STRENGTHENING THE TEACHER WORKFORCE THROUGH SELECTION PROCESSES

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created disruptions in the teacher workforce, including reductions-in-force due to budget cuts, hesitation from teachers to return in-person to the classroom, and relaxed standards for entering the profession. Even before the current pandemic, teacher hiring decisions were often late, rushed, and information-poor.[1] Districts may be able to refine selection processes and add relevant tools to more reliably identify the most promising teacher candidates.[2,3] This brief, aimed at district and school staff involved in the teacher selection process, provides literature-based recommendations to improve the teacher selection process as a cost-effective means of strengthening the teacher workforce.

Considerations to Improve Teacher Selection Processes

Align selection processes and tools with desired performance competencies

Districts typically describe the desired performance competencies in teacher evaluation handbooks, observation protocols, and other human capital management tools. Staff involved in the selection process can strengthen the educator workforce by ensuring that processes are aligned to the performance competencies educators need to achieve the organization's vision.[4] This alignment process entails embedding performance competencies that capture the behaviors, skills, or mindsets needed to effectively teach into the selection process.

Action step: *Identify the performance competencies needed to be an effective teacher.*

A typical teacher performance competency model contains **key performance domains** (e.g., planning and preparation, classroom management, instruction, and professionalism), domain-specific behavior (e.g., uses student performance data in developing instructional units), and **performance levels for each domain** (e.g., unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, distinguished). District leaders should review the performance competency model and its corresponding assessments (e.g., the observation rubric or other evaluation tools used to determine whether the competencies are met) to ensure these match the requirements of the job. If teachers will be required to teach virtually, leaders should consider how to augment the performance competency model to capture the skills necessary to teach effectively online. One resource that leaders could use to augment performance competencies is The Framework for Remote Teaching, developed by The Danielson

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[1] Edward Liu and Susan Moore Johnson. (2006). New teachers' experiences of hiring: Late, rushed, and information poor, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *42*(3), 324–360.

[2] Dan Goldhaber, Cyrus Grout, and Nick Huntington-Klein. (2017). Screen twice, cut once: Assessing the predictive validity of applicant selection tools. *Education Finance and Policy, 12*(2), 197–223.

[3] Robert M. Klassen and Lisa E. Kim (2019). Selecting teachers and prospective teachers: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 12, 59–76.

[4] Herbert G. Heneman III and Anthony Milanowski. (2004). Alignment of human resource practices and teacher performance competency. *Peabody Journal of Education, 79*(4), 108–125.

Group, which provides recommendations for meeting the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic.[5]

This action step assumes the performance competencies identified do, in fact, capture effective teaching. Accordingly, district leaders should also ensure that performance *assessments* capture effective teaching – that the performance assessment adequately captures all facets of instructional practices and the practices are related to desired student outcomes.[6] District leaders need to gather evidence of content and criterion-related validity. Content validity is assessed by the extent to which the items adequately represent a performance domain. Criterion-related validity is the extent to which the measure is related to performance.[7] See the call-out box for questions to consider when assessing content and criterion-related validity of performance assessments.

> ### Content and criterion-related validity
>
> Questions to ask to address content and criterion-related validity for performance assessments include: Does an observation rubric adequately capture all facets of instructional practice? Are scores on the rubric related to teacher performance as measured by value-added or student surveys? The working paper Review of Teaching Performance Assessments for use in Human Capital Management provides an example of how to assess the content validity of teaching performance assessments and review the available criterion-related validity for common performance assessments.

Action step: *Assess the extent to which selection policies and practices focus on the identified performance competencies.*

District and school leaders can use various tools to rate the degree to which screening and selection processes are aligned with the performance competencies teachers will be assessed on once they are hired. For example, the journal article Assessing Human Resource Practices Alignment: A case study provides an introduction to alignment and two exercises staff can use to assess it. The white paper Strengthening the Educator Workforce Through Human Resource Alignment provides two additional alignment tools. These tools also provide exercises for examining the extent to which selection practices are aligned with aspects of the human capital management system. Ensuring that selection processes are focused on performance competencies is intended to minimize the chance that personal biases will influence selection.

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[5] The Danielson Group. (2020). The Framework for Remote Teaching.

[6] Jilliam N. Joe, Cynthia M. Tocci, Steven L. Holtzman, and Jean C. Williams. (2013). Foundations of observation: Considerations for developing a classroom observation system that helps districts achieve consistent and accurate scores. Seattle, WA: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

[7] Crocker & Algina. (2008). Introduction to classical & modern test theory. Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.

Standardize processes to improve the quality of data used to inform selection decisions and minimize bias.

Using a standardized process and blind reviews to score sources of information (e.g., letters of recommendation and resumes) can improve the screening and selection process to help identify more effective and more diverse teachers.[8, 9] Since most school districts already collect this type of information during the hiring process, it is a matter of developing or adapting selection tools to standardize the scoring process. While scoring this information may create additional costs, the costs appear to be relatively small compared to the potential gains from improved selection process.[10] Using standardized protocols and blind screening can also reduce bias.

Action step: "Screen twice, cut once."[11]—*Use a (multi-step) screening process based on multiple criteria, depending on the quantity of teacher applicants.*

District and school leaders can more effectively select high-quality teachers through the use of well-designed screening tools.[12] If there is a sufficient number of applicants, have central office human resources officials, or those responsible for initial screenings, conduct a prescreening of potential applicants based on minimum cutoff scores and other qualifications to narrow the applicant pool to a manageable size. School leaders can then use more extensive job-level screening tools that evaluate on common criteria to select among candidates for interviews. Done well with common scoring procedures, the screening tools can help identify effective teachers.[13, 14]

> Spokane Public Schools (SPS) uses a pre-screening rubric to narrow the teacher candidate pool to a manageable size, which involves a 21-point scoring rubric with three subcomponents (scored 1 to 6): Experience, Depth of Skills, and Quality of Recommendations. Once the teacher candidate pool is narrowed down, school-level hiring officials use a 60-point job-specific rubric with 10 components (certificate and education, training, experience, classroom management, flexibility, instructional skills, interpersonal skills, cultural competency, preferred qualifications, and recommendations) to select candidates for interviews.

