

WHEN THE INTERVIEW IS NOT ENOUGH: A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW WAY OF SELECTING THE BEST TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a nine step proposal for a teacher hiring to revitalize the current, less effective practice of hiring new teachers based on a written application and a single, short, face-to-face interview. The nine steps include: pre-screening applications; a phone interview; an observed lesson; a short-term apprenticeship with a master teacher; a student engagement problem solving task (on apprenticeship); a formal interview; a conflict embedded problem solving task; a student achievement data action planning task; and, a final screening interview. While it is recognized that this hiring model is much more time consuming and labour intensive than current hiring practices for new teachers, it is also hypothesized that this front end effort may be of benefit in ensuring that the best teachers ultimately get to teach and that less administrative time may be needed as a result to bolster, supervise, and perhaps remove less effective teachers from the profession.

Keywords: teacher hiring, teaching interviews, hiring for schools

Introduction

Teacher hiring is an important current topic in educational contexts because a surplus of teachers in many areas of the country has created unprecedented mobility of new teachers across provinces and some newly certified teachers are taking their first teaching positions in remote contexts, for which they may be ill prepared culturally. For years, some form of interviewing has been the main, and often the sole, approach used by school jurisdictions to select the teachers they ultimately hire. This practice can be problematic for several reasons.

In some jurisdictions, hiring team members may have little background in hiring approaches and may have little to no training for the task of teacher hiring. Additionally, in some instances, teaching interview questions are being selected or scripted by people other than the actual interviewers. This is problematic because the topics, scope, and focus of questions reflect a set of beliefs about what characteristics are of value in new teachers. These may not be the beliefs that are common to those people actually involved in the hiring, and in some cases, may reflect foci that are not even understood by the hiring teams. Also problematic is the relatively short time invested in making decisions about whom to hire. A typical teacher-hiring interview is often less than 30 minutes. In this brief span of time, interview teams must try to make the best possible decision about whom to hire. This is a daunting prospect when one considers that the outcome of this 30-minute decision-making process could affect thousands of children and their families for the next thirty years or more!

Similarly problematic is the inequity in local legislation that may influence how teachers can be hired and the filtering processes that they may have to endure before they are even offered an interview. In the Canadian context, inequities are the result of the provincial or territorial jurisdiction over educational mandates. Finally, it is also problematic in the current selection process that teachers' federations or unions are so effective at doing what they were constituted to do. Federations protect teachers. In the hiring process, this can create problems for teacher hiring because federations and unions protect the rights of the already hired teachers, and may do so even if a teacher is ineffective. This may cause hiring teams to be overly cautious about whom they hire for new teaching positions if they perceive that bolder choices may become contentious or run afoul of federation or union policies.

Teacher hiring is a high stakes process. It therefore behooves us to consider ways we might optimize its legitimacy as an effective and universally respected process. With effective teacher selection processes, those charged with the task of hiring new teachers can buffer the usual fame or blame outcome of hiring when their hiring decisions result in the system gaining new and highly effective teachers. To that end, this paper focuses on outlining a framework for a new approach to hiring that includes the traditional interview as only one component of the teacher selection process.

Literature Review

A key factor in the success of students is the quality of the classroom teachers with whom they spend their instructional time (OECD, 2004, 2005; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). The impact of the teacher is a higher influential factor in determining who may succeed and who may not, than other factors such as school climate (Dinham, Ingvarson, & Kleinhenz, 2008) or standardized test scores. Such influence highlights the crucial nature of effective hiring practices to ensure that the most effective teachers get to teach (Walsh & Tracy, 2004). School and jurisdiction hiring teams have a vested interest in implementing effective hiring strategies to increase the chances of improving student success (OECD, 2004; 2005).

Those charged with hiring teachers can reasonably be assumed to be trying to ensure that they hire the most effective teachers. Interviews and other filtering strategies for hiring generally have some criteria that support the interview selection process. Such criteria may be stated in jurisdictional policy documents or identified in selection criteria and retention supports for newly hired teachers (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007). School systems attempt to leverage student success by ensuring that decision-makers can hire quality teachers and then support their continuous growth once they are in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2001; 2003; Harris, 2004).

