

**SPOTLIGHT ON  
RECRUITMENT,  
HIRING &  
PLACEMENT**

# RTTT Pilot Project Newsletter

**Seven Levers of Reform**

- **Recruitment, Hiring, and Placement**
- Induction
- Professional Development
- Supervision and Evaluation
- Teacher Leadership
- Organizational Structure
- Adult Professional Culture

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## Recruitment, Hiring and Placement

The content of this newsletter is framed around the criteria of success in implementing the process of recruitment, hiring and placement of the Working Group for Educator Excellence (WGEE). "The district secures candidates who are committed and qualified to meet student needs, contribute to a professional learning community, and have demonstrated the ability to provide high quality instruction in their content area that will result in high level student learning and achievement." These rigorous criteria align with the goal of the HRPP to create a personnel pipeline to deliver high expertise teaching. Each section of this newsletter

provides a different perspective, about recruitment, hiring and placement, and how these processes are connected to, and influence, the other levers of district wide reform.

Distinguished educator and researcher Marilyn Cochran-Smith shares her expertise on diversity and teacher education programs because candidates in teacher education programs are the future teachers and leaders in education. Human Resources Director Kathy Moran highlights best practices and future goals at Brockton Public Schools. Human Resources Director Tom Campbell reflects on the

comprehensive services of Needham's Human Resources Department. Senior Recruitment Manager Alvin Cooper discusses the challenges and innovative HR solutions in Boston. Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Finalist Bill Madden-Fuoco shares his opinion and experience about recruitment, hiring and placement from a teacher's perspective. Three research briefs about how the practices of top performing countries can inform US recruitment policy, teacher placement and teacher selection, conclude the newsletter.

## An Interview with Marilyn Cochran-Smith

Marilyn Cochran-Smith is Cawthorne Professor of Teacher Education for Urban Schools and directs the Doctoral Program in Curriculum and Instruction at the Boston College Lynch School of Education. She is an elected member of the National Academy of Education, a Laureate member of Kappa Delta Pi, and a Past President of the American Educational Research Association. Dr. Cochran-Smith shares her expertise on the topic of diversity in teacher education programs and the connections to increasing faculty diversity in public schools.

**I. What are some common definitions of diversity in teacher education? What are the benefits of increasing diversity in teacher education programs?**  
 Much of the research and policy related to teacher education defines diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and language background. Sometimes diversity is framed around socioeconomic status, and sometimes around urban and/or rural experiences (as opposed to suburban). Gender is one other characteristic that, on occasion, is included in definitions of diversity, especially in terms of recruiting more men into elementary school roles.

In the literature related to teacher preparation, the discourse around diversity primarily focuses on race, ethnicity and language background of teachers (African American, Hispanic American, Asian American and Native American in the teacher workforce) in relationship to those same groups in the student population. In terms of the goal of increasing diversity in teacher preparation programs, some research has parity as an overarching goal, but not necessarily on a school by school basis. In other words, the demographic characteristics of the teacher workforce should be roughly similar to those of the **[continued on page 2]**

## An Interview with Marilyn Cochran-Smith, continued

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population as a whole and in the school.

Currently, there is glaring disparity with an increasingly diverse student population in the schools, while the teacher workforce is a homogeneous population. This is a common way that the problem is framed.

### **2. Is there a connection or relationship between diversity and social justice?**

Yes, there definitely is a connection. People have made the argument around issues of democracy and social justice. One of these arguments has to do with the problem of children of color in schools seeing primarily white teachers, and the message that sends students about issues of power. For example, what direct and indirect messages is this giving minority students about who their role models are, who has power, who makes decisions, and who holds knowledge.

There is also the argument that teachers with cultural and racial experiences closer to those of their students are more in a position to connect and understand those students. Teachers bring unique characteristics to students and the classroom. There is some evidence that teachers of color are better able to connect to students of color, and also tend to have higher expectations for students of color. It is important to note that while there is some evidence to this point, the evidence is not definitive by any means. There is also some evidence that other outcomes, like dropout and attendance rates, are affected – this is an area in need of more research. These findings do not necessarily hold for Asian students; the research primarily addresses relationships between teachers and students who are African American or Hispanic

Another argument that connects diversity with social justice is that

diversifying the teacher workforce is better for everyone. The argument is that as a society, we want all students to have teachers with a wide range of experiences and backgrounds.

### **3. What does the research say about diversity in teacher prep programs and about the impact of diversity on teaching and learning?**

There are three main ways to talk about the issue of diversity in teacher education programs: The first is about recruiting into teacher preparation programs a more diverse group of prospective teachers for many of the same reasons previously mentioned. Teacher preparation programs have not done a terribly good job, as a field, of responding to that call. In the late 80's and 90's there were various funded efforts to recruit a more diverse group of prospective teachers. Special scholarships for minority students, like the Donovan program at Boston College, prepare urban teachers and provide special funding for those programs. There are also programs where universities partner with community colleges in an effort to recruit minority teacher candidates into four year programs.

Some alternate routes have a particular goal of recruiting minority teachers into teaching. Some programs have recruited paraprofessionals of color into college programs. All of these efforts are long term. Taking paraprofessionals through a teacher preparation program takes four years or longer before the first wave enters the classroom as teachers. A widespread problem about diversity in teacher education programs is that in many cases, universities don't focus on recruitment of a more diverse cohort of teacher candidates unless they have more funding allocated to that goal.

A second way of talking about the

issue focuses on changing the nature of experiences in teacher preparation programs. A widespread trend over the past 25 years has been addressing issues of diversity in the curriculum though coursework, field work or community work. In this way, teacher candidates are provided with experiences working with a diverse population of students. Some programs have a specific course, or courses, on multicultural education and/or diversity. Another effort to include teaching about diversity is to teach diversity across all courses. There is a lot of variability in the quality and quantity of curriculum that are devoted to teaching and diversity across universities. Sometimes "the diversity course" is an add-on or even an elective course. Having the expectation that all issues of diversity in education will be handled in one course can be difficult to achieve. It also takes sustained effort and collaboration to infuse the topics of diversity in every course. Some argue there is a need to provide teacher candidates with both courses looking specifically at diversity and integrating or infusing the topic across courses. Over the last five to ten years many programs have focused on teaching English Language Learners. Boston College is a good example of this although the university does not require a specific course addressing the teaching of ELL students of all teacher candidates. Courses that address the teaching of ELL students are widely taken, but it is still a choice rather than a requirement.