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[8] Dan Goldhaber, et al.. *Screen twice, cut once:*

[9] Rebecca Knight, 7 practical ways to reduce bias in your hiring process, *Harvard Business Review*, June 12, 2017.

[10] Brian A. Jacob, Jonah E. Rockoff, Eric S. Taylor, Ben Lindy, and Rachel Rosen. (2018). Teacher applicant hiring and teacher performance: Evidence from DC public schools. *Journal of Public Economics,* 166, 81–97.

[11] Dan Goldhaber et al., *Screen Twice, Cut Once.*

[12] Dan Goldhaber et al., *Screen Twice, Cut Once.*

[13] Paul Bruno and Katharine O. Strunk. (2019). Making the cut: The effectiveness of teacher screening and hiring in the Los Angeles unified school district. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 41*(4), 426–460.

[14] Dan Goldhaber et al., *Screen Twice, Cut Once.*

Action step: Use a structured interview with a standardized scoring process.

Unstructured interviews often have low validity and reliability,[15] and make it easier for bias to creep into the interview process. Sources of bias include applicant appearance, nonverbal cues, "searching for negative information," similarity effects (in which applicants that possess characteristics similar to the interviewer receive higher ratings), and poor recall.[16] In short, the actual criteria relied upon to make selections might not reflect the competencies needed to perform the job effectively. And, critically, the bias in the interview process can undermine efforts to diversify the teacher workforce.

To reduce bias, use structured questions that are aligned to desired core competencies based on teaching standards, and numerically score the interview using a detailed rating scale, such as a rubric. Some research suggests using simulations like teaching demonstrations, situational judgment tests, or work sample tests, which also may reduce bias.[17, 18] In addition to using structured questions and rubrics to reduce bias, a white paper titled The State of Diversity Recruiting in 2020 provides tips on de-biasing the interview process, including selecting a diverse hiring panel.

Use all relevant available information in the selection process and make information accessible to those involved in selection decisions.

One way to improve the selection process is to use both academic and non-academic information in the selection process. [19, 20] Additionally, to be used effectively in the selection process, such information should be shared with principals or other hiring officials involved in selection.[21]

Action step: *To get a better picture of teacher effectiveness, consider multiple sources of information.*

Individually, qualifications and credentials (e.g., degree and major, the passage of licensure exam, academic background), measures of personality, and screening measures (e.g., Haberman Star Teacher Pre-Screener, written evaluations, teaching auditions, interview scores, and measures of

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[15]Robert W. Eder and Michael M. Harris (eds.). (1999). *The employment interview handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[16]Herbert G. Heneman III and Timothy A. Judge. (2003). *Staffing organizations*. Middleton, WI; McGraw-Hill Irwin.

[17]Robert E. Ployhart and Brian C. Holtz. (2008). The diversity-validity dilemma: Strategies for reducing racioethnic and sex subgroup differences and adverse impact in selection. *Personnel Psychology, 61*, 153–172;

[18]Knight, *7 Practical Ways to Reduce Bias in Your Hiring Process.*

[19]Robert M. Klassen and Lisa E. Kim. (2019). Selecting teachers and prospective teachers: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 12, 59–76; Brian Jacob et al., *Teacher applicant hiring and teacher performance.*

[20]Rockoff, Jonah E., Brian A. Jacob, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger. 2011. Can you recognize an effective teacher when you recruit one? *Education Finance and Policy 6*(1):43–74.

[21]Jacob et al. *Teacher applicant hiring and teacher performance*

perseverance) are slightly related to teacher effectiveness.[22, 23, 24] But, combining these types of measures can provide a stronger signal of future effectiveness in the classroom.

Action step: *Ensure school principals and others involved in making selection decisions have all applicant information to inform their hiring decisions.*

Providing school principals and others involved in the process with the applicant information obtained during the selection process, such as scores from screenings and interviews, can be an important means of improving the selection process.[25] Relevant, available applicant information, such as background characteristics (e.g., undergraduate GPA) and screening measures (e.g., applicant performance on a mock teaching lesson) can predict teacher effectiveness, but that information needs to be shared with principals, or the hiring official, to inform the hiring decision.[26]

Next Steps

Given teachers' strong impact on students' success in school and the workforce,[27] it is vital for district and school staff to focus on teacher effectiveness in each phase of the teacher pipeline, including selection. This brief provides some general recommendations and action steps: identify performance competencies that capture effective teaching and assess candidates on those competencies, standardize processes to improve the use of data, and use multiple forms of data in the selection process to improve the selection process to select candidates most likely to enact effective teaching practices. The recommendations are based on research that validates the notion that current ad-hoc selection processes can benefit by incorporating more objective, systematic processes into the process to identify effective teachers.

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[22]Rockoff, et al. *Can you recognize an effective teacher when you recruit one?*

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[25]Jacob et al*., Teacher applicant hiring and teacher performance.*

[26]Jacob et al., Teacher applicant hiring and teacher performance.

[27]Chetty, Raj, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff. 2014. Measuring the impacts of teachers II: Teacher value-added and student outcomes in adulthood. *American Economic Review* 104(9):2633–2679. doi:10.1257/aer.104.9.2633.

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