However hiring teams may lack local or jurisdictional policies to guide their selection process. In this case, hiring teams may be guided by personal perceptions, idiosyncratic assessments, and relatively unacknowledged value judgments (Cranston, 2012). To complicate the selection of hiring new teachers, it may be that hiring individuals or hiring teams have different conceptions of teacher effectiveness (Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009). Defining an effective teacher is a subjective and interpretive act (Cochran-Smith and Power, 2010; Rabinowicz & Travers, 1953) so there may be little consensus on the usefulness of a hypothetical or narrow definition of teacher effectiveness (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2003) and those charged with hiring effective teachers may disagree about what effectiveness is in the context of the new hire.

There is no known method of consistently predicting the effectiveness of a teacher in the classroom once they are hired (Cashin, 1994) which further complicates the task of a hiring team. There is, however, general agreement among researchers that a teacher's actual classroom performance may have some predictive value about their future successes in the classroom (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010; Gladwell, 2008; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Jacob & Lefgren, 2006). However, aside from written reports about classroom performance during the teacher's preparation program, it is not typical for actual classroom demonstrations to be included as an aspect of an interview.

Many jurisdictions rely heavily on a brief interview to identify the most promising new teachers. When teachers are hired for teaching positions outside of their local area or internationally, the interview may be conducted by one interviewer, by phone or electronically through programs such as Skype. As well, while many jurisdictions train their hiring personnel to use performance based interviewing techniques to structure questions that bridge the gap between past practice and future practices, some hiring teams receive no training at all. Jurisdictions attempt to improve the cadre of employees who show most promise that they will leverage student achievement by being effective in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; OECD, 2004; 2005; Wise, Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1997) and may attempt to improve the quality of the interview process to improve their screening practices. The effort to improve screening by improving interview quality is essentially an effort to match the organizational needs with the available talents of applicants and the classroom demands of an effective teacher (Herriot, 1989; Montgomery, 1996; Plumbley, 1985; Zhu & Dowling, 2002). This effort may help potential employers design and use strategies that will help their organization identify the most promising teacher qualities (Cochran-Smith & Power, 2010). This practice is inherently problematic if jurisdictions fail to use a systematic, research-based approach to the hiring practices, and especially problematic if the employer relies heavily upon an ineffective, single method of selecting new teachers as they make such high stakes decisions (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007; Walsh & Tracy, 2004).

Current hiring practices may further be problematic in two key ways. First, evidence that school jurisdictions make effective decisions about whom they hire in the selection of teachers is largely unavailable (Boyd et al, 2007). Recent research (Authors, 2012) shows that some school administrators have very low confidence in the effectiveness of the interview selection processes used in their jurisdiction, especially as they often hire new teachers for system positions rather than for their own schools. Second, new teachers may be unaware of how to prepare for hiring, how interviews are conducted, and how to anticipate the needs of various jurisdictions, leaving them unaware of how to improve their prospects of obtaining their first teaching position (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011).

Interviewing may largely be a subjective process, whose goal is to yield an objective outcome. The tension between the use of objective criteria for hiring (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2007) and the subjective practice of hiring based on interviews and references may confuse the issue of trying to ensure that the most effective teachers ultimately get hired. This tension defines the key weakness of our current practice of relying too heavily, even exclusively, on interviews to select the most promising new teachers. When the subjective approach of relying on interviews is used exclusively, the high stakes task of hiring the most effective teachers may rely on a faulty assumption; that those responsible for hiring can successfully identify the candidates' characteristics through the interview alone (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Additionally, some research shows that school-based hiring may provide those charged with the task of hiring teachers with better teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997; DeArmond, Gross, & Goldhaber, 2010) and ensure more confidence among hiring team members than hiring that is undertaken for a system-wide list of hires (Authors, 2013). By implementing school-based hiring, principals can select teachers whose characteristics they perceive to fit the school and its needs (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Firestone & Louis, 1999). This practice supports the healthy development of the desired school culture. But, in many jurisdictions, administrators hire for system positions and may have little say in who is assigned to their school.

