

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic threatens to severely disrupt traditional in-person recruiting and hiring activities for the 2020-2021 school year. In response, districts across the United States are exploring strategies to conduct recruitment activities virtually. Hanover Research has prepared the following research brief to support member districts in recruiting, interviewing, and hiring new teachers virtually. This brief draws on the available literature examining virtual recruitment in K-12 school districts and the private sector to identify best practices in virtual hiring. Specifically, it examines best practices for identifying and conducting initial outreach to a talent pool of potential candidates before discussing strategies to engage candidates throughout the application process and into onboarding. This brief concludes with a discussion of equity considerations for virtual teacher recruitment.

Key Findings

- **School districts can use virtual hiring and recruitment tools to replace in-person activities that are no longer feasible due to the Covid-19 pandemic.** Districts and organizations that used virtual tools to support hiring before the Covid-19 pandemic report that these tools enable effective recruitment and hiring practices and may allow districts to recruit from a wider range of teacher applicants than in-person hiring.
- **Video conferencing platforms can be used to conduct virtual interviews.** Staff members conducting virtual interviews should test their internet connectivity and conferencing tools before the interview, select an appropriate location for the interview, and dress professionally. Districts should ensure that all interview participants have the correct meeting time and can access the video conferencing platform.
- **Districts can also use online tools to host virtual information sessions.** These sessions help districts identify potentially interested candidates for teaching positions. Districts can maximize the effectiveness of information sessions by creating opportunities for video interaction among potential candidates and follow up with attendees after the session.
- **Social media and email outreach to potential candidates can serve as additional ways of recruiting staff members.** Social media posts and

email newsletters allow human resources teams to highlight the benefits of working in a district. Staff members can also use these tools to schedule interviews.

- **Districts should continue to reach out to candidates throughout the recruitment process.** Human resources staff should ensure that all candidates currently in the application process are aware of the transition to virtual hiring and have all the resources and information they need to complete their applications. Staff members should also reach out to applicants to remind them of upcoming events and deadlines and thank them for completing steps in the application process.
- **Hiring practices should continue to support equitable recruitment of diverse teachers when transitioning to a virtual process.** Online interviewing practices should remain equitable and online recruitment materials should include information about equity and diversity. Human resources staff should prioritize outreach to candidates whose backgrounds reflect the diversity of students in the district, as well as applicants for difficult to fill roles.

Identifying a Talent Pool

The secondary literature suggests that online recruitment and hiring can be effective strategies for identifying and selecting teacher candidates. School districts such as Minnetonka Public Schools in Minnesota and placement organizations such as Teach for America began using virtual recruitment tools before the Covid-19 pandemic. These districts and organizations report that virtual recruiting tools provide the same level of quality as in-person recruiting while allowing them to recruit a wider range of candidates.¹ Recruiters in the corporate sector also report that tasks such as background checks and assessments can be completed more efficiently in a virtual format.²

Because most job seekers use the internet to identify open positions, virtual recruitment activities can enhance districts' efforts to identify a large pool of highly qualified teaching candidates. A 2016 report by the Center for American Progress (CAP) identifies the hyperlocal nature of teacher recruitment as a challenge for districts' efforts to recruit highly effective teachers. The report recommends that districts adopt virtual recruitment tools used in the corporate sector to engage a more geographically diverse

talent pool.³ For example, online webinars allow districts to attract candidates who are geographically remote and who would be unable to attend in-person activities.⁴

Overall, best practices for virtual recruitment align with general recruiting best practices while taking advantage of online platforms.⁵ Figure 1 presents general best practices for teacher recruitment. Districts transitioning recruitment to a virtual model should continue to adhere to these practices to the extent possible.

Figure 1: General Best Practices for Teacher Recruitment

Hire Early

- Try to hire as many candidates as possible between March and May, as research suggests that effective teachers tend to be hired earlier in the year.

Create a Hiring Committee

- Rely on a hiring committee that includes content specialists, teacher leaders, and administrators to divide responsibility for conducting interviews and obtain diverse perspectives on candidates.

Use a Selection Model

- Develop a model that incorporates multiple measures of potential teaching performance to recruit the candidates most likely to be effective in the classroom. Research suggests that schools using multiple performance metrics in their hiring process are more likely to recruit highly effective teachers.

Market Your School

- Use social media outreach and the interview process to highlight the attractive aspects of working in a particular school or district.

Source: Georgia Association of Educational Leaders⁶

Districts should transition hiring events such as interviews and job fairs to online platforms.⁷ For example, Virginia Beach City Public Schools is using an online screening tool to replace in-person recruiting events.⁸ Before transitioning to online recruiting, districts should check in with human resources staff to ensure that staff members have all of the tools and resources needed to perform their jobs virtually.⁹ Districts should also review existing online outreach to make sure that outreach strategies are effective. A 2018 article in the professional publication *Educational Leadership* recommends that district leaders use a search engine to look for district job postings to ensure that the district's job postings and hiring information are easily accessible for potential candidates.¹⁰

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) recommends that school districts host virtual information sessions to identify

potential candidates. Figure 2 shows recommendations for maximizing the effectiveness of virtual information sessions.¹¹ In addition to these recommendations, Zoom, the video communications developer, has developed general guidelines for hosting online events, available [here](#).¹²

Figure 2: Best Practices for Virtual Information Sessions

Have attendees sign up in advance so that you can easily monitor attendance and follow up afterwards

Give attendees opportunities to interact throughout the session

At the beginning of the session, share an agenda, session objectives, timeline, and norms for engaging

To encourage personal connection, have recruitment staff join via video and ask participants to do the same