Increasing the diversity of faculty is a third way to talk about diversity and teacher preparation programs. A number of places have tried to recruit a more diverse faculty, as the argument is that it is tough to take a stand about diversity when ***[continued on page 3]***

## An Interview with Marilyn Cochran-Smith, continued

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everyone on the faculty is white. Overall, there is an uneven record in all three areas. Many programs address diversity really well, while many other programs are not making the same effort along these lines. Even with No Child Left Behind and all of its criticisms, the law has heightened awareness of disparate achievement and learning opportunities for various minority groups. When test and other data showed an achievement gap for particular racial groups, special education students, and bi-lingual learners, it increased attention to the issues around diversity. Race to the Top has further heightened awareness of these issues – as the population continues to change, including changes in immigration patterns. Increased awareness of the issue, however, does not necessarily mean that the achievement gaps will narrow.

#### **4. What were the main findings from the recent article you wrote with Curt Dudley-Marling about the divide between teacher education and special education? What are some ways regular education and special education teachers can work more collaboratively in both teacher education programs and in public school settings?**

What you're referring to is an article we wrote for a special issue of the Journal of Teacher Education focusing on general education and special education. In our conceptual piece, we addressed issues that divide the two fields. One main point we made is that in special education, the term "disability" suggests a kind of deficit and that many people in special education work from a model that comes out of medicine, or a deficit perspective about what skills and knowledge individual students are missing and how can we fill those gaps. Many people in general education working on diversity issues are trying to work from an asset-based perspective and in many ways reject a deficit model of thinking about and making decisions about curriculum and instruction. The

disciplinary background of many special educators is related to behavioral/psychological models while many general educators who are working on diversity and social justice work from more of an anthropological, sociological, ethnographic perspective. There is a lot of qualitative research trying to understand perspectives of different contexts. This critique of the two fields is not an overarching generalization, but in the article, we suggest that in many ways, there are key issues that divide these two groups.

A third divide revolves around access to the general curriculum. There is wide agreement across the two communities about wanting all students to have access, but many general educators working from the perspective of social justice make the argument that the curriculum needs to change and that the curriculum and school structures are faulty and are deeply Eurocentric. The curriculum and school structures do not incorporate the knowledge traditions of communities of color. Joyce King, for example once said "access to a faulty curriculum isn't justice." So the issue here is about access to the general curriculum versus reinventing curriculum.

#### **5. Your book, *Inquiry as Stance*, lays out a framework for the next generation of research practitioners. Could you comment on the promise of practitioner research informing school-wide reform efforts to better improve teaching and learning in schools?**

I wrote this book in 2009 with Susan Lytle. We reviewed the work of inquiry communities and of people engaged in practitioner research around the world. We wanted to know what these communities were doing and what topics they were addressing in their research. One thing we found was the most common topics or projects that these practitioner research groups are addressing were equity and diversity. So practitioner research has everything to do with race, class, gender, culture, diversity and equity.

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## HRPP Pilot District Spotlight: Innovative and Integrative Practices in Brockton

Recruiting, hiring and placing highly effective teachers who are a match to a dynamic and complex urban environment such as Brockton is a welcome challenge for Human Resources Executive Director Kathleen Moran. Brockton's innovative strategic reform plan, known as R<sup>3</sup>, Realigning Resources for Results, combined with the district's participation in the Human Resource Pilot Project, has created an environment that not only attracts the attention of the news and media, but that supports its teachers and administrators.

Director Moran notes that the district has a good vision, and that it is a place where educators want to work. One of the major recruiting strategies the district employs to hire high-quality candidates is the use of formal and informal partnerships with local institutions of higher education. A number of teacher candidates at Bridgewater State University complete their student teaching in Brockton and are then hired by the district because of their exemplary work and potential. Bridgewater State University also offers a number of additional

courses that current educators in Brockton take for Professional Development credit. The district has a number of student teachers from Stonehill College and Simmons College as well. Stonehill, in particular, has a strong reputation for preparing teacher candidates to work with English Language Learners.

For the first time in the district, Superintendent Matt Malone has

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## Innovative and Integrative Practices in Brockton, continued

**[continued from page 3]** invited representatives from local universities to the district this August. The event is an opportunity for the district and local institutions of higher education to collaborate and communicate with each other about how to improve the teacher preparation process to better meet the needs of the students.

Kathleen notes that “the hope is for a reciprocal conversation so that the district learns more about what the teacher preparation programs have to offer, and for the local universities to learn more about the specific knowledge and skills that the district is looking for in teachers.” This reciprocal conversation has the potential not only for the district and universities to understand each other’s needs better, but to begin to lay the groundwork for how to better meet those needs.

The relationship between the district and the union is another aspect of the recruitment and hiring process in Brockton. There has been much conversation about improving the hiring process and timeline in order to recruit more high quality candidates to the district more effectively. The relationship between district administrators and the union is described as collaborative. The committee in charge of adopting new state requirements for teacher evaluation is made up of four union members and four administrators. They hope to scale this initiative. A committee has been working as a team to adapt the current evaluation system to meet state requirements as well as to the unique needs of Brockton. There is more to the hiring timeline than simply the collective bargaining agreement,

however. Often the timing of the finalized budget for the upcoming school year can have an impact on when the district officially knows which positions are open and for which they need to recruit and hire.

District supervisors attend as many recruitment fairs as possible, including many at local universities. In addition, the district is a member of the Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education. The district is “trying to cast as wide a net as possible to identify high quality candidates, and we are getting good representation in teacher candidates.” One recently adopted recruitment tool is the district’s implementation of SchoolSpring, an electronic recruitment and hiring website which allows the district to post openings and receive applications electronically. While the district does not currently have any areas of hard-to-staff positions, there is a trend of relatively fewer candidates qualified to teach English Language Learners and students with disabilities as compared to the number of applicants for other positions.