Hiring jurisdictions need to use approaches that are both systemic and consistent for the task of hiring teachers (Fullan, 2011). Some jurisdictions are now using a multi-staged selection process, called predictive hiring, that attempts to find the best fit among teacher candidates (Pappano, 2011). Multi-staged hiring processes address the need to support educational improvement by attempting to predict the best teachers by hiring smarter, thereby flagging problematic fits at some stage in the process. Multi-staged hiring processes support the traditional resume, application letter, and interview with the addition of further filters. Additional filters may provide better data upon which to make a teacher hiring decision.

Predictive hiring approaches can include a sequence of the following stages: an initial phone interview; the observation of a model lesson taught by the teacher applicant; a face-to-face interview; a problem-solving email exercise (e.g., responding to an angry parent); and, a professional task simulation (e.g., a student achievement data analysis) to help hiring teams select the best teacher. Predictive hiring practices may help hiring teams to select the best applicant for the teaching position. Such a person may fit the organization in several ways, including a fit between the applicant and the work environment, the job requirements, the organization/school and its culture, and the group with whom they will work (Anderson, Lievens, van Dam & Ryan, 2004; Antonioni & Park, 2001; Ehrhart & Makransky, 2007; Kristof-Brown et al, 2005; Sekiguchi, 2004). A prior study shows that assessments of fit between the applicant and the organizational culture may predominate in hiring decisions (Karren & Graves, 1994).

While these measures of fit may be varied and may provide some diverse data in the hiring process, it seems unlikely that interviewers are simultaneously and systematically assessing fit as the compatibility between the interviewee and the professional demands of teaching, competence for the job, organizational fit, and group fit in the absence of a conceptual framework to structure these diverse and sometimes competing goals.

Complicating the teacher selection process is the lack of clarity about what characteristics make a teacher effective. Similarly, how highly effective teachers are chosen in the selection process can be problematic. Theories about optimizing human capital (Schultz, 1961) to get the best fit of candidate to needs may be more subjective than is productive, and predictive approaches to hiring, while showing some promise of positive yields, are yet to be proven and are labour intensive to implement. However, experienced educational supervisors will recognize that supporting, supervising, and possibly terminating ineffective teachers is likely much more costly to the supervisor, the school, the children and their families, and the school system. In recognition of this paradox, the remainder of this paper is devoted to providing suggestions for a way forward that may help hiring teams acquire the most promising teachers through a multi-staged, high impact hiring process.

A New Way Forward When the Interview is Not Enough: Multi-Staged High Impact Hiring

Introduction to Multi-Staged, High Impact Hiring

A key feature of multi-staged high impact hiring practices is the flexibility of the process. Those who are hiring teachers can select from among the full range of suggested hiring practices to make use of the stages that fit their local circumstances. A second key feature of this model is the absolute need for hiring teams to have training in all aspects of the model. Only by attending to these two key features can hiring teams buttress their hiring decisions by using data about each candidate which they can triangulate to ensure that the strongest possible teacher candidates ultimately get to teach.

Multi-staged high impact hiring has the following potential stages from which to design a local hiring process. It is our contention, however, that school jurisdictions would benefit from using all stages of the following model, including:

- pre-screening applications
- a phone interview
- an observed lesson
- a short term apprenticeship with a master teacher
- a student engagement problem solving task (while on apprenticeship)
- a formal interview
- a conflict embedded problem solving task
- a student achievement data action planning task
- a final screening interview

Hiring teams will, of course, be subject to the decisions of their jurisdiction about the extent of their engagement in all nine aspects of this model for hiring new teachers. Each aspect of the total process is explained in the following paragraphs by identifying the goals of each stage, the structure required within the stage, strategies for gathering relevant data about the performance of the teacher candidate at each stage, and the transitions needed between stages to make each one optimally productive.

Pre-screening applications

Virtually all school jurisdictions require that teacher candidates provide written documentation for application to any teaching job openings. Pre-screening applications should allow hiring teams to:

- confirm the applicant's qualifications for the position;
- confirm intentions to engage in ongoing professional growth;
- assess the level of confidence evident in the applicant's statement of application or cover letter; and
- determine the level of appropriate teaching or teaching related experiences offered by the applicant to support their application.

