

Diagnosing Your Staffing Challenges

Overview

While teacher labor markets have always been local, coming out of the pandemic, educator shortages are increasingly nuanced, making it crucial that systems take the time to assess their current state as failure to do so may result in misdirected action that perpetuate existing educational inequities the pandemic has brought to light.

To gain a holistic understanding of their current state, systems should look to both quantitative talent data and perspectives from stakeholders. This helps ensure systems are using multiple datapoints to arrive at potential solutions that are targeted and specific, and that systems are positioned to also track progress towards their goals.

Assessing Your Current State

To diagnose your current state, we suggest working to answer the following questions using the data you have available — considering when you might use quantitative data you've collected, when you might collect additional qualitative stakeholder feedback to fully answer a question, and when you might analyze your policies and procedures for shifts that will ensure all your students have access to effective, diverse educators.

We suggest going through this activity as a talent or staffing team, making space for independent analysis and reflection, followed by team time to share thoughts and collaboratively plan to use data findings strategically.

The questions you might want to answer are organized around three big buckets: recruitment, staffing, and retention.

Recruitment: Are we attracting effective, diverse applicants who mirror the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of our student population?

- What are our key sources for applicants, especially for hard-to-staff roles?
- When are vacancies posted? How many applicants are there for each vacancy? In high-need subjects? How are they identified?
- What is the strategy for recruiting racially diverse, language diverse, and gender diverse candidates, and is it effective?
- Which recruitment techniques and channels are most effective at producing effective teachers?
- Do recruitment strategies purposefully attract applicants who are committed to serving students and their communities?
- How many individuals are active in the substitute teacher system? How has that changed over the past five years?
- For each month of the school year, how many individuals are active in the substitute teacher system? How has that changed over the past five years?
- What is our relationship with our education preparation programs and our state licensure office? What is our asset map of local and regional educational preparation programs?
- What staff resources have we dedicated to recruitment? Do we have adequate resources and staff applied to our recruitment challenges?
- How has COVID-19 affected recruitment? How have the answers to the previous few questions changed over the past five years?

Staffing and Instructional Delivery Models: Are we consistently identifying diverse and effective candidates and efficiently filling our vacancies with those candidates? Are we maximizing the reach of the most effective educators in our system?

- Does our selection process consistently identify diverse and effective candidates?
- What is the screening and interview process for candidates? How long does it take to move through the selection process (from application to offer)?
- Does the current selection model advance applicants who prove to be successful in their first year? Stay into their second year?
- When do hiring managers identify vacancies for the year?
- How are teachers staffed to positions in the district? Is this process as efficient as it could be, and does it promote the best-fit candidates for individual positions?
- What proportion of daily substitute requests are filled? How has that changed over the past five years?
- What proportion of long-term substitute requests are filled? How has that changed over the past five years?
- Are we rethinking who is delivering instruction and how it is being delivered? Are there opportunities to increase the reach of our most effective educators so that more students have access to our best teachers?
- What are our class sizes, and how do we assign students to teachers? Can we use staff in different ways to ensure that our students are receiving instruction from our best educators?
- How has COVID-19 affected staffing?
- How have the answers to the previous few questions changed over the past five years?

Retention: Are we retaining our most effective educators—especially our most effective teachers of color?

- What is year-over-year retention? How does it compare to similar school systems? Are there differences by demographics, tenure, or school characteristics? If so, why?
- Are there leaders or types of schools (e.g., Title 1 schools) that have higher turnover? Why? Have we supported school leaders or taken other action where we have seen low retention rates? Was it effective?
- What factors influence teachers' decisions to leave the district or to move between schools (e.g., compensation, relationship with leaders, working conditions, affinity spaces, culture)? Are there any trends by demographic data point?
- Is the district differentially retaining our strongest teachers? Do we have the performance data we need to discern the teachers we want to prioritize retaining?
- How has COVID-19 affected staff retention and daily staff attendance?
- How have the answers to the previous questions changed over the past five years?

Reflection and Moving to Action

After reviewing your talent data, we recommend meeting as a leadership, talent or staffing team to discuss reflections and plan for talent strategy, as well as how you will continue to use data effectively.

Reflection: Consider and discuss the prompts below

- What headlines stood out to you? What confirmed what you knew and what was surprising? Why?
- What do these headlines mean for the experiences of students and educators within your system?
- How might your lens (role, priorities, orientation to the work) be impacting your analysis? What other perspectives would be helpful to consider?
- What strengths or evidence of growth did you see in the data? How might these bright spots be leveraged?
- What key challenges emerged?
- Where might additional data, stakeholder input, or research be helpful? How could you gather this information?

Action: Use data findings to generate action steps

- Of the key challenges you identified, what is most urgent to address to ensure all students have access to racially diverse, effective educators?
- What are short-, medium- and long-term priorities?
- Which current initiatives are underway and aligned to the high leverage challenges you found? Which current initiatives may need to shift or be deprioritized based on the data? What new initiatives do the data suggest?
- What other teams or departments should be consulted or involved in this planning?

Data Planning: Continue to use data strategically

- What data does your system collect that you have ready access to? Are there opportunities to use it more effectively?
- What data does your system collect but you don't have access to? Who can you work with to gain access and set up systems for ongoing access?
- What data does your system not currently collect but would be helpful to have? Who can you partner with to set up systems for collecting and using this data?
- What data will you use to monitor the impact of your actions? As a result of these actions, what do you expect to see in the data in 1 month? 3 to 6 months? 1 year? How will you use data to adjust accordingly?
- What data collection and analysis routines will help ensure your team continues to use data strategically?

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