motivated workforce is a competitive advantage (Bolman & Deal, 2017). School leaders recognize the importance of effective teacher recruitment and retention, but they may fail to align their expectations for teaching to the selection processes (O'Donovan, 2010). This misalignment can lead to less-than-desirable student outcomes (O'Donovan, 2010).

Recruitment

Teacher recruitment has become increasingly complex as school leaders consider a variety of characteristics when making hiring decisions (Jabbar, 2018). Human resource directors and principals are continually seeking innovative ways to recruit, hire, and retain the best teachers (Jabbar, 2018). Still, although beyond the control of administrators, one of the most-critical considerations for job-hunting teachers continues to be the geographical location (Morrison, 2015). Fortunately, schools looking to attract a diverse, highly qualified candidate pool have a number of options for enhancing recruitment and hiring processes (Douglas & Khandaker, 2015).

This increase in complexity, such as value-added scoring systems to rank candidates, has to do with the pressure and accountability states, schools, and communities are facing in terms of hiring and retaining quality teachers (Jabbar, 2018). According to Jabbar (2018):

Principals not only seek teachers with a mix of personal and professional qualities, including good classroom-management skills, content knowledge, and teaching experiences, but also those who can connect with students, go above contractual obligations, and those who match needs or characteristics of current teachers in the school. (p. 119)

The recruitment process becomes even more complex when school leaders have different perceptions of what talent and fit look like and utilize different strategies to recruit teachers (Jabbar, 2018). By tidying up, quantifying, and hiring teachers with sought-after qualities, school leaders can create sustainable consistency in hiring practices (Douglas & Khandaker, 2015).

It is relatively unanimous in the education field that hiring quality teachers is one of the most-important jobs of any human resource director or principal (Young, 2018). However, identifying sought-after traits and applying scoring systems can be daunting and overwhelming, which sometimes results in avoidance of quantifiable hiring systems (Young, 2018). Podolsky et al. (2016), among many others, cited a plethora of variables to consider when screening applications and resumes: academic ability of the teacher, years of experience, certification status, prior school district(s), furthering of education, and professional development.

One could reasonably understand the complexity of assigning the variables mentioned above to a scoring system. Removing subjective opinions from the teacher application and hiring process while adding objective data and analytics to the screening methodology leads to more accurate judgments of who will be effective on the job (“Teacher Hiring,” 2020). Furthermore, “With the resurgence on the focus of teacher

effectiveness and evaluation, hiring is the most important lever school principals have for improving the quality of the staff and, thus, student learning” (“Teacher Hiring,” 2020, p. 20).

Recruiting and hiring quality teachers is a two-sided issue because for school leaders to rank, interview, and hire candidates, they must be capable of acquiring applicants (Jabbar, 2018). Unfortunately, high volumes of teachers are not always available where they are needed most; high-poverty and rural areas are some of the hardest places to recruit potential applicants (Brenneman, 2015). Teachers are significantly less likely to apply to schools with high concentrations of poor students and are more likely to apply to schools that reflect their own racial or ethnic background (Goldhaber et al., 2019). Brenneman (2015) found many teachers do not choose schools based on performance but prefer to teach in communities where they went to school or currently reside.

When trying to recruit quality teachers, Sprankles and Backman (2017) noted three critical teacher qualities: “coachability for a growth mindset, the ability to build life-altering relationships, and a willingness to approach difficult subjects in the classroom” (p. 36). The growth mindset model is one of the most sought-after teacher qualities because, with this mindset, teachers believe their basic abilities can be developed by starting where they are (Sprankles & Backman, 2017). Difficulty recruiting quality teachers is an unfortunate reality of education, and with the high cost of college combined with consistently low teacher salaries, the difficulty may not be remedied soon (Brenneman, 2015). Bigham et al. (2014) interviewed principals in the Midwest who

uncovered 50 themes associated with teacher qualities, but the following 15 emerged as the most-sought qualities:

1. Passion for teaching as a career/working with students.
2. Interest and competence in working collaboratively.
3. Current pedagogy and content knowledge/experience—and passion for it.
4. Specific examples of classroom management/how to deal positively with student behavior.
5. Growth mindset/focus on lifelong learning/ability to show clear growth from challenges.
6. Understand differentiation of instruction and universal design for learning (UDL).
7. Ability to build relationships and exhibit emotional intelligence (EQ)/interpersonal skills.
8. Appropriate level of confidence/ability to accept constructive feedback.
9. Knowledge of the curriculum, how to implement and use relevant assessment to plan.
10. Temperament/personality/character/ “fit” for your particular school/team/position/district.
11. Communication skills—oral, written, listening, etc.
12. Coursework in/experience with/knowledge about/interest in your particular school/school system.
13. Range of experiences in education/exposure to different approaches.

14. Ability to plan a comprehensive lesson and articulate specifically what they are doing and why.
15. Ability to motivate/engage ALL students and believe in their ability to achieve. (p. 213)

Human resource directors and principals strive to hire the best teachers, but that simply cannot happen if there are no applicants; therefore, effective recruitment is critical (Bigham et al., 2014).

With recruitment in mind, the question shifts to determining to what extent human resource directors or principals can identify effective teachers when hiring (Engel, 2013). Sprankles and Backman (2017) highlighted the misalignment of or lack of literature regarding which teacher characteristics are tied to teacher quality, and perhaps more importantly, what principals look for in teachers. The disparity, subjectivity, and inconsistency in these identified areas of importance are of great concern for anyone looking to create or duplicate highly effective recruitment, retention, and hiring practices (Engel, 2013).

School Image and Reputation

Organizational image, or reputation, refers to stakeholder impressions, knowledge, and beliefs of an organization based on a loose structure of knowledge (Lievens, 2017). A school's image, or reputation, is created through the feelings and beliefs that exist within a community (Eger et al., 2018). School image is a delicate component of school leadership shaped over time and plays a large role in community support, teacher recruitment, teacher retention, and marketing (Eger et al., 2018). Perhaps the most-unsettling notion for school leaders is that the attributes that contribute to school

image tend to be relatively limited, are ongoing, and can be quite unpredictable (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

In terms of scholarly literature and how it pertains to school reputation, “interest in people’s perceptions of organizational image originated with recruitment researchers” (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016, p. 2). This type of research was derived from the notion that school image, or organizational perception, might influence potential applicants’ attraction to school districts as a place to work (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Of course, school image would be of particular interest to human resource directors and principals as this public relations piece could affect not only the day-to-day operations of a school but also the potential recruitment of future teachers (Eger et al., 2018).

As mentioned by Schoer (2014), “For principals, the ability to create and maintain positive recognition and identity both personally and for the school is crucial for support from all stakeholders” (p. 30). Further, the continual marketing and promotion of a school’s image in today’s competitive climate has become a common and intentional public relations strategy of many high-achieving school districts (Honiges, 2013). Schoer (2014) identified 10 principles of branding, creating, and maintaining a positive school image:

1. Keep it simple: one big idea is best.
2. Mass-produced word of mouth (PR) builds brands.
3. Focused brands are more powerful than diffused brands.
4. Somehow, some way, there needs to be a difference.
5. The first brand in a category has a huge advantage.
6. Avoid sub-brands at all costs.

7. Quality is important, but not as important as the perception of quality.
8. Be consistent and patient: building a strong brand takes time.
9. Put your brand definition in writing; otherwise, you'll get off course.
10. Realizing the benefits. (pp. 30–33)

It is not difficult to see the importance of school reputation and image relative to public relations, according to Eger et al. (2018), Lievens (2017), and Lievens and Slaughter (2016).

Consequently, assessment and improvement of a school's image are increasingly valuable for school districts (Eger et al., 2018). While measuring such a subjective variable could prove difficult, school leaders would find it a valuable use of their time (Eger et al., 2018). Unfortunately, for school administrators, school image is static, ever-changing, and firmly developed over long periods of time, so a constant focus on public relations could pay dividends (Lievens, 2017).

Teacher Contracts

Contract and salary negotiations are current and recurring legal topics in the field of education (Ingle & Wisman, 2018). The combination of federal, state, and local influence provides a unique set of circumstances for educators and school boards alike (Ingle & Wisman, 2018). A sound understanding of teacher contracts and salary negotiations can encourage a transparent and propitious relationship between teachers and administrators (Vegas, 2017).

There are two primary types of teacher contracts in Missouri and many other states: probationary and tenured (MNEA, 2020). According to the MNEA (2020), the probationary period for Missouri teachers is five years. Once a teacher in Missouri signs

the sixth consecutive contract with a district, the teacher is considered tenured (MNEA, 2020). Probationary teachers, as the name suggests, are under close administrative watch and have fewer contractual rights than tenured teachers (Ingle & Wisman, 2018). At the end of each yearly probationary contract, the district has complete discretion in deciding whether or not to hire the probationary teacher for another year (MNEA, 2020). Non-renewed contracts for probationary teachers are not necessarily commonplace, but in the event a teacher is not re-hired, the teacher has little to no right to due process (Ingle & Wisman, 2018).

Missouri teacher contracts are typically offered in March after the contracts for superintendents (January) and principals (February) (Missouri State Teachers Association [MSTA], 2020). Once a probationary teacher in Missouri is offered a contract, the teacher has 15 days to return the signed contract before it is considered a rejection (MNEA, 2020). In Missouri, teachers also have the right to have contracts offered to them by April 15th, and failure to do so by the district automatically renews a teacher's contract (MNEA, 2020). In most cases, teachers who are non-renewed are not blindsided, as districts should communicate with faculty early and often throughout the teacher evaluation process (Strunk et al., 2018).

In the event a teacher who has signed a contract wants or needs out of the agreement, it is up to the district and board of education to determine what that process looks like (Strunk et al., 2018). Many school districts assign penalties or put stipulations in place, such as finding a highly qualified replacement, associated with early termination of a contract (Strunk et al., 2018). However, when working with teachers who desire to

pursue other endeavors, districts tend to favor what is best for the teacher, as school leaders rarely wish to keep a teacher who does not want to be there (Strunk et al., 2018).

As previously mentioned, teachers in Missouri acquire tenure after signing their sixth consecutive contract (not after completing their fifth year) (MNEA, 2020). Upon completion of their fifth year, school districts and school boards are faced with a much bigger decision than in the previous year-to-year probationary contract period because once a teacher is tenured, he or she has an indefinite contract with the district (MSTA, 2020). Although tenured teachers have an indefinite contract, they are still required to uphold their job performance (MNEA, 2020). According to the MNEA (2020), tenured teachers can be terminated for the following circumstances:

- If the teacher has a physical or mental condition that renders him or her unfit to instruct or associate with children
- For immoral conduct
- For incompetence, inefficiency or insubordination in the line of duty
- For willful or persistent violation of Missouri's school laws or the local school district's published policies or regulations
- For excessive or unreasonable absences
- For conviction of a felony or a crime of moral turpitude. (p. 1)

Although it is possible for tenured teachers to lose their jobs, it is far rarer than simply non-renewing a probationary teacher (Ingle & Wisman, 2018). Specifically, there are many procedures districts must follow and document to release a tenured teacher (Strunk et al., 2018).

Regardless of whether teachers are tenured or probationary, there are obstacles within the process of applying and selecting jobs outside the current school district (MNEA, 2020). In Missouri, most teachers are offered contracts or are non-renewed within the same couple of weeks in the year, typically in the middle of March (MSTA, 2020). Since teachers technically only have 15 days to consider the contract offer, and many of the jobs they are potentially interested in do not open until around the same time, the result can be a very busy time for school districts in the process of recruiting and hiring teachers (MNEA, 2020).

Although many school districts will release teachers from their contracts to accept other positions, the process is not always easy (Strunk et al., 2018). It places the district in a difficult position to find a replacement since most experienced teachers are also under contract (Strunk et al., 2018). The domino effect of teachers shuffling districts from March to April cannot be understated, specifically in relation to the competitiveness of hiring early (Iasevoli, 2016). It is difficult to imagine another profession where the vast majority of job openings and hiring happen within the same month (Ingle & Wisman, 2018).

Teachers may not realize how unique the contract process is as it pertains to probationary and tenured contracts (Strunk et al., 2018). During essentially three to four weeks per year, the majority of teacher turnover takes place (Strunk et al., 2018). Additionally, there is virtually no negotiation of contracts based on performance; contracts are generally based on years of experience and level of education (Hanushek, 2020). The amount of state and local control pertaining to teacher contracts sets the stage for a scenario unlike most other state or local jobs (Hanushek, 2020). However, Missouri

school districts still strive to recruit, hire, and retain high-quality educators to serve their respective communities (MNEA, 2020).

Teacher Pay

Improving student achievement by increasing the effectiveness of teachers is, and likely will continue to be, an ongoing battle in public education (Kobakhidze, 2018). Accordingly, districts and states are constantly searching for innovative ways to attract the best to the education profession (Kobakhidze, 2018). The broad consensus in education is that teacher salaries influence the type of people who enter the field, and low salaries generally have a negative impact on teacher recruitment and motivation (Vegas, 2017). Although education is still viewed as a profession that provides intrinsic motivation, it simply lacks the lucrative financial rewards many other entry-level careers offer (Vegas, 2017).

Salary schedules and other fringe benefits vary widely from district to district and especially from state to state (Derkachev, 2015). According to the *Missouri Salary Schedule and Benefits Report* from the Missouri State Teachers Association (2020), the larger the school district and the closer to a metropolitan area, the higher the average salary. This seems to be common knowledge in the teaching profession, but many teachers and administrators prefer small or rural schools for a variety of reasons (Jabbar, 2018). While pay and benefits are important, geographic location tends to be the number one reason teachers choose a school district (Morrison, 2015).

The majority of districts in the United States calculate teacher salaries based on experience and education (Kobakhidze, 2018). Unfortunately, this model does little to reward academic excellence, only academic experience (Lavy, 2017). It is difficult to

imagine another profession where everyone is paid the same, regardless of performance (Lavy, 2017). Although pay steadily increases with vertical and horizontal movement on the salary schedule, salary is only associated with another year of experience or degree attained (Lavy, 2017). This traditional model does have the benefit of simplicity, transparency, and predictability but lacks the financial ceiling many potential teachers are seeking (Ohanian, 2019).

Teachers are asked to strive for excellence in themselves, their students, and ultimately their districts without any additional monetary reward for doing so (Ohanian, 2019). This traditional model ultimately generates a culture and climate of *getting by* rather than continually striving for excellence (Hanushek, 2020). Teacher incentives and merit-based pay certainly complicate teacher compensation but could be a solution to improve student achievement by increasing the effectiveness of teachers through financial motivation (Hanushek, 2020). However, merit-based pay creates uncertainties and pressure for both teachers and school districts, as it is much more difficult to forecast or budget (Hanushek, 2020).

Many districts operate as Professional Learning Communities or PLCs (DuFour et al., 2016). The PLCs promote student achievement through grade-level and subject teams by focusing on horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment (DuFour et al., 2016). Professional learning communities are focused on four essential questions to drive teacher and building collaboration:

1. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions should every student acquire as a result of this unit, this course, or this grade level?

2. How will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn?
4. How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

(DuFour et al., 2016, p. 36)

Teacher incentives and merit-based pay contradict the PLC team mindset by encouraging competition and minimizing collaboration (Kobakhidze, 2018). Another issue with teacher incentives and merit-based pay is that teachers' current efforts are scrutinized or questioned, which suggests students are not currently reaching their potential (Hanushek, 2020).

A leading theory in the field of education espouses the idea that family background, social and economic status, and parents' level of education are the main factors and determinants of student performance at school (Kobakhidze, 2018). If this is true, a student's ceiling or teacher's income potential is predetermined or at least predisposed (Kobakhidze, 2018). Additionally, competition over collaboration could have a significantly negative impact on teacher retention due to the inherent reclusive nature of teachers working in isolation (Hanushek, 2020). DuFour et al.'s (2016) extensive research on PLCs has debunked the myth that teachers working in isolation is a sound instructional practice.

If teachers are essential to effective schools and are ultimately responsible for increasing student achievement, administrators need to understand what motivates teachers (Matthes & Tollerud, 2010). When surveyed, teachers made the following claim regarding merit pay: if teachers are paid more, they will teach better, and incentive pay

will give teachers something to strive for while reducing attrition and burnout (Matthes & Tollerud, 2010). If the intent is to attract, recruit, and retain high-quality teachers to the education field, it would be wise to include them in the decision-making process and understand what motivates them (Irfan & Marzuki, 2018). Additionally, upon further inspection, results have indicated males favor merit-based pay due to their autonomous behaviors, whereas females ascribe more to the notions of attachment, relationships, intimacy, and collaboration (Matthes & Tollerud, 2010).

Sought-after districts, where teachers have a strong desire to work, still hold the control as most positions end up filled with qualified candidates (Ohanian, 2019). However, in areas or positions that are difficult to fill, the power struggle leans heavily toward teachers (Ohanian, 2019). When teacher supply does not meet teacher demand, teacher incentives and merit-based pay reign supreme (Derkachev, 2015). When supply and demand are relatively stable, districts may continue with the simple, transparent, and ultimately most cost-effective way to compensate teachers: salary schedules (Hanushek, 2020).

Until merit pay policies turn into more than just conversation, it is difficult to speculate how the policies might unfold (Ohanian, 2019). There would be a bevy of growing pains and unintended consequences for all involved who might ask these questions: Would the salary schedule still reflect degrees differently? Would the salary schedule still have the same floor and ceiling in terms of salary? (Hanushek, 2020).