Current problems with pre-screening applications at present are of two types. First, the hiring team members may not participate equally in the determination of who moves on the next stage of screening because they may not all be invited to view the applications. Often, only the school principals, and sometimes only human resources department personnel assume responsibility for pre-screening and thereby narrowing the pool of candidates from among all applicants. This is problematic because the interviewers are stepping into the process mid-stream, without having an opportunity to gather comparative impressions about how each applicant presents her/his self in written form. When human resources department personnel are engaging in pre-screening, the problem is compounded because they lack the professional training to provide appropriate filters for concepts embedded in a teacher's description of their philosophy or their intentions within their classroom.

A more suitable approach would see all hiring team members engaged in vetting, sorting, and selecting applications from among all applicants. To do this effectively, and to sustain the working relationship productively through all stages of the hiring process, the hiring team should meet before the pre-screening stage to build consensus about the needs for the position and determine criteria they intend to apply to written applications to help them identify who will move on to the second stage of hiring.

A Phone Interview

The second stage of multi-phase teacher hiring should include a phone interview. This interview has the following purposes:

- to determine if the applicant can speak in depth and with conviction about their beliefs and philosophy of learning as stated in the written application;
- to identify perceptions of the applicant's confidence in professional communication; and
- to establish commitment to the next phases of multi-staged hiring should these be offered to the candidate.

To gather data from this stage of the interview process, it will be important for the hiring team members to have a pre-planned list of questions or discussion items and a pre-established list of ideas and concepts they would hope to hear in the candidate's discussion. As information will be exchanged quickly at this phase of the interview process, pre-established responses will be essential supports to ensure that key ideas are captured during the discussion.

Once again, it is critical that all members of the hiring team be present at the phone interview, have a clear perception about its purposes, and have opportunities to discuss perceptions of the phone interview prior to the next stage of the process. Technologies that allow for videoconferencing could be used at this stage instead of telephone communication, but whatever technology is used it should allow all members of

the interview team to engage in all aspects of this stage of interviewing. The interview team will also need to have established a strategy for identifying when and how applicants will be invited to the third phase of the hiring process before they engage in the phone conversation.

An Observed Lesson

If the hiring team is impressed by the written application and the phone interview of a candidate, they may require that the candidate teach a lesson in a context identical to, or similar to, the one to which they are applying. All members of the hiring team should be involved in observing the lesson, preferably in person, but at least electronically in real time. This will allow hiring team members to discuss the lesson immediately after it is taught and to identify impressions while they are fresh. In this context, it is critical that the hiring team members are equally clear about the students' learning goals for the lesson and the professional skills related to these goals that will be assessed in the candidate. It would be unfair to both the candidate and the hiring team to have poorly structured expectations for this highly stressful effort by the teacher candidate. For example, the teacher candidate may be told that students are to learn the parts of a plant (the learning goal) and that the teacher candidate is to display their skills with teaching to address various learning styles and readiness levels by tiering parts of their lesson. Immediately following the lesson, the teacher candidate should have immediate feedback from the hiring team as to the strengths and areas they should improve in such a lesson. Such feedback is a professional courtesy to the candidate but it will also help the interview team formulate their summative comments and overall conclusions about the candidates' skills. A written summary of the hiring team's evaluation of the lesson should be provided as soon as possible after the demonstration lesson and before the next stage of the hiring process. A strategic format for written feedback can keep the feedback focused and the challenge of writing a timely report manageable (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Written Feedback of a Teacher Candidate's Demonstration Lesson

Did the teacher candidate meet the learning goals for the students?	Did the teacher candidate display the professional skills that were expected?

Anecdotal notes that show evidence for each of these questions should be provided for the candidate in detail.

After the observed lesson, both the interview team and the teacher candidate should see engagement in further steps of the interview process as a serious show of interest in employing the teacher. The next stage of the interview process is more labour intensive and resource dependent so it should only be made available to the most outstanding of the candidates as determined by their input in the previous three stages of the process.

