

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

CONSULTANT REPORT

HUMAN RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

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CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS REPORT– 2012

Focus:

- A. Introduction and Theory of Action
- B. Human Resources Functionality - Overview and Gap Analysis
- C. Summary of Quick Hits
- D. Next Steps

A. Introduction and Theory of Action

The mission of every urban school district is to provide the best possible education to each and every child and overcome the challenges that poverty has so that all children do achieve. All individuals working for an urban district must contribute to this mission. Teacher and Principal quality are the two most important factors in each student receiving the best education and the Human Resources department plays a critical role in ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader at the helm of every school. A clear and research-based human capital strategic plan with strong support from a highly functioning Human Resources division will result in a higher performing workforce. A strategic Human Resources division where all staff members know their roles and support every aspect of the urban reform movement is essential in addressing these challenges in ways that will provide long-term solutions.

To contribute to workforce quality, Human Resources must be focused on the "right work" - strategic work. Compliance activities will never contribute to improved workforce quality - in fact, those activities will often be barriers to finding and keeping great talent. To this end, assessment and improvement of Human Resources functionality is clearly linked to workforce capacity and quality.

The "right work" of Human Resources is now defined in the curriculum of the Urban Schools Human Capital Academy and includes the following strategic functions:

Teacher Quality:

- Teacher Preparation and Recruitment
- Hiring and Selection
- Induction and Assignment
- Staffing and Deployment
- Performance Management
- Linking Professional Development to HR Functions
- Compensation and Benefits
- Career Management
- Support for the Principals as Human Capital Managers

Principal Quality:

- Building a Quality Pool
- Selection and Deployment
- Induction

- Compensation and Benefits
- Performance Management
- Career Management
- Support for Principals' Supervisors as Human Capital Managers

Due to time constraints, the consultants were not able to receive feedback on all the functions outlined above that constitute the work of a highly functional HR division, but information was received on a number of those functions.

B. Human Resources Functionality - Overview and Gap Analysis

Overview and Perceptions

The HR Department has been struggling for a number of years - most speak frankly in the system about HR's functionality as disappointing and counter-productive to the reform effort the rest of the system is experiencing. Processes and activities are significantly compliance-oriented and have continued to be paper-driven and burdensome for the entire system. If anything, the department has become less strategic in the past several years, not more.

A number of staff in HR were described as hard working but HR has not redesigned their processes for expedited work flows, nor have they used the full complement of capacity in Lawson that would streamline their work. We heard stories of principals putting in a requisition for a new hire that would take weeks, even months, before actions were finalized. The focus is on compliance - certification and highly-qualified requirements - not on grasping quickly to ensure talented candidates are not lost to other districts or out of frustration with HR. In order for HR to take on the strategic work essential to the mission of CMS, they must jettison some or most of the current compliance work and they must redesign inefficient processes that are taking up all of the time.

Almost all those interviewed outside of HR expressed a lack of confidence in the leadership of the department and the fact that things had not gotten better over the last eighteen months, and in some instances, had gotten worse. Processes that are difficult or cumbersome have not been redesigned, customer service has not improved and HR has not become more strategic, despite the hope by all when the new leader of HR was brought on board eighteen months earlier. Those in the field expressed concern that some major functions that used to be aligned within HR (such as Employee Relations) were no longer aligned and believed that might be attributed to less than successful leadership in HR. In addition, moving HR under the Deputy Superintendent was viewed as a need for closer supervision of a department that was continuing to struggle.

HR accomplished the Reduction-in-Force process well over the last years. This was very challenging but was handled with care. However, as a result of focusing so intently on the RIF, teacher candidate pipelines that had previously been established were to a large part lost.

