Introduction

This research brief offers practices and strategies for inclusive recruitment; lists inclusive job postings, descriptions, and marketing strategies; and discusses screening practices, inclusive application and interview questions, and interview atmospheres.

In addition to publicly available research and academic literature from education organizations and districts, this report examines inclusive hiring practices from other industries.

Key Findings

- Developing effective hiring strategies supports districts’ recruitment efforts of diverse candidates. Notable strategies include alternative outreach methods; creating an inclusive hiring team comprised of individuals with diverse backgrounds; including, as opposed to excluding, applicants, disregarding assumptions about a candidate’s “culture fit”; and offering financial incentives (e.g., relocation assistance, signing bonuses).
- Partnering with higher education institutions and alternative teacher preparation programs allows districts to solidify a diverse recruitment pipeline. Alternative, non-higher education paths include teacher residencies and early mentorship pairings. These opportunities provide aspiring teachers with structured training, practicum, and clear directions towards formal teaching and educational positions.
- Inclusive job postings and descriptions contain language that welcomes all individuals regardless of background. For example, job postings at the North Clackamas School District (OR) include language encouraging individuals to apply even if they do not meet all requirements. Historically, women and people of color are less likely to apply to a job unless they meet all of the qualifications. Additionally, inclusive job postings only include the needed minimum requirements and education, and avoid gender, racial, or ability-biased language.
- A standard interview format with identical questions for all candidates reduces interviewer bias and promotes diversity. Standardized questions focus on employees’ past performance and remove employers’ preconceptions of candidates. Standardized formats also allow employers to quantify interviews through methods such as rubrics and scorecards.

- Behavioral interviewing enables districts to learn about and assess diverse candidates’ previous employment experiences in a structured and inclusive manner. Common question themes include the candidate’s commitment to diversity; handling uncomfortable workplace environments and situations; and collaborating with diverse colleagues.

Inclusive Recruitment Practices

In the following subsections, Hanover details best practices for district-led recruitment strategies of diverse candidates; partnerships with colleges and universities; and collaboration with alternative certification programs.

District-Led Recruitment Strategies

Districts can attract diverse candidates by expanding their traditional outreach and recruitment efforts. Per the National Educational Association (NEA), alternative recruitment strategies include:

- Early prospective teacher identification initiatives (e.g., counseling, summer college preparatory courses, and financial aid promises);
- Aggressive recruitment techniques (e.g., orientations, recruiting students from two-year colleges, organizing media campaigns in minority communities);
- Financial aid targeted towards minorities who intend to teach (e.g., fellowships, scholarships, forgivable loans);
- Social and economic support (e.g., improving test-taking skills, providing academic counseling and tutoring); and
- Mentoring in the school setting.

Districts should form hiring committees that emphasize diverse applicants in their selection process to support these and other diversity-motivated hiring efforts. The Center for American Progress recommends that districts “include diverse perspectives—both in terms of race and ethnicity and in terms of job position—on the hiring committee and invite teachers to join school leaders and district representatives when interviewing candidates.” Figure 1 lists recommendations regarding the recruiting process for diverse staff members.
In the following subsections, Hanover details inclusive job postings and descriptions as well as inclusive marketing strategies.

### Inclusive Job Postings and Descriptions

Utilizing inclusive language in job postings helps attract diverse candidates. According to Randstad Canada, “An inclusive job description is worded in such a way that no one feels excluded or uncomfortable when they are applying for...
the job based upon their gender, cultural or ethnic origin and background, or a disability they might have. It is critical that inclusive job postings only list the minimum job requirements and education levels necessary to begin employment. Listing additional requirements can be discriminatory, as women and people of color are less likely to apply for a job unless they meet all qualifications. Inclusive job descriptions also avoid using words such as “expert,” as these language types often discourage diverse candidates from applying.

Districts can frame their schools as inclusive through changes in job posting language. In addition to, or instead of, standard anti-discriminatory language, districts can include language seeking diverse candidates (see Figure 3). While standard anti-discriminatory language shows to applicants districts’ efforts to comply with U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) laws, adding positive, inclusive language signals a district’s active intent to meet its diversity, equity, and inclusivity goals.

Some districts have begun to incorporate inclusive language in their job postings. In 2019, the North Clackamas School District (OR) posted a job for an elementary school teacher containing language addressing how women and people of color historically are less likely to apply to a job unless they meet all the requirements. The post also included language inviting these individuals to apply regardless. The district now posts this language on its jobs application page and in several job postings (see Figure 4).

Avoiding Gender Bias

Gendered wording can maintain inequality in male-dominated positions. Many job descriptions use words linked to male or female traits (see Figure 5). For example, terms such as “competitor” or “dominant” are associated with men and often discourage women from considering job postings.