Ensure equitable access to the information sessions

Give candidates a sense of your school culture and community

Source: The New Teacher Project¹³

Schools can also conduct job interviews virtually.¹⁴ For example, Vancouver Public Schools in Washington has begun using video and phone interviews to supplement in-person interviews.¹⁵ However, staff members should take steps to ensure that virtual job interviews are effective and prevent technical issues from interfering with interviews. As with in-person interviews, staff members should review each candidate's resume and prepare questions before the interview. Staff members should also make sure that all interview participants have the correct meeting time with appropriate time zone adjustments and that candidates can access the virtual interview platform.¹⁶ Districts should establish a back-up phone number to complete interviews in case of technical difficulties.¹⁷

Although schools can conduct initial interviews by phone, human resources experts in the corporate sector recommend completing at least one video or in-person interview before making a final hiring decision. The format and questions of video interviews should be the same as traditional interviews. However, interviewers should remember to use more visual and language cues to signal that they are listening to the candidate than they would in an in-person interview.¹⁸ Figure 3 summarizes guidelines for conducting video interviews developed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Figure 3: Guidelines for Video Interviews

Test internet connectivity and video conferencing tools before the interview

Select a well-lit location that is free of noise and clutter for the interview

Dress professionally

Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce¹⁹

Engaging Prospective and New Teachers

Districts should continue to reach out to prospective candidates throughout the hiring process to ensure that candidates remain engaged with the district. Hiring committees should develop a plan to contact each candidate every one to two weeks and prioritize teachers in high-need subject areas and areas with multiple vacancies. Committees should update email messages frequently to avoid redundancy.²⁰

TNTP recommends that districts use email and social media to engage prospective candidates. For example, districts can develop an email newsletter to provide their applicant pool with up-to-date information on the hiring process and recruiting events.²¹ Districts can also use social media accounts to schedule interviews and invite applicants to share what excites them about the district. TNTP also suggests that districts plan to post to social media accounts at least once per day and examine posts to identify what strategies generate the strongest responses.²²

Districts should take particular care to reach out to candidates already in the recruiting process when they transition to online recruiting. This helps to ensure that these candidates are informed about changes to the recruitment process, such as a transition to virtual interviews.²³

In addition to email outreach, staff members should call candidates both to remind them of upcoming events and deadlines and to thank them for completing steps in the application process.²⁴ Telephone outreach to potential candidates may be more effective in the current environment, as employees working from home may be more willing to take time for conversations with recruiters.²⁵

Remote Onboarding

Districts should also begin planning remote onboarding for employees hired at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.²⁶ Like virtual hiring, virtual onboarding adapts traditional onboarding activities to an online environment. Districts can use video conferences to introduce new teachers to their colleagues and hold orientation meetings.²⁷

Interact, a software developer, has developed a more comprehensive [suite](#) of resources to support remote onboarding across industries during the Covid-19 pandemic. These resources are available free to download with registration.²⁸

Figure 4: Best Practices for Virtual Onboarding

Eliminate or reduce unessential activities to streamline the onboarding process

Ensure that managers dedicate sufficient time to working individually with new employees

Use virtual platforms for community-building activities such as virtual coffee meetings or chat functions

Source: Fast Company²⁹

Although empirical research on the effectiveness of remote onboarding and induction for new teachers is limited, some evidence suggests that these programs can be effective for new teachers. Riverside County Office of Education's Center for Teacher Innovation in California reports that 98 percent of new teachers who completed the CTI New Teacher Induction program would recommend the program to other new teachers.³⁰ The CTI New Teacher Induction program uses a job-embedded online coaching model that aligns with state licensing standards for new teachers and cycles of inquiry. Provisionally-credentialed teachers who complete the program earn a clear teaching credential. New teachers meet with their coaches using an online platform at least once per week.³¹

Equity Considerations

Districts should ensure that hiring practices continue to support equitable recruitment of diverse teachers when transitioning to virtual hiring.³² Regardless of the methods used to recruit teachers, districts should implement the best practices outlined in Figure 5 for recruiting, selecting and hiring, and onboarding and retaining diverse teachers.³³

Figure 5: Human Resources Strategies to Recruit and Retain Diverse Teachers

Recruiting

- Identify data-driven, targeted outreach strategies
- Create strategic institutional relationships
- Conduct ongoing relationship-based recruitment
- Extend outreach beyond individual networks

Selecting and Hiring

- Publish vacancy notices early and hire early
- Involve teachers of color in the hiring process
- Actively work to counter bias
- Use multiple measures to evaluate applicants

Onboarding and Retaining

- Provide competitive compensation and benefits
- Strategically place teachers of color in schools
- Provide high-quality induction and support
- Build the capacity of school leaders to improve working conditions

Source: Regional Education Laboratory Northwest³⁴

In particular, districts should prioritize outreach to candidates whose backgrounds reflect the backgrounds of students in the district.³⁵ Figure 6 presents guidelines for conducting equitable online interviews developed by TNTP.³⁶

Figure 6: Guidelines for Equity in Online Interviews

Set and communicate clear expectations for virtual interviews

Let candidates and interviewers know that it is okay if unplanned interruptions happen because they are interviewing while children and other family members are at home

Give candidates a way to indicate if they cannot interview via video conference and offer them an equitable alternative

Provide specific anti-bias training for video interviews to selectors

Be flexible

Source: The New Teacher Project³⁷

Districts should include information on equity in online recruitment materials. For example, districts could include a message related to the importance of staff diversity on their human resources web page. Madison Metropolitan School District in Wisconsin publishes formal diversity goals and progress towards meeting these goals each year.³⁸

Caveat

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Endnotes

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