

APPENDIX 5: Nashville Superintendent's Transition Team Subcommittee on Human Resources/Talent Management February 2017

A well-functioning Human Resources (HR) Department needs to take a systems approach to human capital. In education, human capital represents the knowledge and skills that teachers, school leaders, and support staff use to perform the duties of their positions and the ways they continue to grow in order to contribute to student learning. Human Resources' essential mission is to ensure that there are efficient and effective processes in place to attract, recruit, select, mentor, develop, evaluate, and recognize all employees.

More than 10,000 teachers, administrators, and support staff serve students in this educational system. The HR Organization includes two major units under the direction of the Executive Human Resources Officer: Talent Strategy and Operations. The Talent Strategy unit is responsible for the recruitment and hiring of employees. Fundamental to school support are six Human Resource Partners that assist schools and offices with staffing of certificated staff. Other HR staff support the hiring and deployment of substitutes, ensure certification and district compliance with state and federal regulations, and oversee performance management compliance. The Human Resources Operations unit is responsible for HR business services, employee relations, compensation, and employee benefits. The Human Resources and Talent Services budget for 2016-17 was \$7.7 million

Committee Charge and Scope of Work

The charge of the committee was to assess the systems and processes in Metro Nashville Public Schools for recruiting, hiring, onboarding, supporting, and evaluating employees and to make recommendations for how the district can recruit and retain the best and the brightest educators and support staff.

- Review, in-depth, the system's recruitment and induction ("onboarding") process for recommendations on how to become more systematic in developing staff capacity;
- Audit select Human Resources functions;
- Study the system's salary schedules and benefits package to ensure that MNPS compensation is competitive with surrounding districts, in order to attract and retain top staff to the district; make recommendations for future action;
- Consider various reward and incentive programs that can help retain talented staff.
- Survey staff for feedback on the MNPS induction process;
- Survey principals on the quality and quantity of the applicant pool for school-based positions;
- Analyze how people receive specific training to develop and upgrade their skills;
- Consider aspects of the MNPS organizational culture that supports or does not support a positive sense of pride at being part of the team;
- Review how staff are deployed to schools; and
- Review employee evaluation process.

The Human Resources/Talent Management Committee was comprised of experts in the field of human resources; representatives of teachers, support staff and administrators; and stakeholders who support teacher preparation and professional learning. In order to take on the scope of this work and meet our charge, the committee established four subcommittees. These subcommittees were: recruitment, hiring and selection; retention; performance management; and professional learning. The committee held a number of conference calls between July and November 2016. The committee benchmarked the ways in which similar-sized districts recruit, hire, support, evaluate, and deploy employees. In addition, the committee reviewed the organization and processes from districts known for having strong Human Resource practices. A variety of data were reviewed including the MNPS Human Resources data dashboard and district recruitment, evaluation, and retention data. A full-day work session was held in September to review our learnings and determine strengths and opportunities for improvement in the Human Resources area. Seven onsite interviews were held with HR staff, teachers, substitute teachers, support staff, and principals. The committee also analyzed past assessments of human resources, employee focus group interviews, Listen and Learn documents, and information gathered from other transition committees.

System Strengths

The committee identified a number of strengths in the system's human resources functions. The employees in the Human Resources department are dedicated and hard-working. They understand the importance of human capital as a driver for student achievement. In addition, HR staff has good institutional knowledge of the district and these strengths can be built upon.

The Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools HR Department has made a number of process improvements to better serve schools and offices. Redesigning several new procedures and instituting automated systems have achieved these efficiencies. While the *Applicant Tracking Applitracks System* is not as functional as it could be, it has established a portal for external candidates to use when applying for positions. The HR Department is working to improve and streamline processes and make better use of this automated system. The HR Department generates a significant amount of data. They have established a HR Dashboard and have the ability to use data to make HR strategic decisions.

The HR Department developed a strategic plan with goals, objectives, and timelines for meeting those goals. This blueprint is clear and derived from solid HR understanding and best practices. The organization of HR Partners who support school, by level and regions, provide aligned services on which strong supportive relationships can be built to support the recruitment, selection, and deployment of staff. The department has regularly conducted surveys and focus groups with various employee groups to obtain input from key customers in order to improve their services.