At this fourth stage of the process, the teacher candidate should be assigned to a teacher employed by the jurisdiction who is recognized and valued for their professionalism and strong teaching skills...a master teacher. The teacher candidate should be assigned to the master teacher for a period of one to two weeks.

This time should be both a learning time for the teacher candidate and an additional opportunity for the hiring team to gather data about the teacher candidate’s suitability for the position. At this stage of the process, no master teacher should be required to evaluate the work and engagement in the apprenticeship for the teacher candidate. This could create awkward collegial relationships and may subvert the goals of the hiring team. Rather, the hiring team members should each visit the apprenticeship classroom at least once during the apprenticeship time and observe the teacher candidate. As with the lesson observation, the hiring team should be very clear about what professional skills they hope to observe in the candidate during this apprenticeship and that list of skills should guide their observations. Depending on local contracts with teachers and the jurisdiction’s culture related to hosting and mentoring colleagues, the jurisdiction may need to pay a professional stipend to the master teacher to recognize the additional work involved in the mentoring process.

A Student Engagement Problem Solving Task

This stage of the interview process should be embedded in the previous stage. While teacher candidates are working with a master teacher on a short-term apprenticeship, they should be assigned the task of addressing a student engagement problem. Such a task will provide interview team members with a sense of the candidate’s ability to: isolate issues related to learning success; identify appropriate reengagement strategies; use an IEP as a working document designed to improve instruction; display their creativity and imagination in instructional contexts; empathize with a learner who struggles with a context; and, support student success with a “whatever it takes” attitude. To make this stage of the interview process realistic, it is essential that the teacher candidate is challenged to provide support for a student with this reengagement task while managing and supporting the learning of the remainder of the students in the class.

Hiring team members who observe this stage of the interview process will need a deep understanding of the principles and concepts of differentiated instruction and will need an observation framework that will allow them to record specific observations (Figure 2) of related professional skills in a context that happens quickly, casually, and within a dynamic lesson infused with interaction and activity. This is not an easy observation task and will require that the hiring team member(s) is especially trained in issues related to student engagement and differentiated supports for student success.

Figure 2 Observation of an Embedded Student Engagement Task

Criteria for Observation of an Embedded Student Engagement Task (Stage 4)	Observer’s Notes	Observer’s Conclusions and Recommendations
Isolates issues related to learning success		
Identifies appropriate reengagement strategies		
Uses an IEP as a working document designed to improve instruction		
Displays creativity and imagination in instructional contexts		
Empathizes with a learner who struggles with a context		
Supports student success with a “whatever it takes” attitude		

Before teacher candidates move on to stage 5 of the multi-stage interview, the interview team should meet for two purposes: they should hear a report from the team member(s) who observed the last stage of the process and have an opportunity to digest both the observations and recommendations from the student engagement task, and they should design the questions to be asked during the next stage of the process, the face-to-face interview.

A Formal Interview

Recent past practice in many jurisdictions has made the formal interview a very difficult part of the teacher selection process (Authors, 2012). Principals who have had only the teacher candidate's written application, and a very brief (usually 25 to 30 minutes) time to interview candidates report dissatisfaction with the process. Shockingly, some principals who have hired teachers recently, report that they feel confident in the strength of their final hiring decision only about 50% of the time. Frustration among hiring principals about the validity of a formal interview to help them select the best teachers is compounded when the interviewers are not engaged in the process of setting the questions that will be asked during the interviews (W. Hill, personal communication, August, 2013). Without the opportunity to engage in setting the interview questions, the focus and purpose of the questions may not be clear to interviewers. In fact, principals who recently engaged in interviews where they had no question design input, reported that they had no idea what some questions were getting at and would have no idea how they themselves would address these questions if they were in the position of the teacher candidate (W. Hill, personal communication, August, 2013).

Interview questions always need to be designed with three key ideas in mind. They should provide enough information for interviewers to get answers to the questions: "Can you do the job?"; "Will you love the job?"; and, "Will we love working with you?" By ensuring that all interview questions are designed to provide information about these three questions, interviewers will be able to determine if the teacher candidate is a good fit for the organization, the school team, the job requirements, and the administrator's leadership style.