Once the recruiting net is cast, the principals oversee the hiring process in each building, and ultimately recommend a candidate to fill an open position. Schools have many sources of candidates, including resumes directly sent to the district or through SchoolSpring, as well as teacher candidates who have completed their practicum in a Brockton school. Monitoring Teaching Assistants (MTA) are another source of potential teachers. MTAs are employees who have completed their Bachelors but are not currently licensed. The MTAs work closely in the classroom with teachers, and once

they are licensed, they can become candidates to fill open teaching positions. Director Moran explained that principals are able to observe teaching candidates and MTAs in the district, and that these potential teachers also have the benefit of getting to know the culture of the school and district before applying for a teaching position. Committees typically have a variety of stakeholders, including building administrators, teachers and parents. Once a principal makes a recommendation to Human Resources, a supervisor checks paperwork and offers the position.

The strong induction program at Brockton makes the district more attractive to prospective applicants. The district provides teachers new to teaching a mentor as part of a one-year induction plan. A goal moving forward for Brockton is to develop and implement a comprehensive three-year induction model to meet the needs of new teachers in the district better. Mentors receive training that consists of two days of training as well as three additional meetings throughout the year to learn how to support their mentees better. There is also a culture of support in the district. Much informal mentoring occurs in each building, with the new teacher’s team members providing additional mentoring and support to him or her.

The district also utilizes technology. For example, a wiki has been developed and will be available this upcoming school year for new teachers and mentors. The wiki is a secure website where new teachers and their mentors can post questions, concerns, interesting articles and other topics related to teaching and learning.

How teacher are placed varies by grade level. At the elementary level, placements are predeter **[continued on page 5]**



***“The hope is for a reciprocal conversation so that the district learns more about what the teacher preparation programs have to offer, and for the local universities to learn more about the specific knowledge and skills that the district is looking for in teachers.”***

***-Kathleen Moran,  
Brockton Public  
Schools***

## Needham Public Schools: Building Human Resource Capacity through Comprehensive Recruitment and Hiring Efforts

Needham is a high performing district by many measures. Ninety-seven percent of students pursue post-secondary education after graduation. Overall Math and ELA MCAS scores across all grades outperform state averages by almost twenty percentage points. A suburb of slightly under 30,000 inhabitants, the town serves 5,400 students across its eight schools. Thomas Campbell, Director of Human Resources, discusses the importance of recruiting and hiring expert teachers in all classrooms and the comprehensive strategies the district employs to pursue that lofty goal.

The biggest strength of Needham Public Schools in attracting high-quality teaching candidates is not one or two specific strategies, but a number of characteristics that combine to create a professional environment of support. Director Campbell describes the collegial culture in the district with the following vignette: A long-term substitute teacher was hired in Needham to teach for the semester, and moved to a different classroom for the second semester. The substitute teacher explained that not one day went by throughout the entire year, no matter which class he was in, without at least one staff member checking in and offering

support. This example is the norm rather than the exception, and signifies what is exceptional about the district.

The induction and professional development programs are two other strengths of the district that create positive working environments for its teachers and administrators. Each new teacher is matched with a mentor for one year and participates in a series of meetings with other new teachers and their mentors. Mentors receive training in the district. Regular support groups are held for mentors since supporting new teachers in a comprehensive manner can be such a challenging job. Professional development, provided through the school year, focuses on district goals and teachers' individual improvement plans. There is a Professional Development Committee that elicits teacher feedback on the offerings and updates programming options to align with current district objectives. Last year, for example, one of the professional development opportunities at the elementary schools focused on the implementation of a new math curriculum.

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## Brockton Public Schools, continued

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At the middle and high school levels, principals will make adjustments to ensure that grade level and/or content level teams are balanced. For example, a principal might shift a veteran teacher to a team with more new teachers in order to have balanced teacher leadership across the grade level teams in the building.

Developing teachers into building and district level leaders is another aspect of Brockton's program. The Administrator Internship Program is a mechanism through which the district identifies and develops teachers to take on other leadership positions. Through this highly competitive process, selected candidates complete an intensive full-time internship in an administrative position in the district from April through June. Participants in the program work with a principal as well as a central office administrator to gain experience of administering at the building as well as district level. Prior to beginning the internship, participants interview a number of principals and central office administrators

to identify positions and current projects that are of interest to them. Participants also have the opportunity to provide feedback on the internship at weekly roundtable discussions. A number of teachers who have completed the internship program have gone on to fill administrative roles in the district. The internship program has proven to be an excellent capacity-building process for the district.

Principal feedback about how to make improvements to the hiring process is the primary source of quality-indicators for the program. Tracking the effectiveness of particular recruitment and hiring practices, as well as overall indicators such as number of candidates and teacher effectiveness of chosen candidates, is a goal that Director Moran plans on addressing moving forward. Last year, her first year as Human Resources Director, Kathleen hired one hundred new teachers, and did not want that to be the last the teachers heard from Human Resources. In order to continue to support new teachers,

a representative visited and checked in on each of the newly hired teachers during the school year to see how their year was going and to offer additional support and assistance.

In terms of goals moving forward, two priority goals are 1. To develop and implement a comprehensive induction model and 2. To increase the district's collaboration with institutions of higher education which prepare educators. Director Moran also sees ways in which the district can bring Professional Development to another level. Increased collaboration and communication between the Learning and Teaching and Human Resources offices has the potential to make rich connections and networks to identify and support new teachers better in the district with a focus on teaching and learning. Kathleen also would like to use technology to communicate the benefits of working at Brockton. The district, for example, could provide potential new teachers with access to a list of professional development opportunities and also post student, teacher and parent testimonials as additional recruiting strategies.

## Needham Public Schools, continued

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Collaboration between the district and the teachers' union is another strength of the recruitment, hiring and placement program in Needham. This collaboration allows Director Campbell to develop and implement recruitment and hiring timelines to attract high-quality candidates. The district rarely has formal grievances. The teachers' union and the district work together and communicate to resolve issues before they go through grievance procedures. Tom works diligently with the union to ensure that the district is providing growth-oriented working conditions outlined by the collective bargaining agreement. One invaluable lesson learned during his time as a Middle School principal is the importance of consistent and open communication with the union. There is a reciprocal relationship between the union and the district where both parties preview ideas and/or upcoming obstacles with the other party.