In a true pay-for-performance model, a teacher's overall education might not play a factor in his or her salary, which could send some unintentional messages (Meng & Wu, 2017). Typically, merit pay and pay-for-performance models imply a higher pay

ceiling, which one would think more teachers would accept. However, if teachers are asked to perform the same duties for the same or potentially less money, one could predict a mass exit (Ohanian, 2019). In the event a district or state moved to merit pay, there would undoubtedly be growing pains, and unfortunately, these growing pains could likely affect someone's livelihood (Meng & Wu, 2017)

Salary committees are commonplace in the education field (MSTA, 2020). Typically, these committees are comprised of volunteer, unpaid representatives who tend to be experienced staff members asked to represent the teaching population when requesting or negotiating salaries and other benefits such as health insurance (MNEA, 2020). Salary schedules and health insurance benefits are among the most commonly negotiated benefits (MSTA, 2020). In reality, salary committees can make requests, but ultimately, neither the board nor administration is bound to arrive at an agreement based on a committee's requests (MSTA, 2020).

Collective bargaining is the negotiation of wages and other conditions of employment by an organized body of employees (MNEA, 2020). Collective bargaining differs from salary committee recommendations in many ways (MSTA, 2020). The primary difference is that agreements reached within collective bargaining are legally binding and restore the employees' rights given to them by the Missouri Constitution (MSTA, 2020). Unlike salary committees, whose requests typically include increased salary and benefits, collective bargaining consists of a wider array of items that can be bargained, such as working conditions, class size, textbooks, and teaching assignments (MNEA, 2020).

Hiring and Interview Practices

Despite continual efforts, hiring quality teaching candidates, specifically in less-than-desirable school districts, remains at the forefront of educational issues (Goldhaber et al., 2019). Many school leaders utilize defined interview and hiring processes, but few would say the processes are flawless when it comes to hiring the most-effective teachers (Finch, 2014). Unfortunately, due to the overwhelming time constraints and responsibilities of school human resource directors, the hiring process often moves quickly, and decisions are based on limited amounts of information, especially given the high-stakes nature of the situation (Whitworth et al., 2016).

To recruit teachers accurately and effectively, school leaders must understand the applicants' most-important considerations and motivations for seeking employment (Morrison, 2015). According to Morrison (2015), the two most-important considerations for teacher candidates are location and level of responsibility. Further, the most-popular reason for teachers to seek a new position is career progression (Morrison, 2015). With this in mind, school leaders can determine what is driving teachers to choose their school districts. Correspondingly, there are many components to developing a quality interview, but none perhaps as important as the interview questions (Clement, 2009). According to Clement (2009), "Past behavior is the best predictor of future performance, so educators would be wise to craft interview questions that explore past experiences, skills, and behaviors of job candidates" (p. 22).

School districts with the most-sustained success in their hiring and interview practices have a deliberate commitment to a research-based framework of teaching

effectiveness combined with existing hiring practices to yield better outcomes from the teacher screening and selection process (Cranston, 2019). Cranston (2019) specified:

When school leaders apply a well-developed and agreed upon framework of teaching effectiveness—one that reflects the expectations of what it means to be effective in a local school context—that result will be a better hiring process than many of those currently employed. (p. 455)

Unfortunately, while many know their hiring and interview practices are imperfect and have limited resources at their disposal, school leaders tend to rely on subjective hiring measures such as applications and resumes (Morrison, 2015).

While applications and resumes certainly are an integral component of a highly effective school district's screening process, those documents are just two parts of a greater process (Morrison, 2015). According to Sawchuk (2014), a two-tiered approach is suggested; human resource departments score applicants on a given scale by examining their resumes for experiences and skills and reviewing recommendations from supervisors. Next, human resource directors pass the most-desirable candidates, based on their respective scores on the objective scale, to principals (Sawchuk, 2014). The predictive power of tiered systems, such as the one Sawchuk (2014) described, has proven to be a strong indicator of teacher success (Cranston, 2019).

As a last step in the interview process, and typically for only one or two candidates, some school districts require a performance event in the form of teaching a mock mini-lesson (Sawchuk, 2016). This performance event, sometimes called mock lesson, mini-lesson, and/or teaching audition, allows teachers to get outside the typical components of an interview and into their natural element (Sawchuk, 2016). Performance

events are undeniably a valuable part of the interview process; however, like many hiring and interview practices, they take time, talent, and resources to implement effectively (Cranston, 2019).

Selection Criteria

Teacher selection is one of the single most-important jobs of school leaders, and some argued it is even more important than teacher evaluation (O'Donovan, 2012). Human resource directors value teacher qualities differently, but being student-centered, having previous teaching experience, holding proper certification, and possessing the qualities of best fit are all frequently required traits (Mee & Haverback, 2017). Consequently, many highly effective school districts have clearly defined teacher selection processes rather than leaving these processes merely to chance (Mott, 2017).

Objective interview practices remove options from personal interviews and tend to lead to a more accurate judgment of who the most-effective candidates are (DeNisco, 2015). By improving candidate screening techniques, school leaders can boost the ability to hire quality teachers who stay on the job longer and are better equipped to help students (Sawchuk, 2014). School leaders may implement teacher selection methods that include clearly defined and prescribed processes, but unfortunately, many have not built those processes on fundamental human resource research or evidence-based research of student outcomes (O'Donovan, 2010). While human resource directors can improve selection criteria, the reality of an uncontrollable factor of acquiring quality applicants in a given school district remains—the geographic location (Morrison, 2015).

For teachers to fully understand the process of selection criteria, it would behoove them to investigate what school administrators are looking for in potential teaching

candidates (Farr, 2010). According to Farr (2010), using data from the following list will allow human resource directors to identify high-quality applicants:

- Past performance, especially measurable past performance, is the best predictor of future performance.
- Having achieved big, measurable goals in college or previous workplaces is a very good sign—for example, running and doubling the size of a tutoring program.
- Knowledge matters, especially in high school math, but not in every case.
- Graduating from a selective college is a plus, but graduating from an Ivy League college does not guarantee classroom success.
- An improved GPA in the last two years of college tells more than straight A's all the way through. This speaks to a key characteristic—perseverance or “grit” in the face of adversity.
- A master's degree in education has no correlation with classroom effectiveness.
- “Life satisfaction” matters—teachers who report they're very happy with their lives seem to convey this enthusiasm and zest to their students. (p. 6)

However, Farr's (2010) identifiers are not necessarily all-inclusive, as many of the items are not applicable to first-year teachers.

Ziebarth-Bovill et al. (2012) surmised five fundamental qualities first-year teachers should strive to attain: “1) Passion; 2) Enthusiasm; 3) Sensitivity and Compassion for others; 4) A big heart for kids and a caring attitude; and 5) A good sense of humor” (p. 126). Unfortunately, these five qualities are not always the easiest to

identify during interviews (Ziebarth-Bovill et al., 2012). In summary, human resource directors are looking for first-year teachers to be kid magnets and to connect with their students emotionally, socially, and intellectually (Ziebarth-Bovill et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, many of a school district's hiring practices and/or administrator attitudes, philosophies, and processes may not be consistent, and this creates a constantly moving target for teacher candidates (Supon & Ryland, 2010).

School districts are continually competing for high-quality teaching candidates, and strategies for gaining a competitive advantage over other school districts are ever-changing (Mott, 2017). According to Sawchuk (2016), districts that have made a conscious effort to hire earlier have yielded a more-diverse, higher-quality pool of teacher candidates. Iasevoli (2016) reiterated the importance of hiring early: "Teachers who are hired when the school year is in full swing are not as effective as those hired before classes begin" (p. 4). Many districts recognize timing as a factor in the teacher selection process; however, it is rarely a controllable factor (Mott, 2017). To put themselves in a more favorable position in the teacher selection process, some districts have gone as far as offering early announcement incentives for those planning not to return the following school year (Mott, 2017).

Analytics is also used as an indicator by some school districts, as the subjective opinions from personal interviews and other common hiring practices are taken out of the equation (DeNisco, 2015). Analytics tools estimate how effective a teacher will be based on the following categories:

- Qualifications, such as the selectivity of the candidate's teacher preparation program

- Attitude, such as how the candidate handles challenges
- Basic subject knowledge
- Teaching strategies, and how the candidate would respond to specific classroom situations. (DeNisco, 2015, p. 2)

While taking the subjectivity out of the equation can be beneficial, the primary issue with analytics as the tool to estimate teacher effectiveness is that the value placed on specific attributes is still unclear (Engel, 2013). Further, analytics can remove one of the strongest indicators of a teacher's success: the fit among the teacher, school, and position (DeArmond et al., 2010). The match between candidate and district is important, but teacher fit within a building is one of the biggest indicators of future success (DeArmond et al., 2010).

Hiring practices and the selection criteria of candidates are not to be left to chance and should be built upon a strong foundation of factors, including analytics, interviews, and mock lessons (DeNisco, 2015). Clearly defined selection processes look different from district to district but often include an online screening tool, structured interview questions, and other components critical to school districts (O'Donovan, 2010).

Unfortunately, there is no secret or silver bullet to identify great teacher candidates (Bigham et al., 2014). Although hiring processes are often products of habit, it is much easier to improve the quality of teaching prior to hiring than it is after hiring ineffective teachers (DeNisco, 2015). According to DeNisco (2015), "The worst mistake a principal can make is hiring an ineffective teacher and exposing a classroom of students to someone who does a bad job" (p. 20).

Teacher Evaluation

Prior to the 1980s and 1990s, the teacher evaluation was a yearly or bi-yearly formality for an administrator to complete for re-hire but was not used as a growth tool to improve schools (Bauries, 2019). According to Donaldson (2013), “Teacher evaluation has come under increased scrutiny in recent years as a promising lever for increasing teacher effectiveness” (p. 844). As school leaders face increased pressure to hire quality teaching candidates, data used for human capital decisions have become part of comprehensive teacher evaluation systems (Cannata et al., 2017). Additionally, the standardization of evaluation systems used by school districts increases the likelihood of more-consistent evaluation processes through analysis of common data (Bauries, 2019). Evaluation data are specifically useful to teachers as another component of their portfolios during the interview and/or application process (Cannata et al., 2017).

In Missouri, 287 school districts and 983 school buildings use the University of Missouri’s College of Education Network for Educator Effectiveness (NEE) teacher evaluation model (NEE, 2020). According to the NEE (2020), the Network for Educator Effectiveness model is a comprehensive system that provides training and resources for evaluating and supporting the professional growth of teachers, principals, and other educators (superintendents, school counselors, library/media science specialists, speech/language pathologists, and paraprofessionals). The NEE (2020) model is built upon educator growth, emphasizing meaningful feedback and offering learning resources for educator professional development to help reach specific, individual goals. Meaningful feedback and self-identified learning targets are both strong indicators of

highly effective instructional practices, according to both Hattie (2009) and Rutherford (2020).

All teachers and school districts utilizing the NEE (2020) model have access to an online database of historical teacher evaluation scores as a point of reference, feedback, and potentially a recruitment tool. Additionally, readily available online professional development modules can be shared by principals based on specific areas observed during the evaluation process (NEE, 2020). Since there is a standardized training process for principals who evaluate teachers using the NEE, the process increases the chances of the principal and teacher drawing from these data in the interview, resume, or portfolio presentation processes, which could be invaluable (Cannata et al., 2017). Further, the process promotes consistency among districts for training, reflection, and professional development purposes (NEE, 2020).

Comprehensive teacher evaluation systems provide more accountability to teachers and administrators, as the standards often closely align with state standardized tests (Anderson et al., 2019). Comprehensive teacher evaluation systems, when shared between districts or by candidates, provide school leaders with data for hiring and make decisions less subjective (Cannata et al., 2017). While teacher evaluation components should not be the only pieces of data utilized when making hiring decisions, effective principals balance these data with other proven and pertinent tools based on the needs within their respective schools (Cannata et al., 2017).

Teacher evaluation is most widely accepted as a process of adding accountability and driving instruction in the classroom rather than as a method to retain teachers (Rutledge et al., 2010). However, it is worth noting that providing teachers with

meaningful feedback, promoting ownership in teacher growth, and offering ongoing support are some of the most-important influences a principal can have on student learning (Rutledge et al., 2010). According to Marshall (2008):

Two notions about teacher evaluation have the ring of truth: It is important for principals to get into classrooms and observe, and teachers should be evaluated on how much their students learn. But both ideas can be implemented in ways that do not improve teaching and fail to boost student achievement. (p. 23)

Building principals have the capacity and obligation to control, shape, and reinforce what teacher evaluation looks like in their respective buildings (Anderson et al., 2019).

Historically, teacher evaluations tended to be preannounced, occurred infrequently, and rarely encompassed valuable feedback since they were viewed as a “dog and pony show” (Marshall, 2008, p. 24). More recently, the focus of many principals is to be in every classroom every day, so they have a sound pulse on the students, teachers, and learning (Anderson et al., 2019).

Teachers and principals who take ownership in student learning, collaboratively, are nothing new for PLC schools (DuFour et al., 2016). However, incorporating collaborative ownership into the teacher evaluation model has not always been commonplace (Marshall, 2008). According to Marshall (2008), if only standardized test scores are used to evaluate learning outcomes, practical and ethical difficulties present themselves, including the following:

- The results of most tests are not available until summer—too late for May deadlines for teacher evaluations.

- There are no standardized test results for more than half of teachers, including those in art, music, physical education, and the primary grades.
- Most tests are not designed to measure individual teachers, so it is unfair to use them for evaluation.
- Even the value added approach—measuring the gains students make from September to May—is not viable, since experts say three years of data are needed to make fair judgments.
- Many tests measure only lower-order thinking skills and factual knowledge, so making them high-stakes will only undermine high expectations.
- Using test scores for evaluation could lead to more cheating by stressed-out teachers, who are, after all, the ones administering the tests.
- Raising the stakes undermines the kind of collegiality that is essential to improving teaching and learning. (p. 23)

The points Marshall (2008) made reinforce the sound instructional practices and collaborative on-the-spot accountability in a highly effective PLC school (DuFour et al., 2016). School principals who are highly engaged in the PLC process (DuFour et al., 2016) and who make a conscious effort to be in every classroom every day must be providing some type of feedback (Rutherford, 2020). If principals are highly visible in teachers' classrooms and provide informal feedback, the teacher evaluation is a formality because the principal has spent so much time in the classroom (Rutherford, 2020).

Coercive, non-collaborative approaches to teacher evaluation simply do not drive instruction and will waste both the teacher's and principal's time (Bauries, 2019).

Effective teaching starts with intensive classroom visits, effective and honest teacher

evaluations, opportunities for growth and improvement, and the removal of ineffective teachers when needed (Marshall, 2008). Obviously, sound curricular goals, power standards, and instructional resources must be in place and communicated to teachers, too (DuFour et al., 2016). Good teaching and leadership have a common thread of being results-oriented and placing students first (Marshall, 2008). Effective teacher evaluation, while not directly focused on student results, should encompass engagement, critical thinking, alignment to curriculum, and team goals (NEE, 2020).

As it pertains to curriculum, beginning with the end in mind, or backward planning among teams, is critical and yields greater classroom results for student outcomes (Marshall, 2008). Common formative assessment and utilizing the data to modify instructional practices are the next critical pieces of the puzzle, as these provide timely diagnostic information of student learning before it is too late to monitor and adjust instruction (Marshall, 2008). Another necessary component of the instructional process, according to Marshall (2008), is to get students involved in their own learning. When students understand where they are on the learning continuum and where they need to be, they can take ownership of the steps necessary to reach learning goals (Marshall, 2008).

Instructional coaching is another layer of teacher support many school districts have found to be successful (Marshall, 2008). The instructional coaching position capitalizes on formative feedback and often narrows the focus to beginning, new-to-the-district, and/or struggling teachers (Rutherford, 2020). Teachers who receive services from instructional coaches are not excluded from principal evaluations but instead receive additional, non-punitive/evaluative feedback from a content and delivery

specialist (the instructional coach) (Rutherford, 2020). Often, instructional coaches are heavily involved in content and/or grade-level specific PLCs and are also responsible for collaborating to improve student outcomes (DuFour et al., 2016).

In summary, the most-effective teacher evaluation is made up of many components, but perhaps none more important than informal mini-observations so principals can take the true pulse of a classroom (Rutherford, 2020). Highly effective mini-observations should be accompanied by a face-to-face, 30-second feedback conversation within 24 hours to provide a strong foundation for student outcomes; these conversations can also become a part of the formal evaluation (Rutherford, 2020). While the mini-observations are not scored, the observations are certainly monitored and used to paint the larger picture during formal evaluation (Marshall, 2008). Lastly, formal observations include clearly identified district, building, and personal learning targets (Marshall, 2008). A highly effective teacher evaluation includes clear evaluation rubrics, “look-fors,” and specific written feedback to be reviewed in an in-person post-evaluation conference (NEE, 2020).

Barriers to Teacher Effectiveness

According to Donaldson (2013), “How principals hire, assign, evaluate, and provide growth opportunities to teachers is likely to have major ramifications for teacher effectiveness and student learning” (p. 838). The people side of education, or human capital, has continued to gain momentum as a key strategy for raising the quality of schools by focusing on elevating the competencies of teachers and school leaders (Donaldson, 2013). In terms of teacher effectiveness and student learning, teachers are the single most-important factor (Fraynd, 2013). However, while researchers have

indicated an emphasis on human capital management is beneficial and that of all school resources, teachers have the largest impact on student learning, and schools tend to hire, assign, develop, and retain teachers differently (Horoi & Bhai, 2018).

Principals have the potential to influence teacher effectiveness by not only hiring the best candidates but also assigning them to positions that align with their skillsets (Donaldson, 2013). However, the challenge of finding the best and most-qualified teachers is an ongoing battle, specifically in math, science, and special education (Fisher, 2014). According to Fisher (2014), “Job candidates must be able to teach at the level that our students are going to be assessed and the added competition of quality candidates only benefits them” (p. 2). Goldhaber and Walch (2014) pointed out that long-term trends in teacher workforce quality are troubling, and they argued fewer and fewer academically capable high school graduates are entering the field of education. While Americans tend to hold teachers in high regard, researchers have suggested, “Teachers in the United States are more likely to be drawn from the lower end of the academic achievement distribution than teachers in selected high-performing countries” (Goldhaber & Walch, 2014, p. 30).