For almost all groups/individuals the consultants met with, there was a strong sense that HR had good intentions but could not deliver on the critical functions they currently have, let alone embrace other critical functions they currently do not have. When those interviewed were asked to rate the overall effectiveness of HR in CMS from a 1-10 scale, with one being less effective and 10 being very effective, the informal ratings were usually around 5-6. No one rated HR higher than 6. There was a

belief that there HR staff tried to be responsive but they were not successful in getting the work done efficiently and effectively. In addition, HR was so compliance-driven that their processes actually get in the way of the mission of finding and keeping great talent. One individual summed it up by saying “I feel treated positively but I don’t get results.” “I don’t feel like a customer of HR.”

When asked to brainstorm what traits the leadership of HR should demonstrate, the following were identified:

- ✓ understand how schools operate;
- ✓ demonstrate a sense of urgency - especially in filling vacancies early and immediately
- ✓ prioritize the work as what schools need;
- ✓ delivers the product; do the work in the weeds and also thinks of what needs to happen next;
- ✓ own the schools and student achievement;
- ✓ show the ability to structure for the right work;
- ✓ be goal-oriented and measure success;
- ✓ utilize research for most effective HR practices;
- ✓ be willing to accept shared accountability and show commitment to student achievement results;
- ✓ be team players and totally customer-focused.

Those interviewed a lack of confidence that the current leader of HR has the capacity to improve the department's performance or understand the human capital needs of the district.

Gap Analysis and Recommendations to Improve Functionality

There are missing functions in HR - strategic functions - that would add considerable value to the workforce quality if they existed and there are HR functions being done in other parts of the organization for which HR should be responsible. In addition, there are some processes that take considerable Principal and applicant time and energy - processes that need redesign for efficiency and effectiveness. There are several examples and recommendations to improve that follow:

Teacher Preparation and Recruitment

- Zone Superintendents expressed a lack of support as they do their own screening and vetting of Principal/Assistant Principal candidates and little or no screening is done for central office applicants by HR. In fact, all groups indicated that little screening is done for any position to cull the most promising applicants and to help Principals as they screen the multiple numbers of teacher candidates on their own.
- Principals had to fill over 1,000 vacancies as late as July - there were no early contracts in critical shortage fields (math, science, Special Education, Spanish) that would have identified the most promising candidates and ensured their commitment to CMS in the spring
- Applicants must apply to each and every vacancy to be considered, which means that the applicant must be online 24/7 continually applying to vacancies in their field, rather than Principals being able to reach out to any applicant once a one-time online application is completed.
- Promising teacher candidates in critical shortage fields (math, science, Special Education, ESL, Spanish) are not identified and offered early contracts by HR to ensure their commitment to CMS.

- Identification of preparation programs producing the most productive applicants (re: student achievement results once in the classroom) has not been done by program or pathway, which would help inform the most promising recruitment pathways for future hiring.
- Zone Superintendents and Principals expressed a desire for stronger support from HR in building and maintaining a strong Principal or Assistant applicant pool. It was unclear to them how a perspective AP gets into the AP pool - the process was not transparent to them and many felt that excellent Principal and Assistant Principal candidates have been lost because of HR's lack of interest in them and lack of a clear process for consideration.

Recommendation 1:

Talent Acquisition should be responsible for filling the candidate **pools** (not individual positions) with great talent - recruiting across the board for teachers, principals, instructional assistants, central office vacancies, etc. and screening continually to highlight the strongest applicants, especially for teachers and administrators. But matching that talent to unique needs of schools should be the role of the HR Manager. See Recommendation 2 for reorganization recommendations to accommodate moving that function for a more seamless service delivery model.

Recommendation 2:

In addition, the entire Talent Acquisition division should incorporate a broader understanding of teaching and learning and transition from a data-entry division to a true talent acquisition operation. The "recruiters" currently are really only doing data-entry and are not expected to understand what great teaching talent looks like. The data-entry (onboarding) function (along with at least 8 of the recruiter positions) should be moved under the HR Managers with a recommended ratio of 25-28 schools:1 HR Manager/1 Recruiter. That way, Principals would only need to contact their HR Manager to fill a vacancy (or for any other HR needs) and functions would be done seamlessly by the one team - the service delivery model becomes one-stop shopping for all HR issues (with the exception of Employee Relations - recommendations to be address later in this report).