Many interviewees noted that they appreciate the diversity of the district's student population. Staff also noted that there are great people working for MNPS and their colleagues are competent and hard-working. Several staff also indicated that there are many opportunities to grow.

System Challenges

One major challenge is related to the ways in which candidates are recruited and hired. Although there was sentiment about the effort and diligence of the HR team, the department is inundated with lengthy processes and transactions. Most often, interviewees noted that HR is organized in a way that is silo'd and they often call multiple people in HR to get their questions answered. Many of the interviewees reported that there are not clear procedures around key HR processes to ensure a strong, deep, and diverse pool of candidates; the hiring of candidates in a timely manner; and the implementation of an intentional and a focused orientation and induction program for all staff. No one could articulate a consistent process. Employees from all employee groups reported inconsistent experiences in hiring and onboarding. In addition, hiring processes of support staff is inconsistent.

HR lacks adequate integrated HR information systems and technology. While HR generates a significant amount of data, this data is, at times, difficult to access and often from stand-alone databases. Many interviewees noted that Applitracks (Applicant Tracking System) is just not working. This application system is clearly not being used to improve the application and hiring process.

A second major challenge is the extent to which HR is perceived as serving schools and offices. Responses from current employee interviews and past focus groups reveal remarkable consistency in the fact that customer service from Human Resources has been poor. While employees have had the opportunity to provide feedback to HR, there needs to be better follow-up on suggestions made. There is a lack of transparency about how decisions are made and unclear procedures exist. Quality candidates for positions are often lost due to lack of communication and assistance.

Many employees stated that they “go-around” HR and work directly with schools and offices to get hired. They see HR as creating barriers rather than having streamlined processes that facilitate candidates’ rapid hiring and onboarding. While principals know that HR staff tries to assist them, they often recruit their own staff through their own networks. There are many bottlenecks to moving applicants through HR and most processes are cumbersome and inefficient. There were reports of lost documents and unclear directions. There are also concerns raised about the quality and quantity of substitute teachers. Furthermore, there are uneven substitute fill-rates across the district.

Thirdly, we heard from several of our groups, who represented all employees, that their work is hard and there is not quality support for new employees to the district. New teachers and principals are often in “survival mode” in their first year. The financial costs associated with teacher turnover are also substantial. While we know there are a number of reasons that teachers, principals, and others leave school districts – such as better compensation, a variety of benefits, and professional learning that is linked to the work employees perform – makes a difference in keeping high-quality employees. In school year 2015-16 in MNPS, the average retention rate for teachers was approximately 80%, a number that was less than the goal benchmark of 90% of effective and highly effective teachers being retained.

The final major challenge is related to performance management and professional learning. As confirmed by the Student Achievement Subcommittee, the HR/Talent Committee found that in MNPS, there is not a clear or integrated approach to performance management that includes intentional and aligned professional development linked to the roles and responsibilities of each employee, nor a fair and transparent evaluation system. While most teachers and school-based

administrators are evaluated each year and participate in some form of professional learning, other employee groups have little professional learning and are rarely evaluated. Principals noted that there should be better-aligned rubrics for certificated, non-classroom employees. Although principals were positive about the more frequent visits from Executive Leadership Principals during the 2015-16 school year, they noted that the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) is executed in an inconsistent manner.

Support staff and Central Office members noted that there is inconsistent implementation of performance evaluations and receipt of feedback. Support staff reported that they are not clear about the standards against which they are evaluated, and many reported that they have never been evaluated in their positions.

There was consensus that the current state of professional learning is not aligned to performance feedback and professional growth and development. Employees talked about “random acts of professional development.” Additionally, there is little differentiation in how professional learning is executed.

Priority Areas and Recommendations

Priority Area 1: Human Resource Processes

Refine and streamline all HR processes to ensure MNPS can think about human capital in a strategic way.

