

The Matchmaking Process: Teacher Hiring in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools

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Abstract

This qualitative analysis of teacher teams is part of a larger, comparative case study, “Developing Human Capital Within Schools,” conducted by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. Within one city, we interviewed 142 teachers and administrators in six high-poverty schools (three charter and three district), all of which had achieved the highest ranking in the state’s accountability system. Here, we analyze how each school approached the process of teacher hiring and how both administrators and teachers experienced it. All schools assessed candidates through a two-way hiring process which provided both schools and candidates with opportunities to exchange information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract. Each school’s hiring process included multiple steps, such as screening résumés and cover letters, a pre-interview phone screening, an interview with the principal, a teaching demonstration and debrief, and a school visit. Throughout these steps, schools recognized that they needed to court candidates if they offered a position, so that the applicant would accept it. Those involved were clear that the investment of time and resources was very worthwhile and helped to ensure a good, secure fit between a school and its teachers.

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Introduction

Good teaching matters, especially for students growing up in poverty (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Downey, Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). But, effective teaching does not depend alone on the contributions of talented and skilled individuals. Rather, promising teachers are far more likely to rise to their potential when they are well-matched with both their teaching assignment and with the school organization where they work (Daly, Keeling, Grainger, & Grundies, 2008; Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Levin, Mulhern, & Schunck, 2005; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Liu, Rosenstein, Swan, & Khalil, 2008; Loeb, Kalogrides, & Béteille, 2012). However, in urban school districts, outmoded staffing policies and practices have long impeded school leaders from carefully selecting and cultivating a faculty who collectively meet the needs of the school's students. (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt, & Wyckoff, 2011; Daly et al., 2008; Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Levin et al., 2005; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Liu et al., 2008; Loeb et al., 2012). The consequences of this have been severe—particularly for low-income and minority students.

For decades, policies rooted in ideals of overall efficiency and fairness to teachers shaped staffing structures (Levin et al., 2005). In most districts, hiring was centralized—conducted and controlled by the central office. Schools depended on district-level personnel to recruit and select teachers, and then to assign new hires to specific vacancies at individual schools. Districts also managed the teacher transfer process through which teachers were reassigned due to layoffs, programmatic changes, and preferences to move to another school. Prolonged delays in placing current teachers often meant that new teachers could not be hired until summer, often just before school started (Liu & Johnson, 2006). As a result of these policies and of delays in municipal or state approval of the education budget, urban districts routinely lost prospective teachers to

surrounding wealthier, whiter suburbs (Liu & Johnson, 2006). On the whole, these staffing policies and their resulting administrative practices prevented both new and experienced teachers from finding positions that matched their knowledge, skills, and interests (Ballou, 1996; Cannata, 2010; Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Levin et al., 2005; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006). Consequently, teachers in urban schools frequently reported being dissatisfied with their job, which they often left within a few years (S. M. Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; S. M. Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Liu et al., 2008; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Since 2000, the effects of centralized, impersonal, and slow-moving staffing systems have prompted many districts to transform their historically bureaucratic personnel offices into human capital management systems, designed to recruit, select, develop and compensate a talented teaching force (Odden, 2011). One step some districts have taken is to decentralize hiring and to negotiate with the local teachers union a process that is both more accelerated and based on “mutual consent” (Daly et al., 2008). These reforms recognize that school communities differ in their needs and expectations and that individual teachers also have unique expertise and interests that fit better in some schools and programs than others. Thus, some districts have granted schools increased autonomy over teacher hiring and transfer and, simultaneously, have given teachers greater say in where they teach.

Research in education and industry affirms the wisdom of these reforms (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1989; Daly et al., 2008; Kristof, 1996; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). In a strong system, hiring is site-based and carried out as a two-way process whereby schools and teacher candidates exchange information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract (Liu & Johnson, 2006; Winter, Ronau, & Munoz, 2004).

Through this process, each party can decide whether a good “fit” exists—the school decides whether to offer a position, and the candidate decides whether to accept it.

Although staffing reforms have enabled many schools to adopt more “information-rich” processes (Liu & Johnson, 2006, p. 324), policies and practices have not ensured that schools could succeed in doing so. Remarkably little is known about how individual schools conceptualize and carry out the process of hiring teachers, and even less is known about how teachers experience these efforts. In addition, few researchers have explored how a specific school’s policy context influences these processes. Here, we investigate these issues by drawing on data from a larger exploratory study conducted by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, which focuses on how human capital is managed and developed within schools. The sample includes six schools—traditional, turnaround, and charter—located in the same large city in Massachusetts. These schools all have demonstrated success with low-income, minority students. However, each school’s process for selecting teachers was influenced by a different combination of state and local policies.

In the following section, we review the literature on teacher selection, beginning with Liu and Johnson’s (2006) concept of “information-rich hiring” and a description of how hiring has traditionally worked in urban districts. Next, we explain how teachers experience information-rich hiring and describe the ways in which some school systems have innovated with hiring. After presenting our research questions and methods, we discuss the findings of this analysis. We conclude by considering the implications of this work for policy, practice, and research.

Literature Review

In their study of new teachers’ experiences of hiring, Liu and Johnson (2006) posit that, “a new teacher’s effectiveness in working with students may depend not only on her general

qualifications but also on the fit between her particular skills, knowledge, and dispositions and the school position she has been hired to fill” (p. 325). The importance of a strong fit between a teacher and his school is consistent with research in the field of organizational behavior and management, which explores person-organization and person-job fit and examines their links to work-related outcomes, including overall satisfaction, effectiveness, and plans to stay or quit (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996; Rynes et al., 1991). As in industry, Liu and Johnson posit, when a school hires well, it engages candidates in a two-way process through which both parties—the school and the candidate—can gather the information each needs to make an informed decision about whether the individual and the position are a good fit for one another. Teachers who experience such an “information-rich” (p. 324) hiring process—one that provides them with a realistic preview of their future job—report that they are more satisfied with their positions and, ultimately, are more likely to stay in their school (S. M. Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Liu et al., 2008).

Traditional Teacher Hiring in Urban School Districts and Schools

Historically, most urban teachers were assigned to their school through a centralized process conducted by district administrators. Developed in the 1960s to ensure efficiency and to prevent nepotism and discrimination, centralized processes frequently relied on standardized procedures that treated all new applicants uniformly and entailed similar steps (DeArmond, Gross, Bowen, Demeritt, & Lake, 2012; Johnson and PNGT, 2004; Levin et al., 2005; Levin and Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006). In addition, policies governing the placement of new teachers were affected by staffing procedures that often gave priority to teachers with seniority in the district, to whom the district had ongoing obligations, including tenure. In the past, some district regulations granted “bumping rights” to permanent teachers, allowing those with more

seniority to claim positions within a school with little or no input from the principal. In addition, district and state policies commonly required that layoffs among teachers be seniority-based. As a result, all teachers with tenure were retained by the district in order of seniority and had to be placed before the hiring process was opened to new teachers. Often this was a protracted process and, as a result, many staffing decisions occurred just before the opening of school or even once classes were already in session. Strikingly, Liu and Johnson (2006) found that in Florida, only 18.6% of new teachers were hired more than a month before the start of school and that roughly one-third of teachers were not hired until after school had started. Comparable data emerged in other states.

In a qualitative study examining the experiences of 50 new teachers in Massachusetts, Johnson, Liu, and colleagues (2004) found that most teachers who had been hired at the “last minute” (p. 171) before school started had spent months trying to secure a position. When an offer was finally made—often on the spot, based on a résumé and a single, short interview with the principal—the new teachers quickly took the position. Such “down to the wire” (p. 171) timing meant that new teachers rarely met future colleagues or saw the school in action before signing a contract. In addition, because their schools lacked opportunities to watch prospective teachers interact with students or to observe them teaching, the schools were unable to utilize hiring as a bridge to new teacher induction.

Unfortunately, even as districts across the country have shifted towards more decentralized selection—indeed, more than 90% of principals nationally report that they now have “extensive autonomy” (Cannata & Engel, 2012, p. 459) in teacher selection—recent research (Cannata, 2010, 2011) continues to suggest that many teachers still experience hiring as “late, rushed, and information-poor” (Liu & Johnson, 2006, p. 324).

The “Realistic Preview:” Information-Rich Hiring in Practice

What happens when teachers are not hired at the last minute, or when schools seize the opportunities provided by new policies that enable strategic, site-based hiring? In Johnson et al.’s study (2004), some teachers who initially accepted positions that proved to be a poor fit quickly transferred to another school or district. In doing so, they searched for a position that better matched what they wanted, often participating in an information-rich process that allowed them to learn about the school—at the same time that the school was learning about them. In following teachers over the course of four years, the authors found that those who had engaged in such processes were more likely to stay in their schools than to transfer or to leave teaching.

In a study of thirty principals who benefited from hiring autonomy in one Florida district, Harris and colleagues (2010) found that information-rich hiring enabled school leaders to carefully assemble the organizational “mix and match” (p. 228) that they sought—a team of teachers who differed demographically, in skill and experience, and who might work well together and therefore stay in the school for the long-term. DeArmond et al. (2012) explain how school leaders approached a similar “mix and match” selection process in their study of 43 Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) across the country. Generally, state laws allow charter schools to operate unconstrained by local collective bargaining agreements and to hire and fire teachers without regard to tenure. They are not bound by the legal requirements of seniority-based layoffs. This policy context has allowed these CMOs to innovate with staffing strategies.

Most CMOs in DeArmond et al.’s (2012) study approached recruitment and hiring with the goal of employing “mission-driven people they believed would fit their school and programs” (p. 7). Some sought teachers who had particular characteristics; several looked for instructional

knowledge or skill, while others prioritized work ethic or personality traits. However, all CMOs included in the study engaged candidates in an array of activities to recruit them, to gather information about whether they were a good fit for the school, and to ensure that, if offered a position, they would accept it. For example, several CMOs built partnerships with pipeline programs, most commonly Teach for America (TFA), whose mission aligned with their own. Then, in efforts to “give [candidates] as much information as possible,” they engaged them in “real upfront” (p. 9) conversations about both positive and negative aspects of working at their schools. Their purpose was to convey the message: “the job is hard, but we are doing it because we are on a mission to help kids learn” (p. 10). After applicants were invited to be interviewed—which sometimes involved meeting with teachers, parents, students, or community members—nearly all CMOs required applicants to teach a demonstration lesson.

These CMO leaders cited staffing as a main function of their job and, thus, invested considerable time and resources in potential candidates. They recognized that a timely two-way hiring process is not a “one-shot event” (p. 14). Rather, they viewed it as the first step of an induction process that “socializ[es] staff around the organization’s mission and expectations for how they should work to achieve that mission” (p. 17), ideally before the school year begins. It also enables administrators to prepare to support teachers as they enter a new school.

Additional research on “high-performing” CMOs (Chadwick & Kowal, 2011, p. 5) as well as “high-performing” new, small, district schools in New York City yielded similar findings (Villavicencio & Marinell, 2014, p. 5). Together, these studies demonstrate that many schools that effectively serve low-income students conceive of information-rich hiring as critical to their success. They also provide useful descriptions about how school leaders strategically manage hiring systems. Here, we build on this work by exploring how relevant policies and

administrative practices combine to work at the school-level in six high-poverty, urban schools that the state recognizes as “high-performing.” We analyze the day-to-day practices that they employ in selecting teachers, and we describe how administrators and teachers experience these processes.