Principals who hire most effectively recognize experienced teachers make the greatest, quickest impact on student achievement (Callahan, 2016). However, the task of hiring and assigning the best candidates to the most-appropriate places is not where a principal’s responsibility stops (Fraynd, 2013). Principals must identify and secure applicable, meaningful professional development that is research-based and supported (Donaldson, 2013).

Retention

Callahan (2016) stated, “If the most precious product developed in education is the student, then our most prized commodity should be the classroom teacher” (p. 7). Once effective teachers are recruited and selected, they must be retained, and a strong notion that has gained traction over the last decade is of individual empowerment and localization of management through teacher leadership (Green & Kent, 2016). There is a strong likelihood of retention when teachers are afforded leadership opportunities, have effective mentors, and do not work in isolation (Callahan, 2016). According to Green and Kent (2016), “Teacher leaders are those who lead within and beyond the classroom, influence others toward improved educational practice, and identify with and contribute to a community of teacher leaders” (p. 31). Teacher self-efficacy, or the empowerment of teachers who work collaboratively toward a common goal, was recognized by Hattie and Anderman (2013) as one of the most highly effective strategies for improving student outcomes.

With serious teacher shortages in math, science, and special education, retaining quality teachers has never been a bigger priority, especially in school districts located in lower-income, less-desirable areas (Ryan, 2016). These school districts have had to become more aggressive with teacher salaries to remain competitive when recruiting new teachers; however, salary schedules often do not maintain the overall income potential and/or growth as those from higher-income school districts (Ryan, 2016). With these difficulties in mind, school districts have invested time, talent, and resources into understanding the motivation of teachers and why teachers leave school districts (Wyatt, 2013).

Like all human beings, teachers can be proactive and engaged or passive and alienated from the social and environmental conditions in which they work (Wyatt, 2013). These conditions and how teachers respond to them are crucial in determining how teachers develop, grow, and function (Wyatt, 2013). According to Wyatt (2013), the following is a defined list of reasons many school districts in lower-income areas find it difficult to retain teachers:

- Teacher poverty related to low pay.
- Many teachers take jobs in remote, rural areas.
- Rural, low income school districts' working conditions challenge teachers' motivation.
- Lack of pre-service training and/or effective mentorships.
- Lack of effective professional support/development within the school district.

(p. 221)

Wyatt (2013) highlighted many reasons teachers choose to leave districts, but according to Shaw and Newton (2014), "School leadership takes seriously the issues of teacher satisfaction and retention to benefit from the growth and experience of a strong teacher" (p. 101). Many school districts only focus on the acquisition of highly effective teachers, which certainly is important, but the quest also needs to be discovering ways to influence the already highly effective teacher to stay, grow, and mentor incoming teachers (Shaw & Newton, 2014).

For teachers to feel highly motivated, happy, and content while encompassing a growth mindset, a top-down servant leadership model is necessary (Myers et al., 2016). According to Myers et al. (2016), growth mindset, or "the belief that effort can improve

talents, notably intelligence,” and grit, or “the long-term perseverance towards a goal or set of goals,” are the two most-important traits a leader can model and/or foster in teachers (p. 1521). Shaw and Newton (2014) described this phenomenon as follows: “The transformational power of the servant leader and the effect that he/she has on a group of employees and colleagues to lift an organization from mediocrity to greatness is astounding, particularly as it relates to teacher satisfaction and retention” (pp. 101–102).

In addition to teacher leadership and mentorships, teacher residencies have increased teacher retention rates in school districts (Guha et al., 2017a, 2017b).

According to Guha et al. (2017a):

Turnover is higher in districts that meet shortages by hiring teachers who have not completed adequate preparation. . . and teachers who do not receive support in their first years leave teaching at much higher rates than those whose school districts provide effective support and mentorships. (pp. 38–39)

Retention of high-quality teachers should make up a significant portion of how school leaders focus their time, and teacher attrition costs not only students but the school district as a whole (Bland et al., 2016).

Grow Your Own

When it comes to supply and demand and student achievement expectations, the stakes are high for school boards and human resource directors to recruit, select, and retain quality educators (Wimbish, 2009). Due to ongoing high-quality teacher shortages, teacher growth and the success of a school can be heavily dependent on developing teachers and *growing your own* (Douglas & Khandaker, 2015). An increasing amount of research has been conducted highlighting the value of recruiting potential teacher

candidates from the communities in which they reside as a successful transition into the teaching profession (Valenzuela, 2017).

As mentioned, grow-your-own programs are focused on preparing and placing aspiring teachers from within their communities as a viable solution to addressing teacher shortages in schools (Gist, 2019). Grow-your-own programs differ greatly from traditional education preparation programs and alternative route programs (Gist, 2019). Traditional education programs are linked more closely to colleges and universities through undergraduate and graduate degrees (Gist, 2019). Alternative route programs typically target college-educated individuals who have not completed any educator preparation certification but do hold a degree (Gist, 2019). Grow-your-own programs cover a broad spectrum of criteria, including recruitment, financial assistance, curriculum, and support (Valenzuela, 2017).

Many teacher certification options have similarities in recruitment, curriculum, and support (Grow Your Own Illinois, 2020). Where a grow-your-own program differs most is the inclusion of a financial aid incentive or guaranteeing a position at completion (Grow Your Own Illinois, 2020). Chronologically speaking, some grow-your-own programs begin identifying potential candidates as early as middle and high school (Valenzuela, 2017). Other programs, as one might expect, target students in college, or perhaps most commonly, paraprofessionals working within school districts (Valenzuela, 2017). Regardless of where a grow-your-own candidate is in life or career, research is strongly supportive of this recruitment technique as it has proven to contribute positively to student, teacher, and community success (Gist, 2019).

Culture and Climate

School culture, or the quality and character of school life, has gained significant attention as a way to improve a plethora of school issues such as student achievement, attendance, recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction (Martinez et al., 2016). Borkar (2016) concluded, “Collectively and individually, a positive school climate can have a major impact on the success of all students and staff in the school” (p. 861). For significant growth to occur and be sustained, teachers must feel they are part of a school community that is bigger than themselves (Hasselquist et al., 2017). According to Donohoo et al. (2018), “When teams of educators believe they have the ability to make a difference, exciting things can happen in a school” (p. 41). Furthermore, Hasselquist et al. (2017) concluded, “School culture is the interplay between three factors: the attitudes and beliefs of persons inside the school and external environment; the cultural norms of the school; and the relationships between persons in the school” (p. 267). Without the three characteristics seamlessly working together, school districts could face a significant barrier to change or to sustaining long-term improvement (Hasselquist et al., 2017).

Teacher self-efficacy, or the extent to which teachers believe they can complete a certain task, has been linked to higher student achievement levels and greater persistence to stay in the profession (Hasselquist et al., 2017). In other words, teachers who believe in themselves are more likely to continue teaching, and student achievement will be positively impacted (Hasselquist et al., 2017). Teacher self-efficacy, when paired with teacher leadership, allows educators to take ownership in the decision-making process, which is even more profound (Green & Kent, 2016). Teacher leadership is espoused by

researchers who have suggested high levels of involvement by all individuals in an organization contribute to greater, more-consistent improvement (Green & Kent, 2016).

While teacher self-efficacy and teacher leadership are components of highly effective teaching and learning, Hattie (2009) suggested they are not the biggest pieces of the student achievement puzzle. Donohoo et al. (2018) concluded, “When a team of individuals shares the belief that through their unified efforts, they can overcome challenges and produces intended results, groups are more effective” (p. 41). According to Hattie (2009), this phenomenon, known as collective teacher efficacy, is one of the most-profound influencers of significantly higher levels of both quality teaching and student outcomes. Donohoo et al. (2018) added, “Collective teacher efficacy is defined as a group’s shared beliefs in its conjoint capability to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (p. 41).

Schools should strive to create a climate and culture where teachers and students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure in the environment and can interact with caring people they trust (Borkar, 2016). According to Borkar (2016), “A positive school climate affects everyone associated with the school: students, staff, parents, and the community” (p. 861). While many school leaders are beginning to recognize the importance of a positive school climate and culture, the difficulty lies in developing and sustaining an environment where these norms, goals, values, and relationships are represented (Martinez et al., 2016).

Summary

Chapter Two served as a review of literature and a foundation for the building blocks essential to further understanding the process of teacher hiring. Topics covered

included recruitment, school image and reputation, teacher contracts, and teacher pay. Additionally, hiring and interview processes, selection criteria, teacher evaluation, barriers to teacher effectiveness, retention, grow-your-own programs, and culture and climate were also explored.

In Chapter Three, the problem and purpose, as well as the research questions, are provided. Described in the next sections are the research design, population and sample, and instrumentation. The procedures for data collection and analysis of the data are detailed, and the ethical considerations for this study are provided.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Problem and Purpose Overview

This study included an examination of the perceptions of teachers and human resource directors regarding effective recruitment, hiring, and retention practices. The teachers and human resource directors surveyed were employed by school districts identified within the top 10% of Missouri based on cumulative 2019 MAP and EOC scores. Survey items were presented in three different formats: open-ended, rank, and select all that apply, and were aimed at determining the most-effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies used by high-performing public schools in Missouri as perceived by human resource directors and teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective teacher recruitment strategies?
2. What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-common reasons teachers leave the profession?
3. What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective district strategies for retaining high-quality teachers?

Research Design

The primary purpose of survey research, such as in this study, is to describe the characteristics of a given population (Fraenkel et al., 2019). In this case, the entire population of public schools in Missouri could not be surveyed. The population was narrowed to an intended sample, or target sample, of the top 10% of public schools in Missouri, as determined by cumulative scores on the MAP and EOC assessment. The MAP and EOC scores were examined in the following subject areas: English language arts, mathematics, and science. To be selected for this study, schools had to score in the top 10% on one or more of the three subject areas on their cumulative MAP and EOC scores from spring 2019.

The researcher developed a descriptive survey based on the works of Bolman and Deal (2017), Podolsky et al. (2016), and Hattie and Anderman (2013). According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), a descriptive survey is appropriate when researchers want to determine the beliefs of a given population about one or more variables. Once the survey data were collected, descriptive statistics were applied. Descriptive statistics allow researchers to summarize the information contained in many scores with just a few indices (Fraenkel et al., 2019). For this study, the data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Additionally, tables and figures were constructed to further display and explain the findings.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included all public school districts in Missouri. During the 2018–2019 academic year, 555 public school districts qualified for review of cumulative MAP and EOC data (MODESE, 2019). In total, there were 1,229 elementary

buildings, 291 middle school buildings, 50 junior high buildings, and 567 high school buildings in the state (MODESE, 2019). The schools contributed their respective district MAP and EOC data that included English language arts, mathematics, and science scores independently. Further, to be considered for this study, schools had to score in the top 10% in terms of cumulative MAP and EOC totals in English language arts, mathematics, and/or science (not all three areas). In many cases, schools were top 10% across all tested subjects, but that was not always the case.

The sample was selected from a list of the top 10% of public school districts based on cumulative MAP and EOC scores in English language arts, mathematics, and/or science from 2019. This amounted to 90 Missouri school districts (MODESE, 2019). Purposive sampling was used and considered appropriate because the selected participants were knowledgeable about the topic and were able to answer the questions regarding human resource administration (Bluman, 2018). Purposive sampling, according to Fraenkel et al. (2019), is different from random sampling in that researchers select a sample they believe, based on prior criteria, will provide the rich data needed.

From the school districts selected, a maximum of 90 human resource directors and 90 teachers, with a minimum of 20 human resource directors and 20 teachers, were asked to participate in the study. Of the 90 selected school districts, 12 school superintendents agreed to participate, with 11 human resource directors and 59 teachers completing their respective surveys. However, not every respondent completed every survey question.

Instrumentation

According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), there are three primary difficulties in survey research. Fraenkel et al. (2019) noted the following difficulties: (1) ensuring questions are clear and not misleading, (2) getting respondents to answer questions thoughtfully and honestly, and (3) getting a sufficient number of questionnaires completed and returned to enable meaningful analysis. With these difficulties in mind, participants were surveyed simply and conveniently using Qualtrics.

Two online surveys were created by the researcher (see Appendices A and B), which prompted three types of responses: open-ended, rank, and select all that apply. The survey items for the human resource directors and the teachers were designed using the work of Bolman and Deal (2017), Podolsky et al. (2016), and Hattie and Anderman (2013). Questions one, two, and six on the teacher survey were open-ended to add breadth and richness to the research. Survey participants were prompted to elaborate on the most-effective and least-effective hiring practices and to offer advice to replicate effective hiring practices.

In item three of each survey, participants were asked to select the five most-effective methods to retain quality teachers, according to Bolman and Deal's (2017) basic human resource strategies (p. 138). This was chosen as an appropriate lens to gauge teacher retention based on proven human resource strategies and the human resource framework (Bolman & Deal, 2017). On item four of each survey, participants were prompted to rank "why teachers leave your district," according to Podolsky et al.'s (2016) six primary reasons. For item five on both surveys, participants selected the five most-important characteristics to look for in teachers, based upon Hattie and Anderman's

(2013) eight primary categories of teacher characteristics to consider when hiring new teachers.

Fraenkel et al. (2019) stated, “Reliability refers to the consistency of the scores obtained and how consistent they are for each individual from one administration to the next” (p. 155). The survey was field-tested with six human resource directors and six teachers to examine the reliability of the instrument. Their feedback was taken into consideration prior to finalizing the survey. Piloting, or field testing, surveys among similar intended samples ensured the survey items were not poorly worded, misleading, or unclear (Bluman, 2018).

To examine the validity of the instrument and to determine if the survey results would provide useful information about effective hiring practices, specific evidence had to be collected (Bluman, 2018). When collecting evidence, three primary types of evidence should be considered: content-related, criterion-related, and construct-related (Bluman, 2018). Criterion-related evidence refers to relationships and how well scores estimate, present, or predict future performance data (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Construct-related evidence refers to the ability to measure and explain the psychological differences in an instrument (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Content-related evidence, or the evidence of validity the researcher considered when creating the surveys for this study, refers to whether the instrument logically arrives at the intended variable (Fraenkel et al., 2019). For the purposes of this study, the researcher used content-related evidence to determine the survey instruments were valid.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from Lindenwood University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C), and once identified as a high-achieving top 10% school district, superintendents were contacted via email for permission to conduct research in their school districts (see Appendix D). If superintendents responded to the request and expressed an interest to participate, they were emailed the permission letter to complete, sign, and return (see Appendix E). Next, the superintendents aided in the collection and compilation of contact information of district human resource directors. Once the names and email addresses of human resource directors of high-performing public school districts in Missouri were acquired from their respective superintendents, the directors were contacted via email and sent the survey instructions and link (see Appendix F). Additionally, the human resource directors were sent the teacher survey with an email script to distribute in their respective school districts (see Appendix F).

The first page of the survey included the survey consent form and information sheet. After completing their surveys, human resource directors distributed the surveys to teachers. All participation was on a voluntary basis. Additionally, both surveys included open-ended, rank, and select all that apply items.

Data Analysis

The survey responses were reported and analyzed using descriptive statistics as the primary data analysis technique, enabling the researcher to meaningfully describe data with numerical indices or in graphic form (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Additionally, the data were interpreted, explained, and expounded upon. Creswell (2018) defined descriptive analysis as an "analysis of the means, standard deviations, and range of scores

for the variables” for identifying patterns, and in this case, for finding and categorizing effective hiring practices (p. 163). Tables and figures were also developed to further aid in understanding the descriptive data. Responses from the completed surveys were collected to analyze and interpret data to understand the phenomenon of teacher recruitment more readily.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant received an Informed Consent Form which contained information about the purpose of the research, any possible risks, and the opportunity to opt-out of the study any time without negative effects. Data codes were used to lessen the possibility of identifying participants or schools. Additionally, all electronic files were protected using a password on a personal computer on a secured site, and all documents and files will be destroyed three years from completion of the research project.

Summary

In this chapter, the problem and purpose overview were reviewed, as well as the research design. Next, the population and sample of the study were discussed, followed by a detailed description of the instrumentation. The processes for data collection and data analysis were presented. Lastly, the ethical considerations specific to this study were reviewed.

In Chapter Four, data are presented following analysis, starting with human resource director survey responses. Next, teacher survey responses are explored and analyzed. Data are presented in various figures, and descriptive statistics are explained and elaborated upon. Additionally, the open-ended responses of both human resource

directors and teachers are shared and interpreted to support the quantitative data elicited through the rank and select all that apply questions.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri to gain insight into what they value in the teacher hiring process. Another purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of human resource directors and teachers to identify trends, commonalities, or differences in what is sought by both parties to understand the recruitment and retention of teachers more fully. Two surveys, each with six questions, were created to address the research questions for the study. Respondents included human resource directors and teachers employed in one of the top 10% of school districts in Missouri based on cumulative MAP and EOC assessment scores from 2019.

The 90 school districts meeting the top 10% criteria were given the opportunity to participate in this study. In all, 12 school superintendents agreed to participate, with 11 human resource directors and 59 teachers completing their respective surveys. Not every respondent completed every question. Responses from the surveys provided quantitative data that were reviewed and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

This chapter contains the data collected from the human resource director and teacher surveys. Each survey was chronologically analyzed, question by question, to aggregate or disaggregate data. Tables and figures were created to provide a visual representation of the data for the two groups.

Survey

The surveys created for human resource directors and teachers were created by the primary researcher based upon the work of Bolman and Deal (2017), Podolsky et al. (2016), and Hattie and Anderman (2013). Survey items consisted of open-ended (short

answer) questions, as well as close-ended multiple-choice questions, rank questions, and select all that apply questions. The human resource director and teacher survey items had slight variances in verbiage to tailor to the respective audiences; however, the intent and overall substance of the survey items were the same.