HR staff members are hardworking and are doing their best, but they are stuck in outdated and convoluted processes and compliance activities that are preventing the opportunity for MNPS to think about human capital in a strategic way. With a growing number of human resource challenges – including teacher, substitutes and paraprofessional shortages; increased high needs schools and students; and competition from surrounding districts – MNPS must refocus how it ensures that it is increasing recruitment and marketing efforts and hiring the highest-quality employees. The candidate experience must be improved.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Redesign and streamline the application and hiring processes with the goal of ensuring that all high-quality candidates are available for principals to hire in January, February, and March and for Central Office hiring managers to hire in a timely manner. To begin the hiring process earlier, the district should look at potential ways for schools to receive preliminary allocations in order to project vacancies. The HR team should ‘process map’ each step from posting a position through onboarding an employee into the district, to identify the “as is” state, then look at ways to improve the current process, and establish new processes that meet the needs of schools and offices. They should also identify and stop processes that are inhibitors or barriers to a positive candidate experience.
2. Implement a strong recruitment effort that highlights why MNPS is a great place to work. Focus recruitment efforts on hard-to-fill areas and ensure that the workforce is diverse and of high quality. Partner with the Nashville Public Education Foundation and local business to support marketing the district. It is imperative that the HR Department makes a

concerted effort to recruit and hire teachers early. At least 80% of teacher and principal hiring should be completed by June 1 for the next school year to ensure that schools are 100% staffed by the opening of school in August. The district should offer “open contracts” for teachers in hard-to-fill areas, thereby securing the highest quality teachers. Developing and nurturing student teachers, substitutes, and para-educators can be an important pipeline. Early hiring is a key lever to obtaining the highest-quality teachers and principals.

3. Review the current use of the Applitracks system and redesign the workflow to ensure that this automated applicant tracking system is used to its full potential. Currently, not all applicants apply through Applitracks and the system is not being used to qualify applicants to be in various teacher or classified pools. Applitracks also has the ability to generate applicant and hiring reports that HR is not using. Many school districts in the United States use Applitracks and there are a number of best practices that can be garnered by learning from other districts. By using Applitracks appropriately, candidates can be tracked, vetted, and qualified for interviewing quickly so high-quality candidates are not lost to other school districts.
4. Implement strategies to improve the substitute teacher fill-rate through improved systems that enhance recruitment and incentive pay for substitutes. Consider hiring a permanent substitute for each building in order to ensure better fill-rates for the district.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Create and implement a multi-year quality research-based induction program for all employees. Research shows that strong induction support for all staff has been linked to improved student achievement and increased retention rates.¹ HR must work in partnership with Academics and other departments to guarantee that there is a plan in place to support the early tenure of all staff.
2. Audit all current data reports so decisions can be made regarding the prioritization of the data to be used internally with HR staff and externally with customers and stakeholders. Create an *HR Data Team* to establish guidelines for the best ways to access and disseminate HR data designed to drive decisions. This team should determine how HR data is collected and disseminated to key customers and stakeholders. More specifically, the current HR data dashboard should be reviewed and a talent management report by site be generated to include data that reflects the applicant pool, number of vacancies, performance evaluation data, and turnover and retention data. Whenever possible, the HR Department should develop metrics and goals related to understanding the diversity of the workforce and how the workforce is deployed. All HR data should be disaggregated by effectiveness, race, gender, and by high and low-needs schools. This HR Talent Management Report that is disseminated to all principals and supervisors should reflect significant human capital data points for each worksite.
3. Identify clear goals and objectives for the HR Department that contribute to the accomplishment of the district’s goals. The HR Department’s work must become more strategic than transactional. Organize the HR department to support key HR functions. All HR roles should be clarified and responsibilities delineated. It is important that employees know their roles and responsibilities and the impact of their work on others. HR should

¹ Ingersoll, R. & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Education Research*, 81(2), 201-233.

review and update all job descriptions to make sure that these descriptions are aligned to the work they perform.

4. Determine key performance indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks to measure and compare performance and effectiveness of the department and regularly report on these metrics. The department should publish an annual report that speaks to the ways in which HR is meeting the strategic goals of the district.

Priority Area 2: Customer Service

Improve customer service to ensure Human Resources is supporting the human capital needs of schools and worksites.