Methods

This paper is based on a qualitative, comparative case study embedded in a larger study that we conducted at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. The larger study, “Developing Human Capital Within Schools,” examined what six high-poverty, urban schools—all of which had received the state’s highest performance rating—did to attract, develop, and retain teachers.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this analysis are:

1. What policies (state, local, or CMO) shape school-level approaches to selecting teachers and what opportunities and constraints do administrators report these policies present?
2. How do high-poverty schools that are succeeding with students approach teacher selection?
3. How do principals and teachers assess their experiences with these practices?
 - a. To what extent do principals and other personnel engaged in teacher selection report that the process garners accurate and useful information about candidates?
 - b. To what extent do teachers report that the selection process they experienced provided them with an accurate preview of their job and school?

Sample of schools

Our sample selection was guided by four principles. First, we sought a sample that included charter and district schools in one city. Second we looked for schools that served high-poverty populations ($\geq 70\%$ of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch) and also primarily served students of color. Third, we sought schools that were considered high-performing, having

achieved the highest rating in the state's accountability system. Fourth, we sought schools that were employing distinctive approaches to human capital development.

To attend to the first three principles, we examined publicly-available demographic and student performance data. We used the state's accountability ratings as a proxy for academic success with students. At the time of our study, Massachusetts rated schools on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 designating the highest performing schools. The school ratings were based on four years of data that documented both the school's student performance growth and its success in narrowing proficiency gaps among sub-groups of students on state tests.

To attend to the fourth principle, we researched various schools' approaches to human capital development by consulting our professional networks and considering information about specific schools and CMOs. Based on this inquiry, we drew up a sample of six schools—all geographically located within one large urban school district in Massachusetts. The sample included three district schools (one traditional, two former turnaround) and three state-authorized charter schools. All schools were elementary and/or middle schools, which facilitated cross-site comparisons. We contacted six school leaders explaining our study and requesting their participation and all agreed to participate (For school descriptive statistics, see Appendix B).

The purposive nature allowed us to conduct an in-depth, exploratory study of a particular context—high-poverty, high-minority schools that have demonstrated success with their students. By design, this sample is not representative of schools in the region.

Data Collection

Interviews. In Spring 2014, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 142 teachers, administrators and other staff (including talent directors, where applicable) in the six schools. Administrator interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes; teacher interviews lasted

approximately 45 minutes. All research team members were present for most interviews with the principals and CMO directors; every team member conducted some interviews with teachers at each school. This approach facilitated cross-site comparisons, improved inter-rater reliability in coding data, and ensured that each research team member understood each school's structures and culture.

Our interview sample within schools was purposively constructed. At each school, we first interviewed the principal to learn both what processes they used to select, develop, and retain teachers and how those processes were conceived and implemented. Then, we recruited teachers who varied in personal background, teaching experience, preparation, teaching assignment, and role. We also interviewed additional key staff (e.g. curriculum coaches, discipline deans, family coordinators) when it became apparent that their views would inform our understanding of teachers' experiences. To build our sample, we relied on staff lists and on recommendations from administrators and teachers. We solicited participation through emails, flyers, and word-of-mouth. Participants were ensured confidentiality—neither the content of their interview nor the fact that they had been interviewed was shared with the principal (although many discussed their participation with their principal).

In each school, the number of teachers we interviewed varied depending on the school's size, its organizational complexity, and the practices used. We interviewed between 33% and 56% of teachers at each school, plus additional staff. At the three charters schools, we also interviewed full-time Teachers in Training (TTs). (For sample demographics see Appendix B). We used semi-structured interview protocols (Appendix C) to ensure that data would be comparable across sites and interviewers. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interview protocols included several questions that encouraged participants to discuss the school's approach to staffing. Specific questions included topics such as where they recruit, what positions they struggle to fill, and how they decide whom to hire. Teachers were asked to describe the process through which they were recruited and hired at the school and to explain whether and how they were involved subsequently with recruiting and selecting new colleagues. With all interviewees, we used follow-up questions to further explore each of these topics and to identify particular issues that warranted deeper inquiry. For example, at every school, interviewees discussed the challenge of recruiting, hiring and retaining Black and Latino teachers; we therefore modified our protocol to explore this topic in greater depth. In our visits to the schools, we also observed a wide range of day-to-day practices, and looked for evidence about the school's organizational culture.

Document Collection. Although interviews are the main data source for this study, we also gathered a range of documents that describe school policies and programs related to recruiting, developing and retaining their teachers. These documents vary by school and include resources, such as professional development calendars, school handbooks, and results of teacher surveys. When possible, we also collected extensive documentation of recruitment and hiring processes, such as protocols for interviewing teachers and observing demonstration lessons and rubrics for assessing candidates. We also collected charter school applications, collective bargaining agreements, and applications for contractual waivers, along with other documents that illuminated the state and local policy contexts in which each school operates.

Data Analysis

After each interview, we wrote detailed thematic summaries describing the participant and summarizing his experiences with the school's practices for recruiting, hiring, developing

and retaining teachers. First, we identified themes or *etic* codes drawn from the literature on the elements of developing human capital. Then, we used thematic summaries to analyze each site individually and to conduct cross-site comparisons, identifying common themes and differences. We used this preliminary analysis to supplement the *etic* codes with *emic* codes that emerged from the data. For example, in interviews, pay emerged as a challenge for hiring charter school teachers, although we had not identified that theme in the literature. We used this preliminary code list to review a small subset of the transcripts, individually and together, in order to calibrate our understanding and use of the codes, as well as to refine the list and definitions. We repeated this process to finalize the code list (Appendix D) and to improve inter-rater reliability. We then coded each transcribed interview using Dedoose software.

After coding interviews, we engaged in an iterative analytic process, using data-analytic matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to track findings related to school-based staffing. To understand the policy context in which each school operated, we identified the particular policies that affected each school and influenced what they could do. For example, we determined which components of the district's collective bargaining agreement remained binding in turnaround schools and how state-issued charters affect each charter school's operations. We then analyzed the interview data and documents from each school separately. We ultimately completed a data analytic matrix showing the components of recruitment and hiring at each school and connections among them within schools. We wrote an analytic memo comparing the different staffing strategies across the sample in order to first develop a deep understanding of the process that candidates experienced as they were being recruited to apply, vetted as applicants, and offered positions.

To understand how principals and teachers described and assessed their experiences with

these practices, we created school-by-school matrices comparing interviewees' responses to their school's recruitment and hiring processes, by component where appropriate. We again wrote an analytic memo presenting initial hypotheses about how teachers experienced and assessed these processes. We also sorted codes by particular interviewee characteristics. For each transcript, we categorized the interviewee according to relevant characteristics, such as years of teaching experience and age (See Appendix D). We then investigated whether teachers' perceptions of the hiring processes varied, within and across schools. We wrote a third analytic memo about emerging trends and hypotheses. Finally, we addressed risks to validity by returning to the data to review coding and check our emerging conclusions and to seek rival explanations or disconfirming data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We also shared analytic memos, outlines and drafts with our research team and with other colleagues.

Findings

All six schools in our study conceived of hiring as a two-way process—one in which both parties have opportunities to exchange information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract. Each school had developed a clear understanding of what it sought in teaching applicants and a specific, structured process for selecting teachers from their pool of applicants. Each administrator explained how the steps within their process were designed to provide both the school and the applicant with information they needed to make a sound judgment of the other party. Not surprisingly, however, each school's context appeared to have shaped how effectively it could implement its intended hiring process.

In this section, we begin by describing each school and explaining the policy and structural context within which each operated. We then discuss the steps that the schools used to determine whether to offer candidates a job and describe how teachers perceived these processes.

Finally, we explain the challenges that schools faced in implementing their thoughtfully designed systems.

The Schools

As noted above, all six schools in the study are located within Walker City¹, Massachusetts and primarily serve students who reside in Walker City School District (WCSD). The sample includes one traditional district school, two district schools that had recently emerged from turnaround, one in-district charter school, and two state-sponsored charter schools that were entirely independent of the local district.

The District Schools

Dickinson Elementary was a century-old, traditional elementary school serving 370 children in grades Pre-K-5. For generations, the school primarily served immigrant children; at the time of our study, 75% of its students were English Language Learners. Teachers belonged to WCSD's teachers union and Dickinson was bound by the WCSD collective bargaining agreement and other state and district policies. Monica Davila, the school's sole administrator, had taught at the school for several decades before becoming principal. Dickinson had experienced stable leadership for over two decades, although the school had three principals during the years just before Davila was appointed. However, interviewees reported that the culture had remained stable because teacher turnover was rare: several Dickinson teachers had taught at Dickinson since the 1980s. As teachers repeatedly said, "you don't leave Dickinson—you retire from Dickinson." In Davila's four years as principal, she reported that she had only hired four new teachers and more than half of those we interviewed had been at the school for a decade or more.

¹ Pseudonyms are used for the district, the schools, and all study participants.

In 2013-14 when we conducted the study, Dickinson had begun implementing WCSD's new hiring system, which granted all district schools significant autonomy in selecting candidates. It called for a site-based hiring committee composed of the principal, teachers, and parents, that followed a multi-step process involving interviews and demonstration lessons. Although the principal was required to interview all tenured teachers from within WCSD who applied for the opening, she was not required to select any internal applicant. In fact, after the interviews, she was permitted to hire teachers who were new to the district even if veteran WCSD teachers had applied for the position.

Fitzgerald Elementary was founded in the 1960s and served 390 students in grades K-5. Early in its history, Fitzgerald was lauded as a top WCSD school. But, it severely declined in the 1980s. In 2008—two years before the school was placed in turnaround—Sharon Forte, an experienced WCSD principal, began her tenure as Fitzgerald's seventh principal in ten years. During turnaround, the state required Forte to replace at least 50% of the teachers; Forte chose to replace 65%. Tenured teachers who did not receive an offer from Forte had the right to transfer to a different WCSD school. After exiting turnaround, administrators said that Fitzgerald had little annual turnover; one reported that the school had hired roughly 3-5 teachers each year after entering turnaround.

When the school successfully exited turnaround as a Level 1 school at start of the 2013-14 school year, the state granted Fitzgerald special status as a within-district Innovation School, which allowed Forte to maintain some hiring autonomy—namely the right to select teachers without regard to seniority, a provision that was subsequently granted to all district schools. However, the status did not allow Forte to involuntarily transfer teachers; if she wished to dismiss an underperforming teacher, she had to comply with the WCSD evaluation process for

doing so.

Hurston K-8 opened in 2003, with 800 students. It was founded by WCSD as an in-district charter school with significant decision-making authority. Hurston was exempt from most union and school committee work rules, and was overseen by a joint district/union committee. Despite its relative autonomy, Hurston had a rough beginning. It had five principals during its first seven years and then was put into turnaround by the state, which required that a new principal be hired. When Daniel Hinds—an experienced district principal—began the turnaround process at Hurston in the spring of 2010, he was supported by an administrative team including an Assistant Principal, a Professional Development Director, an Operations Director, and several others. Although Hinds was required to replace at least 50% of the school’s teachers, he replaced approximately 80%. After that, the school had retained 92% of those hired—a fact that some credited to Principal Hinds’ belief that, as one administrator explained, “if you go through blood, sweat and tears to make [replacing 80% of staff] happen, then you need to choose the right people [and subsequently] make sure that you’re retaining them.”

