

Here's How

Leadership guidance for new principals



#5: Hiring and placing

The new principal inherits a team but, before long, gets to reshape that team through hiring. In fact, the first step in developing capacity is recruiting, hiring, supporting, developing, and retaining effective and caring teachers, forming them into “an educationally effective faculty,” advises Standard 6 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Each hire is an act of leading learning, equipping the principal to fill classrooms with teachers effective at increasing student learning and fitting into a school culture of collaboration and improvement, notes NAESP’s *Leading Learning Communities: Pillars, Practices, and Priorities of Effective Principals*.

Getting Started: What and How

Hiring and placement doesn’t have to be a solo activity. Create a scaffold for attracting great teachers by forming a team of people and resources.

1. Create a diverse hiring committee of staff expected to work with that teacher—not only other faculty members, but custodians, counselors, secretaries, and paraeducators. The final decision is yours, but be genuine about collecting input and perspectives.
2. Work with the committee to specify the qualities they hope to see in the person hired (e.g., experience level, personality traits, priorities).
3. Train committee members to listen carefully and articulate their opinions on the candidate—not just, “I like her,” but “She needs more experience, but she has a student-focused mindset.”
4. Scrutinize data that signals applicants’ effectiveness, such as teacher qualifications, past impacts on student achievement, and classroom observation ratings.
5. Screen candidates through an equity and social justice lens. What else can they offer students in addition to degrees and experience? Can they view student behavior and achievement through the perspective of students’ diverse backgrounds?
6. When placing teachers, promote equity and school growth by matching high-performing teachers to low-achieving students.
7. Promote professional growth by assigning new teachers to experienced grade-level teams for built-in coaching and mentoring.

Research says ...

- Principals’ effectiveness in organizational management, including hiring, predicts higher student achievement, teacher satisfaction, and parent ratings of the school.
- Schools that more consistently hire high-performing teachers have substantially higher achievement growth.
- On average, principals assign their more experienced teachers to more advantaged students, suggesting that many are not using strategic assignment policies to pursue equity.

Resources

- *You’re the Principal! Now What?*
— Jen Schwanke
- *What Great Principals Do Differently*
— Todd Whitaker
- *The Principal: Three Keys to Managing Impact* — Michael Fullan
- *Leading Learning Communities: Pillars, Practices, and Priorities for Effective Principals* — The National Association of Elementary School Principals
- *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* — The National Policy Board for Educational Administration
- *How Principals Affect Students and Schools*
— The Wallace Foundation



Words of wisdom

Veteran principals affirm that hiring is one of their most important duties.

- “Having access to a large pool of candidates and professional development services can assist in supporting the goals of the building.”—*Howard Fields, assistant superintendent of human resources, Kirkwood School District, Missouri, and cofounder of eduopenings.com*
- “When I went to job fairs, I would take one or two of my parents with me. Yes, I was very deliberate about which parents to engage in the process, but I liked the feedback.”—*Denise Michelle Gamble, education consultant, NAESP Race and Equity Task Force member*
- “Universities do a great job at preparing young teachers to enter the profession. An open dialogue with those organizations helps them understand what the needs are from the campus, and the campus understands what’s happening at the prep program.”—*Christopher Bailey, Principal, Clack Middle School, Abilene, Texas*
- “My success in hiring has been with relationships with other teachers and educators, whether through graduate classes I have taught or reaching out to other departments in the school district. That’s where I try to market my school so I can persuade people to interview and possibly come here. Networking!”—*Shauna Kauffman, principal, Arnold Elementary School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Annapolis, Maryland*

Keys to success

**Don’t hire to match what you have.
Go for the gold!**

- Hire great teachers who will lead peers toward achievement.
- Build the skills and expertise you need to use data for hiring decisions.
- When you sense a strong candidate, begin sharing school culture and expectations.



Hiring “grunted” teachers: 7 questions

“Grunted” teachers are equipped with positive dispositions as well as knowledge and classroom skills, says Michael Chirichello, consultant at Leadership Matters LLC. The answers to these questions reveal those candidates likeliest to share the values and beliefs of your school:

1. What does your perfect day look like?
2. What kind of problems do people bring to you?
3. How would co-workers describe you? What is their greatest misperception about you?
4. Can you share an example of helping someone or teaching a significant lesson?
5. If your life works out as you imagine, what will you be doing in five years?
6. What will your legacy be?
7. How do you maintain balance in life?