The purpose of the Central Office is to support a district's schools. In their seminal work, Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton and Newton (2010) called on Central Office to "fundamentally remake their work and practices and relationships with schools to support teaching and learning."² district Human Resources departments are ideally situated to take leadership in the district's efforts to better manage the talent of its workforce in supporting student learning. A major lever that contributes to increased student achievement is to ensure that there are great employees in every position in the district.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Create a Principal and Hiring Manager Advisory Board to advise the Executive Human Resources Officer about challenge areas and opportunities for improvement. It is critical for HR to build a culture of service to hiring managers to meet the human capital needs of the district.
2. Establish an annual survey that is sent to principals and hiring managers to learn about the ways in which Human Resources is supporting the human capital needs of schools and worksites. The survey should obtain input and the feedback on the following processes:
 - a. Timeline and hiring processes
 - b. Online access to candidates
 - c. Hiring pools for all positions, particularly those that are hard to fill
 - d. Quality of candidates
 - e. Onboarding and Induction processes
 - f. Support and responsiveness from HR in analyzing and utilizing employee data
3. Institute consistent exit surveys that are automatically sent to staff who leave the district and use this data to inform recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies. Require survey completion for transitioning out of the district. Hold focus groups with all employee groups to obtain ongoing feedback and input about why employees elect to stay in MNPS.
4. Build a culture of helpfulness within the HR department through training, coaching, and practicing an outward mindset. This support needs to be regularly measured and used to drive the HR strategic work. This is particularly important to build the capacity of principals and hiring managers to become strong human capital managers.

² Honig, M.I., Copland, M.A., Rainey, L., Lorton, J.A. and Newton, M. (2010, April). *Central office transformation for district-wide teaching and learning improvement*. Seattle, Washington: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (CTP) at the University of Washington.

Long -Term Recommendations

1. Develop and communicate clear protocols for various HR actions so that employees are aware of the procedures. The following areas should be developed first:
 - a. Create an annual Compensation Benefit Summary and distribute it to all employees.
 - b. Develop a protocol for terminations so the employee and the workplace site have clear procedures for exiting employees.
 - c. Develop an online Human Capital portal where all standard operating procedures can be updated for current and future employees.

Priority Area 3: High Quality Staff

Retain high quality staff by providing staff with multiple opportunities for growth and recognition.

It is known that keeping high-quality staff is a key component to student achievement. Once districts hire well, it is imperative that school districts keep their great teachers as well as all high-performing staff in all positions. New teachers that are hired in a timely fashion, placed in appropriate settings, and receive comprehensive induction are more likely to remain in teaching longer.³ Consistent with national trends, teacher and principal turnover is a challenge for Nashville. It is even more complicated by the significant shortages in certain teaching and administrative positions. The best retention strategies are tied to professional development designed to help employees grow. Professional and personal growth and working in a supportive culture is often rated higher than salary for why someone stays in an organization.⁴ In our interviews, all staff shared that they wanted to have value-added professional learning that helps them to increase their capacity and their ability to impact student achievement.

Retention of highly effective staff is not only an HR function, but is the responsibility of the whole district to support and nurture excellence. It is incumbent on the school district to put purposeful strategies in place to keep great staff.

³ Barnes, G., Crowe, E., & Schaefer, B. (2007). *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts: A pilot study*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Retrieved from: <http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/CTTFullReportfinal.pdf>.