Recommendation 3:

The remaining Talent Acquisition team should continue to conduct a rigorous recruitment schedule, expand college relations, manage the alternative certification programs, establish recruitment pipelines for Principal and Assistant Principal positions, and handle all of applicant tracking. In addition, they should establish measures for the applicant pools to allow them to see which pathways are producing higher quality candidates (looking at Gallup scores and productivity of new hires once in the classroom over time). Vacant positions should be posted at the school level (not in HR) which saves a great deal of time and allows those who know their staffing needs best (Principals) to advertise their needs. Principals should have access to the vacancy database 24/7 and applicants should have access to the same vacancy database 24/7 as well. In order to ensure the above functions, the Executive Director would need 3-4 staff, but some of those should have a teaching or administrative background and understand quality teaching and learning issues. Thus, some of the remaining recruiter positions would need to be converted to the level of someone with a teaching and learning background.

Recommendation 4:

Immediately redesign the applicant process so that a one-time online application makes the applicant available for all positions. Allow applicants access to vacancies and the ability to direct their resume to a vacancy, but make them automatically available to all vacancies in their field, removing the need for them to constantly go online and apply to all vacancies. There is a strong perception throughout the district that applicants have to "jump through hoops" and that HR "does not take good care of applicants." Repurposing positions as recommended in Recommendation 3 will move the data entry function under the HR Managers and leave a smaller team that is truly dedicated to finding great talent and providing great customer service to that talent.

Recommendation 5:

Establish an early contract system where promising candidates in critical shortage fields are identified, vetted (by a representative group of Principals either on recruiting trips or through HR identifying candidates from the general applicant pool) and offered early contracts, solidifying their commitment to CMS prior to vacancy posting. Early contracted candidates would still be referred to individual Principals as vacancies occurred but by offering them a position between January - May prior to real vacancies, the quality of the candidate pool is far better than in June, July and August. The Gallup Teacher standardized interview, already utilized in CMS, is a strong indicator of future classroom productivity and can be used by HR to identify potential early-contract candidates.

Recommendation 6:

Consider a technology solution investment in the Lawson applicant tracking module that could replace My Apps and provide a smooth connection to the HRIS system already in place. While this would not solve the screening problem that Principals have (too many candidates with HR's lack of screening), it would minimize the multiple data-entry points and save several Recruiter positions, which then could be converted to positions that serve Principals more comprehensively. Processes from application to onboarding are dysfunctional and need to be redesigned for efficiency and speed.

Induction

- Onboarding of new hires is a much lengthier process than it needs to be and there are data entry points along the way that are duplicative and labor-intensive.

Recommendation 7: Redesign the onboarding process prior to next year's staffing season and put as much of the process online as possible (from benefits selection through final payrolling). Collect certification documents after the offer has been made and the payrolling process begun for the new hire - do not delay either the offer or speedy onboarding for reasons relating to certification.

Staffing and Deployment

- There is a Talent Acquisition team separate from the HR Relationships Management Team but the two divisions are not aligned to each other, nor is the Recruitment team aligned to the Zone Superintendents. Principals are going to different divisions to get a new teacher (Recruiter) or handle other HR issues (HR Manager) and even to a third service point for labor relations issues (Employee Relations, residing outside of HR). Consequently, no one division

- "owns" a school and all of its talent management and human resources issues.
- In addition, a number of those interviewed did not know what many of the HR staff were doing or who was meant to serve them directly. Often they would go to one or two staff members who are good at getting things done because the staff assigned to them are not. Calls get transferred and problems moved from one desk to another without resolution. One Principal indicated she had never met her HR Manager and did not know if the Manager knew who she was. There was sentiment among HR that when they had a Service Center before budget cuts, at least employees were able to get answers to their questions. Calls now career around HR and often go to so many different staff that the individual eventually gives up.