A straightforward way for any organization to remove gender-coded language in job postings is to use the Gender Decoder Tool. This application allows organizations to determine if posting language is biased towards one gender. Districts should also consider the suggestions listed in Figure 6 in avoiding gender-biased job postings.

Figure 3: Traditional Vs. Positive Job Posting Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE</th>
<th>INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The district does not discriminate on the basis of the person’s actual or perceived race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, veteran status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sex or sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law, ordinance or regulation, in its educational program(s) or employment.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Inclusive School celebrates the diversity of our school and local communities including race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. We welcome candidates representing the diversity of the world in our educational program, admission policies, financial aid program, staff hiring, and other school-administered programs.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Multiple

Figure 4: North Clackamas School District (OR) Inclusive Job Posting Language

The North Clackamas School District strives to create an inclusive environment that welcomes and values the diversity of our staff and students. We foster fairness, equity, and inclusion to create a workplace environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Studies have shown that women and people of color are less likely to apply for jobs unless they believe they meet every one of the qualifications as described in a job description. We are most interested in finding the best candidate for the job, and that candidate may be one who comes from a less traditional background. We would encourage you to apply, even if you don’t believe you meet every one of our qualifications described.

If you are unsure whether you meet the qualifications of this position, or how this would be determined, please feel free to contact Human Resources to discuss your application. Preference will be given to those applicants with work or lived experience with culturally, linguistically and racially diverse communities.

Source: North Clackamas School District

Job postings should also include multiple ways for applicants to contact the hiring manager. Additionally, providing multiple opportunities for diverse candidates to submit materials (e.g., a website portal, e-mail, fax, and regular mail) promotes inclusive recruitment.

Figure 5: Examples of Gender-Coded Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALE-CODED WORDS</th>
<th>FEMALE-CODED WORDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>Collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outspoken</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Monster.com

A straightforward way for any organization to remove gender-coded language in job postings is to use the Gender Decoder Tool. This application allows organizations to determine if posting language is biased towards one gender. Districts should also consider the suggestions listed in Figure 6 in avoiding gender-biased job postings.

Figure 6: Recommendations for Removing Gender Bias in Job Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE</th>
<th>AVOID SUPERLATIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid including words in your titles like &quot;hacker,&quot; &quot;rockstar,&quot; &quot;superhero,&quot; &quot;guru,&quot; and &quot;ninja,&quot; and use neutral, descriptive titles.</td>
<td>Excessive use of superlatives such as &quot;expert,&quot; &quot;superior,&quot; &quot;world class&quot; can turn off female candidates who are more collaborative than competitive in nature. Research also shows that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avoiding Racial, Religious, or Ethnic Bias

Like gender, using neutral, un-coded language in job advertisements reduces the likelihood of racial, religious, or ethnic bias. Additionally, references to “professionalism” or “professional attire/dress/appearance” imply inherent cultural prejudice and should be excluded from job descriptions. Figure 7 lists additional ways to eliminate racial bias in job descriptions and postings.

Avoiding Ability Bias

To avoid automatically excluding individuals with physical disabilities, inclusive job postings and descriptions should avoid any mention of physical demands unless a job explicitly requires them (e.g., custodian). Employers often list non-required physical expectations in job descriptions, including:
- Typing and/or writing;
- Occasional standing, walking, stooping, kneeling, or crouching;
- Reaching with hands and arms;
- Talking or hearing; and
- The ability to lift and carry up to 20 lbs.

If employers must include physical requirements in job descriptions, using inclusive language can welcome applicants with physical disabilities. Figure 8 compares examples of discriminatory and inclusive job posting language towards these individuals.
Creating and promoting an inclusive brand can help districts increase the likelihood of building a more extensive, diverse candidate group. All marketing language should include the district’s commitment to an environment that celebrates and promotes diverse individuals, backgrounds, values, ideas, and perspectives.  

Inclusive marketing requires that districts reach diverse populations through mediums catered to their needs and interests. For example, “[Districts] might consider placing ads with organizations specifically geared toward supporting diverse backgrounds, including student and faculty diversity conferences, professional development workshops, and advocacy groups.” Posting jobs on social media also allows districts to reach more diverse candidates. Districts might consider utilizing staff from minority and historically underrepresented groups and other internal diversity advocates to promote job opportunities at job fairs, webinars, conferences, and through individual conversations. Additionally, hiring a diversity recruitment company can assist in recruiting and marketing to diverse candidates.

Screening Candidates, Inclusive Application/Interview Questions, and Interview Atmospheres

In the following subsections, Hanover describes best practices for screening applicants, inclusive interview and application questions, and creating inclusive atmospheres.
examples of how they have demonstrated certain behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities. Employers then use answers to behavioral interview questions to project the candidate’s future performance. When interviewing diverse candidates for K-12 and higher education positions, some common question themes are the candidate’s commitment to diversity, handling uncomfortable workplace environments and situations, and collaborating with colleagues from diverse backgrounds (see Figure 10 for specific examples).