⁴ Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/productfiles/A_Coming_Crisis_in_Teaching_REPORT.pdf.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Working with schools and offices, create a districtwide Retention Plan that focuses on support for highly effective employees and provides career paths for all employees. Review turnover data by worksite yearly. It is essential to understand the key drivers of employee turnover and retention. Differentiate the Retention Plan by school and worksite. Consider providing incentives for high needs schools to retain staff.
2. Conduct a compensation study that includes a review of how MNPS compares to surrounding districts as well as comparable districts, and subsequently develop a strategic approach to MNPS total compensation that recognizes the contributions of employees and can be used to recruit and retain the highest quality staff. With the outcomes of this study, HR should develop a strategic approach to MNPS total compensation that recognizes the contributions of employees and can be used to recruit and retain the highest quality staff. The district should explore systems that reward educators based on a wide variety of factors including career ladder professional growth salary systems.
3. Create leadership pathways for all employee groups by promoting a culture of learning and development for all employees. MNPS staff should know that there are a variety of work options for them in the district. These pathways would include the development of substitutes and paraprofessionals to become teachers and other teacher career ladders, as well as increasing the district pipeline for assistant principals, principals, and Central Office administrators. All these avenues help to keep high quality staff.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Create partnerships with local universities and alternative certification programs, for current staff and students who intend to pursue teaching, to establish a “grow your own” pipeline to assist in staffing hard-to-fill teacher positions and increase the diversity of the workforce.
2. Institute a strong recognition program for all staff that recognizes employees who devote their time, skills, and energy to support and improve student achievement. Employee recognition is a major component of a strong workforce and it demonstrates the value of every employee in the district. MNPS should not only ensure that there are districtwide Outstanding Employee Programs and Retirement appreciation, but each worksite should create ways to recognize staff for their contributions and commitment to the district.

Priority Area 4: Performance Management

Develop and implement a performance management system to articulate performance standards for every role and to provide supports to help employees grow.

Performance Management is the systematic process for managing employees' individual and collective performance towards achieving the organization's goals and mission. A comprehensive performance management system should include:

- Clearly articulated performance standards for every position/role.
- Observing and evaluating performance.
- Providing feedback, development, and support to foster improvement.
- Taking other action to support the employee through aligned professional development related to one's work, opportunities for promotion, compensation based on performance and clear exiting procedures.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Support all employees with a Performance Management System with goals, objectives, standards, and supports that are implemented consistently and with transparency and in a manner that helps all employees grow. In order to ensure that there is a clear and transparent system, a *Performance Management Implementation Team* should be created to oversee how the performance management system is executed for all employees. This team should be comprised of a multi-stakeholder group that represents all employee groups. The current systems should be reviewed and revised to ensure there is an integrated approach to supporting all employees. For some employee groups, a performance management system may need to be created.
2. Establish collaborations between HR and Executive Leadership Principals (ELPs), Academics, and Special Education to ensure that there is high-quality professional development that is connected to the knowledge and skills that are needed by employees to perform their duties successfully. This professional learning should be aligned to the strategic direction of the school district. Professional Learning should not only include feedback on performance, but also the opportunity for the employee to give input on what professional learning is needed to help them grow. Professional learning should reflect best practices in teaching and learning and help adults with varied interests and learning profiles build capacity. A multi-stakeholder *Professional Learning Steering Committee* should be created to oversee and coordinate all professional learning in the district. This collaborative group should be responsible for ensuring that all professional learning is coordinated and embedded into the day-to-day work of each employee. There also should be a focus to make certain every employee engages in professional learning that is aligned to his or her work.
3. Analyze the distribution of effective teachers to ensure that the highest-needs schools have the highest-quality teachers and consider incentives for staff to choose to work in high-need schools.

4. Develop clear and coherent roles for teachers and support staff to lead in both professional learning and performance management. Explore how to create and support hybrid roles for the district's most effective employees to lead professional learning, coach and mentor colleagues, and support school improvement.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Strategically manage employees in the district by developing a talent management report that includes the performance of each employee and other relevant employee data (such as employee assignments, attendance, etc.) to identify employees' relative areas of strength and needs for growth. The regular review of how each employee is performing will uncover trends that can lead to improved support and professional learning. More specifically, deep analysis of this data will inform the district about hiring practices, assignment of staff, promotional opportunities, professional learning and retention.
2. Create and disseminate regular employee absentee reports to supervisors and consider incentives for employees who have good attendance. Leave issues are often a pain point for supervisors. Significant employee absenteeism impacts the use of substitutes and influences student achievement. Higher teacher absenteeism is highly correlated to lower student achievement; therefore, it is important to manage both day-to-day and longer-term absences. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality report, the Nashville schools had the country's third worst problem with absences. On average, teachers missed class 14 days a year.⁵

⁵ Joseph, N. Waymack, N., Zielaski, D. (2014). *Roll call: The importance of teacher attendance*. National Council on Teacher Quality. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED556249>.