Needham's recent reorganization of its special education leadership provides an excellent example of collaboration between the union and the district to make good recruitment, hiring and placement decisions. Previously, there was an elementary, middle school and high school special education administrator as well as teachers who served as team chairs. After eliciting recommendations from a consultant about the organizational structure of the district, a special education administrator position was created for every building at the elementary and middle school levels. This places a local level authority in every building that can make decisions around providing services. The move creates eight new administrative positions, supervised by the K-8 Special Education Director and the Assistant K-8 Director. The union and district worked together to keep the eight new administrative positions under the collective bargaining agreement, and move the K-8 Special Education Director

and Assistant Director positions from collective bargaining to individual contracts. This example shows how the union and district not only worked together, but made a decision that directly increases capacity of the district to serve students with disabilities better.

Needham has a good reputation and is lucky to not struggle to fill positions, so there are not incentives to fill specific positions. There is some flexibility within the collective bargaining agreement, but they are rarely utilized. Tom notes that he strives to "keep the hiring process fair and consistent, and not allow the process to be about who you know."

In order to attract and identify high quality candidates that are a good match with Needham's philosophy and mission, Director Campbell oversees a thorough recruitment and hiring plan. Identifying vacancies is the starting point of the plan. The district begins recruitment for administrative positions in November. Advertisement of administrative positions includes running ads in major local newspapers and national education periodicals. Brochures highlighting the educational community in Needham, made by high school students in the production department, are disseminated to every school of education in New England.

In terms of teacher positions, the district launches a major ad campaign in late March. Director Campbell attends as many job fairs in Massachusetts as possible, such as Emmanuel, Boston College, Simmons, and Harvard. One targeted goal of the district is to increase its diversity of the staff since it currently does not match the diversity of the student population. Needham shares resources with a collaborative of ten other communities called the Greater Boston School Human Resource Network. For the past two years,

the district has hosted a diversity recruitment fair for the collaborative, with a high attendance rate. In order to increase diversity, Needham also contacts historically African American colleges with a school of education as far south as Florida and as far west as Alabama.

While the recruitment process in Needham reflects a strategic effort to market to and communicate with high-quality candidates, the hiring process is equally comprehensive to ensure interested applicants are high-quality educators in Needham. Out of the initial applicant pool, a number of candidates is invited for a first interview with a committee.

There is an interview committee for every position to be filled. The next round of interviews consists of a smaller group of interviewers at the building level, always including teachers. The committee then identifies one candidate who is invited to conduct either a demonstration lesson or is observed in his/her current classroom. A finalist is then recommended to Director Campbell and the Superintendent. The Superintendent makes the final decision..

The hiring process consists of many levels to ensure candidates who are identified fit in the district. The process currently in place values multiple perspectives on the candidates from a variety of different settings.

Administrator candidates go through a similar process to teacher candidates but with some important distinctions. A site visit is conducted for finalists in every administrative position, which has taken Director Campbell as far as Pennsylvania and Texas to fill positions. The site visit allows members of the hiring committee ***[continued on page 7]***



***"What we do is all about student achievement, and a big part of getting students to achieve is the adult in the classroom."***

***-Thomas Campbell, Needham Public Schools***

## Boston Public Schools: Recruitment and Hiring in the State's Largest District

The public school district in Boston faces many unique challenges and opportunities as the largest district in the Commonwealth. With over 55,000 students and 4,000 teachers, the district is diverse and complex. As the recruiter for the district, Alvin Cooper, Senior Recruitment Manager, had more positions to fill for this upcoming school year than the number of teachers in many districts, and receives on average 150 applications for each vacant position.

To provide support in its massive recruiting effort, Boston Public Schools collaborates with higher education institutions. Boston has partnerships with UMass Boston and Wheelock College through a grant supporting the district to increase the diversity of its teaching staff. BPS partners with all local universities by having student teachers complete their practica in Boston schools. The partnerships that Boston has in place with the 92 local colleges and universities produce a large number of teacher candidates who apply to teach in Boston. The pool of teacher candidates from local institutes of higher education is part of the reason Mr. Cooper can receive upwards of 350 applications for highly sought after positions.

Finding candidates for teacher positions which address the needs of students with severe disabilities is the one area of critical need that the district currently has. Boston is also looking to increase the diversity of its staff to match the diversity of the student population better. Bucking the trend, Boston has a sufficient number of candidates for commonly hard-to-staff areas such as mathematics and moderate disabilities. In order to fill the critical need of severe special education teachers, Boston focuses its recruiting efforts on marketing the district to high-quality candidates for all positions. The recruitment and hiring process in Boston begins with identifying which positions will be available for the next year. Timelines for recruiting and hiring are contractually driven. Teachers, for example, are required to give notice by June 15<sup>th</sup>. Since 1993, principals in Boston have had the autonomy to make hiring decisions. Candi-

dates complete the application online, and that information is collected and a selected candidates are invited to interview. Principals recommend candidates for hire, a staffing manager ensures the candidate's licensure and other paperwork is in order, and then the candidate completes an orientation. The process by which principals and the Human Resources Department communicate to find matches for vacancies is like the NFL, according to Alvin: "We have a large pool of candidates, and principals are very clear on what positions they need filled. For example, a principal might ask to be connected with Physics teachers with dual certification and who are Spanish-speaking." The hiring process can vary at the building level, but principals are highly encouraged to include a lesson observation in addition to interviews.

Once a teacher is hired, BPS provides supports and services as part of the induction program. Every new teacher participates in a "red carpet" orientation where all are welcomed and taught the ins and outs of working in a Boston Public School. New teachers are matched with a mentor during their first year, and those who are part of the UMass-Boston Teach Next Year Program, Wheelock College and the Boston Teacher Residency receive mentoring support for their first three years. There are specific criteria to become a mentor, including at least ten years of successful teaching experience. Mentors receive training about how to support, and not simply evaluate, new teachers. To continue the development of teachers beyond their mentoring years, BPS provides a plethora of professional development opportunities. Teachers can take any professional development opportunity through the district's online My Learning Plan system. In terms of supporting and cultivating teachers to become leaders, there is currently no formal plan. Teachers who aspire to be future leaders communicate informally with their principal and Human Resources. BPS used to have a formal plan to develop administrators called the Boston Principal Fellowship, but the

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## Needham Public Schools, continued

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to observe the finalist in his/her working environment and to talk with different people that he/she works with. "The process is extremely time intensive, but it has served us well, as we have a solid track record of hiring high quality people." There are also faculty forums to provide employees the opportunity to ask questions of administrative candidates as well as for parents to meet the candidates and provide feedback in the hiring process.