Interviewers need to be trained in interviewing approaches before they face this high stakes task. If interviewers are unaware of the orientations they have toward the job; are unaware of differences in their orientation compared to other interviewers; have no knowledge of the structure of interviews or of organizational fit theory; and, have had no time with the other members of the interview team to determine what questions should be asked of the candidates and what criteria they will apply as they listen to teacher candidates' responses, the interview will lack validity as an aspect of the selection process (Author, 2013). Interviewers should also consider the use of video technology to tape interviews so that they can revisit aspects of the interview as they discuss candidates' responses.

After the formal interview, applicants should get some feedback from at least one member of the interview team so that they are informed of the strengths they displayed in this context and areas that may pose a problem for the selection team. It is important that this feedback is timely, specific, and constructive as candidates address the final three stages of the selection process.

A Conflict Embedded Problem Solving Task

Some of the professional tasks that a teacher must undertake are not situated in the classroom or reflective of the interactions between the teacher and the students. For this reason, the next phase of a multi-staged teacher selection process will engage teacher candidates in the opportunity to show their skills with a non-teaching communication task. This should be a written task where the teacher candidate is required to write a response to someone who is highlighting a concern or issue and displays a concern aggressively and emotionally.

This written task will allow the interview team to assess the teacher candidates': composure under stress; professionalism; written communication skills; problem solving skills; beliefs about problem solutions and attitude toward others who express a legitimate concern; and, their understanding of the chain of command in a school context.

An example of a written task scenario will provide a context for this part of the multi-staged interview process.

Example

The teacher has received the following email from a parent.

I am very upset about the homework that you assigned to my son last night. It was totally irresponsible to assign so many math questions for him to complete when you know he hates this subject and usually fails math tests. I have given him permission not to do any further math homework that is sent home. We don't want another evening of tears and fights to get this done again.

The teacher candidate is then asked to develop a plan, including a written response, to address the concerns raised in this email. In evaluating the suitability of the plan and the written response, interviewers need to determine what an ideal response would include and the qualities of a professional response they would hope to see in the teacher candidate's written answer. While the criteria for a written response should include proper grammar, spelling, and tone, this is also an opportunity for the interview team to examine the professional maturity of the teacher candidate. It should be evident in the response that the teacher candidate is empathetic to the concerns that were expressed, looking for a positive and constructive solution, maintaining a positive tone, keeping the best interests of the student at the forefront of the conversation, and looking for a win-win solution. The written response and the "next steps" plan that the teacher candidate makes should demonstrate their ability to distance themselves from what they might perceive as an attack on their professionalism and to consider the parent's email by asking themselves, "What is the concern?" and "What is the real concern?" The response and plan should allow the parent a sense that their concerns have been heard, will be addressed in a timely manner, and will be handled in a way that maintains the integrity of the relationship between the teacher and the parent and allows them to continue to work together to support the child's success.

A Student Achievement Data Action Planning Task

This stage of the multi-stage interview process for new teachers is an opportunity for interviewers to determine the level of focus on students' learning that characterizes the teacher candidate. In this stage, teacher candidates are provided with an example of student achievement data and are required to create a plan to improve the student learning that is measured by the data. The data could be evidence of the learning of a single student in relation to a single piece of evidence for a single learning expectation. Alternatively, it could be data for a group of students from a large scale standardized or non-standardized assessment focus.

In either case, the teacher candidate should:

- identify trends of evidence as seen in the data;
- identify the limitations of the data source;
- identify alternative sources of data that could be used to verify the trends evident in the data;
- plan short and longer term instructional actions that are needed to improve the trends that are identified in the data; and
- communicate to students and to parents what the data shows, and how specific actions will be taken to improve the student's (students') success.

An example of an achievement data task for an individual student on an individual task is provided.

The student is unable to show evidence of understanding how to add fractions with unlike denominators in unit test questions. What actions will you take?

An example of a standardized, large scale, group result achievement task is provided.

A Grade 3 class is performing well below the area's average in reading on the standardized test that is administered to all students. What actions will you take as their classroom teacher?