Responses from Human Resource Directors

Question One

What have you found to be the most-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?

The human resource directors were presented with an unlimited character text box to respond to this open-ended question. There were six responses to this question, and responses ranged from a short phrase to a lengthy paragraph. Responses were disaggregated into four primary categories: word of mouth, grow your own, hiring/interview processes, and salary/benefits.

A program called grow-your-own teachers is gaining attention in more rural districts (Valenzuela, 2017). Grow-your-own programs provide additional support and options for members to become certified teachers in their communities (Grow Your Own Illinois, 2020). Human Resource Director HR6 commented:

We have been doing the “grow-your-own teachers program” for several years. We attempt to identify potential students who would make good teachers and then talk to them about coming back to our district if they decide to go into education.

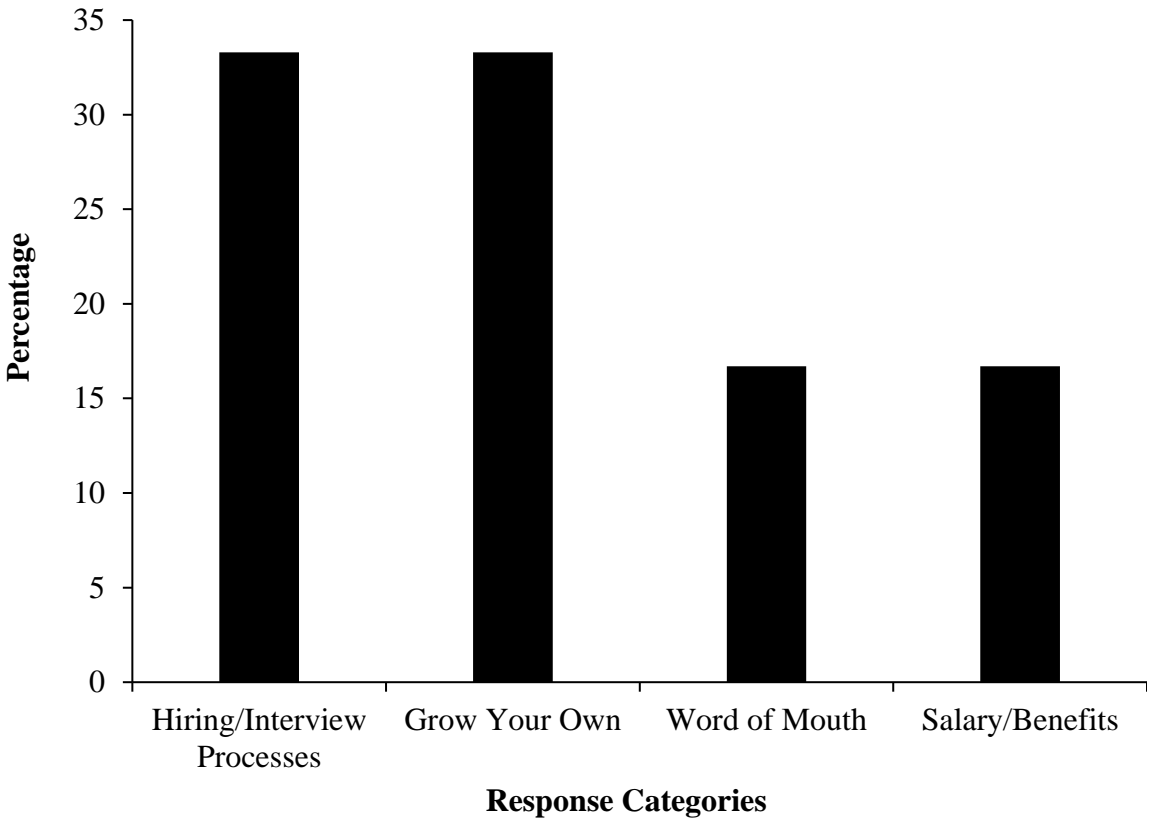
Furthermore, Human Resource Director HR2 explained, “Getting to know the candidates beyond the interview process (i.e., inviting them to shadow in your building and/or growing paraprofessionals into teaching positions” as a highly effective method to recruit teachers.

Human Resource Directors HR3 and HR5 highlighted various hiring and interview processes they have found to be effective for teacher recruitment. Human Resource Director HR3 stated, “Building strong communication and working relationship with the area college teacher preparation supervisors” is an effective way to recruit teachers. Additionally, Human Resource Director HR5 shared, “We do a district recruitment/preview day that is effective” for recruiting new teachers. While Human Resource Director HR1’s response was disaggregated into the “word of mouth” category, HR1 asserted that contacts within the educational community have been an effective way to recruit new teachers, too. Lastly, HR4 simply cited “money” as the most-effective way to recruit quality teachers.

Human resource directors valued hiring/interview processes (33.3%) and grow-your-own programs (33.3%) most highly. Responses of word of mouth (16.7%) and salary/benefits (16.7%) were also identified as effective recruitment methods (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Human Resource Director Responses Regarding What They Perceive to Be the Most-Effective Methods to Recruit Quality Teachers



Question Two

What have you found to be the least-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?

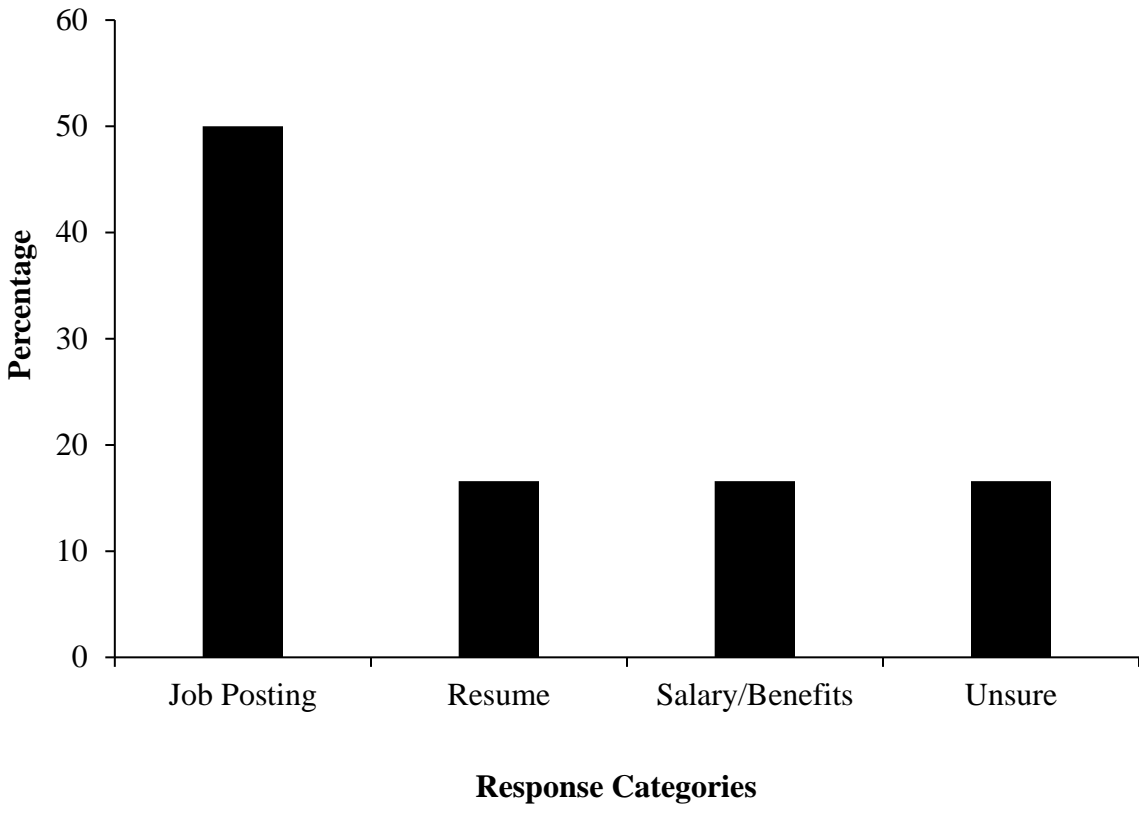
The human resource directors had an unlimited character text box to respond to this open-ended question. There were six responses to this question, and responses ranged from a short phrase to a lengthy paragraph. Responses were disaggregated into four primary categories: job posting, resume, money, and unsure.

The method rated the least effective for recruitment was relying on the job posting to produce quality teachers; 50% of human resource directors selected this rating category. Human Resource Directors HR1, HR3, and HR6 agreed that posting a job to college education departments, statewide platforms, or online and then simply settling on whoever applies is a highly ineffective method for recruiting teachers. According to HR1, “Just posting a job and settling for whoever applies” is the least-effective method teacher recruitment method. Similarly, Human Resource Director HR3 added, “Posting a job opening on a statewide platform” is the least-effective teacher recruitment method. Lastly, HR6 shared, “Posting jobs with college education departments” is the least-effective teacher recruitment method.

Additionally, 16.7% of the human resource directors responded that relying on resumes only is the least-effective method for recruiting teachers. Human Resource Director HR2 explained, “Taking what candidates put down on their applications as gospel truth” is the least-effective teacher recruitment method, because “plenty of people can look good on paper.” Likewise, 16.7% of the human resource directors responded that poor starting salary is the least-effective method of teacher recruitment. Specifically, Human Resource Director HR4 stated, “Having a poor starting salary or not allowing teachers to bring years of experience to the district” is the least-effective strategy for teacher recruitment. Finally, 16.7% of the human resource directors were unsure of which method is least effective (see Figure 2). Specifically, HR5 stated, “I am not involved in teacher recruitment, so am unclear of unsuccessful methods.”

Figure 2

Human Resource Directors' Responses Regarding What They Perceive to Be the Least-Effective Methods of Recruiting Quality Teachers



Question Three

What have you found to be the most-effective methods to retain quality teachers?

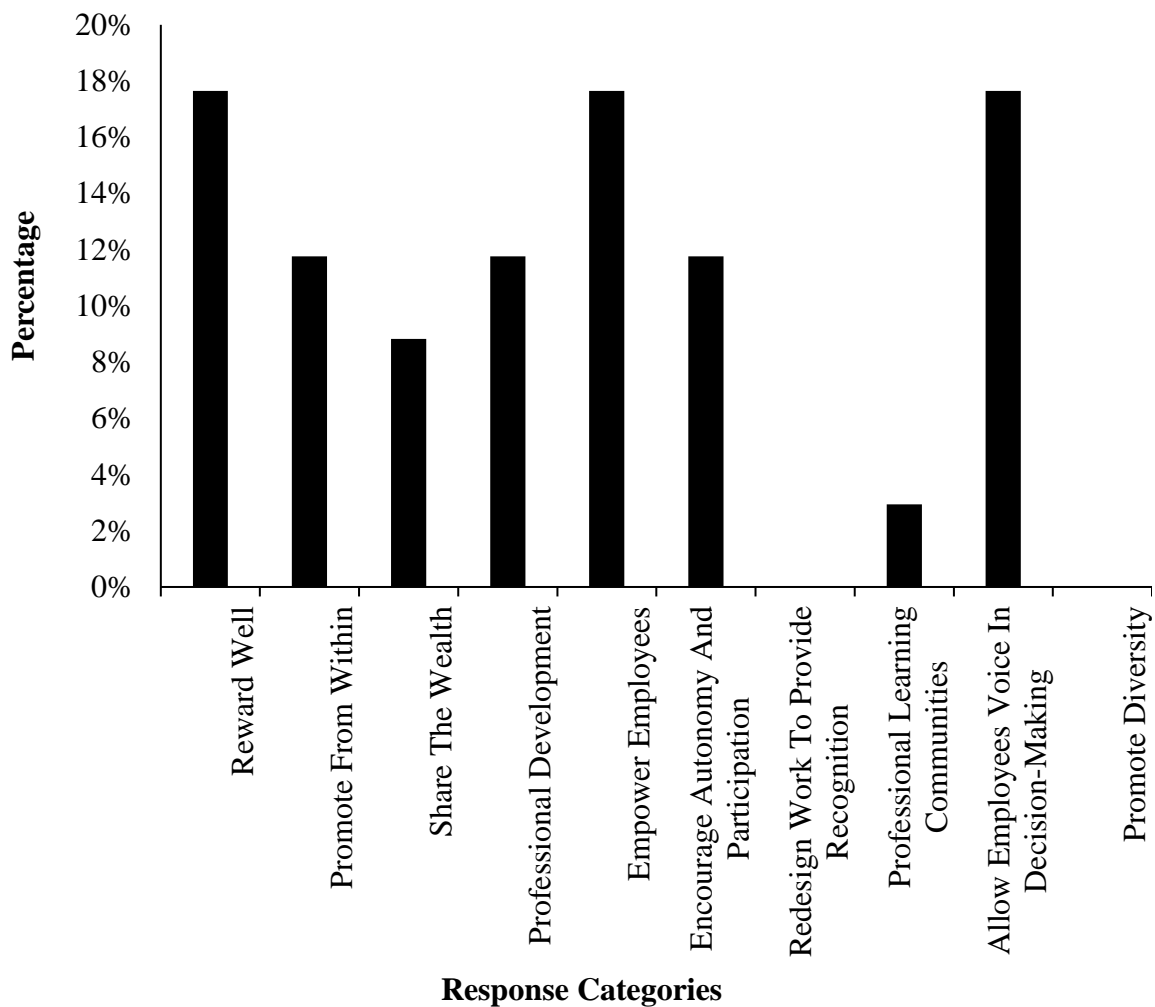
The human resource directors were instructed to select up to five most-effective methods to retain quality teachers based upon the 10 Bolman and Deal (2017) selections. The Bolman and Deal (2017) selections included the following: reward well, promote from within, share the wealth, professional development (invest in employees), empower employees, encourage autonomy and participation, redesign work to provide recognition,

professional learning communities (foster self-managing teams), allow employees voice in decision making (promote egalitarianism), and promote diversity.

Of the 34 total selections, three categories were identified as the most-effective: reward well (17.65%), empower employees (17.65%), and allow employees voice in decision-making (promote egalitarianism) (17.65%). The next most-effective methods to retain quality teachers were as follows: promote from within (11.76%), professional development (invest in employees) (11.76%), and encourage autonomy and participation (11.76%). Share the wealth was selected by 8.82% of the respondents, followed by professional learning communities (foster self-managing teams) (2.94%). Human resource directors never selected “redesign work to provide recognition or promote diversity” as a highly effective method to retain quality teachers (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Human Resource Directors' Rankings of Bolman and Deal's (2017) Choices of the Most-Effective Methods to Retain Quality Teachers



Question Four

What do most teachers give as the primary reason they leave your district?

Human resource directors were instructed to rank “Why Teachers Leave Your District” (Podolsky et al., 2016) from the most frequently given reason to the least

frequently given reason. The responses are ranked below in order of most-frequent (1) to least-frequent (6) (see Tables 2 and 3). While the culmination of rankings is valuable, Table 3 adds breadth to the research by disaggregating the data further.

As displayed in Tables 2 and 3, 42.86% of human resource directors ranked personal reasons as the number-one reason teachers leave their school districts. Similarly, 42.86% of human resource directors ranked dissatisfaction with compensation as the number-two reason teachers leave their districts. Another 42.86% of human resource directors chose dissatisfaction with compensation as the number-three reason to leave. Challenging working conditions was ranked fourth by 42.86% of human resource directors and fifth by another 42.86% of human resource directors. Lastly, 71.43% of human resource directors ranked lack of support as the number-six reason teachers leave their school districts.

Tables 2 and 3 provide a snapshot of human resource directors' perceptions, but the tables are not all-encompassing because many of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) reasons teachers leave a school district were ranked inconsistently or contradictorily. However, as cited previously, several of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) reasons teachers leave school districts scored highest in multiple ranking areas (dissatisfaction with compensation and challenging working conditions), and some (better career opportunities and inadequate preparation) never led any ranking.

Table 3 displays a break-down of the rankings by question, which indicates minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, and variance of human resource directors' perceptions of why teachers leave school districts. It is specifically worth noting that the ranking order of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) list changed significantly

compared to Tables 2 and 3 when sorted by the mean, which is perhaps the most-appropriate lens through which to evaluate survey question four. The mean rankings of most-frequent (1) to least-frequent (6) reason for leaving were as follows:

1. Personal Reasons (2.57)
1. Better Career Opportunities (2.57)
3. Dissatisfaction with Compensation (2.86)
4. Inadequate Preparation (3.14)
5. Challenging Working Conditions (4.71)
6. Lack of Support (5.14)

It is also worth noting “challenging working conditions” was never ranked higher than 4, and “dissatisfaction with compensation” was never ranked higher than 2. Additionally, “inadequate preparation,” “personal reasons,” and “dissatisfaction with compensation” were never ranked lower than 5.