The process does not end when contracts are signed, however. Every February, Director Campbell and the Superintendent meet with administrators to discuss every teacher and administrator in their first three years at Needham. While these discussions have led to some difficult decisions, Director Campbell stressed the importance of maintaining a focus on student learning: "What we do is all about student achievement, and a big part of getting students to achieve is the adult in the classroom."

Moving forward, Tom would like to develop a more comprehensive succession plan in the district. In the coming years, there will likely be a number of open administrative positions, and the Superintendent and Director Campbell have discussed developing a formal plan to support teachers in the district to develop into future administrators and leaders.

Director Campbell describes a piece of advice he shares with all candidates before their first interview. He calls each candidate to preview the interview process so they know what to expect, and also to remind them that the interview is as much about the candidate interviewing the district as it is about the district interviewing the candidate. This piece of advice is not only helpful for the candidate, but it signifies the importance the district places on a reciprocal match of values, beliefs and teaching practices between the individual and the district.

## Boston Public Schools, continued

**[continued from page 7]** program ran out of funds about two years ago.

The placement of teachers is done at the building level. In order to provide new teachers placements with a balance of support and challenge, a coordinated effort takes place between the teacher, the mentor, the Teacher Development Office, and the Human Resources department. The Teacher Development Office matches mentors, and provides new teachers who have a more challenging placement with a more experienced mentor. BPS currently uses the Dimensions of Effective

Teaching as the criteria on which to evaluate teachers, although the evaluation system will change with the implementation of the updated state evaluation regulations over the next two years. Mr. Cooper has purposefully shifted from using “highly qualified” to “effective” when talking about great teachers to stress the importance of recruiting and hiring teachers who not only are licensed, but who are going to make a difference in the education of Boston students.

Building capacity of the recruitment, hiring and placement processes in Boston is first on Alvin’s list of goals. Making the hiring process

more automated could help reduce paperwork, time and cost in processing applications. He would also like to increase the vast resources of the district to enlarge its pool of candidates. Curriculum departments could identify and interview teacher candidates as one way to broaden the applicant pool. While there is an application tracking system that analyzes return on investment, building the capacity of the recruitment office to be able to disaggregate and utilize the data to inform decision-making is another goal of the district.



**“We have a large pool of candidates, and Principals are very clear on what positions they need filled.**

**For example, a principal might ask to be connected with a Spanish-speaking physics teacher with dual certification.”**

**-Alvin Cooper,  
Boston Public Schools**

## A Teacher’s Perspective on Recruitment, Hiring and Placement

Boston Public Schools humanities teacher Bill Madden-Fuoco took the time to share his perspectives on recruitment, hiring and placement with the WGEE. Bill teaches at the Urban Sciences Academy in West Roxbury, and was named a finalist for the prestigious Massachusetts Teacher of the Year award.

**Could you describe your experience with recruitment? What were the characteristics and/or offerings of schools that made you want to teach there?**

I was a resident in the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR), a 15-month Master’s program run in collaboration with the district and UMass Boston. It is a rigorous blend of practice and theory. Residents are paired with a mentor teacher and are in schools four days a week, while simultaneously completing coursework. BTR just welcomed its tenth cohort, which includes about 70 residents. BTR puts a lot of energy into recruiting a diverse and talented cohort, and acceptance is highly competitive. BTR works closely with the district’s human resources to find positions for graduates.

I teach in Boston because I live in the city and it is a way for me to connect with the community I live in. I wouldn’t teach anywhere else. As a novice teacher, I didn’t want to work in a school with admissions requirements, but it was important to find a school that functioned fairly well, so that I could focus on continuous professional development. I completed my residency at a school that, at the time, in my opinion, did not

function well. Overall, expectations for learning were low, leadership was tenuous, and special educators were poorly supported. BTR gave me the best training possible for teaching in Boston, but being a first-year teacher is incredibly challenging, no matter what the context. I firmly believe that I would have drowned if I took a job at the school at which I did my residency. Matthew Ronfeldt at the University of Michigan recently published a study of New York City schools that found that teachers who did their pre-service work at easier-to-staff schools (even when controlling for student demographics) had higher retention rates than teachers who trained at harder-to-staff schools. I would expect that this finding would also hold for first year teachers and the schools in which they teach. I obtained a position at the Urban Science Academy (USA), a school with a strong principal, and now that’s my number one criterion for choosing a school.

**What was the hiring process like? Did you feel the process gave the hiring district/school relevant information about who you are as an educator? Did the process give you complete information about the district/school?**

As a teacher, I don’t think you can really get to know what a school is about until you’ve worked in it for several months. If you know current teachers at a prospective school, that’s a **[continued on page 9]**

## A Teacher's Perspective on RHP, continued

**[continued from page 8]**

huge advantage to getting insight into the culture of the school.

From the hiring end, my take is that in BPS, the process is conducted primarily at the school level. That being said, the hiring process is significantly shaped by the twin forces of district policies and the collective bargaining agreement. BPS is currently in a period of structural change. Nine schools were recently closed and eight merged or expanded.

Clearly, school closures are hardest on the students, families, and staff at those schools. Districts, however, are essentially ecosystems, and changes at one school have ripple effects on staffing and hiring throughout the district. The impact of these changes – as well as the creation of new in-district charters, impending expansion of seven more high schools, and the turnaround status of 11 schools – is huge and complex.

There are two trends, however, that are especially problematic. The first is the growing size of middle and high schools. The most cited benefit of small schools is the improved social culture that comes from tighter relationships. This is obviously important, but overlooked is a leader's enhanced capacity to cultivate an effective staff at relatively smaller schools. There's a big difference between supporting and evaluating 30 teachers versus 60. In addition, when schools merge, the "lead" school is forced to take on most of the "absorbed" school's staff.