On this stage of the interview, the hiring team should consider the breadth of the candidate's response, which should be provided in written format. This will give the hiring team an opportunity to consider the candidate's familiarity with various types of assessment, the need to engage in focused, targeted teaching when assessment data shows areas of underachievement, the capacity of the candidate to support assessment sources by triangulating data about achievement from multiple sources, and the need to communicate assessment data, and related improvement plans to all stakeholders, including the students and parents. In the written response, the hiring team can also assess the candidate's level of internalization of a "whatever it takes" attitude to support students' learning.

Experienced hiring teams will recognize the preceding stages of the proposed model for a new way to hire teachers as one that includes some aspects of professional teacher practice that are very demanding and indicative of seasoned and very competent teachers. We would agree with this perception and argue that we can demand this level of professionalism among new teachers and raise the bar of expectations for their competency. If it is clear that this is how teachers will be hired, we can anticipate a back filling effect where they will commit to developing even stronger levels of competency during their professional training.

A Final Screening Interview

At this final stage of the multi-staged new teacher hiring process, teacher candidates who have not shown a high level of competency at each stage have been turned away. The final screening interview is offered only to those candidates who have been highly regarded by the hiring team at all other stages. This interview will serve three main purposes, including:

- to celebrate the achievements of the teacher candidate through the other stages of the process;
- to offer employment to the teacher candidate; and
- to work with the teacher candidate as an early career support team and help them create a plan for professional growth for their first year in the profession.

Additionally, this final screening interview should be a time to outline the role of the hiring team members as career mentors to the teacher candidate. This support should be available to help the new teacher in the early years of their career with advice, support, and resources as needed, with the aim of retaining the teacher in the profession.

Discussion

There is little doubt that school system administrators will initially react to this model by deciding that it is too unwieldy, time consuming, and costly for their system. In systems where hiring teams are often formed hastily and have little training and no time to form a common vision of who they want to hire and why, this model is an extreme departure from the norm. There are two responses to the anticipated concerns. First, we know from a strong and growing body of research that the effective qualities of a teacher matter more than any other factor when we consider student achievement as the most important outcome in schools. Second, we encourage system administrators to consider the alternative. When we know that school administrators lack confidence in the current interview system used to select new teachers (Authors, 2012), we must recognize concurrently that other strategies are needed to bolster the interview process.

The strategies outlined in the multi-staged interview process as presented in this paper provide many opportunities for school jurisdictions to upgrade current hiring practices. While jurisdictions may not be able to manage the immediate implementation of all nine stages of this model, many would readily be able to include at least one additional stage in their current process. As with collecting data about students' performance in the classroom, collecting data about the skills offered by new teachers applying for a teaching position is enriched by the collected triangulation of data about their skills. The stages of the model outlined in this paper provide some direction about how to start the process of enriching hiring practices at the school and jurisdictional levels.

Conclusion

The teacher-hiring model that is outlined in this paper has several stages. The staged process can be compared to unpeeling the layers of an onion by gradually focusing on deeper and deeper levels of professional skills at each stage of the hiring process. After using all nine stages of the proposed process to select teachers who will ultimately be hired, the hiring teams can be more confident, than is currently the case that they have chosen the most promising teachers from among the applicants. The information that they collected about the applicant through the stages of the process will indicate skills in many professional areas of practice. The breadth of the information will help to assure the interview team that their final choice is the most effective one.

It is critical to the efficacy of any hiring practice that the interviewers are trained to do this important job in a professional manner. Training is needed in many areas, including: developing knowledge of organizational theory about "fit"; developing a commonly understood set of characteristics that are desirable in the teachers they want in their jurisdiction; developing a common understanding of structures and orientations in interview questions; identifying roles and responsibilities for team members at various stages of a multi-staged process; developing criterion-based observation frameworks for the various stages of the process; developing relevant problem solving tasks for some stages of the process (communication and assessment tasks); and, developing procedures for communication to the applicants at each stage of the process.

While this list of interview team skills may be daunting at the outset of implementation, there is time and supports are available in all systems to develop these interview management skills gradually to support the strength of the system. Without commitment to this new direction for interviewing new teachers, we risk continuing to use processes in which we lack confidence.

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