Recommendation 8:

HR Managers currently have an ill-defined role and much of it is transactional, adding little value to the talent management needs of the district.

1. The division name does not resonate with Principals - the Relationships Management title should change to School Services or HR Partner Services or something that the field and applicants can understand.
2. The ratio of schools to HR Manager should be about 25-30:1 (elementary) and 15:1 (middle/high) with comprehensive roles focused on matching and keeping great talent in every teacher/school-based position. One HR Manager needs to remain dedicated to supporting central office managers in finding and keeping great talent in their divisions, along with one-two HR Managers to handle auxiliary services staffing needs.
3. The HR Analyst role is a solid one in concept, but again, they are drawn away from strategic analysis of talent management data in schools and into functions that do not belong with them, such as unemployment compensation (belongs in Benefits with a full-time individual to handle those hearings)
4. HR Managers should have a solid understanding of teaching and learning, quality educational applicants, research that informs human capital in public school systems, and student achievement data in their assigned schools that correlates with human capital quality.
5. Principals should be able to "staff" their schools through their HR Manager - from hiring and onboarding through retention or dismissal/non-renewal actions and everything inbetween. Current Recruiters should be moved under them at a ratio of 2 Managers to 1 Recruiter for all onboarding and other transactional data entry needed.

Recommendation 9:

Consider the re-establishment of a Comprehensive Service Center that would answer calls and emails of a transactional nature. This would free up HR Managers and Analysts to be devoted to Principals and their talent management needs, to support them in ensuring all teachers were performing effectively and that new talent to the district was given outstanding customer service.

Recommendation 10:

Provide a dedicated HR Manager who supports the Deputy and the Zone Superintendents around all aspects of Principal and Assistant Principal staffing - recruitment/pipeline(inside

and outside the district), screening and vetting, selection, induction, compensation, performance management, career management

Performance Management

- There is only a compliance Performance Management function in HR, with limited support for principals who are dealing with low-performers. HR tracks each and every step of the McREL process - to what purpose? Principals should be held responsible for completing evaluation processes and HR should support them through timeline reminders and strong support on improving low-performers, but to continue to document a Principal's every step benefits no one and utilizes precious resources in HR.
- Employee Relations resides outside of HR which makes it very difficult for Principals who must contact multiple teams to do the critical work of dealing with human resources and staffing issues for their school. Some groups indicated that as many as 30% of teachers could be considered "below standard" or in need of improvement - if this is the case, HR and Employee Relations must be aligned in supporting Principals in Performance Management strategic work. The perception exists that Principals will not be supported in documenting and exiting low performers - that every case has to be prepared "like a court case" and that ER will require so much effort on the part of the Principal, even for non-tenured low performers. One Principal said regarding low performers: "Why bother because our decision won't be supported."

Recommendation 11:

Discontinue the constant monitoring of every step of the teacher evaluation process. Offer periodic reports to Principals of which teachers are coming up for tenure and which teachers are due for evaluation, but trust they will complete the responsibilities assigned to them and offer support instead for improving low-performers.

Recommendation 12:

Revamp the mindset and approach of Employee Relations to provide significant support to Principals on performance management issues, to minimize requirements and documentation especially for non-renewals (non-tenured removals), and to take advantage of North Carolina's flexibility to remove low-performing tenured teachers during layoffs.

Recommendation 13:

Revisit the current organizational structure that has Employee Relations outside of Human Resources.

Compensation and Benefits

- It is sometimes difficult for HR to have a "seat at the table" on compensation reform (pay for performance) - they are often left out of the conversations but held accountable for implementation, which puts them in a difficult position
- The strategic function of lowering teacher absenteeism through analyzing reports, improving or dismissing those who abuse leave and tightening reasons for leave appear to be absent, although the capacity to track and improve leave usage exists and those who handle leaves and benefits would like to do so. Alignment between the Leave function and the HR Managers should be strengthened.