The second trend is the in-district inequality that flows from a growing number of seats in schools with student recruiting and/or hiring autonomies. Most high school pilots and in-district charters in the district (in addition to three exam schools) have some type of application process so that a disproportionate number of higher need students are served in "traditional"

schools. Because these traditional schools do not have the hiring autonomies of pilots, in-district charters, and turnarounds, they also absorb a disproportionate number of excessed teachers (teachers whose positions have been cut, but have rights to another position in the district). It is common for a traditional school to evaluate out an ineffective teacher, only to be forced to fill the resulting vacancy with a teacher from the excess pool.

This is not to say that there are not great teachers in the excess pool, but a principal would like to have a deeper applicant pool. When it comes to hiring, I think it's probably extremely frustrating to be a principal at a traditional district school right now.

### **Have you had an opportunity to participate on interview committees or other areas of recruitment, hiring and placement?**

I have been able to accompany an administrator to watch a potential hire teach. There is no substitute for the opportunity to see a teacher in action – particularly on his/her home turf as opposed to a guest demonstration lesson at the hiring school. Having lesson observations as part of the hiring process is a great way for districts to identify candidates that are good matches for the position.

### **Describe your experience with placement/class assignment as a teacher. How does the placement of new teachers and administrators take into consideration preparation and readiness? Does the district have a plan for new teachers and administrators' professional development in place?**

Class assignment for new teachers is critical, and first and second year middle and high school teachers, ideally, should have only one "prep" – that is, one lesson to prepare for each day (e.g., teach the same algebra lesson to four classes, rather than teach an algebra lesson twice and a geometry lesson twice).

There are two things that most people who have not taught may not un-

derstand. The first is a significant amount of the work that effective teachers engage in takes place beyond the bell. It is the less visible work – meeting with students after school, planning lessons and units, differentiating and designing materials, communicating with families, analyzing student work and giving feedback. Particularly during the first few years, it takes an enormous amount of time to do all the prep work to deliver a single hour of instruction. The second hidden truth is that no matter how great that one hour of instruction is, some students will not meet that learning objectives of the class. They may have been absent, or need additional support. Those post-class follow-ups and individualized interventions take significant time and effort, but they can make the difference between merely teaching and making sure students learn.

When you take those two things into account, I believe the best way to support new teachers is by limiting a) their number of preparations, and b) the total number of students on their rosters. My first few years, I taught one section a day of AP English, and co-taught three sections a day of 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities. Now if I was also assigned a journalism elective in place of one of the Humanities sections. I would have had three preparations instead of two, which would have added at least 10 hours a week to my planning load, where I was already working 60-70 hours a week.

BPS does have a cadre of New Teacher Developers who mentor new teachers. I have spoken to some of them who are mentoring first-year teachers with three and sometimes more preparations this year. It is not realistic to expect any teacher to develop and implement quality curriculum and instruction every day for three or more preparations. It is a situation that has demands that are beyond the capabilities of the best and brightest teachers.

**[continued on page 10]**

## A Teacher's Perspective on RHP, continued

*[continued from page 9]*

### **What are some suggestions for districts and schools to improve their recruitment, hiring and placement practices to attract and retain high-quality educators?**

More than 50% of urban teachers leave before their fourth year. Schools and districts can focus on retention by limiting the number of preparations and the sizes of class rosters for new teachers. This can go a long way toward easing recruitment needs and costs. More importantly, we need to stop the constant churn of teacher turnover that subjects urban students to classrooms with teachers who are learning on the job.

In-district residency programs like BTR are effective in preparing teachers to meet the specific needs of a district's student population. The data suggests that BTR graduates have higher retention rates. In addition, to establish a teaching force that better reflects the diversity of the students it serves, urban districts can develop teaching career track programs for high school students interested in becoming teachers. Personally, teaching was the furthest thing from my mind when I was a teenager, but I do have several students who plan to go into education.

In general, and not just for new teachers, I think we need to focus on changing working conditions to make teaching and learning success more of a reality. The results in urban schools are uniformly not acceptable; I

think better recruitment and performance evaluation is necessary, but I do not expect meaningful improvements without radical changes to the structure of the teaching job. Our expectations of what all teachers should be able to do – be skilled at teaching students with learning disabilities, teaching students learning English, have the skills to plan individualized instruction – have grown (appropriately). The conditions surrounding the work, however, have not changed. Additional time for collaboration and planning could be built into the day, and roster sizes could be reduced. Such changes are not clearly on the horizon, especially in this economic climate. Instead of adding resources and teachers to support schools, we debate the particulars of which teachers should be the first to go during perennial layoffs.

Lastly, districts could work their hardest to ensure effective leadership in schools. Administrator quality, just like teacher quality, is highly variable. Districts could hire school-based leaders with extensive teaching experience. Both the proliferation of turnaround schools and the new legislation that was drafted as a compromise to the Stand for Children ballot initiative give principals more autonomy in hiring and firing, and this autonomy needs to be balanced by administrator accountability. I am grateful to work for a strong administrative team, but accountability in the district needs improvement. A report by the National Council on Teacher Quality showed that as recently as 2009, more than a quarter of schools in the district failed to submit a single teacher evaluation.

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## **Did You Know? Teachers Stay Close to Home More than Other Professions**

- ◆ Geographic preferences of teachers is an important, and often overlooked factor in staffing schools
- ◆ Teachers work closer to where they grew up relative to other college graduates
- ◆ This pattern could be one reason why low performing schools have difficulty recruiting high quality teachers: low performing schools produce less high-quality
- ◆ Teacher candidates and teachers prefer to work close to where they grew up
- ◆ Critical question moving forward: Does having local teachers mean having effective teachers?

Adapted from Reininger, M. (2012). Hometown disadvantage? It depends on where you're from: Teacher's location preferences and the implication for staffing schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(2), 127-145.

## In Brief: How Top Performing Countries can Inform Recruitment of Effective Teachers in the US

Having effective teachers in the classroom can have a greater impact than other variables on student learning. Recruiting high quality teachers to US schools, then, has the potential to significantly improve student learning. In a 2010 McKinsey & Company Report, Auguste, Kihn, and Miller analyze the recruitment strategies of three top performing nations, Finland, Singapore and South Korea. All three of the countries recruit 100% of their teaching staff from candidates in the top third of their academic class, compared to the US that recruits 24%. In this report, the argument is made that the US can benefit from a more strategic and systematic approach to recruitment and hiring.