Figure 4

Human Resource Directors' Rankings of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) Reasons Teachers

Leave School Districts

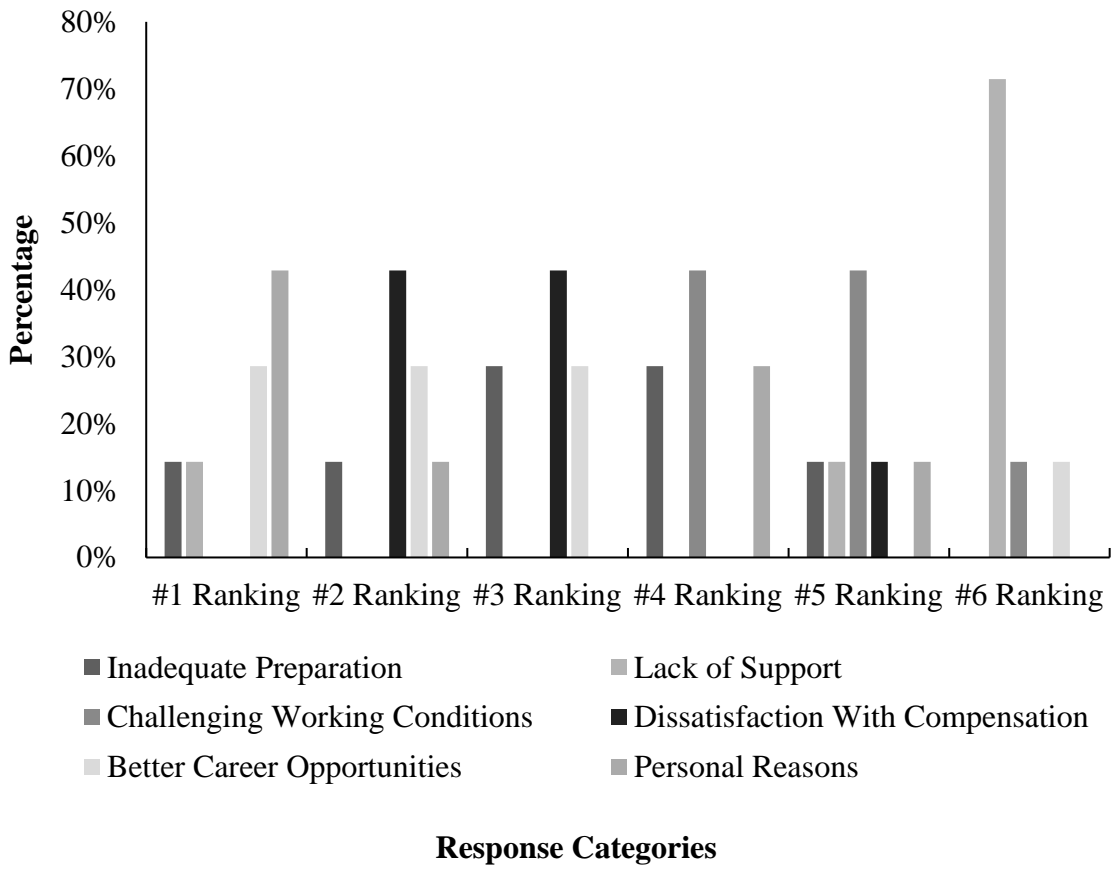


Table 2

Percentage of Human Resource Directors' Rankings of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) Reasons Teachers Leave School Districts

Response	Ranking Percentage					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Inadequate Preparation	14.29	14.29	28.57	28.57	14.29	0.00
Lack of Support	14.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.27	71.43
Challenging Working Conditions	0.00	0.00	0.00	42.86	42.86	14.29
Dissatisfaction with Compensation	0.00	42.86	42.86	0.00	14.29	0.00
Better Career Opportunities	28.57	28.57	28.57	0.00	0.00	14.26
Personal Reasons	42.86	14.29	0.00	28.57	14.29	0.00

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Human Resource Directors' Rankings of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) Reasons Teachers Leave School Districts

Response	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance
Inadequate Preparation	1.00	5.00	3.14	1.25	1.55
Lack of Support	1.00	6.00	5.14	1.73	2.98
Challenging Working Conditions	4.00	6.00	4.71	0.70	0.49
Dissatisfaction with Compensation	2.00	5.00	2.86	0.99	0.98
Better Career Opportunities	1.00	6.00	2.57	1.59	2.53
Personal Reasons	1.00	5.00	2.57	1.59	2.53

Question Five

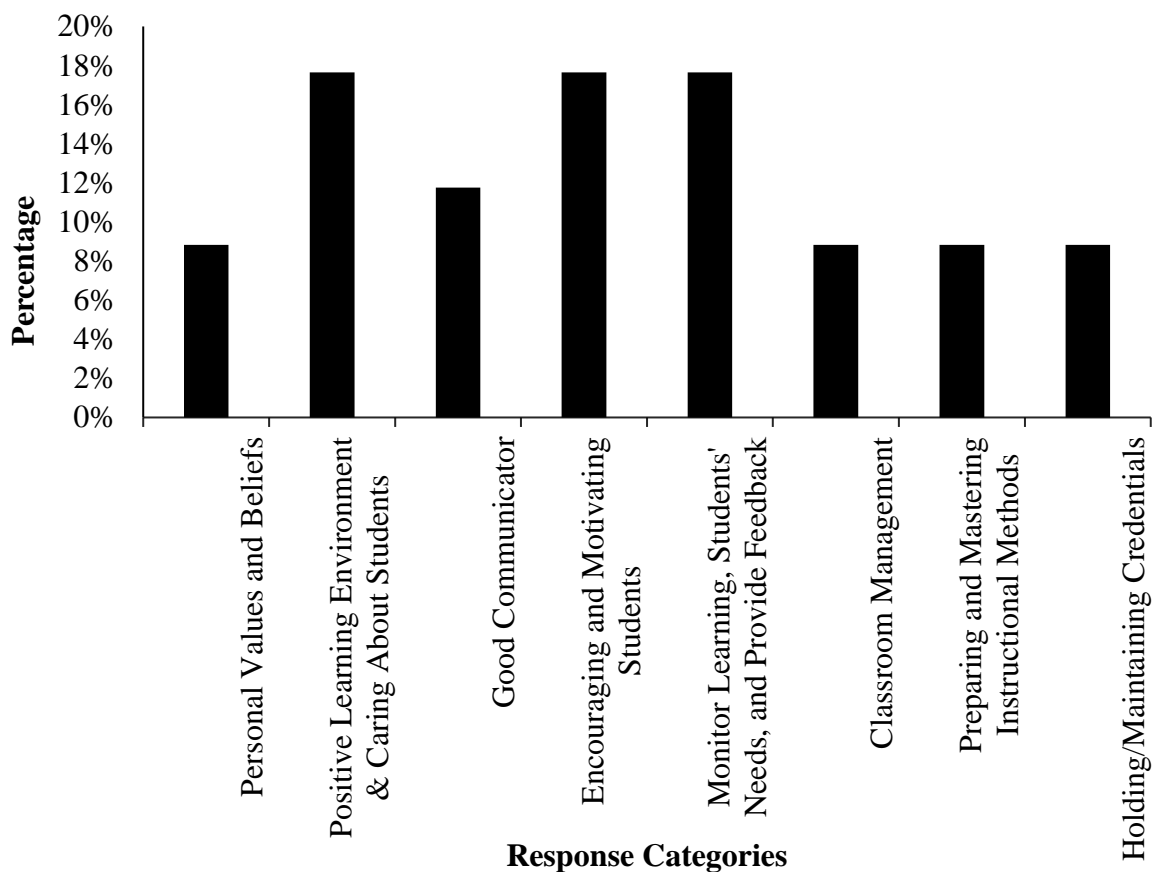
From the Hattie and Anderman (2013) choices, select the five you believe to be the most-important characteristics you look for when hiring new teachers.

Of the 34 total selections from Hattie and Anderman (2013), three categories were identified as the most important: positive learning environment and caring for students (17.65%); encouraging and motivating students (17.65%); and monitor learning,

students' needs, and provide feedback (17.65%). The next most-important characteristic for hiring teachers, according to the human resource directors, was being a good communicator (11.76%). Personal values and beliefs (8.82%), classroom management (8.82%), preparing and mastering instructional methods (8.82%), and holding/maintaining credentials (8.82%) were rated as the least-important characteristics when hiring teachers. Shown in Figure 5 are the 34 teacher selections as they pertain to Hattie and Anderman's (2013) choices.

Figure 5

Human Resource Directors' Top-Five Characteristics to Look for When Hiring New Teachers



Question Six

What advice would you give to other school districts looking to replicate your successful hiring practices?

The human resource directors were presented with an unlimited character text box to respond to this open-ended question. There were six responses to this question, and responses ranged from a short phrase to a lengthy paragraph. Responses were

disaggregated into five primary categories: culture, grow your own, growth mindset, hiring/interview processes, and other. Human resource directors valued culture most highly (37.5%). Next, grow your own (25%) was identified as a strong building block for successful hiring practices. Lastly, growth mindset, hiring/interview processes, and other were selected by 12.5% of respondents, respectively.

Human Resource Directors HR1, HR4, and HR5 agreed creating a workplace environment that is inviting, caring, positive, and family-like is the biggest factor in trying to replicate successful hiring practices. Specifically, Human Resource Director HR1 quantified:

Growing a positive culture starts by taking care of your staff and being their biggest cheerleader. We believe we have the best thing going and will do everything we can to keep growing and stay on top. We will only hire staff who drink the Kool-Aide and believe it, too.

Further, Human Resource Director HR4 added, “Promote from within, and also look for people who would mix well with your culture.” According to Human Resource Director HR5:

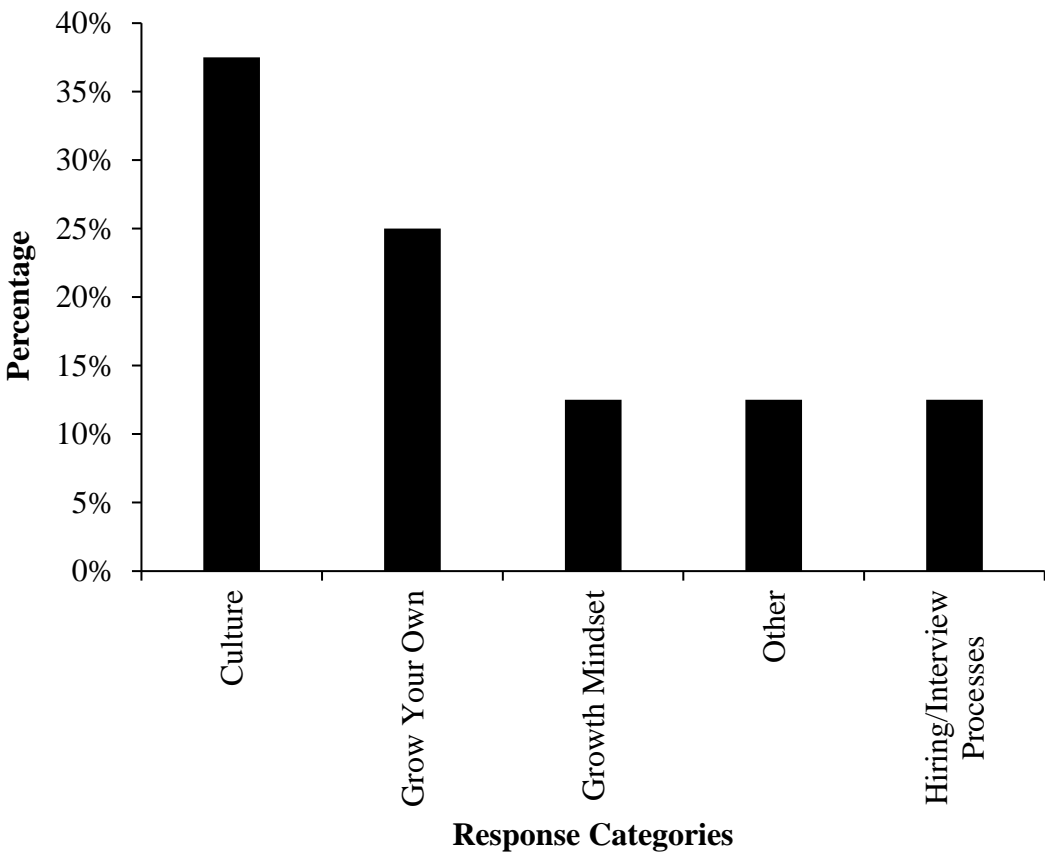
Try and make the workplace like a family environment. Also, if the teachers care about the students and other staff members, they have a stake in the success of the district, and the choice to leave becomes much more difficult.

Human Resource Directors HR2 and HR3 concluded teaching, training, and growing your own teachers are effective teacher recruitment tools. Human Resource Director HR2 recommended, “Spend time getting to know candidates, have interviewees do mini-lessons so you can see how they prepare and interact with students; grow your own.”

Additionally, Human Resource Director HR3 shared, “We believe that you can teach/train teachers on instructional practices, but you cannot teach work ethic and compassion.”

Figure 6

Human Resource Directors’ Responses Regarding Their Advice to Other School Districts Looking to Replicate Their Successful Hiring Practices



Responses from Teachers

Question One

What have you found to be the most-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?

Teachers were presented with an unlimited character text box to respond to this open-ended question. There were 25 responses to this question, and responses ranged from a short phrase to a lengthy paragraph. Responses were disaggregated into seven primary categories: word of mouth, culture, grow your own, reputation, money, hiring/interview practices, and professional development (see Figure 7). Teachers valued money (34.2%) most highly. Culture (18.4%) and hiring/interview practices (18.4%) were also identified as highly effective methods to recruit teachers. Reputation (15.8%), followed by word of mouth (5.3%), grow your own (5.3%), and professional development (5.3%) completed the list of recruitment strategies.

While there are many factors that play a role when recruiting staff, teachers tended to mention a combination of items they desire. As described by one teacher, T11:

I believe teachers want to come to a district that is already doing well, where there is better pay, and places that have a clear focus on mission. I also think a district's reputation plays a heavy role in recruitment.

It is also worth noting that many of the teachers' responses mentioned multiple categories. For example, money was the most-valued category mentioned by teachers (34.2%), but money was rarely mentioned in isolation. Specifically, money was often mentioned in combination with various other benefits such as insurance, extra duties, fair pay, stipends, days off, and salary schedule advancement. The vast majority of teachers

mentioned money and one of the other primary categories, which were also tallied and accounted for, as shown in Figure 7.

School culture and hiring/interview practices were the second most-sought category identified by 18.4% of teachers each. Teachers T2, T3, T5, T13, T15, T17, and T19 all mentioned a combination of caring working environment, positive school environment, welcoming atmosphere, strong sense of community, family first, and feeling valued and respected. This was best summed up by Teacher T15:

A strong sense of community and feeling like we all belong. Building strong relationships with coworkers and admin alike. Building principals and other administrators are family-centered, meaning that while they value us and our dedication to students, it is also important to take care of our personal family sickness, issues, etc., without feeling guilty for missing work. Being “family first.”

Furthermore, Teacher T17 expanded and stated:

Good benefits, including salary and insurance, as well as making teachers feel they truly have a voice in decision making. It is vital that teachers feel respected and valued. Personalized professional development (that which an individual finds value in, rather than a generic or one-size-fits-all approach that ignores variation in experience, content, student age group, or personal interest) is also important.

In terms of hiring and interview practices, Teachers T6, T8, T14, T16, T21, T24, and T25 all mentioned the interview processes, interview committees, location of job postings, timing of job postings, multiple-round interview processes, and/or mock lessons as strong

recruitment tools when identifying highly effective teachers. Furthermore, Teacher T16 summarized the following hiring and interview practices as crucial to the organization:

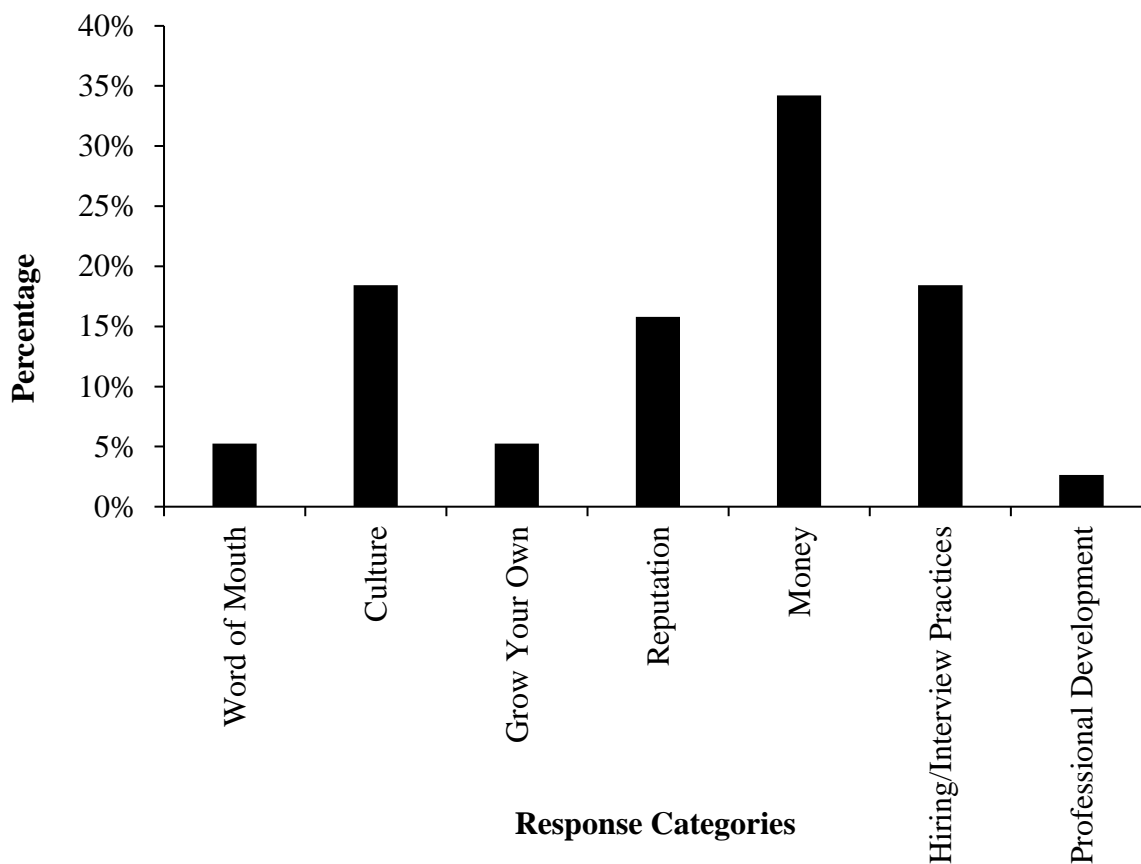
1. Keeping track of which hiring channels produce the most qualified candidates.
2. Home-grown programs where you hire graduates for your school district.
3. Use an interview process to weed out candidates who are not qualified for your positions and/or identify the best teachers for your organization.