At the start of the 2013-14 school year, Hurston exited turnaround as a Level 1 school. The school maintained status as a within-district charter, which continued to allow the principal hiring autonomy and the right to transfer teachers involuntarily. During layoffs, however, the school would still have been affected by the district’s need to assign surplus tenured teachers in WCSD and might be required to accept one. All Hurston teachers were covered by the WCSD teachers contract and paid according to the district’s negotiated pay scale.

The Charter Schools

Kincaid Charter Middle School, an in-district charter school authorized by the state to “restart” a WCSD school. Kincaid served 475 students in Grades 6-8 and opened with all three

grades in 2011 as the first of five schools managed by the expanding Kincaid Charter Network. Although no teachers from the prior school were rehired, most students remained. Kincaid's principal at the time of our study, Louis Kain, succeeded Kincaid's founder in 2013, after serving as a founding Leader of Instruction (LI) at the school. His administration included three LIs, a Director of Operations, and two Deans of Discipline.

After Kincaid's charter was approved by the district and then by the state, its board of trustees was required to "negotiate in good faith" a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WCSD teachers union. Although Kincaid was overseen by the state, teachers continued to be represented by the local teachers union. They achieved tenure in WCSD under state law and were paid and accrued seniority in keeping with the district's contract. In compliance with the charter's MOU with the district, Kincaid had hiring autonomy for all school-based positions, and the school was permitted to dismiss non-tenured teachers and involuntarily transfer tenured teachers out of the school and into the WCSD excess pool. Kincaid Charter Network Executive Director Kaplan estimated that 78% of teachers had remained at their school from year to year, which was lower than he hoped. However, of that 78%, some who stayed in the building moved out of teaching positions and into other roles. In doing so, they created a teaching vacancy that had to be filled. The school also hired three TTs each year.

Naylor Charter K-8, a state-authorized charter school founded as a new school in 2002, served 500 students. The school was the first of three schools established in the Naylor Charter School Network, which was led by Executive Director Samantha Nelson. Principal Claire North, who had succeeded Executive Director Nelson as principal, was supported by an Assistant Principal, a Director of Operations, and a Dean of Discipline. Naylor operated entirely independent of WCSD. The school was not unionized; teachers could be dismissed at any time.

Salaries were determined by the school, and according to Executive Director Samantha Nelson, were comparable to WCSD salaries in 2014.

Naylor had complete hiring autonomy; teachers had to meet the federal government's requirements for being "highly qualified," but only ELL teachers had to be licensed by the state. In general, Naylor administrators reported that retention rates within the network were high—roughly 90%. However, as at Kincaid, this number included teachers who switched positions—often moving into a leadership role within the school. It also included teachers who moved to a new school within the network. The school also hired nine TTs each year.

Rodriguez Charter K1-8, also a state-authorized charter school, was founded in 1995 and served 420 students. The school, which did not belong to a network, was divided into a lower and upper school within the same building, which Executive Director, Tamar Rowland, managed. She began her long tenure at Rodriguez as a teacher and succeeded the school's founder as Executive Director. Rodriguez's two divisions were led by Principals Sam Ryan (upper school) and Julia Rega (lower school). Like Naylor, Rodriguez received funding from the state and operated independently of the district. Rodriguez teachers were not unionized and their salaries were substantially lower than those of WCSD teachers. Like Naylor, Rodriguez had complete hiring autonomy; teachers had to be "highly qualified," by federal standards, and only ELL teachers required licensure. Retention rates at Rodriguez were high; Principal Rega reported hiring "between zero and two" teachers annually.

In summary, each of the six schools had a unique history. Although Dickinson and Rodriguez each had relatively new leaders, both schools benefited from many years of a stable administration and teaching faculty, and both Principal Davila and Executive Director Rowland had worked at their respective schools for many years before taking the helm. Similarly,

Naylor's relatively new Principal North had taught at the school before succeeding Executive Director Nelson as principal. In contrast, both principals at Fitzgerald and Hurston were appointed by the district to turn around schools that were seriously hampered by instability in leadership. Kincaid's Principal Kain was appointed to be the school's second principal in three years, during the restart phase of a formerly failing school. In addition, at Fitzgerald, Hurston and Kincaid, most current teachers had been hired during the turnaround phase.

Each school also operated within a particular policy context, which influenced their approach to staffing. Dickinson did not have special status and was therefore bound by all WCSD contract obligations and other state and district policies. By contrast, Fitzgerald and Hurston benefited from substantial hiring autonomy as a result of both turnaround regulations and their special status within the district after turnaround. However, they were required to hire teachers who were licensed to work in WCSD and each had to comply with some provisions related to layoffs and involuntary transfers. Kincaid's status as an in-district charter granted Principal Kain substantial hiring autonomy, but, like Fitzgerald and Hurston, he was required to hire licensed teachers. Finally, because Naylor and Rodriguez were not formally part of the district, both schools had complete autonomy to hire teachers and were only bound by licensing rules for a small number of specialized positions.

Organizational Perspectives on Hiring

Leaders at all six schools believed that their school was not the right place for every teacher. They thought that the purpose of hiring was to determine whether there was a good match between the school and an applicant. At Rodriguez Charter, Executive Director Rowland captured this common sentiment in describing her applicant pool: "[S]ome are a good fit for

Rodriguez. Others are great teachers, but we are not perfect for them and they are not perfect for us.”

Schools assessed fit on several dimensions. First and foremost, leaders explained that teachers had to be aligned with their school’s mission. As an administrator at Fitzgerald said, their mission was one of “social justice,” where “we all know that this school is altering the course of these kids’ lives.” At Naylor, this mission was repeatedly described as “closing the achievement gap.” Principals at both Fitzgerald and Hurston said that during the turnaround process, their primary decision rule in hiring was, as Principal Forte explained, whether teachers shared the “belief system” that would enable them to achieve their mission—“did they think that children who are African American or Latino and poor could learn?” Principal Hinds attributed his school’s success in moving beyond turnaround status to the fact that teachers “had that fundamental belief,” even if they “didn’t have a track record of success.” It wasn’t necessary to convince them that “this *could* be done. It was... supporting them in the how.”

Schools also assessed a candidate’s fit based on whether applicants were aligned with the school’s philosophical and practical beliefs about how this goal could be achieved—namely, how the work would get done. Although the schools differed dNelsonatically in their beliefs about what Principal Davila at Dickinson called “the way to make a difference,” all suggested that teachers had to agree with their school’s way of doing things. Principal Kain at Kincaid Charter explained that when hiring, he weighed the “will-skill” dimension: “We try to limit as many low-will hires as we can because [will] is the thing that we’ve found we cannot change or don’t have the patience to change.” He said that the school was “willing to do what we have to do to help you build content, if you really want... to be here.”

Ideas about what teachers would be expected to do differed. At some schools, they had to be ready to implement the school’s behavior system—which administrators saw as contributing to a positive school culture. For example, at Kincaid, teachers had to endorse a “no excuses mentality,” defined in school documents as a belief that “regardless of circumstances... there is no reason why a student cannot be successful in school and why a teacher cannot achieve meaningful results with his or her students.” For example, if a student failed to turn in homework, “we do not want to hear excuses about why it’s missing. Instead, we want to see the homework completed and we don’t want the homework to be missing in the future.” Those interviewed at Naylor spoke of similar expectations. One described the school as “similar to the traditional no-excuses charter school,” noting “super high expectations for behavior.” In contrast, at Rodriguez, Rowland said, “the biggest thing for us is... we’re not a ‘no excuses’ charter school. That’s not what we believe in... You need to believe that you’re here to serve all the kids who walk through the door and you need to believe that they can and will succeed. You need to believe that we’re not giving up on kids and that it may sometimes take heroic efforts. But we’re going to work with kids and families to have them succeed.”

Beyond norms of discipline, however, all schools sought teachers who were committed to the school’s prevailing pedagogy and could be expected to participate actively in the school’s professional culture. For example, at Fitzgerald and Rodriguez, participants explained that the curriculum was, in the words of one teacher, “very demanding academically” because teachers were expected to develop complex, project-based learning experiences for students. At Hurston and Dickinson, the arts were a priority because, as Principal Davila said, a strong arts program is key to providing students with an education on par with what their suburban peers’ experience.

Each school's approach was supported by its professional culture. For example, at all schools, teachers were expected to exhibit what those at Naylor called a "growth mindset"—an unwavering commitment to improving one's craft. Across schools, teachers routinely gave and received instructional feedback and were held accountable for implementing that feedback in subsequent classes. Executive Director Nelson explained that administrators were not focusing on teachers' deficits, but rather on their continuous improvement: "What's interesting in life is getting better at things all the time." At Hurston, administrators concurred, explaining that to be successful, teachers must have what one described as, "the mindset to make things work for the kids that they have that period, that year. That might not necessarily be what worked for the kids they had third period... or last year." Teachers had to "be willing to constantly reassess, reinvent and really be creative."

Although administrators in the six schools in our sample realized that many applicants saw their school as a desirable place to work, they believed it was important, as one Fitzgerald interviewee explained, to simultaneously "[sell] the school and... be upfront about the challenges." Principal North said that she had "tried to be more transparent" after two new hires left because they "didn't realize what they were signing up for." Several principals explained what "being upfront" involved. Principal Rega talked with applicants about what she called Rodriguez's "work ethic." Teachers at the school, she said, were "never satisfied—we want every child to succeed... there are teachers who stay 'til 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 at night. There are teachers who come early. There are teachers who have [their own] kids and go home and... [continue doing school] work." At Naylor, Principal North explained to applicants that they would be expected to "work really long hours... creating curriculum from scratch...staying after

school tutoring...calling parents on their way home... I have teachers who sign up for observation debriefs with me starting at 6:15 every morning.”

At Fitzgerald, one administrator recalled that teachers who wanted to remain at the school during turnaround were told, “We have a lot of hard work to do. It’s going to require you doing more than maybe some of your other teacher friends are doing in other schools. It’s going to require more of your time. It may require you to change the way you feel about your teaching practice.” She was clear: “We’re on a mission and if you don’t see yourself as fitting in here, we welcome you to go somewhere else.” Since turnaround, the principal had also been explicit with applicants about what one described as the emotional “intensity” of teaching children growing up in poverty: “The biggest challenge is that our student population is very demanding... they don’t have a lot of their basic needs being met... they just live in a high-poverty environment where they don’t have a lot of social and emotional support.” Consequently, she explained, students must have “a lot of their needs to be met by their classroom teachers.”

At each school, principals were convinced that a two-way, information-rich process of hiring had played a significant role in their success. “Good hiring matters,” Principal Ryan explained, “If you hire well, and you’re explicit beforehand, you don’t need to fire people... If you’re really clear about what kind of teacher [a Rodriguez teachers is]... [applicants] just know they’re not that teacher and they’re like... ‘This isn’t the right environment for me.’” If they subsequently discovered that teachers disagreed with the school’s mission and culture, school leaders often took responsibility. As one said, “It’s probably just our fault in hiring.”