Singapore provides teachers with competitive salaries and bonuses targeted at achieving desired outcomes. Teachers in Singapore receive longevity bonuses for staying in a school system for different intervals which may partially explain why the country has a relatively low attrition rate - 3% compared to 14% in the US. Singapore also pays teachers based on their performance; teachers receive between 10-30% of their salary for high performance based on the country's teacher evaluation system. The value of becoming an educator is also symbolized through Singapore's funding tuition and providing a salary to teacher candidates studying at the National Institute of Education (NIE). Only 8% of applicants are accepted. The status of teaching is high in Singapore. The country has a National Teacher's Day, where the President hosts a number of outstanding teachers to recognize their good work. Singapore also targets high school students to inform them about how valuable and prestigious teaching is. Internships are offered to promising high school students to teach, and these internships often lead to academic scholarships.

Teachers in Singapore are provided with opportunities to advance and excellent working conditions. There are three tracks, each of which has unique and continuous professional development that teachers can choose from based on their career interests: a leadership track, a teaching track and a specialist track. Teachers are provided with 10 hours of paid professional development each year, and have time to collaborate each week with their colleagues.

Teaching in Finland is held with similar regard to professions like medicine and law. It is common in Finland for other companies to recruit teachers to leave for another profession because the quality of teachers is so high and the selection process is so refined. One reason for the high regard that Finland holds for teachers is the rigorous process and standards required to get into the profession. Potential teachers

must have a Master's degree to teach and are screened on a number of assessments and clinical observations. Only 10% of applicants are accepted into teaching, and the country pays for graduate study plus a stipend.

Finnish teachers have authority to make decisions about curriculum, textbooks, lessons and other teaching activities. The government identifies what teachers in Finland must teach, but not how the content is taught. Performance evaluations are non-existent in Finland, with an emphasis placed on self-reflection and evaluation. Salaries for teachers in Finland are average, and the government does not provide performance-based or longevity bonuses as in Singapore. Finland's focus on raising the image of teaching in society and making the profession one on par with respected professions has increased the country's capacity to recruit and retain top candidates.

In South Korea, teaching is a highly sought after profession that is deeply respected. South Korea pays teachers more than any other country in the world, and guarantees a teaching position for life to selected candidates. Primary school teacher candidates are required to complete a four-year degree, where one entrance requirement is to be in the top 5% on standardized entrance exams. A number of years ago tuition was covered to recruit top candidates, but now the teaching profession is so desired, candidates much privately fund their education. An interesting facet of the South Korean education system is that the government controls the number of seats at schools of education to match the forecasted demand for primary school teachers. This is done to increase the chances of accepted candidates' receiving a position after graduation. Teachers are well paid in South Korea, with salaries ranging from \$55,000-\$155,000. In order to finance teacher salaries, class sizes are large compared to other high performing countries, averaging 35 students.

While many lessons can be learned from the three top performing countries (see table below from Auguste, Kihn and Miller, 2010), can they be applied to the US? The authors ran different scenarios based on market research to estimate the cost of certain reform efforts. For example, the cost of raising the percentage of top third candidates in teaching from 14% to 68% through an increase in teacher salaries would be between \$100-290 million for a large urban district. It may not be inexpensive to increase the number of effective teachers in the US, but providing teachers with high societal status and professional working conditions has the potential to offset other costs associated with turnover and attrition.

## What the Research Says about Teacher Selection

The selection of candidates to teach in public schools is an important process for districts that can have a significant impact on teaching and learning. Selecting candidates who are a fit with a school's culture, and who have the professional background and tools to develop into a successful teacher in their new setting, can impact student learning and achievement. This brief focuses on what the research says about the teacher selection process. Districts can improve their selection process not only to meet state and federal legal hiring requirements, such as the Massachusetts requirement to hire licensed educators and highly qualified requirement of No Child Left Behind, but also to put a high quality teacher in the front of every child.

Malcolm Gladwell (2008) refers to the problem of who to hire when we do not know who will be successful in the position as "the quarterback problem." In the NFL, teams scout college players and attempt to determine who will be the next Tom Brady. The problem is there are no sure-fire ways of assessing who will be a successful quarterback in the NFL. Case in point is Tom Brady, who has won three Superbowl rings with New England, but was selected after 198 other players were chosen. The very team that chose Tom chose six other players in the draft that year before. Inversely there are numerous examples of number one draft picks who had little to no success in the NFL although they were highly touted as college players. In education there is a similar phenomenon: although there are predictors that administrators use to select candidates, such as graduate school GPA, GRE scores and responses to essays on teaching philosophies, it is difficult for districts consistently to identify teachers who will add value to student learning.

While Gladwell brings up an interesting point about hiring, what does the research say about current hiring practices at the district level? DeArmond, Gross and Goldhaber (2008) assessed hiring practices in ten Washington elementary schools in a large decentralized urban district. Findings of the qualitative field study suggests that, while the schools followed common hiring procedures, there were distinct differences in the ways the schools recruited teachers and identified consistent hiring priorities. While almost all of the participants in the study preferred local hiring authority over system-wide hiring, the research findings indicate that simply allowing schools to hire on the local level does not guarantee that all schools will have the means to recruit and hire the best candidates. The authors stress the need for schools to build capacity around the hiring and selection process, and also provide incentives to attract high-quality candidates to hard-to-staff schools and positions.

Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, and Ingle (2008) conducted a case study analyzing the hiring and selection practices of a Florida school district and comparing the findings to the research of hiring practices in other professional fields. Findings indicate that the hiring practices in the Florida district share many similarities with other occupations. For one, both education and other fields rely on two important processes in the hiring process; screening and selection of candidates. The variations in these practices and tools depend on the specific occupation as

well as the cost and benefit of the tools for the specific occupation. In general, principals in the Florida district rely heavily on interviews as a deciding factor in the selection process, as well as other factors including experience and recommendations.