Recommendation 14:

Ensure representatives from HR's Compensation team are always present at discussions regarding pay-for-performance and differentiated compensation

Recommendation 15:

Provide reports to HR Managers to have them help Principals manage teacher absenteeism and deal with outliers who might be abusing leave (note: significant teacher absenteeism is highly correlated to a decline in student achievement)

Career Management

- It is unclear if HR demonstrates any leadership in teacher or Principal career management - especially in developing teacher leadership or establishing retention strategies for highly effective teachers. Pay for performance may eventually address differentiated pay for teachers but HR did not appear to be taking the lead in retention strategies of high performing staff.

Recommendation 16:

Include work on retention strategies for highly effective teachers in the scope of the HR Managers in their support of Principals. Begin to build and publicize the teacher leadership opportunities that are made available to highly effective teachers.

Functions Residing in HR that fit better elsewhere:

While HR is missing some strategic functions, they are also handling some functions such as school allocations and position control that almost always reside in the Finance/Budget Division in other districts. HR should have access to position control screens so as not to under or overstaff a school, but should not be responsible for all the number-crunching that goes into budgeting and allocations for schools. In addition, allocations and position control screens are not available online to either Principals or HR Managers, making the hiring and onboarding process cumbersome and lengthy, and allocations and position control screens are not utilized or produced from the Lawson HRIS system, even though that functionality exists in Lawson.

C. Summary of Quick Hits - Can implement with Little or No Cost

1. Transition all responsibility and ownership for allocations, budgets for schools and position control to the Finance Office (Finance should create and distribute the spreadsheets to Principals as well). Clarify that HR's role is to find and keep great talent for all positions, not to determine how those positions should be budgeted for or authorized.
2. Ensure there is high-level support to the Deputy and Zone Superintendents for all aspects of Principal and Assistant Principal staffing (in most districts, the Chief Executive Officer handles these critical functions)
3. Immediately begin screening and vetting candidates for all positions so that Principals and other managers receive a much smaller pool of the most talented candidates (note: Principals should always have access to 100% of the applicant pool if they so desire but identifying the best candidates in each field is critical as well)
4. Immediately start work on redesigning the application process so that applicants are considered for all vacancies in their field and are not required to continually apply to each and every vacancy.
5. Provide access to all HR Managers and Analysts to Position Control screens so they can see

the staffing allocations and current staffing status of the schools for which they are responsible and utilize Lawson functionality to produce those screens.

6. Tighten processes and approvals for leaves of absence and short-term leave - ensure no teacher is getting multiple FMLA leaves without working a full 12-months inbetween; produce a list of any teacher who has exhausted sick/personal leave but continues to call in sick - determine status by sending them to a third-party doctor of the district's choosing; produce monthly absentee reports for all schools and for Zone Superintendents and have HR Managers work with Principals who have the highest absenteeism.
7. Establish a representative Principal Advisory group that meets monthly with HR Senior Leaders to hear what is going well and what is not and make significant improvements based on their feedback.
8. Open the Teacher Transfer process from March - July with an online system that allows teachers to apply directly to schools
9. Make the Director, HR Relationships Management Team, the owner of all displacement/placement issues and processes.

D. Next Steps

The Human Resources department of CMS would be an excellent candidate for future participation in the Urban Schools Human Capital Academy; however, the transactional aspect of the department must be fixed in order to free up time and resources to address the more important strategic work that will result in increased workforce quality. Compliance work must be largely jettisoned, functions must be aligned, greater support to Principals, Zone Superintendents, and Central Office Managers must be addressed, and HR must demonstrate that they own the work of the schools and can ultimately contribute to the quality of the workforce that is focused on greater student achievement.

If some or all of the Quick Hits were addressed, if HR reorganized to provide a much more focused, one-stop service delivery model for school leaders, if they ensured that everyone who served school leaders fully understood and were immersed in K-12 issues and student achievement goals, they might begin to increase the 33% "very satisfied" perception of their services and productivity.