Components of a Two-Way, Information Rich Process

Decision Making Authority and System Management

The schools employed a range of systems for managing the hiring process. At all six, the school-based leadership team was ultimately responsible for offering positions and every principal reported spending a significant amount of time on hiring. At the district schools, principals often made these decisions with help from others. For example, at Dickinson, Principal Davila's decisions were informed by teachers on the school's hiring committee. At Fitzgerald, Principal Forte relied on her assistant principal and instructional coach in making hiring decisions, whereas at Hurston, Principal Hinds frequently consulted with other administrators. At the charters, a range of school-based administrators made decisions about hiring. Naylor's Executive Director Nelson said that Principal North had "decision rights" over hiring, although she often conferred with Nelson and with her assistant principal and teachers. At Kincaid, decisions were made by Principal Kain or by LIs. Finally, at Rodriguez, both principals recommended candidates to Executive Director, Tamar Rowland, who virtually always concurred.

While all principals were heavily invested in making hiring decisions, management of the hiring process was decidedly different at charter schools than at district schools. At the district schools, principals spent countless hours reviewing résumés in their personal inboxes and on the district's new online dashboard, and then personally communicating with candidates to schedule interviews and organize demonstration lessons. At these schools, hiring was often fragmented because, as one interviewee explained,

There's so many demands that in the moment, when you get the résumé and the person looks good and you're afraid that tomorrow they might take a different job, there's an instinct to call... then you're on the phone... and somebody comes in and has had a fight, so you hang up the phone and go to the crisis and then you never get to logging [the call]. So then, the next day... you remember, 'Oh! I called someone!'"

Consequently, district principals asked other administrators or teachers to help manage the process. One such administrator explained that although hiring is “outside the scope of my work... it needs to be done and there’s only so many human[s] who can do it.”

In stark contrast, at the charters the hiring process was formally managed by talent staff who had been carefully trained by their network and principals and who collaborated with school-based leaders to ensure a process that was organized and smooth for the school and for applicants. At Kincaid Charter Network, the talent division included ten members, who were responsible for staffing the five schools in the growing network. The recruitment team was directed by Lola Kelly, a TFA alumna with five years teaching experience. In addition to supervising three full-time recruiters, Kelly oversaw the network’s part-time “résumé reviewer”—a former teacher. At Naylor, one individual, Sophie Newton, a TFA alumna, was responsible for staffing the network’s three schools. Likewise, Virginia Rose managed staffing at Rodriguez. New to education, Rose had worked for decades in corporate human resources prior to joining Rodriguez.

The talent staff at all three charters had developed systems for managing the many applications they received—sometimes, according to administrators, hundreds per position. At Kincaid and Naylor, where the highly structured hiring process was codified in handbooks and rubrics, talent staff tracked the progression of each application on-line. At all three charters, talent staff reviewed applications and eliminated what one called “obvious no’s,” screened the “maybes,” and quickly spotted the rare candidate worthy of being “fast-tracked” through the process. The talent team alleviated the problems that the district school principals experienced with having to manage hiring along with all the other responsibilities in their school. Candidates recounted the benefits of that system. A current Kincaid teacher recalled, “The hiring process

was great.” He said he “was very impressed...I didn’t feel like their questions were necessarily revolutionary, but I felt like the system of ‘We’re going to do a phone interview. It [will] be at this time... They didn’t even have a building yet... and they seemed very much to have their stuff together.” As an urban educator who had experienced working in what he called an “underperforming” district school, he said the organized system was a much-needed “breath of fresh air.”

The Process

Step 1: Screening

During the first phase of a multi-stage hiring process, all six schools relied on application materials—a résumé, sometimes a cover letter, and occasionally additional components—to decide whether candidates were worth serious consideration.

The Initial Application

Each school assessed a candidate’s initial application to determine whether a potential match existed. Because application reviewers “wield a lot of power,” as Lola Kelly explained, it was important for them to understand what the schools were seeking. All of the schools required applicants to submit a résumé, and some also requested a cover letter. The schools used these materials in different ways. For example, at Fitzgerald, Principal Forte explained that résumés gave her “a pretty good sense” of candidates’ teaching experiences—a priority, because her students “can’t afford a lost year” because they are “very fragile.” Others at her school relied on résumés for information about the candidates’ content knowledge based on the colleges they had attended and the degrees they had earned. This was important, as one administrator explained, because Fitzgerald students were “very far behind.” At Dickinson, Principal Davila looked for teachers with experience at specific schools within the district; she preferred candidates who had

attended WCSD schools, themselves. Because candidates applied to district schools through a centralized online system—and therefore could easily apply to multiple schools—Davila also looked for candidates who added “a personal note... saying how they’ve heard wonderful things about Dickinson and they really want to work here.” For certain positions, she also looked for specific experience and training. For example, in hiring a new literacy interventionist, Principal Davila scanned résumés for a teacher who was “Wilson-trained and ha[d] taught first grade.”

At Rodriguez Charter, several administrators said that, in addition to résumés, they carefully read cover letters. One explained that she looked for “interesting experiences,” such as living abroad or an esoteric job experience. Another said, “I like seeing if cover letters are thoughtfully done and if they have personality... I hate really dry, boring cover letters.” Her colleagues reported that they also used cover letters to learn about a candidate’s philosophy or, as one said, “thinking about children.” Several said that they quickly rejected applicants with subpar writing. In addition, Rodriguez administrators looked for teachers with experience in urban schools and one said that they “bring in almost anyone who has it.”

Step 2: Additional Pre-Interview Screening

Some schools invited candidates who passed the first round of paper screening to participate in an exercise before deciding whether they should advance to the next round. At Rodriguez, applicants were sent a “pre-screening questionnaire,” asking them about their educational philosophy, their interest in urban education, their classroom management strategy, and their approach to teaching specific subjects. The purpose was not only to learn about the candidates, but also to give them a sense of what the school stood for and to eliminate those who lacked genuine interest in Rodriguez. As one administrator explained, “it’s a kind of test to see how much you want to work here. If you’re sending your résumé to a thousand places and we

[say], ‘now do a little more work’ and you do that work, it’s showing that you want it.” She continued to describe the responses they sought, admitting that, “it’s not actually the answer that matters so much to me as—who is the person?” If the answers were “articulate, well thought out... if we’re on the same page, we bring them in.”

At Kincaid, Naylor, Fitzgerald and Hurston, a short phone interview conducted by someone other than the principal served a similar purpose. At Kincaid, the network talent team conducted roughly 100 phone interviews each week. They asked applicants scripted questions and considered their responses to determine what one called “mission fit and basic educational philosophy.” Candidates were assessed on a 5-point scale; they earned up to four points based on their responses and an additional point for meeting what the talent handbook called “strategic diversity requirements around gender, race, or second language.” Candidates who scored 3-5 points advanced to the next stage in the network’s process: an interview at a specific school.

At Naylor, Sophie Newton conducted all screening interviews, using a protocol to determine whether candidates were “mission aligned,” possessed a “growth mindset, and exhibit[ed] “organization and overall poise.” Newton reported that Naylor “never take[s] a chance on mission alignment,” which she ascertained by asking candidates why they wanted to teach at Naylor. “If they don’t have a good answer,” she said, “that’s a big red flag. If they don’t ever mention the achievement gap, if they don’t ever discuss urban kids and that all students need good teaching—not just rich white kids”—they are rejected.

Newton said that Naylor quickly rejected candidates whose “attitude towards the students was “not respect-based, but instead deficit-based.” Executive Director Nelson explained, “We screen out any people with savior complexes, who think that they’re here to save our kids and there’s something wrong with them.” They sought candidates who said things such as, “I was

given an excellent education—I want to give that to others.” But, if a candidate said, “oh, these kids, the homes they come from’—as soon as the ‘homes they come from’ comes in, they’re not a good candidates for us.”

They further assess candidates’ attitudes, testing whether they have a strong internal locus of control. Nelson described asking questions such as “Tell us about your student who made the most progress last year and why. Tell us about the student who made the least progress and why.” They seek candidates who “own both sides”—rather than those who say things like, “really, it’s the parents in both situations.”

In contrast, Fitzgerald and Hurston reported using phone interviews to learn about what one called applicants’ “teaching practice and beliefs.” A Hurston administrator explained,

If they’re a literacy coach, I might ask [how they teach] tone and mood... If it’s math, ‘How do you get kids to not just do fractions, but understand fractions? What does that look like? How do you make it come alive for them?... What’s a difficult concept that you’ve cracked—that you have figured out how to present it to kids and engage kids with it and get them to master it?’

Similarly, Fitzgerald administrators asked teachers to describe their lesson planning process and posed scenarios to candidates, such as how they would approach teaching students who were significantly behind academically. Administrators explained that they sought candidates who recognized that, as one said, “it’s stressful, not only for the child, but it’s stressful for the family because nine times out of ten, there’s a behavior problem that’s attached to whatever is impeding the learning.” Administrators also reported asking teachers why they wanted to teach at Fitzgerald—a question that elicited responses that were, as one said, “helpful in understanding whether they’ve done any research on the school.”

Across schools, current teachers talked positively about their experience as candidates when they participated in a screening interview before meeting with the principal. At Kincaid,

one explained that it gave applicants the opportunity to learn more about “what the organization is about,” how it functioned, and then ask questions. It also enabled applicants to get a sense of what the school was seeking and, as another said, begin thinking about “how you could fit into that.”

Step 3: Interview with an Administrator

At most schools, the next step in the process was an interview with the candidate’s future supervisor—most often, the principal. At Kincaid and Naylor, school-based interviewers followed up on what the talent team had learned about candidates and further explored whether the candidate was, as Principal Kain explained, “philosophically inclined to want to hold the kinds of expectations we believe help students focus and prepare them for learning experiences.”

Principal Kain explained that he asked Kincaid’s applicants questions such as, “You see a student on Friday afternoon walking down the hall. They’re getting ready to leave and their shirt is untucked. What do you do?” Kain noted that applicants were “typically pretty candid if you ask that question without a lot of fNelsoning,” and the school used it to gauge candidates’ instincts:

If, philosophically, you might say something in that moment—‘I don’t think students should ever have to have their shirt tucked in,’ then you’re not going to really like that they have to raise their hands [in class]... or that we require them to sit up without their hands on their face.

He questioned whether such candidates were “coachable.” Current Kincaid teachers repeatedly reported that the school’s strict systems were a key attraction to the school. As one said, the interview made it clear that she would be able to “slip right into the culture” and teach, instead of dealing with behavior.

At other schools, administrators used interviews to learn more about candidates’ approaches to curriculum design. For example, a Hurston administrator explained that strong

literacy candidates would not say, “I use this textbook, or only this book.” Instead, she said, they would describe a more nuanced approach, such as, “if I want to grow the reading, writing, speaking of my English-language learners, then these are the key components of my classroom I need to have. I’m going to pull from this material and that material.” To her, such candidates would be “truly able to describe how they think about designing lessons... they’re describing, ‘Okay, these are some of the lower order things. These are some of the middle, the higher order thinking we want them to have, and this is how I’m going to scaffold it.’”