Rutledge et al conclude that hiring in education is a complex task, and administrators make choices regarding the utility of different tools in the selection process. In the case study, videos and lesson observations were not given high value by principals, possibly because of the cost and time of thoroughly analyzing and observing a lesson for candidates compared to an interview. In a study from the same research group, Harris, Rutledge, Ingle and Thomson (2010) interviewed principals in a Florida district to determine what characteristics they looked for in the hiring of teacher candidates. Results indicate principals look for candidates with a mix of personal and professional qualities, are different from current faculty with regard to race, experience etc., and are a cultural fit with the specific school. While principals tend to follow centralized policies and procedures, they do so minimally when those policies and procedures are not aligned with their own beliefs and assessment of teacher candidates. The findings suggest hiring at the local level is important, and also that principals have significant power in the selection of teachers, and therefore the quality of teachers in schools, and should continue to be equipped with the knowledge and skill set to recruit and hire high-quality teachers.

One of these skills sets is Behavior Based Interviewing (BBI) Clement (2007; 2009). BBI is a style of interview questions that has been used in business for a number of years that relies on the assumption that a candidate's past behavior is a good predictor of their future behavior. BBI questions are tailored to delve deeper into a candidate's past behavior in the classroom. For example, a question focusing on teaching methods could be: "Name a specific method or strategy you have used to teach in the past and why it is one you will continue to use." (Clement, 2009, p. 23). Clement suggests the use of BBI questions as an evaluative tool for educators to better predict and select candidates who will be expert teachers. In order to maintain objectivity, a primary rule of thumb when using BBI is to have an interview protocol of BBI questions tailored before interviews and have each candidate answer the same questions.

Selecting teachers is a complex task in part because teachers are people and people are complicated. Research suggests that current predictors used in the selection process have room for improvement. While local level authority to hire can increase the goodness of fit between candidates and the specific position, principals have been found to comply minimally with district level hiring policies they do not agree with. BBI is one example of a tool that educators can use to identify teacher candidates better and to improve the overall quality of teachers in each classroom.

## In Brief: Teacher Placement

Teacher placement is an important aspect of recruitment and hiring. Placing teachers who will be successful in particular contexts allows schools to improve teaching and learning. Teacher placement can be particularly difficult for disadvantaged schools. For example, teacher turnover is higher in poorer schools relative to schools with more financial means (Ingersoll, 2001 as cited in Ronfeldt, Lankford, Loeb and Wyckoff, 2011).

What about the impact of teacher turnover on student achievement? A study by Ronfeldt, Lankford, Loeb and Wyckoff approximated the impact of teacher turnover on student achievement of 4th and 5th grade students in New York City. Students in grade levels with a higher teacher turnover rate had lower ELA and Mathematics scores compared to their peers. The impact of higher teacher turnover was stronger in schools that have a larger number of lower-performing and African American students. This finding suggests that educational leaders need to strive to create supportive environments to enable teachers to become experts who will stay in their schools.

Schools that are more effective tend to have stronger recruitment, hiring and placement strategies. Loeb, Kalogrides and Beteille (2011) looked at this relationship and found four main themes. Higher performing schools in general are able to recruit and hire higher quality teachers to fill vacancies. Schools that are higher performing also tend to distribute teaching assignments to new teachers in a relatively more equal manner. The study even shows that teachers develop faster when working in schools that had an improvement in student achievement compared to teachers who worked in schools that did not show a similar improvement. More effective schools are also able to hold on to higher-quality teachers than less effective schools, but are no more likely to be able to remove ineffective teachers. Thus, schools that have an overall more systematic

and comprehensive approach to recruitment, hiring and placement tend to be able to fill vacancies with higher caliber teachers and also retain those teachers.

Schools can build their capacity in different aspects of human resources to hire and retain high-quality candidates. There is research that assesses the provision of financial incentives to teachers to work in traditionally hard-to-staff schools. Glazerman, Protik, Teh, Bruch and Seftor (2012) assess the impact of providing incentives to the highest-performing teachers in school districts to move to the lowest performing schools in the district. This study presents initial data as part of a larger research study funded by the Institute of Educational Sciences.

The incentive involved \$20,000 over a two-year period, and in return teachers receiving the incentive agreed to stay at the lower performing schools for at least two years. The incentive is known as the Talent Transfer Initiative (TTI). The program also provides \$20,000 incentives over two years for high performing teachers already teaching in low performing schools as long as they remain in the school. The initial findings of this study indicated that the incentive program was feasible to implement, although a large number of candidates were needed to fill the openings in the low performing schools. On average, approximately 16 candidates were needed to fill each position. The study also found that the teachers who did transfer had more experience than teachers who typically filled the TTI positions.

Teacher placement has been shown to impact student achievement. With a systematic and comprehensive approach to recruitment, hiring and placement school districts can not only improve the quality of their teachers, but also improve student learning and achievement.

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**WORKING GROUP  
FOR EDUCATOR  
EXCELLENCE**

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Next Issue's Spotlight:

**Teacher Leadership**

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**Mission of the Working Group for Educator Excellence**

WGEE is a broad coalition of 60 individuals from 26 statewide organizations who are united in the belief that the most effective way to provide every child with an excellent education is to take a systemic approach to influencing what teachers and educational leaders know and can do. We believe when key elements of the human resource system are strengthened to align with one another and with a common research-based, field-tested core of professional knowledge, the cumulative effect will be improved student achievement and a more efficient and effective system that strengthens teacher and leader expertise.

**Human Resource Pilot Project**

The pilot project, funded by the RTTT initiative, is a joint effort by the WGEE and DESE to accomplish two goals. The first goal is to systematically and strategically create, strengthen, and align the key influences on the quality of teaching and leadership in three school districts: Attleboro, Brockton, and Revere. Secondly, the project aims to embed the knowledge bases of professional teaching and leading at the appropriate stage of an educator's career. The influences, or levers, include Recruitment, Hiring, and Placement, Comprehensive Induction, Professional Development, Supervision and Evaluation, Teacher Leadership, Organizational Structure, and Adult Professional Culture. Through qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, we aim to determine the degree to which alignment will strengthen quality teaching and leading, increase student achievement, use cost, time, and resources with greater efficiency, improve teaching and leadership practices, increase the satisfaction and retention of teachers and leaders, and improve school and district culture.