Figure 10: Behavioral Interview Question Examples

- Describe an experience in which you collaborated with individuals while in a diverse, multicultural, and inclusive setting? Did you encounter any challenges?
- Describe a situation in which you encountered a conflict with someone at work. How did you handle the situation?
- Tell us about a time that you adapted your style to work effectively with those who were different from you.
- Give an example of how you think about your audience before communicating with them. What factors influence your communications?
- Tell us about your philosophy and approach to teamwork. Please be specific and describe what behaviors you display to support and encourage a collaborative work environment.
- Tell me about a time when you had to assemble a team for a project. How did you go about doing this, and why did you choose these individuals?

Sources: Multiple

Districts also need to have responses to diverse candidates’ questions. Common question themes address the district’s supports for diverse teachers, diversity initiatives, and career development. Likely questions from candidates include:

- What are my chances for progressing/advancing my career here?
- [Does the district] have a formal mentoring program and/or career development programs? What does [the district] do in terms of community outreach efforts to partner with diverse groups?
- Do you have employee affinity groups that focus on the needs of people like me and other groups?
- What initiatives has [the district] participated in regarding diversity?
- Does [the district] have formal diversity initiatives and programs in place?

When writing inclusive job application questions, districts should use language as they would in job descriptions. Like interview questions, “screening-in” applicants, applying behavior interviewing methodology, and standardizing application questions reduces bias and assists in recruiting diverse candidates.

Inclusive Interview Atmospheres

Employers can create inclusive interview environments by providing candidates detailed information about the interview beforehand and choosing welcoming spaces. Providing candidates with knowledge such as the interview schedule gives diverse candidates additional context and the ability to prepare and helps employers showcase staff diversity (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Examples of Information to Provide Candidates Before an Interview

- Give candidates advanced notice about who — and how many people — will be at their interview
- A few days before the interview, email candidates an agenda — including the names of everyone they’ll be meeting, the breakdown of each panel, and the focus areas each interviewer will be covering in the interview.
- Linking to the interviewers’ LinkedIn profiles, empowering candidates with confidence

Source: LinkedIn, 2019

If conducting interviews in person, employers may want to consider interviewing diverse candidates in a casual location other than an office or a conference room to present a more inclusive atmosphere. Noisy interview environments often distract and discriminate against candidates with neurological difficulties. Interviewers should also confirm the room temperature is comfortable for the candidate. Besides showing care towards the candidate, providing a comfortable atmosphere for the diverse candidate shows inclusivity, as building heating and cooling systems are often designed to suit men’s needs.

In creating an inclusive interview environment for racially diverse candidates and candidates with physical disabilities, districts must acknowledge and mark traditional societal structures, such as conceptions of professionalism. Figure 12 adapts the University of Colorado Boulder Environmental Studies Program’s recommendations for creating an inclusive interview environment during faculty site visits for K-12 school districts.

Figure 12: Adapted Ideas for Districts in Creating Inclusive Interview Environments for Diverse Candidates

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Although it is preferable to conduct final interviews in-person to avoid discriminating against individuals without quality Internet or phone access, circumstances sometimes necessitate virtual interviews through phone or video conversations. Figure 13 lists best practices for creating an inclusive atmosphere for virtual interviews.

**Figure 13: Best Practices for Creating an Inclusive Virtual Interview**

- Understand and accept that not every candidate will be able to access virtual interview technology and may need to reschedule or determine an alternate method for interviewing;
- If you plan to video chat with a candidate, make sure you’ve allowed them to prepare by letting them know they’ll be on camera;
- Conduct virtual interviews in a place that is quiet and free from distractions to give your full attention;
- Be mindful and accommodating of potential audio and/or video delays; and
- If teleconferencing with a search committee, remind committee members to mute their lines when not in use to ensure smooth communication.

Sources: Multiple

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Source: University of Colorado Boulder Environmental Studies Program

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Endnotes

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 19.
9 Figure contents quoted verbatim from: “The Residency Model.” National Center for Teacher Residencies. https://nctresidencies.org/about/residency-model-teacher-mentor-programs/
12 Ibid., p. 3.

Ibid.


“Interviewing.” Oregon State University-Office of Human Resources. https://hr.oregonstate.edu/search-excellence/interviewing


Bullet points quoted verbatim with minor modifications from: Ibid.


Figure contents quoted verbatim from: Ibid.

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“Step 5: Conducting Interviews Inclusively.” University of Colorado Boulder-Environmental Studies Program. https://www.colorado.edu/envs/step-5-conducting-interviews-inclusively


Figure contents quoted verbatim with significant modifications from: “Step 6: Conducting Site Visits Inclusively.” Environmental Studies Program. https://www.colorado.edu/envs/step-6-conducting-site-visits-inclusively