Current teachers recalled appreciating being asked to talk in depth about curriculum when they were being hired. They reported that these conversations helped them understand how the school would help them grow as teachers. For example, a math teacher at Rodriguez described her “long phone conversation with Tamar Rowland about math methodology in general.” In that conversation, the teacher explained, “she and I were just on the same page. Tamar is one of the most incredible people I’ve ever met, so smart and has her finger so on the pulse. As soon as I spoke with Tamar, I got off the phone and said... I hope I get this job.” Current teachers also explained that it had been important to them to know that their future colleagues were being carefully vetted for their subject expertise—especially when they would fill hard-to-staff middle school positions, such as one combining math and science. Teachers who took hard-to-fill positions often left quickly, and teachers who stayed wound up training their new, frequently novice, colleagues.

At Dickinson, the only school in the sample fully bound by the district’s new hiring process, Principal Davila was required to ask a particular set of questions in every interview. She said that this made the process “cumbersome.” She recalled one candidate who reported already knowing the questions because “they’re the same questions wherever you go.”

Therefore, Davila supplemented with “little questions” that allowed her to “go with [her] gut” about what she believed would be important for teachers at Dickinson—a commitment to working in partnership with families and an interest in the “family feel” of the school’s professional environment. Before the district began requiring her to use the scripted questions, Davila had asked candidates just two questions that she thought elicited important information about the candidate’s potential at Dickinson: “Tell me about your family” and “why do you want to be a teacher?”

The teachers Davila hired appreciated being asked to talk about their links to the local community and to their own family. To them, the questions signaled shared values—as did the personal manner in which the interview was conducted. One Dickinson teacher said that before she was hired, Principal Davila invited her prospective grade team colleagues to participate in the interview because, as Davila told them, “You’re the ones who are going to have to work with [her].”

Administrators across schools also thought of interviews as providing an opportunity to convey to candidates, as one said, “what we’re all about.” Teachers reported that this strategy worked. For example, a Kincaid teacher reported that she “knew in the interview that I would love working here” because of the “fabulous questions” she was asked, such as, “If you could wave a magic wand and fix things at your school, what would you do?” She was amazed to hear administrators discuss a vision that “might [actually] come true”—especially since, “as an isolated teacher” in another school, she had not always felt like teachers had a “hand in the vision.” However, based on her interview, “it was pretty clear that [teachers] would have a hand in it.” Likewise, a Rodriguez teacher who had been hired a decade earlier still remembered how her interviewer’s “really good questions” illuminated how special Rodriguez was. Compared

with her prior school—where “it was kind of like, ‘Do you plan on having any kids?’ All right, you’re hired,”—her interview at Rodriguez was “very interesting. The contrast was so remarkable.”

Step 4: Teaching Demonstration

In contrast to the hiring process in many schools, interviews carried limited weight in decisions by the schools in this study. As one Fitzgerald administrator explained, “you can have the most fabulous answers in an interview, but if you can’t stand up in front of the class and build positive relationships with students... it’s not going to be a good fit.” Therefore, every school in our sample required candidates to teach a demonstration lesson—or “demo”—before they decided whether to offer the applicant a position.

Principals repeatedly said that, as Hurston Principal Hinds remarked, “with demos you can tell really quickly” whether a candidate would be a match for the school. For example, Hinds recalled visiting one applicant’s classroom, at a school slated for closure. He said, “as soon as we walked in the room, I knew. I was like, ‘I want this woman... every kid should have this... teacher.’ Just remarkable.” For Hinds, “it was a reminder... to suspend judgment [about teachers in failing schools]...as soon as we walked out, we were like, ‘we’re done!’” Similarly, at Dickinson—which was requiring demo lessons for the first time—a current Dickinson teacher and hiring committee member compared watching two finalists for a dNelsona position teach:

One [applicant] did a demo lesson that was very... rudimentary and she spent... 10-15 minutes waiting for the kids to not only sit still... but looking at her and not moving. And I wanted to pull my hair out... and then she did a few fun little games, but they were very low level... Then the second woman that came in...she did classroom management... in about a minute... She had quickly told the kids what she wanted, where to go...[B]y the end of it she had taught them about pantomime. She had had the kids paint—with their bodies—this picture of being at a baseball game... She put one kid in a pose and it was obvious that the kid was about to hit a baseball and then she said ‘now, who could add something to this picture?’ One kid ran up... she had another kid selling hot dogs. Another person was cheering in the stands. Another person was an

umpire. Another kid was fielding – it was incredible. And, you know, both women gave pretty good interviews, but one – the demo lesson was—we all went back and were like, “okay so we’re going to hire her right?” And everybody was like “yes.”

He said that he and his colleagues “couldn’t believe how revealing” demos were.

Some principals preferred to observe candidates in their own classroom because, as Hurston Principal Hinds said, “context matters. You can’t manage a group of kids you don’t know.” Further, by April, when demonstration lessons usually occurred, he preferred “to see the relationships that [candidates] have with the kids that [they’ve] worked with all year.” A Fitzgerald administrator concurred, noting that when she observed applicants in their own classroom, she assessed whether they were “more stand-in-front-of-the-classroom-and-lecture, expect the kids to take notes and then do practice problems. Or do they have manipulatives?” She also observed, “What kind of work is on the wall? How have they prepared for me to come and see them? On a daily basis, what is it like to be a kid in their class? Do they have management issues?” However, others favored conducting demos at the hiring school, in a current teacher’s classroom. This saved principals travel time and allowed candidates to see the school and interact with teachers and students. It also allowed others to watch. At Dickinson, for example, hiring committee members watched the demos. At Rodriguez, Principal Rega always invited teachers to watch with her so she could “have some teacher voice” in assessing candidates’ teaching. However, arranging live demos introduced a host of logistical problems, which Naylor tried to solve by asking candidates to film themselves teaching—an approach that Principal North preferred because it allowed her to see candidates’ classrooms.

Some administrators gave applicants substantial guidance about what to teach during their demo. Principal Rega said she learned a lot about applicants from what they asked about the class they would teach: “I am always looking for that extra, that creativity, that critical

thinking, that something that's beyond... standard good teaching." She admitted, however, that she was also "pleased when [candidates] say, 'I'll just come in and do something.'" Principal North instructed Naylor's candidates to "tilt the [video] camera so that I can see the kids," which enabled her to provide "management feedback." Similarly, at Kincaid—which also focused on management during demo lessons—a novice teacher explained how she had been counseled by another teacher when preparing for her demo: "As long as you catch anything that looks off task, they'll love you... Sound confident... Stand up there and don't be afraid to give a demerit. Don't be afraid to be sharp and on task—don't let the kids intimidate you." Although she recalled that this advice was "very intimidating," it ultimately proved useful.

Several administrators explained that the lesson itself was not the most important factor in the demo; they were equally interested in what they called the post-lesson "reflection" because it helped them understand whether candidates possessed the "growth mindset" required to thrive at their school. Administrators assessed this in a formal debrief following the demo, where they looked for what the applicant said went well—or, more importantly—what did not. Principal Forte listened for whether applicants took personal responsibility for shortcomings in the lesson, or if they subtly blamed students. For example, she listened for whether a candidate said, "I wish I had put nametags on the kids when they were moving on the rug and I couldn't catch their attention'... or 'oh, the kids moved around a lot on the rug.'" Forte further explained that she was perpetually amazed at how often people resist or "try to fight" when she offered constructive criticism. Like her fellow principals, she knew that "if [candidates] can't take any hard feedback," teaching at her school was "not going to go so well." In the words of a Rodriguez administrator, "we want teachers to understand that that's part of being here."

Current teachers were generally very positive about their experiences with teaching demo lessons and debriefing them during their application process. Many said that they had expected schools would ask them to demonstrate their teaching and they reported feeling skeptical of schools where they were not asked to do so. At some schools, the demo requirement conveyed the priority that the school placed on pedagogy; as Principal Ryan observed, the teachers Rodriguez hires “do not want to work at a school where someone’s going to hire you just on how well you interview!”

At schools that viewed the post-lesson debrief as a key part of the demo process, current teachers suggested that the experience of getting feedback on their instruction was what convinced them that they wanted to work at the school. For example, one Naylor teacher, who left her previous school where she had been “thrown to the wolves” as a novice with no curriculum and no coaching, accepted a job at Naylor because of its explicit focus on supporting teachers. Another explained that, although she had delivered “kind of a dry, boring lesson,” she was surprised that the feedback she received “wasn’t...demeaning,” but rather allowed her to reflect. That experience contrasted with working at her previous school, where administrators “didn’t talk about the teaching when observing,” but instead assessed, “does your board look great? Is your room straight and neat?”... It was more of a performance evaluation than a teaching evaluation.” A third, recently hired teacher reported that he “loved the hiring process.” To him, the lesson debrief provided “a great preview of what it would be like to work [at the school]. Having taught at Naylor for less than a year, he reflected:

[It] was exactly the same tone and intent as my weekly debriefs with my principal after she observes me. The questions were...What did you think went well in this lesson? What are some things you think could have gone better? Instead of feeling like they were looking for canned answers, we really got into the nitty-gritty of the lesson in a way where I felt like... I had actually gotten a lot of helpful ideas about how to improve the specific lesson that I had sent them [and] a much better sense of the sort of classroom

management that they were looking for. They were commenting on how informal I was in the classroom, which I was really shocked by because I thought it was the strictest and most efficient class... and I was really proud of it.

At Kincaid, teachers similarly discussed how much their experience in the debrief mattered in their decision to join the faculty. For example, one teacher recalled the feedback he received in exacting detail: “The ratio of my voice to student voice was too high. I was talking too much and... the exit ticket was not aligned as well as it should have been to the objective of the lesson.” The teacher was invited back a week later to re-teach the lesson, incorporating the feedback. Another teacher told a different story about the extraordinary effort on the part of administrators to see her teach and the debrief signaled to her the support she would get at Kincaid. Because she lived out-of-state, she interviewed by phone and provided a demo video. Then, because she was, “dead in the middle of standardized testing,” a Kincaid administrator flew across the country to debrief with her in person. She explained, they “gave me pluses and deltas on how I can improve” and asked her to respond: “They wanted to see how I would interact with feedback.” Impressed, she moved to Massachusetts to take the job.

Although schools were less likely to see a demo lesson when hiring right before the start of the school year, some went to great lengths to ensure that they could see candidates teach, whether they were hired in early April, late August, or even mid-year. For example, summer hires at Rodriguez taught summer school students, and at Kincaid, they taught at a nearby afterschool club. However, although principals believed that demos are usually good predictors of who succeeds at the school, they did not find them foolproof. As Principal Ryan said, “even when you’ve seen the person teach, you’re still rolling the dice. You never know. People I thought were mediocre have been incredible. People I thought were incredible have been mediocre.”

Step 5: Meeting with Current Teachers

Before extending an offer, some schools engaged candidates in additional steps. At Fitzgerald, candidates were asked to collaborate with the grade-level team that they would join. For example, a fourth grade candidate might be asked to meet with the fourth grade team to analyze data and plan a future lesson. Determining whether candidates would collaborate well was crucial because, as Principal Forte believed, “a lot of our success is because we really work as teams—it’s like you’re married to your team.”