Additionally, Teacher T21 added, “Advertising for the position through the DESE system instead of just through the school website system” is a highly effective teacher recruitment tool. Lastly, Teacher T24 added, “Interviewing using not only administrators but also faculty members who will be working closely with the prospective teachers” is the most-effective teacher recruitment method.

School reputation, at 15.8%, was the third most-sought category teachers identified as an effective method to recruit teachers. Teacher T3 summarized, “Alumni status: most teachers enjoy teaching in the area they grew up in, reputation for academic and athletic excellence, teacher pay and benefits, and school environment.” Additionally, Teachers T5, T9, T10, T11, and T18 all mentioned that a school or district’s favorable reputation plays a large role in whether teachers seek employment there.

Figure 7

Teachers' Responses Regarding What They Perceive to Be the Most-Effective Methods to Recruit Quality Teachers



Question Two

What have you found to be the least-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?

Teachers had an unlimited character text box to respond to this open-ended question. There were 21 responses to this question, and responses ranged from a short phrase to a lengthy paragraph. Responses were disaggregated into 10 primary categories:

job posting, nepotism, not applicable, word of mouth, job fairs, money, timing, poor culture, location, and references.

The least-effective methods rated by teacher respondents were relying on the job posting or relying on money to produce quality teachers; 19% of the teachers selected these categories. Teacher T1 simply cited “websites” as the least-effective teacher recruitment tool. Teacher T5 stated, “Opening applications on the internet and/or applitrack” is the least-effective recruitment tool. Teacher T10 added, “Impersonal approaches such as video interviews” are highly ineffective methods of recruitment. Lastly, Teacher T19 concluded, “Posting jobs and hoping teachers apply” is the least-effective method of recruiting quality teachers.

Aligned with the responses to question one, where money or a strong starting salary was rated as effective by teachers, a poor starting salary ranked toward the top of ineffective recruitment methods. Teacher T7 stated, “When salaries and benefits decrease, so does the candidate pool.” Further, Teacher T9 added, “Low salary led to poor retention rates.” Similarly, Teacher T15 concluded, “Poor benefits, lowest salary in the area, and several extra unwanted duties” are ineffective factors for recruiting quality teachers. Lastly, teacher Teacher T14 summarized:

Rapid salary increases year after year without simultaneously respecting teachers or showing that they have a voice. I know some teachers feel almost trapped in a district where there is quick salary growth but no respect given to teachers.

In summary, teachers mentioned additional details or other common traits that tend to come with working at schools with poor salaries, such as extra duties, smaller candidate pools, and lower retention rates.

Next, teachers responded that word of mouth (9.5%) was also an ineffective recruitment method. Teacher T4 simply stated “word of mouth applications” are the least-effective teacher recruitment method. Lastly, Teacher T17 added, “Word of mouth from people who know someone who is graduating,” is the least-effective method for recruiting quality teachers. Also, at 9.5%, teachers responded job fairs are an ineffective teacher recruitment method. Teacher T6 simply responded, “job fairs,” while Teacher T8 added, “I am not sure job fairs work that well.”

Furthermore, timing (9.5%) was mentioned as a crucial teacher recruitment method. Teacher T11 cited, “Waiting to start the search process until late summer,” is a highly ineffective teacher recruitment method. Additionally, Teacher T18 added, “Hiring post-graduation from college with little experience” is the least-effective method for recruiting quality teachers. Next, references (9.5%) were highlighted as an ineffective teacher recruitment method. Both Teacher T20 and Teacher 21 mentioned using previous work references as a highly ineffective teacher recruitment method.

Lastly, many responses fell into the “not applicable” category (9.5%). Teacher T3 simply stated “not sure” as the least-effective teacher recruitment method. However, Teacher T13 elaborated:

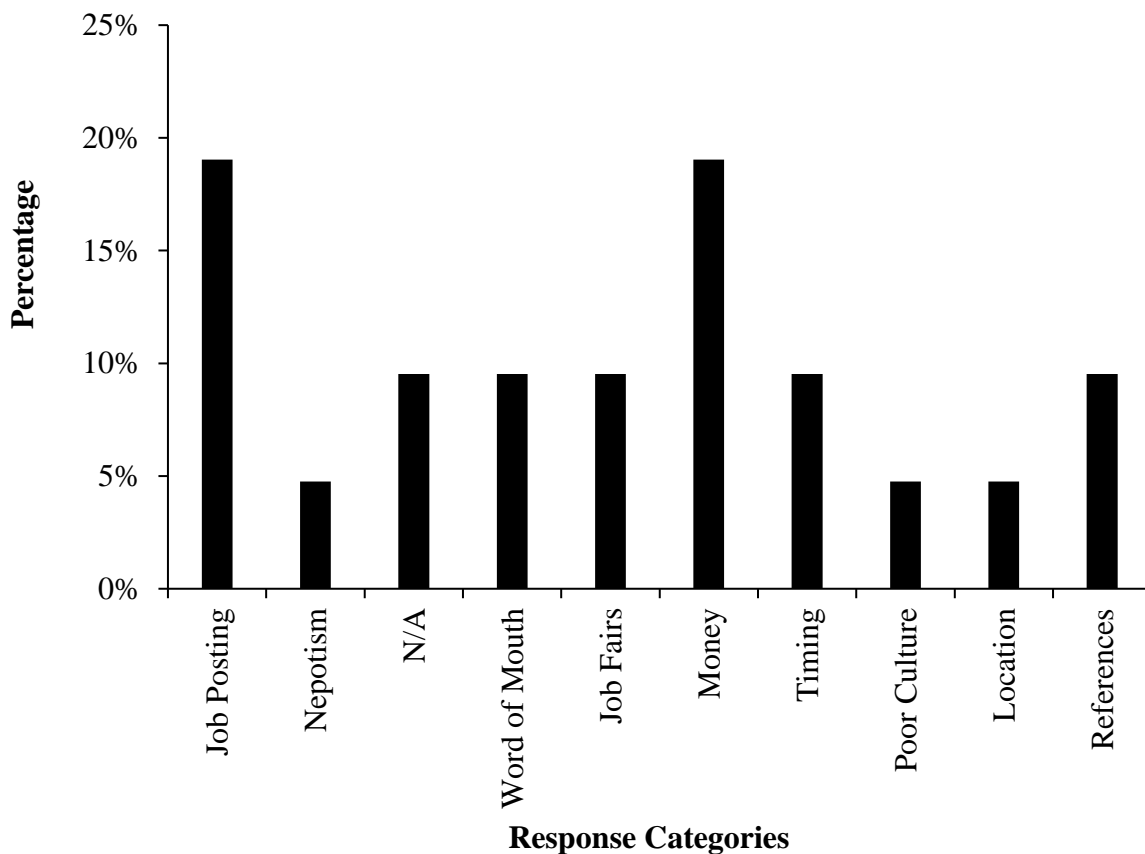
1. When there is a year of high turnover, not asking questions of the district personnel and leadership—are they dissatisfied with the district, policies, or management. Ask the hard questions internally.
2. Not staying up on current trends in hiring and/or your district has a reputation for teachers leaving in a few years.

Lastly, teachers responded that nepotism (4.8%), poor culture (4.8%), and location (4.8%) are ineffective recruitment methods (see Figure 8). Teacher T12 expanded on poor culture:

Not to have understanding or empathy for teacher mistakes or home life situations. When teachers feel unsupported by other coworkers and admin. Meaning that teachers are not offered “coaching” when they are struggling. Forgot to mention on the first question: teachers feel supported and can feel comfortable about asking for help with teaching skills.

Figure 8

Teachers' Responses Regarding What They Perceive to Be the Least-Effective Methods of Recruiting Quality Teachers



Question Three

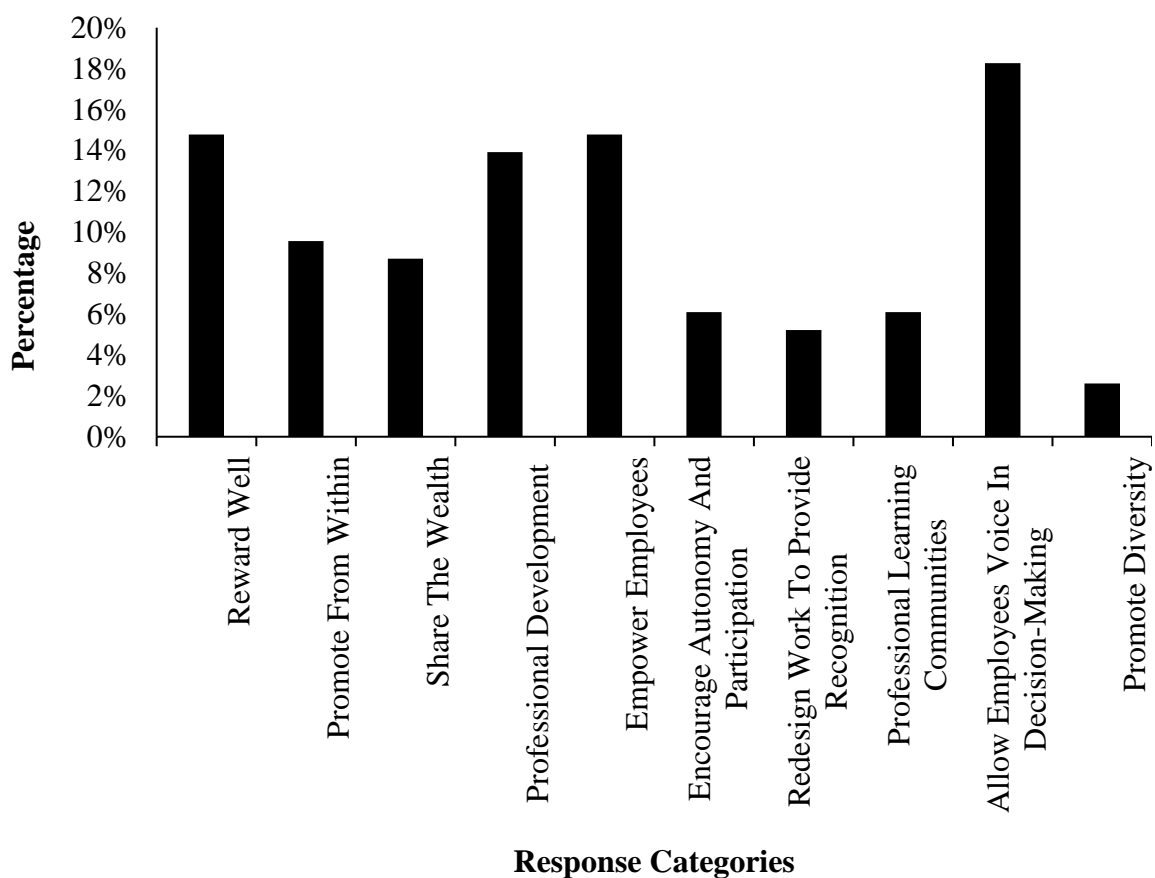
What have you found to be the most-effective methods to retain quality teachers?

Teachers selected up to five of the most-effective methods to retain quality teachers according to the 10 Bolman and Deal (2017) selections (see Figure 9). Of the

115 total selections, teachers identified “allow employees voice in the decision-making process (promote egalitarianism)” as the most-effective method to retain teachers (18.3%). The next most-effective methods to retain quality teachers, at 14.8% each, were to reward well and to empower employees. Professional development (invest in employees) was rated the next highest at 13.9%, followed by promote from within (9.6%) and share the wealth (8.7%). Rated less frequently were to encourage autonomy and to promote professionalism and professional learning communities at 6.1% each, redesign work to provide recognition (5.2%), and promote diversity (2.6%).

Figure 9

Teachers’ Rankings of the Most-Effective Methods to Retain Quality Teachers



Question Four

What do most teachers give as the primary reason they leave a district?

Teachers were instructed to rank “Why Teachers Leave A District” (Podolsky et al., 2016) from the most frequently given reason to the least frequently given reason. The responses are ranked below in order of most-frequent (1) to least-frequent (6) (see Tables 4 and 5). While the culmination of rankings is valuable, Table 5 adds depth to the research by disaggregating the data further.

As displayed in Tables 4 and 5, 30.43% of teachers ranked personal reasons as the number-one reason teachers leave their school districts. A total of 47.83% of teachers ranked better career opportunities as the number-two reason teachers leave their districts. Correspondingly, 26.09% of teachers chose inadequate preparation, and another 26.09% chose dissatisfaction with compensation as the number-three reason to leave. Challenging work conditions was ranked fourth by 30.43% of teachers. Lastly, dissatisfaction with compensation was ranked fifth by 30.43% of teachers, and 47.83% of teachers ranked personal reasons as the number-six reason teachers leave school districts.

Tables 4 and 5 provide a snapshot of teachers’ perceptions, but the tables are not all-encompassing because many of Podolsky et al.’s (2016) reasons teachers leave a school district were rated inconsistently or contradictorily. However, as cited previously, several of Podolsky et al.’s (2016) reasons teachers leave school districts scored highest in multiple ranking areas (personal reasons and dissatisfaction with compensation), and some (lack of support) never led any ranking.

Figure 10

Teachers' Rankings of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) Reasons Teachers Leave School Districts

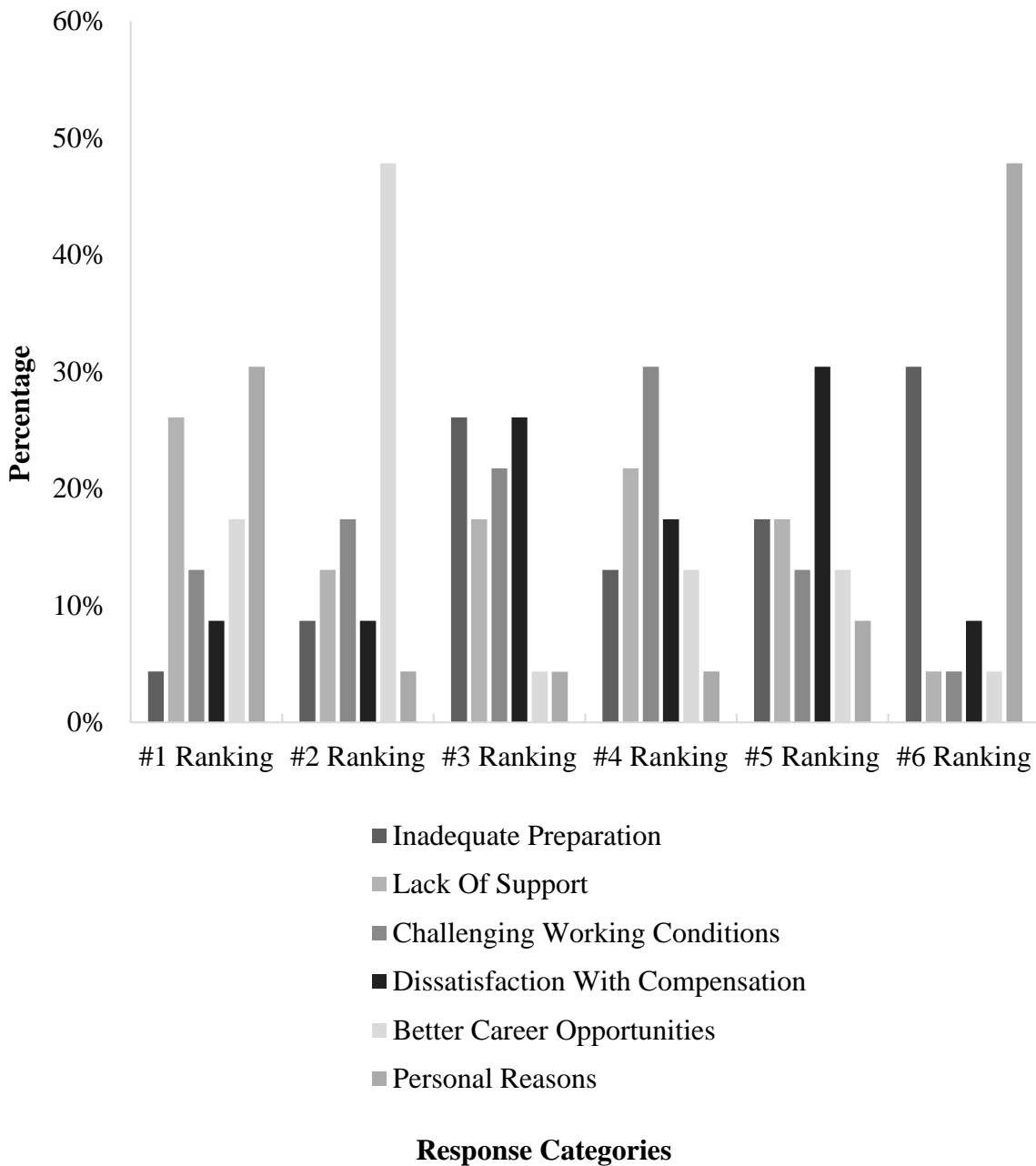


Table 4

Percentage of Teachers' Rankings of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) Reasons Teachers Leave

School Districts

Response	Ranking Percentage					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Inadequate Preparation	4.35	8.70	26.09	13.04	17.39	30.43
Lack of Support	26.09	13.04	17.39	21.74	17.39	4.35
Challenging Working Conditions	13.04	17.39	21.74	30.43	13.04	4.35
Dissatisfaction with Compensation	8.70	8.70	26.09	17.39	30.43	8.70
Better Career Opportunities	17.39	47.83	4.35	13.04	13.04	4.35
Personal Reasons	30.43	4.35	4.35	4.35	8.70	47.83

