

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

WHEN IT'S TIME TO HIRE, START EARLY

Hiring teachers is one of the most important jobs of a principal. Staffing a school with strong teachers is key to driving up student outcomes. When it comes to hiring effectively, research suggests that one of the most important steps a principal can take is to start the hiring process as early as possible.

Why is it important to hire early?



Principals who hire early have access to more and better teachers. One study found that as many as 30 to 60 percent of teacher candidates withdrew from the hiring process before getting an offer from hard-to-staff districts, and the majority said the late timeline was the main reason they took other jobs. To make matters worse, the strongest candidates were the ones who were most likely to withdraw from the process.¹ Also, late hiring tends to be “rushed” and “information poor,” giving principals less time to assess a candidate’s effectiveness and fit for the school.²



Late hiring is costly. Research points to extra financial costs for the school when hiring is done later. The direct costs take the form of the continuing the hiring process and potentially having more intensive searching for candidates. Further, there are indirect costs in the form of a loss of productivity not having a full staff and the opportunity cost of losing highly qualified candidates.³



Students who have late-hired teachers tend to have worse student achievement. Teachers who are hired late have less time to prepare for the school year, to build relationships with other teachers, and to learn about and adjust to the school community. One study found that achievement in math and reading was lower for students who had a late-hired teacher compared to a new teacher who was hired during the summer. Those students’ achievement was on average 0.03 to 0.04 standard deviations lower than the students who had new teacher hired during the summer, a substantial difference.⁴



Teachers who are hired late leave schools at higher rates than teachers who are hired on time. One study found that while 80 percent of teachers who were hired before the beginning of the school year remain in the district for a second year, only 71 percent of teachers hired after the beginning of the school year do the same. By the fourth year, 50 percent of teachers who were hired on time remain in the district while only 39 percent of teachers hired after the beginning of the school year do the same.⁵ Hiring early may help reduce the disruptive effects of teacher turnover by improving the chances that a newly hired teacher stays at a school long-term.

What can I do to hire early?

- **Set an aggressive hiring timeline.** Ideally, teachers should know where they are hired by early in the summer. Getting teachers hired well before the next school year starts requires setting a timeline and plan for recruiting and hiring teachers. Creating an aggressive timeline may require having conversations with leaders in the district office about budget projects and district staffing timelines very early in the school year to gain a good idea of how many new teachers you are able to hire and in what areas.⁶
- **Don’t just wait for applicants; recruit them.** Making sure you are able to choose from the best possible candidates involves finding those best candidates. Faculty and staff can advocate for the schools’ mission and vision. They can also provide authentic perspectives to potential candidates. Sending them to events with recruitment in mind can help bolster the image of your school. Administrators should try to get the message out about their school to professional networks, the local community, and the surrounding region. Developing websites and other informational materials that are available early in the year can help bring more applicants on board.⁷
- **Make sure applicants know that your school is an attractive place to work.** Teachers want to work at schools that align with their goals. Leaders can develop a marketing strategy for the school that communicates to potential applicants the mission and instructional vision of the school.⁸ By and large, teachers’ perception of a principal are a major factor when deciding between schools.⁹ Principal should make positive, individualized engagement with applicants a priority even early in the process.

References

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- ² Papay, J.P. & Kraft, M.A. (2016). The productivity costs of inefficient hiring practices: Evidence from late teacher hiring. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 35(4), 791–817.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003).
- ⁷ Lowe, J. (2006). Rural education: Attracting and retaining teachers in small schools. *The Rural Educator*, 27(2).
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003).