At Naylor, the virtual demo and debrief was followed by a school visit, during which candidates took a self-guided tour, met the principal, and interviewed with current teachers. Current teachers described the interview as informal, explaining that candidates could, as one said, “almost interview us too.” However, they also asked candidates tough questions. For example, one current teacher asked candidates about how they used data to inform instruction. She explained that if a candidate’s answer was “vague” or “not that great for us—like, ‘oh, I use projects to assess their understanding’” she “push[ed] them” because “we’re not really big fans of projects.” For example, she would follow up with, “do you ever use data from any sort of assessments to measure mastery of different standards? Can you give an example of that?” She tried to “get them to be more specific, because...we just believe in data. Tracking it speaks for itself... it’s not usually biased.” She believed that candidates who were “not experienced at using data, or maybe even have some opinions against it” would not fit well at Naylor, where quantitative data “informs everything.” At Naylor, teachers recorded their thoughts about candidates and the principal reviewed them before making a final decision.

Step 6: Reference Checks

Every school checked candidates' references before extending an offer. Although candidates generally listed references, principals sometimes contacted an applicant's current principal or colleagues—even if they were not listed. Sometimes references checks were informal—as Principal Hinds said, he had gotten great references “on the soccer field.” Usually, however, they were more formal. For example, Principal Davila explained that she regularly contacted her district colleagues to see “how [applicants] are doing at their old school.” Occasionally, she learned that applicants “that we thought would be amazing... were having [difficulties] at their old school, so much so that the principals really didn't want to say anything regarding them... They were very careful, but... they were not trying to keep them.” This type of information weighed heavily in a school's decision about whether to extend an offer.

Even when a school was eager to make an offer before another school did so, reference checking was—as one talent director puts it—“a hard and fast rule.” Schools generally did not have a standard set of questions. Instead, as Principal North explained, at Naylor they developed “a whole line of questioning... after we've met the person.” This was intended to yield “information on what we think they might struggle with.” For example, North said, “we watch a [demo] video, and let's say the management is just awful, but we have a great debrief where the teacher takes a ton of awesome feedback. Then you wonder, ‘Well, it's still really bad after two years.’” So, she would ask the reference “‘How often is this teacher getting observed? How often are they getting feedback? Have they ever responded negatively to feedback?’” North recalled a teacher with “terrible” behavior management who was “great on the phone. I found out from his principal he's never been observed. Well, if you have no one helping you, you're not going to get better.” After checking references, the principal might extend an offer.

Part III: Courting the Candidate

Although the schools received many applicants for each opening, the candidate pool remained shallow and strong applicants often received several offers. Recruitment, therefore, did not end once a candidate submitted an application. Instead, at various stages of the hiring process, schools worked to ensure that candidates would choose to accept an offer if extended. Current teachers said that this strategy worked. As one explained, Kincaid made her “feel wanted”—a welcome experience in her otherwise frustrating quest to find an urban teaching job.

District schools generally did not have, as one Hurston administrator said, “a ton of glossy, branding type of things.” Instead, they “do the selling with our results and with showing them what kind of team they’ll be a part of.” Charters, however, used their substantial hiring budgets to send applicants what one called “swag” emblazoned with the school logo. In addition, all schools paid close attention to what favored candidates were seeking in a school and then, based on those factors, customized their recruitment strategy. For example, a Rodriguez administrator explained, if a candidate “really wants to be in a place where they’ll be mentored and they’ll get some professional development,” she would invite that candidate to professional development and, “pair them up with a teacher to go and see what that’s like.” Similarly, she made sure that favored candidates saw the school’s unique features: “if we really like them but they still haven’t sat in on a town meeting, or a seventh grade science class, or even with a group of kids, we’ll get them in here and give them face time.”

Often, this “face time” involved a school tour after the interview, usually with the principal. Teachers repeatedly reported that they were sold on the school by this time they spent with administrators. As one recalled, the principal was “very personable—it wasn’t robotic, just relaxed,” which made her want to work for him. Likewise, principals described their strategy in spending time touring the building with teachers. At Rodriguez, Principal Rega said, “I walk

them around and I say, ‘when we’re going into the rooms you’ll see children who are all engaged. You’ll see children doing different things. You’ll see two teachers in a room... working with kids... This is the kind of place we are.’” Occasionally, parents or students conducted the tours.

In reflecting on their school tour, several teachers recounted being struck by what one called the, “feeling of when you walk in the school.” One said Dickinson was “noisy, dynamic, alive, happy!”—a welcome contrast to another school where she had interviewed, which was “quiet, orderly, and stuffy.” Similarly, a Hurston teacher described the atmosphere there as “bright” and “focused,” rather than “one of hostility. It’s not one of bare walls or old, broken-down things.” A Naylor teacher who had served as a TFA corps member in a “very disorganized” setting recalled being “blown away by...the work that I saw teachers doing [at Naylor] and just the overall calm of the school in comparison to my chaotic, ridiculous classroom.” She recalled realizing “there’s a lot of learning going on and not a whole lot of other nonsense. I want to be a part of that.”

At most schools, another form of courting candidates was what one dubbed “fast-tracking” those who seemed especially attractive during the process. For example, Naylor’s Sophie Newton asked such candidates to send a demo video before a principal’s interview and she occasionally checked references before the school visit so that Principal North could make an offer on the spot. Kincaid employed a similar process and hosted special days for applicants from pipeline programs like TFA and Preparatory Teacher Residency so that they could efficiently conduct interviews, demo lessons, and debriefs and make offers to coveted candidates quickly. However, while wooing was key, one talent director cautioned that it was important not to try too hard: “You don’t want to be that dorky kid who keeps asking others to the prom. We want them to want us as much as we want them.”

The Challenges of Implementing a Two-Way, Information Rich Process

Across schools, teachers who experienced a rigorous, information-rich process spoke about how it helped them prepare to join their school's faculty. However, the barriers to implementing such processes were significant, and principals often reported that the ideal two-way, information-rich hiring process that they described could not always be implemented as planned. Frequently, this was the result of the schools' differing levels of autonomy to make decisions, coupled with the bureaucratic requirements that some had to meet. In addition, principals explained that certain positions were difficult to fill, and that the strength of their hiring process could not make up for the weakness of a school's candidate pool. Nor could it counter the competition for the limited number of strong candidates.

Not surprisingly, teachers at schools with dedicated talent staff and substantial hiring budgets—namely those supported by CMOs—were far more likely to experience the hiring process as it was intended. But at district schools principals often said that the efforts of those in the central office rarely aligned with their needs and district personnel were frequently more frustrating than they were helpful. Some teachers in these schools reported having been hired in a haphazard fashion, often long after submitting their application either to the district or the school, and without having taught a demo lesson. Principals explained that when this happened it was often because WCSD's bureaucratic processes were, in the words of one, “too doggone tedious and long” and sometimes took until September, when, as another explained, “you're just sweating bullets... it's a mess, bureaucracy-wise.” Thus, despite principals' better intentions, several teachers whom we interviewed said that they had accepted jobs knowing little about their schools because, as they admitted, “I needed a job” and any position was “a foot in the [district] door.”

Principals at every school reported dealing with late and mid-year hiring challenges, because turnover was sometimes unpredictable. However, late hiring did not always yield negative results. As one said, “You never know who you’ll get in the summer, I got one of my best science teachers ever in the summer.” Similarly, teachers who were hired without experiencing the full process that the school regularly used sometimes considered themselves fortunate for having been hired by their school. One Dickinson teacher said, “I’m lucky. It’s a crazy, lucky story. It was written in the stars.” Another recalled, “As soon as I was here, I knew I wanted to stay... I’m so grateful that I took that chance and it all worked out.” But, on the whole, last minute hiring was extremely challenging and forced principals to make decisions that, as one said, “in my gut, I wasn’t comfortable with.” Likewise, some teachers who had been hired at the last minute were also less positive and had plans to leave. One disgruntled teacher said that she accepted her position because she had been laid off from another WCSD school just before summer and desperately took the first offer she received. She flatly stated that she “would not recommend that anyone work at the school.”

Even at schools that struggled less with timing and implementation, a rigorous and multi-faceted hiring process did not always ensure that schools could hire good matches. High-poverty schools are demanding environments, and even successful schools face a shortage of strong candidates, particularly in math, science, and special education. These positions were hardest to fill in middle schools for teaching multiple subjects—e.g. middle school math *and* science. As one administrator reported, her school offered a middle school math/social studies position “to like eight people who were really great, who all said, ‘in addition to being a demanding place to work, I have to teach history? I don’t know history!’” Exasperated, she said, “middle school math teachers want to teach math.”

One principal explained that when they could not find the candidate they sought, “we wait and wait and wait and hope we can find someone.” Frequently, as another explained, they ultimately “[took] chances on people who we might not usually take chances with,” which often meant hiring novices who needed significant support. It sometimes also meant deemphasizing subject knowledge and expertise in the hiring process. To some interviewees who had been hired to teach a subject in which they lacked expertise, this made sense. One current teacher who was hired as a novice recalled the administrator who hired him saying, “I can teach you how to teach math.” However, that was of secondary concern to his having a “no-excuses mindset—your willingness to hold students to high expectations and your mission alignment with the school,” which she did not think she could teach. Thus, she told him, “despite your lack of experience in math, based on your mission alignment and no excuses mindset, I know that we have a place for you.” The teacher understood her point and said she had boosted his confidence that he would “be in control probably regardless of what I’m teaching.” He took the job because he “wanted a seat at the [school’s] table.” In retrospect he thought this was a good decision, because “I was able to learn, I suppose.” However, as is common among out-of-field teachers (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010) some of the teachers we interviewed resented being asked to teach a subject in which they had, as one said, “absolutely no background.” Reportedly, those teachers tended to leave more quickly.

Even in subjects that are generally easier to fill, schools reported that the competition for strong teachers was fierce. Both charter and district principals noted that competition had been growing since the WCSD central office started recruiting candidates more actively. One principal observed that alumni of prestigious pipeline programs such as TFA and Preparatory Teacher Residency got “snapped up in 24 hours by middle schools across the country.”

Consequently, those responsible for hiring in the schools reported the need to make decisions more quickly than they would have liked. As one talent director said, “I’ve gotten people offers in less than a week.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Across the schools of this study, principals attributed their success with students to the teachers they had so carefully selected. To shape their hiring processes, each school had developed a clear philosophy about what it sought in teaching applicants. They drew upon that philosophy throughout the hiring process in assessing whether candidates were right for their school. At all schools, principals believed that teachers needed to be aligned with their school’s mission and with its unique philosophical and practical beliefs about how to achieve that mission. In addition, each school had its own ideas about the skills that teachers needed in order to succeed. At some, teachers had to be ready to enforce the school’s behavior system and at all schools, they had to be committed to the school’s prevailing pedagogy and well-matched to the existing professional culture, which called for collaboration and a desire to improve continuously. Teachers also had to be prepared to meet the challenges of working in a highly demanding, urban school, where students’ basic needs were often unmet.