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Rankings of Podolsky et al.'s (2016) Reasons

Teachers Leave School Districts

Response	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance
Inadequate Preparation	1.00	6.00	4.22	1.53	2.34
Lack of Support	1.00	6.00	3.04	1.57	2.48
Challenging Working Conditions	1.00	6.00	3.26	1.36	1.84
Dissatisfaction with Compensation	1.00	6.00	3.78	1.41	2.00
Better Career Opportunities	1.00	6.00	2.70	1.46	2.12
Personal Reasons	1.00	6.00	4.00	2.23	4.96

Question Five

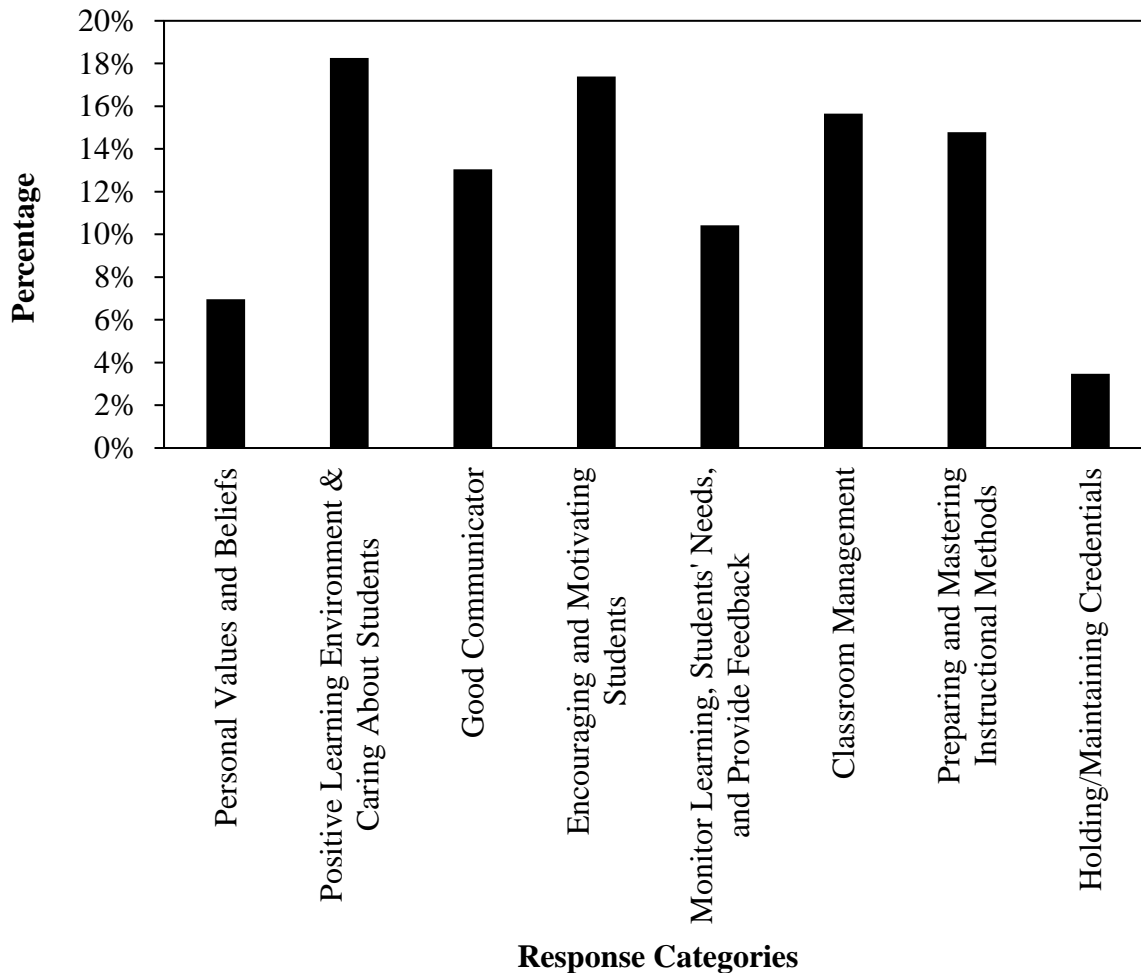
From the Hattie and Anderman (2013) choices below, select the five you believe to be the most-important characteristics to look for in teachers.

Of the 115 total selections, positive learning environment and caring about students (18.3%) were identified as the most-important characteristics. The next most-important characteristic for hiring teachers, according to teachers, was encouraging and

motivating students (17.4%). Classroom management (15.7%) was the third-ranked characteristic to look for in teachers. Preparing and mastering instructional methods was next highest at 14.8%; followed by good communicator (13%) and monitor learning, students' needs, and provide feedback (10.4%). Personal values and beliefs (6.97%) and holding/maintaining credentials (3.5%) were the least-important characteristics.

Figure 11

Teachers' Top-Five Characteristics to Look for When Hiring New Teachers



Question Six

What advice would you give to other school districts looking to replicate your successful hiring practices?

Teachers were presented with an unlimited character text box to respond to this open-ended question. There were 20 responses to this question, and responses ranged from a short phrase to a lengthy paragraph. Responses were disaggregated into 12 primary categories: culture, references, hiring/interview processes, location, reputation, timing, best fit, money, other, grow your own, professional development, and not applicable. Teachers valued culture (22.7%) and hiring/interview practices (22.7%) most highly. Next, at 9.0 % each, “best fit” and “other” were cited as strong building blocks for successful hiring practices. Lastly, with a total of 4.5% of respondents each, the following were selected: references, location, reputation, timing, money, grow your own, professional development, and not applicable.

Teachers T1, T3, T8, T10, and T13 agreed creating a work environment (culture) that is inviting, caring, positive, and family-like is the biggest factor in trying to replicate successful hiring practice. Teacher T1 declared to simply “treat teachers fairly,” while Teacher T3 further expanded and stated:

Create a positive, caring, family environment where staff feel appreciated and rewarded for their hard work and dedication. This [environment] will flow over into student attitudes and performance, causing the district performance to excel. Parent support increases as well. Quality candidates want to work in an environment such as this.

Additionally, Teacher T8 recommended, “Find relationship-based people. Do not only concentrate on the textbook answer.” Furthermore, Teacher T10 cited, “Make your school a community, and good teachers will spread the word and attract good teachers!” Lastly, Teacher T13 concluded, “Help the new teachers learn your district culture – how things are done in your district.”

Teachers also valued hiring/interview processes (22.7%) highly. Teacher T4 recommended to simply “ask a lot of interview questions in the interview.” Similarly, Teacher T5 asserted:

Write interview questions that are situational. They give the best insight to how a teacher applicant would handle things. They also give the interview team an idea of how the applicant can think on the fly and what experience they have already.

Teacher T6, on the other hand, added, “Do not just interview teachers who are known to you. Evaluate resumes and look for talent.” To further elaborate on the interview process, Teacher T19 stated:

I would advise other schools to focus on instinct as opposed to paper qualifications. This [focus] requires extensive interviewing with a diverse team of interviewers and correct wording during the interview process, as many issues cannot legally be discussed. Personal beliefs should be set aside in order to open your mind and eyes to possible candidates.

Furthermore, in an effort to add consistency, fairness, and consensus, Teacher T12 recommended:

The only part of the hiring process I’ve been involved in is when I sat in interviews to replace my counterpart. I did like the common scoring guide. We

discussed the criteria and different levels before the first interview to make sure we were all on the same page. After each interview, we have our score, then came to a consensus on one score. I also liked that there were prepared questions, and we couldn't ask follow-up questions as to allow all applicants a fair interview.

Next, at 9.1% each, "best fit" and "other" were also identified as effective hiring practices.

Teacher T16 stated, "Hire what is best for your school district instead of competing with another." Likewise, Teacher T11 suggested, "Look for candidates who will fit well within the team of teachers with whom they will be working as well as bring new ideas." Teachers T14 and T17 had unique and valuable perspectives to share as well. Teacher T17 recommended, "Make sure you look for teachers who are invested in student-centered instruction." According to Teacher T14:

Recognize union representation and give teachers a seat at all discussions. The teachers are not adversaries to administrators unless administrators alienate them. It is important to engage teachers in decision-making in order to provide a sounding board for decisions that impact the students.

Lastly, references (4.5%), location (4.5%), reputation (4.5%), timing (4.5%), money (4.5%), grow your own (4.5%), professional development (4.5%), and not applicable (4.5%) were selected by the remaining teachers.

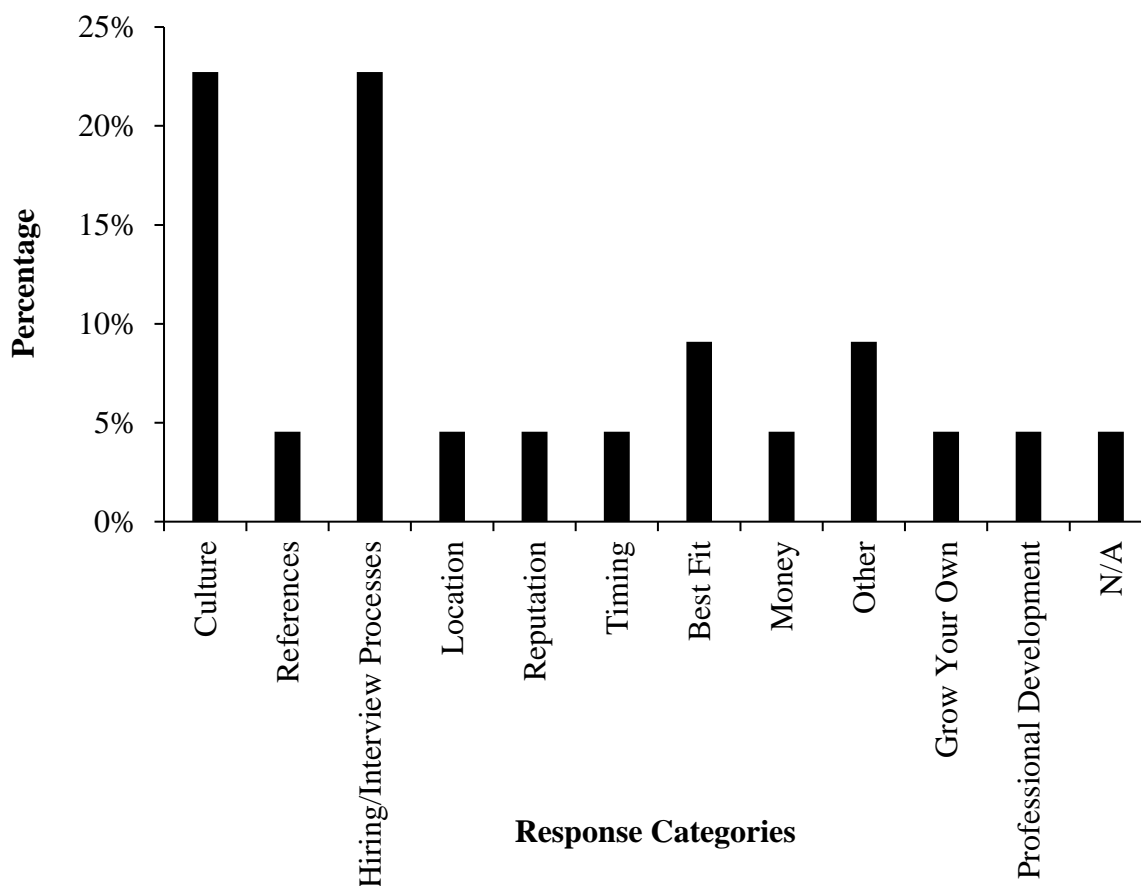
Teacher T2 simply endorsed, "Talk to other teachers this person has worked with." Additionally, Teacher T7 stated, "Pay and benefits are important, but honestly, the most important piece is the neighborhood and surrounding community. The nicer the area, the more people want to work there. I am not sure that can be replicated." Likewise,

Teacher T9 elaborated, “Improve the community perception of your district to increase positive word-of-mouth sharing.”

Teachers T11, T13, T15, and T18 also had valuable insight. Teacher T11 suggested, “Start the process early.” Additionally, Teacher T13 advised, “Look at your sub-pool for candidates, and hire people who change careers since they made a career choice for a reason.” Furthermore, Teacher T15 proposed, “Sometimes small incentives mean more than actual salaries. Provide the best compensation possible, but more importantly, think of additional perks that would add value to the position you are offering.” Lastly, Teacher T18 claimed, “It is vital to provide instructional support through instructional coaches, mentors, and other related PD. Provide the resources they need!” Figure 12 summarizes the 20 teacher responses and the 12 disaggregated categories mentioned above.

Figure 12

Teachers' Responses Regarding Their Advice to Other School Districts Looking to Replicate Successful Hiring Practices



Summary

The research surveys were sent to 12 consenting schools of the 90 districts identified as the top 10% in Missouri based on cumulative MAP and EOC assessment scores from 2019. Two surveys, each with six questions, were created to address the research questions and examine what teachers and human resource directors value in the teacher hiring process. In all, 12 school superintendents agreed to participate with 11 human resource directors and 59 teachers completing surveys. Responses from the

surveys provided quantitative data that were reviewed and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Tables and figures were created to provide a visual representation of the data for the two groups.

Chapter Five begins with a recap of findings from this chapter as they pertain to each of the three research questions. Next, conclusions from this study are also made based on the aforementioned analysis of the three research questions. Finally, implications for practice and recommendations for future research are explored.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

This study was designed to examine teacher recruitment and retention strategies of high-performing public school districts in Missouri to understand and guide the hiring practices of school districts more fully. The data for this research study were collected through surveys of both human resource directors and teachers. Survey participants were identified from high-performing school districts that scored in the top 10% of Missouri public schools based upon cumulative MAP and EOC assessment scores from 2019 (MODESE, 2019).

Once identified, human resource directors and teachers within the top 10% districts were surveyed about what they believe to be the most-effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies. In all, 90 schools had the opportunity to participate, with 12 superintendents giving consent. From the 12 districts, 11 human resource directors and 59 teachers completed their respective surveys, although not every respondent completed every question. The survey included short answer, select all that apply, ranking, and open-ended questions.

Findings

Statistical analyses of the data were completed and presented in Chapter Four. Further, responses from the surveys provided quantitative data that were reviewed and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings in the form of trends and themes are presented in Chapter Five.

Research Question One

What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective teacher recruitment strategies?

Research question one was primarily addressed through answers to survey questions one, two, and five. The questions elicited human resource director and teacher perceptions regarding effective and ineffective recruiting methods as well as sought-after characteristics in prospective teaching candidates. The majority of human resource directors found hiring/interview processes and grow-your-own programs to be the most-effective methods for teacher recruitment. Specifically, human resource directors championed identifying students or paraprofessionals who have the desired teaching traits and growing them into teachers in their buildings or districts. Additionally, utilizing contacts within the educational community, such as college preparation directors, and organizing district recruitment/preview days allowed the districts to identify strong candidates.

The majority of teachers, however, chose money as the most-effective method for teacher recruitment. In most instances, teachers who mentioned money as a valuable recruitment tool also cited another one of the primary seven topics (word of mouth, culture, grow your own, reputation, hiring/interview practices, or professional development). Outside of money, culture and hiring/interview practices were the most frequently cited teacher recruitment tools. Both human resource directors and teachers responded that simply relying on a job posting to yield good teaching candidates is the least-effective method for teacher recruitment. Additionally, the majority of both human resource directors and teachers cited “positive learning environment and caring about students” as the most-important characteristic to look for when hiring new teachers.

Research Question Two

What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-common reasons teachers leave the profession?

Research question two was primarily addressed based upon responses to survey question four, which elicited human resource director and teacher perceptions related to why teachers leave school districts. The majority of human resource directors and teachers cited “better career opportunities” as the primary reason teachers leave a district. Additionally, human resource directors asserted “personal reasons” and “dissatisfaction with compensation” are also common reasons teachers leave a school district. After “better career opportunities,” teachers cited “lack of support” and “challenging working conditions” as primary reasons teachers leave a district. Further, the remainder of the three options revealed inconsistencies between human resource directors and teachers regarding how highly they were ranked for “why teachers leave a district.”

Research Question Three

What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective district strategies for retaining high-quality teachers?

Research question three was primarily addressed based upon responses to survey questions three and six, which elicited human resource director and teacher perceptions related to reasons teachers stay in a district. Most human resource directors agreed that allowing voice and choice in the decision-making process (promoting egalitarianism), empowering employees, and rewarding well are equally important in retaining high-

quality teachers. The majority of teacher respondents agreed that allowing employees' voice and choice in the decision-making process (promoting egalitarianism) is the most-effective method of retaining high-quality teachers.

Furthermore, human resource directors cited creating and maintaining a positive school culture as the most-important component when school districts look to replicate their successful hiring practices. Human resource directors recommended grow-your-own programs frequently, too. Teachers suggested creating and maintaining a positive school culture as the most-important component when schools look to replicate their successful hiring practices, but they also mentioned creating strong hiring/interview practices equally as often.

Conclusions

Conclusions for this study were formulated based upon descriptive statistical analyses of survey responses regarding teacher recruitment and retention strategies of high-performing public school districts in Missouri. The purpose of the study was to more fully understand and guide effective hiring practices for school districts. Moreover, conclusions reflect findings from the review of literature in Chapter Two. Conclusions presented in this section are organized around each research question.

Conclusions for Research Question One

What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective teacher recruitment strategies?

Human resource directors and teachers were surveyed separately and anonymously to determine their perceptions regarding effective teacher recruitment strategies. Responses to survey questions one, two, and five were analyzed to answer

research question one. Survey questions related to research question one included open-ended, short answer, and select all that apply items based on Hattie and Anderman's (2013) values. The conclusions, as they pertain to research question one, are presented below.