Each of the six schools assessed candidates through a thoughtfully developed, two-way hiring process, which provided schools and candidates with ample opportunities to exchange frank information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract. At each school, the hiring process included multiple steps, such as screening résumés and cover letters, conducting pre-interview screening, an interview with the principal, a teaching demonstration and debrief, and a school visit where candidates interacted with current teachers and other members of the school community. Throughout these steps, schools recognized that they needed

to court candidates, so that an applicant who was offered a position would accept it. Although these hiring processes were intensive and time-consuming, administrators and teachers across the schools were clear that the investment of time and resources was highly worthwhile and helped to ensure a good, secure fit between a school and its teachers. Unfortunately, however, in spite of their best intentions, schools often faced challenges in implementing the information-rich hiring process that they had developed.

Implications for Policy and Practice

These findings provide a very different picture of selecting and hiring teachers than is typically reported about the practices in public schools. Despite widespread local policies that allow schools to develop a multi-step, information-rich hiring process, the schools in our study learned more about candidates during the pre-interview screening stage than most public schools learn about candidates during their entire process. Although we have no firm figures about the hiring experiences of all teachers at these schools, we know that they were routinely expected to demonstrate their teaching before being hired, which stands in stark contrast to the 7.5% of teachers who reported teaching a demo lesson in Liu and Johnson's (2006) study of new teachers across four states. In addition, candidates in our sample often had opportunities to interact with an array of school community members and were rarely hired before meeting future colleagues.

Several principals in our study said that the most important factor in their success was the autonomy they had in hiring. Collectively, these six schools make a case for increasing schools' power over how and whom they hire. Even if this is not currently possible within some districts, many components of their hiring processes were within the bounds of the hiring provisions that govern most public schools. Even Dickinson—a traditional school with no special autonomies—had the right to adopt most of the practices being employed at the others schools in the sample.

Therefore, principals who wish to maximize their school's autonomy in hiring might use this study's findings to guide their school-based, information-rich hiring process—one that allows both the school and its candidates to ascertain whether a promising fit exists. Simultaneously, state and district policymakers must recognize that, for district schools in our sample, contending with bureaucratic obligations was a major hurdle in implementing their carefully designed processes. In addition, district schools often lacked the resources that enabled charter school leaders to invest so much time in hiring.

School-based practitioners rarely can translate policies into strong practice without training and ongoing support in doing the new work. Lessons from our study might help states and districts maximize the potential of newly-granted autonomies more effectively. For example, we conducted our study as WCSD was implementing a new system requiring all schools to engage candidates in a multi-step process—one that began in early spring, rather than in late summer. Our findings illustrate the balance that districts must strike as they compel schools to change their long-standing practices. For example, at Dickinson, the new system felt “cumbersome” to the principal because it forced her to ask scripted questions that candidates already had memorized from interviews at other schools. Similarly, at Fitzgerald, administrators were overwhelmed with the tedious reporting about each candidate considered, which the district required. Yet, those interviewed at Dickinson were also impressed that the new system pushed them to begin hiring earlier and through a committee-based process. At all of the district schools, administrators appreciated the online system. In addition, Dickinson participants lauded the new mandate for demonstration lessons, which faculty members quickly came to see as valuable. Although the schools' hiring processes were at different stages of development when the district's new system was introduced, administrators at all three district schools said that the new

policies were pushing their practice in a positive direction. There is reason to be hopeful about the support that districts can offer and the standards that they can set for hiring—even in large, urban districts.

District officials might also learn from how CMO-based talent staff partnered with individual schools to support *their* needs, rather than functioning as a bureaucracy bent on standardizing and monitoring processes. Charter school administrators counted on their CMO as an indispensable partner in recruiting and vetting a pool of candidates who would be well-matched to their unique school organization. They expressed views that differed dramatically from those of WCSD district principals—some of whom viewed central office staff as unreasonable bureaucrats or “police,” as one said. As district officials take steps to improve hiring, they should consider how to become resources to district schools. For example, districts might pre-screen applicants through written applications and/or phone screens. Principals could subsequently read candidates’ responses or listen to recordings of phone screens. Such screens would also serve to minimize favoritism. Instead of mandating that principals ask a prescribed list of questions, district staff might engage school communities in a process through which they determine what their school seeks in teachers. Then, specialists from the central office who are assigned to specific schools might help hiring committees draft interview protocols designed to assess whether applicants are a good fit. Alternatively, districts could identify a set of topics that principals might cover and allow the principals discretion in how to address them. In doing this work, districts must also recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for supporting schools—both because schools differ in their needs and expectations and because some schools have well-established systems for hiring while others do not.

In addition, district administrators can learn from how teachers described their interactions with CMOs during their own hiring process—which starkly contrasted with how teachers described their interactions with the district central office. Numerous teachers who had initially tried to find a job in the district ultimately took one in a charter school, where they sometimes worked more hours for less money. They explained that this happened because they could not navigate what one called the “Kafkaesque nightmare” of bureaucracy. Of course, districts and schools might also learn from how CMOs and individual charter schools prioritized hiring by allocating substantial time, money, and personnel to the process. On the other hand, charter schools might learn from district schools, which held less fixed definitions of the profile of promising teachers.

It is important to note that a strong hiring process cannot make up for an insufficient candidate pool. Although these schools received many applications for each open position, the number of strong applicants was said to be very small. The six schools spent a great deal of time and resources competing for highly coveted candidates, and many of the candidates to whom they offered positions considered multiple offers. Further, because district efforts to improve hiring did not include comparable efforts to improve recruitment, all schools—even charters that did not belong to the district but operated in the same geographic region—reported that the competition for promising candidates was becoming increasingly intense.

Implications for Research

This paper contributes to what is known about how high-poverty schools that are doing well with their students conceive of and enact a successful hiring process, and how administrators and teachers experience and assess those efforts. However, significantly more information is needed to understand how the different components of hiring work. Future

research might follow candidates—both new teachers applying for their first job and experienced teachers transferring between schools or school systems—as they go through the process of securing a new job. For example, districts such as WCSD that are beginning to require all internal and external candidates to apply for new positions through a centrally-managed online platform, might survey applicants about where they are applying, how they learned about particular positions, and what factors eventually drove their decision about where to teach. Researchers might pay special attention to where teachers with promising résumés ultimately take positions, and they might conduct follow-up interviews with those who do not ultimately take positions in the district. In addition, future studies might also track whether and how schools within districts or CMOs that are revamping their hiring processes improve as a function of new hiring policies.

Researchers might also follow candidates over time to determine whether information-rich hiring predicts particular outcomes. For example, are teachers who taught demonstration lessons during the hiring process more likely to succeed with their students than those who did not? Are teachers who met with their future colleagues more likely to report positive experiences with collaboration? Are principals who hire inexperienced teachers through information-rich processes better equipped to induct and support them? Are teachers who report that they had a good preview of what it would be like to work at their school ultimately less likely to depart?

In conclusion, the six schools in this study present promising strategies for improving education for students who need their teachers most. While many reformers who seek to improve teaching quality have focused attention on teacher evaluation and other human capital practices aimed at remediating or dismissing weak teachers, the schools in our study invested a

large share of time and resources in hiring well. Ultimately, they reported, this meant that they were largely able to focus on helping good teachers become great, rather than worrying about dismissing teachers who were ineffective or were poor matches for their school. They focused on hiring candidates who were well-matched both with their future teaching assignment and with the school organization where they worked. It is unlikely that public education will fulfill its promise of being society's great equalizer if districts and schools continue to ignore the importance of hiring skilled and committed teachers strong talent and placing them in schools where they are likely to thrive.

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Appendix A: Sample Descriptive StatisticsTable 1. *Selected Characteristics of Six Sample Schools**

School Name	School Type	Grades	Estimated Enrollment	% Low-income students	% African American or Black Students	% Hispanic or Latino Students	% Other Non-white students	% White Students
Dickinson Elementary	Traditional District	PK-5	370	76	4	85	2	9
Fitzgerald Elementary	District - Former Turnaround	PK-5	390	85	70	25	3	2
Hurston K-8	District - Former Turnaround	PK-8	800	75	41	54	4	1
Kincaid Charter Middle	In-District Charter	6-8	475	88	50	30	10	10
Naylor Charter K-8	Charter	K-8	500	82	70	24	5	1
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	Charter	PK-8	420	72	55	20	7	18

*Percentages are approximated for confidentiality purposes

Table 2. *Number of Interviewees at Each School*

School Name	Administrators*	Non-Teaching Staff **	Teachers in Training	Teachers	% of Total Teachers in the School Interviewed
Dickinson Elementary	1	2	n/a	15	56
Fitzgerald Elementary	2	2	n/a	14	47
Hurston K-8	4	5	n/a	21	31
Kincaid Charter Middle	5	4	2	16	38
Naylor Charter K-8	2	3	2	17	46
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	3	3	3	16	36

* Administrators include directors of CMOs and school based administrators who directly supervise teachers.

** Non-teaching Staff includes instructional coaches, parent coordinators, data leaders, recruitment officers, deans of discipline and other administrators who do not teach students and do not supervise teachers

Table 3. *Total Teachers Interviewed at Each School & Years of Experience*

School	Novice* (1- 3 years)	2nd Stage (4 - 10 years)	Veteran (11+ years)
Dickinson Elementary	3	5	7
Fitzgerald Elementary	1	11	2
Hurston K-8	6	11	4
Kincaid Charter Middle	4	11	1
Naylor Charter K-8	8	7	2
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	1	9	6
Totals	23	54	22

*Does not include Teachers in Training

Table 4. *Race/Ethnicity of Teachers Interviewed*

School Name	Black (Includes Cape Verdean and West Indian)	Latino	Black & Latino	Asian	White
Dickinson Elementary	1 teacher	1 teacher 1 staff	1 teacher	1 teacher	1 administrator 11 teachers 1 staff
Fitzgerald Elementary	5 teachers	2 staff		1 teacher	4 administrators 2 staff 16 teachers
Hurston K-8	1 administrator 5 teachers			1 teacher	1 administrator 1 staff 8 teachers
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	1 teacher 1 TT	2 staff		2 teachers 1 staff	2 admin 13 teachers 2 TTs
Naylor Charter K-8	2 teachers		2 teachers	1 TT	3 admin 13 teachers 2 TTs
Kincaid Charter Middle	3 teachers 1 staff 1 TT	3 teachers		1 teacher	6 admin 2 staff 1 TT 12 teachers
Totals	21	9	3	8	101

Table 5. Race / Ethnicity of FTEs At Each School*

School	Total Number Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	African American	Hispanic	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	Asian	White
Dickinson Elementary	34	3 FTEs (8% of total)	6 FTEs (17%)	0 FTEs	1 FTEs (2%)	24 FTEs (73%)
Fitzgerald Elementary	44	20 FTEs (45%)	.5 FTEs (2%)	0 FTEs	2 FTE (4%)	21.5 FTEs (50%)
Hurston K-8	97	25 FTEs (26%)	15 FTEs (15%)	0 FTEs	3 FTEs (3%)	54 FTEs (56%)
Kincaid Charter Middle	51	10 FTEs (20%)	0 FTEs	3 FTEs (6%)	3 FTEs (6%)	35 FTEs (69%)
Naylor Charter K-8	61	3 FTEs (5%)	3 FTEs (5%)	0 FTEs	2 FTEs (3%)	53 FTEs (88%)
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	57	8 FTEs (13%)	5 FTEs (8%)	2 FTEs (4%)	2 FTEs (4%)	40 FTEs (71%)

These data were drawn from the Massachusetts DESE School and District Profiles and include information from staff during the 2013-14 school year. Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100.