Human resource directors valued hiring and interview practices along with grow-your-own programs as the most highly regarded teacher recruitment strategies. However, teachers ranked money as the most-influential teacher recruitment tool, closely followed by culture and hiring and interview practices. The inconsistencies between the perceptions of human resource directors and teachers only further complicate and reinforce the need to align hiring practices between school districts and potential teaching candidates.

Human resource directors agreed the least-effective teacher recruitment strategy was "simply relying on the job posting" to yield quality teaching candidates. Overall, teachers agreed the two least-effective teacher recruitment strategies were "relying on the job posting" and "lack of money or resources." While there were discrepancies between what human resource directors and teachers reported to be the most-effective teacher recruitment strategies, common tendencies and trends were revealed regarding what did *not* work.

Human resource directors agreed the most-important characteristics to look for when hiring new teachers include a positive learning environment and caring for students; encouraging and motivating students; and monitoring learning, students' needs, and providing feedback (Hattie & Anderman, 2013). The three aforementioned Hattie and Anderman (2013) characteristics were tied for the most mentioned by human

resource directors. Teachers reinforced the human resource directors' perceptions by also citing "positive learning environment and caring about students" as the most-important characteristic in new teachers. Furthermore, teachers cited "encouraging and motivating students" as their number-two most-important characteristic.

The consistency between human resource directors and teachers on what to look for in terms of teacher characteristics is comforting. Furthermore, there are commonalities in terms of the least-effective teacher recruitment methods, too. However, the inconsistencies between human resource directors and teachers appear when considering the most highly effective ways to recruit quality teachers.

Conclusions for Research Question Two

What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-common reasons teachers leave the profession?

Human resource directors generally agreed on the primary reasons teachers leave a district, based upon Podolsky et al.'s (2016) list. In fact, "personal reasons" and "better career opportunities" were tied for the most-cited reason. This was closely followed by "dissatisfaction with compensation" as the number-two reason teachers leave the profession, according to human resource directors. In this case, teachers' perceptions as to why teachers leave the profession were closely aligned with those of human resource directors. To summarize, teachers and human resource directors agreed "better career opportunities" is the number one reason teachers leave a school district. However, while human resource directors cited "personal reasons" and "dissatisfaction with

compensation” toward the top, teachers concluded “lack of support” and “challenging working conditions” played a larger role in the decision to leave a school district.

Conclusions for Research Question Three

What do human resource directors and teachers from high-performing public school districts in Missouri describe as the most-effective district strategies for retaining high-quality teachers?

Human resource directors agreed that from the Bolman and Deal (2017) list of teacher retention strategies, “rewarding well,” “empowering employees,” and “allowing employees voice and choice in the decision-making process (promoting egalitarianism)” are the most-effective teacher retention methods. In fact, the three aforementioned retention methods tied for the most frequently chosen by human resource directors surveyed. Teachers, on the other hand, chose “allowing voice and choice in the decision-making process (promoting egalitarianism)” as their most-effective teacher retention method. It is worth noting, however, that “rewarding well” and “empowering employees” came in tied at number two according to Bolman and Deal’s (2017) list. To summarize, human resource directors and teachers alike agreed upon the top-three most-effective methods for teacher retention according to Bolman and Deal’s (2017) list of 10 retention methods.

Human resource directors and teachers agreed creating and maintaining a positive school culture is the most-important component to retaining high-quality teachers. In addition, implementing an effective grow-your-own program and rewarding employees within the district with advancement were frequently mentioned by human resource directors. Teachers added that effective hiring and interview practices create a welcoming

atmosphere and a strong first impression, which lead to high-quality teaching candidates accepting positions.

Implications for Practice

While many factors contribute to student learning, and individual influences fluctuate, the teacher is consistently the most-influential of Hattie and Anderman's (2013) six primary factors. Furthermore, Bolman and Deal (2017) recognize human capital as one of the greatest factors in organizational success. The findings of this study will provide human resource directors and school districts in Missouri with practical knowledge for finding and retaining quality teachers.

Based on the findings of this study, there are two main recommendations for school districts looking to improve their hiring practices. The first recommendation is to create a positive climate and culture. Many of the findings outlined in Chapters Four and Five can be directly and indirectly tied to climate and culture. The second recommendation is to create clearly defined, research-based district hiring/interview practices. While human resource director and teacher perceptions were not always perfectly aligned, commonalities and differences are summarized for implementation below.

Create a Positive Climate and Culture

In terms of teacher recruitment, human resource directors agreed grow-your-own programs are among the most-effective methods. Not only are grow-your-own programs effective in the eyes of school leaders, as demonstrated in the data, promoting from within is also a positive influence on school climate and culture. Additionally, outside of money, teachers specifically cited climate and culture as the most-effective recruitment

strategy. Furthermore, human resource directors cited a positive learning environment and caring for students as the most-important characteristic in new teachers. Like the aforementioned components, a positive learning environment and caring about students can also be directly tied back to a strong climate and culture (Hasselquist et al., 2017).

In terms of the most-common reason teachers leave a school, human resource directors and teachers agreed that better career opportunities are the most significant factor. Additionally, personal reasons were also toward the top of the list. While school leaders may not have the most influence on those factors, it is noteworthy that in many cases, a strong climate and culture reigns supreme and can encourage teachers to stay.

Climate and culture, as it pertains to retaining high-quality teachers, also revealed significant consistencies between teacher and human resource director perceptions. In fact, rewarding well, empowering employees, and allowing voice and choice in the decision-making process can all be tied to a positive climate and culture, too (Borkar, 2016). Human resource directors and teachers agreed the most-important component in retaining high-quality teachers is maintaining a positive school culture.

Create Clearly Defined, Research-Based District Hiring/Interview Practices

In terms of teacher recruitment, teachers specifically cited hiring and interview practices as one of the most influential in teacher recruitment. Furthermore, teachers and human resource directors specifically cited that relying on the job posting is the least-effective method. In summary, both the most and least-influential teacher recruitment methods can be tied back to hiring and interview practices utilized by school districts. Simply relying on the job posting to produce quality candidates was also cited as an ineffective teacher recruitment method and is directly tied to poor district

hiring/interview practices. While money can be an influential factor for teachers related to a variety of decisions around hiring practices, sound communication of the salary schedule, advancement, and benefits can eliminate surprises down the road. Clear communication of the aforementioned benefits is also part of sound hiring and interview practices.

In summary, human resource directors must focus on controllable factors, such as improving climate and culture and sound hiring/interview practices. It would be a waste of time, talent, and resources to worry about factors outside of their control. Money is certainly always a factor in the decision-making process for teachers; however, many school districts are bound by financial obligations or situations outside of their control. Fortunately, listed as equally important to teachers are factors, such as climate and culture, which are controllable and moldable by school administrators and teachers. Furthermore, sound hiring and interview practices that include objective measures and that make a positive first impression on candidates were frequently mentioned as influential factors in the decision-making process for teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research was based upon the top 10% of Missouri public school districts to determine if the districts' academic success implied successful hiring practices. Other studies could add in an interview element to add depth to the responses and allow for responses outside the limitations of a survey. Additionally, there would be value in exploring what, if any, commonalities, inconsistencies, or trends coincide with the remaining 90% of public school districts in Missouri. There would be value and context in examining their perceptions, too.

Another valuable element in research would be to compare perceptions of effective hiring practice among various regions of Missouri to investigate if location plays a factor. Furthermore, a comparison of rural, urban, and suburban school districts perceptions of effective hiring practices would provide valuable insight into whether or not those demographics influence teacher perceptions, too. Lastly, and perhaps most notably, there would be substantial value in examining only those hiring practice trends controllable by school leaders.

Given the conclusions of this study and the implications for practice, it would be most appropriate to investigate and explore clearly defined, research-based district hiring interview practices. Equally valuable in terms of future research would be to further investigate the creation of a strong climate and culture as it pertains to teacher recruitment, selection, and retention. Based on the findings of this study, the aforementioned two elements would be most beneficial and appropriate for future research.

Summary

Teachers have consistently been recognized as the single most-important within-school factor to predict student success (Fitchett & Heafner, 2018). Unfortunately, school leaders have different perceptions of talent or best fit and utilize a variety of strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers (Jabbar, 2018). According to Yaffe (2015), “Teacher quality is crucial to the success of schooling, yet the teacher hiring process is sometimes rushed and ad hoc” (p. 31).

The human resource framework, as developed by Bolman and Deal (2017), was selected as an appropriate lens through which to view this study. Successful organizations

tend to recognize people, in this case, teachers, as their most-valuable asset (Bolman & Deal, 2017). It is the function of human resource personnel to hire, retain, and develop teachers to achieve common school goals (Rebore, 2015).

In Chapter Two, a review of literature highlighted an in-depth examination of current teacher recruitment processes. Further topics, including school image and reputation, teacher contracts, teacher pay, and grow-your-own programs, were investigated. Next, hiring and interview processes, selection criteria, teacher evaluation, and barriers to teacher effectiveness were examined. Finally, in conclusion, teacher retention and culture and climate were explored. In summary, Chapter Two served as a review of literature and a foundation for the building blocks essential to further understanding the process of teacher hiring.

Chapter Three contained the methodology for the study. The problem and purpose section included an examination of the perceptions of teachers and human resource directors regarding effective recruitment, hiring, and retention practices. Next, the guiding research questions were presented and explained. Further, the target sample, or the top 10% of Missouri districts based on cumulative MAP and EOC scores, was explained. An in-depth explanation of the descriptive survey was also highlighted, along with the methods used for descriptive statistics. Lastly, ethical considerations and reassurances for participants were explained.

In Chapter Four, data from the human resource director and teacher surveys were displayed. Next, each survey was chronologically analyzed, question by question, to aggregate or disaggregate data. Tables and figures were created to provide a visual representation of the data for the two groups. Overall, the data collected revealed

consistencies between human resource directors and teachers in terms of teacher recruitment methods, why teachers leave a district, and the most-important component in retaining high-quality teachers. However, the most notable inconsistencies between human resource directors and teacher perceptions appeared in the most-effective teacher recruitment tool.

Chapter Five included the findings and conclusions from this study. Also discussed in Chapter Five were the implications for practice. The first implication for practice was to create a strong climate and culture, as most of the hiring strengths and/or weaknesses can be directly or indirectly tied to climate and culture. The second implication for practice was to create clearly defined, research-based district hiring/interview practices.

Lastly, recommendations for future research were discussed. The first recommendation was to research schools outside the top 10% as they could provide helpful feedback about the hiring process. Additionally, adding an interview element would further expound upon human resource director and teacher perceptions. Furthermore, it would be worthy to examine whether region or demographic location played a role in perceptions of effective hiring practices. Further research into factors controllable by school leaders was suggested.

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Appendix A

Survey for Human Resource Directors

The link below is a voluntary, anonymous, short, perceptual survey on the recruitment and retention strategies teachers value. The anonymous data are being collected for Zeb Wallace, a doctoral student writing his dissertation at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri*.

1. What have you found to be the most-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?
2. What have you found to be the least-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?
3. What have you found to be the most-effective methods to retain quality teachers? DIRECTIONS: From the Bolman and Deal (2017) choices below, select the five you believe to be the most-effective methods to retain quality teachers.
 - Reward well
 - Promote from within
 - Share the wealth
 - Professional development (Invest in employees)
 - Empower employees
 - Encourage autonomy and participation
 - Redesign work to provide recognition
 - Professional learning communities (Foster self-managing teams)
 - Allow employees voice in decision making (Promote egalitarianism)
 - Promote diversity
4. What do most teachers give as the primary reason they leave your district? DIRECTIONS: Drag and drop to rank “Why Teachers Leave Your District” from the (1) most frequently given reason to the (6) least frequently given reason (Podolsky et al., 2016).
 - Inadequate preparation
 - Lack of support
 - Challenging working conditions
 - Dissatisfaction with compensation
 - Better career opportunities
 - Personal reasons

5. From the Hattie and Anderman (2013) choices below, select the five you believe to be the most-important characteristics you look for when hiring new teachers.

- Personal values and beliefs
- Positive learning environment and caring about students
- Good communicator
- Encouraging and motivating to students
- Monitor learning, students' needs, and provide feedback
- Classroom management
- Preparing and mastering instructional methods
- Holding/maintaining credentials

6. What advice would you give to other school districts looking to replicate your successful hiring practices?

Appendix B

Survey for Teachers

The link below is a voluntary, anonymous, short, perceptual survey on the recruitment and retention strategies teachers value. The anonymous data are being collected for Zeb Wallace, a doctoral student writing his dissertation at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri*.

1. What have you found to be the most-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?
2. What have you found to be the least-effective methods to recruit quality teachers?
3. What have you found to be the most-effective methods to retain quality teachers? DIRECTIONS: From the Bolman and Deal (2017) choices below, select the five you believe to be the most-effective methods to retain quality teachers.
 - Reward well
 - Promote from within
 - Share the wealth
 - Professional development (Invest in employees)
 - Empower employees
 - Encourage autonomy and participation
 - Redesign work to provide recognition
 - Professional learning communities (Foster self-managing teams)
 - Allow employees voice in decision making (Promote egalitarianism)
 - Promote diversity
4. What do most teachers give as the primary reason they leave a district? DIRECTIONS: Drag and drop to rank “Why Teachers Leave Your District” from the (1) most frequently given reason to the (6) least frequently given reason (Podolsky et al., 2016).
 - Inadequate preparation
 - Lack of support
 - Challenging working conditions
 - Dissatisfaction with compensation
 - Better career opportunities
 - Personal reasons

5. From the Hattie and Anderman (2013) choices below, select the five you believe to be the most-important characteristics to look for in teachers.
- Personal values and beliefs
 - Positive learning environment and caring about students
 - Good communicator
 - Encouraging and motivating to students
 - Monitor learning, students' needs, and provide feedback
 - Classroom management
 - Preparing and mastering instructional methods
 - Holding/maintaining credentials
6. What advice would you give to other school districts looking to replicate your successful hiring practices?

Appendix C

IRB Approval Disposition

Apr 2, 2020 10:32 AM CDT

RE:

IRB-20-162: Initial - An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High Performing Public School Districts in Missouri

Dear Zeb Wallace,

The study, An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High Performing Public School Districts in Missouri , has been Approved as Exempt.

Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording). The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

The submission was approved on April 2, 2020.

Here are the findings:

IRB Discussion:

- The PI is reminded that compliance with the recruitment policies at an external site resides with the PI. Should the policies of an external site require authorization from that site's IRB or another office, the PI must obtain this authorization and upload it as a modification to their approved LU IRB application prior to recruiting subjects at that site.

Regulatory Determinations

- This study has been determined to be minimal risk because the research is not obtaining data considered sensitive information or performing interventions posing harm greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Sincerely,

Lindenwood University (lindenwood) Institutional Review Board

Appendix D

Email Script to Superintendents

School Superintendent:

I am writing to request permission to conduct research in your school district. I am currently pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri*. Your school has been identified as being in the top 10% in Missouri based on cumulative MAP and EOC scores in Math, ELA, and/or Science. I am asking permission to anonymously survey your human resource director (or principal) and teachers.

If permission is granted, I will ask for your human resource director's (or principal's) email address. I will then contact your human resource director who will have the opportunity to participate in an anonymous human resource survey. Lastly, I will ask that your human resource director distribute teacher surveys to the teachers in your district.

If you agree, please fill out the attached permission letter and return to me, Zeb Wallace, at zw704@lindenwood.edu.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Best,

Zeb Wallace

Appendix E

Permission Letter to Superintendent

Date:

RE: Permission to Conduct Research in (School District)

To: (Superintendent's Name), Superintendent of Schools

I am writing to request permission to conduct research in the (School District). I am currently pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri*. I am asking permission to anonymously survey your human resource director (or principal) and teachers.

If permission is granted, I will ask for your human resource director's (or principal's) email address. I will then contact your human resource director who will have the opportunity to participate in a human resource survey. Lastly, I will ask your human resource director to distribute surveys to the teachers in your district.

If you agree, please sign below, scan this page, and email to me, Zeb Wallace, at zw704@lindenwood.edu.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding this study.

Sincerely,

Zeb Wallace,

Doctoral Student at Lindenwood University

Approved by:

Print name and title here

Signature

Date

Appendix F

Email Script to Human Resource Directors

(Human Resource Director's Name):

My name is Zeb Wallace, and I am writing to follow up on (Superintendent's Name)'s permission to survey you and your teachers at (School Name). I am pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri*.

If willing, I would ask that you complete the voluntary, anonymous, short, perceptual Human Resource Survey found at
https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ahrayK9wW2NiMXr

Lastly, I would ask that you send your teachers an email that includes the following opportunity to respond:

“The link below is a voluntary, anonymous, short, perceptual survey on the recruitment and retention strategies teachers value. The anonymous data are being collected for Zeb Wallace, a doctoral student writing his dissertation at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *An Examination of Recruitment and Retention Strategies of High-Performing Public School Districts in Missouri*.”
https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6tadFRXhIDUzI7X

Sincerely,

Zeb Wallace
Doctoral Student at Lindenwood University

Vita

Zeb T. Wallace obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Education from Central Methodist University in 2012. Immediately thereafter, he began his master's degree in Educational Administration at Missouri State University and completed it in 2014. In the fall of 2017, Zeb began pursuing his Specialist/Doctorate in Educational Administration degree from Lindenwood University.

Zeb began his career in education at Walnut Grove R-V School District in 2012, where he taught high school business and was the head baseball and cross-country coach for four years. In 2016, he moved to West Plains R-VII where he served as the high school A+ coordinator and head baseball coach for two years before moving into an assistant principal role at West Plains Elementary for another two years. In 2020, Zeb moved to Ozark R-VI where he currently serves as middle school assistant principal.