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Teacher Interview Protocol

Intro: Study Explanation emphasizing that we really want to learn about your experience at this school.

1. Background:
 - a. How did you come to be in your current position at this school?
 - b. Starting with college, can you tell us what you've done?
 - i. Probe for: training and employment
2. Current Teaching Assignment:
 - a. What do you teach here?
 - b. How did you wind up in this position?
3. Overall view of school:
 - a. If another teacher would ask you, "What's it like to teach at _____?" How might you respond?
 - b. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a teacher here?
4. Hiring:
 - a. How were you hired at this school? Step-by-step.
 - b. Do teachers play a role in hiring other teachers? If so, how?
 - c. Has the hiring process changed at this school? If so, how and why?
5. Induction:
 - a. Did you have some kind of induction as a new teacher at this school? What worked and what didn't?
 - b. How are new teachers inducted now? How have things changed since you got here?
6. Support:
 - a. What kinds of supports are available here for teachers to improve their instruction?
 - b. What works well for you? What doesn't? (Probe: PD, Coaching, Collaboration, Evaluation)
7. Evaluation:
 - a. How is your teaching evaluated? Describe the process.
 - b. Was it helpful? How?
8. Administration:
 - a. Who do you go to for support? For what?
9. Social & Psychological Supports:
 - a. What sorts of social and psychological supports does your school offer for students?
 - b. What support do you get for interacting with parents and families?
10. Career goals:
 - a. How long do you expect to stay at this school? In what roles?
 - i. If yes: What keeps you at this school?
 - ii. If no: Why do you think you might leave?
11. Union:
 - a. What role does the union or the contract play in this school?
12. More: Do you have any additional comments?

Principal Interview Protocol

Overview of Study: 6 Schools, All high-poverty, high-minority. All Level 1.

1. Background:
 - a. How long have you been at this school? Prior experience in education? Anything else we should know about how you got here?
2. School Overview:
 - a. Could you first provide an overview of its structure and programs?
 - b. (Where applicable) What does it mean for your school to be a pilot/turnaround/charter school?
 - c. (Where applicable) How did you go about selecting teachers when ---- was placed in turnaround?
 - d. How would you describe it to a teacher or parent who might be interested in it—both its strengths and weaknesses?
3. Teachers: We'd like to get a sense of who your teachers are.
 - a. Where do they come from?
 - b. What formal or informal preparation do they have?
 - c. What attracts them to the school?
 - d. Approximately, what proportion has fewer than 10 years of experience? 5 years of experience? 0-5 years of experience? (Has that changed or remained steady?)
4. Recruitment and Hiring:
 - a. Could you describe the process you use to recruit and hire teachers? (Applicants per position? Teaching demonstration? Who decides?)
 - b. What challenges do you face in recruiting teachers?
 - c. Are there specific demographics or subject areas that you have trouble finding/attracting? If so, how have you addressed those challenges?
5. Assignment:
 - a. How do you assign teachers to a particular grade or subject?
 - b. Could you describe the teachers' responsibilities, both during school hours and outside of school hours? Scheduled and unscheduled time?
6. Compensation:
 - a. Please tell us about the pay scale for teachers. Are there additional stipends? If so, can you describe these opportunities?
7. Collaboration:
 - a. Are the teachers organized by teams, grade-levels, subjects? If so, what does that mean for how they do their work? What is the work of those teams?
8. Supports:
 - a. What supports can a new teacher count on in getting started? And for more experienced teachers?
9. Role:
 - a. Are there specialized roles for some teachers? (Teach Plus, team leaders, etc.) If so, please describe these roles.
10. Curriculum:
 - a. Does the school provide a curriculum for the teachers? If so, please tell us about it.
11. Professional Learning:

- a. Do you have formal professional development? Instructional coaches? If so, please tell us about them.
12. Supervision and Evaluation:
 - a. How do you supervise teachers? How do you evaluate teachers? Are these separate processes? Do students' test scores play a role in evaluating teachers?
13. Dismissal:
 - a. How frequently do you dismiss or decide not to rehire a teacher? Reasons?
14. Retention:
 - a. How long do teachers stay? Why do they stay? Why do they leave? Is there a type of teacher who stays or leaves? Is turnover a challenge?
15. Policy Context:
 - a. Does state or local policy play a role in how you approach building your teaching capacity?
16. Union:
 - a. What role if any does a teachers' union play at your school?
17. Have we missed anything?

Recruitment Director Interview Protocol

Overview of Study: 6 Schools, All high-poverty, high-minority. All Level 1

2. Background:
 - a. How did you come to be in your current position at this school?
 - b. Starting with college, can you tell us what you've done?
 - i. Probe for: training and employment
3. Current Role:
 - a. Please describe your role at this school / in this CMO.
 - b. How did you wind up in this position?
4. Overall View of School:
 - a. How do you describe the school to potential candidates?
5. Recruitment and Hiring Process Overview:
 - a. Please describe the process through which you recruit and hire candidates.
 - i. Probe Recruitment: How do you identify candidates? What pools of candidates do you rely on? What are your best sources for teachers?
 - ii. Probe Hiring: Once a candidate has decided to apply, what are the steps he / she must go through?
 1. How is the school principal involved in recruitment / hiring? How do you interact about the process?
 2. How are other teachers involved in recruitment / hiring?
6. Challenges:
 - a. Are there particular positions that are especially difficult to fill? How do you address these challenges?
 - b. (If it doesn't come up): Have you faced challenges related to staff diversity? If yes, please describe the challenges.
 - i. What have you done to address those challenges?
7. Determining Fit:
 - a. What do you look for in a candidate?
8. The Offer:
 - a. How do you approach making an offer?
 - b. Once you've made an offer, how do you ensure that the candidate accepts the position?
 - c. If you lose candidates, where do they go and why?
9. Midyear Hires:
 - a. How often do you replace a teacher mid-year? Does the process differ, and if so, how?
10. More:
 - a. Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix C: List of Codes and Descriptors

Codes	Description
Assignment	Teacher Assignment: What do you teach/ your job at the school, views of your assignment
Background	Background: Past work history, education
WhyTeach	Why teach? Personal sense of purpose can include changes in views over time.
SchoolOverview	Facts about the school (the facts but not mission or culture), might include specific school goals
HistorySchool	History of School
FacultyComposition	Descriptions of the composition of the faculty
Equity	Interactions, policies or dynamics described in relation to race, ethnicity, social class
Hiring	Related to teacher recruitment, hiring, including teacher’s experience of being recruited / hired. –timing, demo lessons, debriefs, meetings with current teachers, written applications, Who the school seeks and how they find candidates
WhySchool	Why chose school - why teach at this particular school? May reflect changes over time
Mission	Descriptions of what the school aspires to accomplish (if explicitly talking about mission do not double code with culture)
AdminAdmin	Interactions / relationships among administrators (including non-teaching positions such as coaches and guidance, deans and other non-teaching roles)
AdminLeadership	Descriptions of administrators’ style, vision, agenda, priorities, purposes, etc. (includes self-descriptions)
AdminRole	Specific responsibilities and job descriptions of non-teaching faculty
AdminStudent	Relationship between administrators and students (include coaches, guidance, deans and other non-teaching roles)
AdminTeach	Interactions between administrators and teachers (include coaches, guidance, deans and other non-teaching roles in this code)
Demands	Teachers professional responsibilities and expectations, work hours, teachers views on demands
Resources	Material and human resources (money, buildings, positions, --if it is about admin roles will be double coded in Adminroles) - Facilities
Accountability	Related to external accountability (state accountability status and state testing, turnaround status) - what the state does and then what is done as a result
DistrictNetworkState	Formal relationships / governance from State, District or CMO, includes school boards and trustees
Testing	References to standardized tests, state tests, network tests and interim assessments and how used in the school
MonitoringStudents	Teachers’ use of assessments and instructional strategies to monitor achievement
Student	Student Characteristics: Descriptions of students and their community
Neighborhood	Descriptions of the local surroundings of the school
Family	Ways of connecting families and community to school, Perceptions of parents/ families + Teacher and admin connections to parents / families
CurriculumPedagogy	What and how you teach - including instructional planning
SpEdELL	Descriptions of programs or approaches for educating students with special needs and /or ELLs
SpecialSubj	Referring to non-core academic classes (art, music, library, dance, etc) and extra-curricular or co-curricular programs or activities

The Matchmaking Process

SchoolCulture	Expressions of school-wide norms & values including kids, teachers and parents (not explicit statements of mission), big picture that everyone from school would understand
Colleagues	Commentary on colleagues and their characteristics (what I think about the people I work with) - big picture impressions of colleagues
ProfCulture	Professional Culture- the norms of being a teacher or admin in this school. Big picture expectations for how we work together as professionals
Eval	Related to teacher supervision and evaluation: observations, feedback, meetings between supervisors and teachers, how work with teachers on instruction
Coaching	Formal instructional coaches, but NOT induction mentoring
Induction	Programs and supports (formal and informal) for new teachers: prior to day 1 and after day 1
FormalCollab	Deliberate, structured groups working together-organized by the school- including whole school sessions – including approach to lesson planning and who is included and who is not - JUST TEACHERS
InformalCollab	Specific work with colleagues that is not organized by the school, informal collegial interactions -JUST TEACHERS
RolesTeach	Formal roles and opportunities for career advancement (Teach Plus etc.) may have double coding when example of influence through a formal role including leadership teams, Teachers in Training, etc.
InfluenceTeach	Teacher opportunities as brokers of influence (teachers generally in their work having influence), including committees where you can voice concerns - Admin change view because of a teacher
CareerGrowth	Individual professional growth for career progression
OrderDiscipline	Safety, systems, expectations and rules for students, and enforcement
StudentSupports	Social and emotional and academic supports for students and behavioral - outside of classroom structure
StudentTeach	Interactions among teachers and students inside and outside the classroom.
Turnover	Why other people stay or leave; both causes and frequencies, personal plans to stay or leave, also about satisfaction and dissatisfaction, might be stuck in job
Pay	Payscale, stipends and other things related to compensation
Partners	Partners including City Year, Teach Plus, Ed Schools, etc.
Union	Related to the union and the contract
Gem Quote	This is a great quote.

Descriptor Categories for Characterizing Interviewees

Descriptor	Definition	Response options
School	School Name	
Grade Level	Grade Level Presently Taught	Non-teacher, pre-k, k,1, 2, 2 or more grades, all grades, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Gender	Gender	Male, female
Position	Position in the school or system	Recruitment officer, CMO administrator, principal, non-teaching faculty or administrator, teacher, assistant teacher / resident teacher, split role: teacher and other non teaching job
# years at this school	# of years working at this school counting this year	
# years at charter	# of years working at charter schools in total	
# years at district schools	# of years working at district schools in total	
# years at private schools	# of years working at private schools in total	
# years teaching	total of charter, district, private years	
Race / Ethnicity	Self-identified race / ethnicity	Black, White, Caribbean, Cape Verdean, Latino/a, multi-racial, other, Asian
Classroom type	Type of classroom in which interviewee teaches	Self-contained elementary multi subjects, departmentalized core subject, specific subject non-core, ELL/ Special Ed only