

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:¹

- **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."² Figure 1 lists recommendations regarding the recruiting process for diverse staff members.

Figure 1: Strategies for Recruiting Diverse Staff Members

SELECT AN INCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TEAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider including people who will bring diverse outlooks, and who are respectful of different cultures and characteristics Recognize the potential to bring unintended biases to the process, and address this by having a clear and open discussion among team members before beginning the interview process
INCLUDE RATHER THAN EXCLUDE CANDIDATES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how each applicant might enhance diversity in the department and schoolwide Some applicants may expressly identify themselves as diverse; in other cases, a resume or application may reflect diversity affiliations such as membership in a diverse organization or attendance at a Historically Black College, or a women-only or disability-focused school Take a fresh look at candidates who have been passed over to make sure that you have not overlooked any potentially attractive candidates
AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT A CANDIDATE'S "CULTURAL FIT"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus first on the candidate's similarities to, rather than differences from, the way your staff and their colleagues and constituents approach their work (i.e., If your constituents are fast-paced, does the candidate have a similar style? If your staff is direct with each other, does the candidate demonstrate that he or she is comfortable with such communications?) Consider whether the candidate's differences matter to the work he or she would do, and how those differences might actually enhance your team and its efforts
FINANCIAL INCENTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signing bonuses Student loan forgiveness Funds to assist with relocation expenses Finder's fees to existing district staff for referring those hired as new teachers

Sources: Multiple³

Community Partnerships

Colleges and Universities

Districts should also develop and cultivate partnerships with local colleges and universities to increase their diversity of teaching applicants. To ensure that teacher candidates align with district needs, "there is a need for greater collaboration between teacher-preparation programs and the school districts likely to hire program graduates."⁴ In particular, urban school districts and schools "should develop close partnerships with colleges of education to ensure that an increased supply of well-qualified black and Hispanic teachers are prepared to teach in city schools."⁵

Teacher residencies are a notable district-college/university partnership example. Specifically, teacher residencies are "partnerships between districts and universities that subsidize and improve teachers' training to teach in high-need schools and in high-demand subject areas" where

residents work with experienced teachers while completing formal coursework.⁶ Participants also receive financial support through a stipend or scholarship and agree to work three to four more years in their residency district.⁷ Teacher residency programs are particularly beneficial for recruiting and retaining non-white teachers.⁸ Figure 2 lists five steps to developing teacher residencies.

Figure 2: Steps to Developing and Supporting Teacher Residency Programs

Targeted recruitment and selection of residents
Rigorous selection and support of teacher mentors
Intensive pre-service preparation focused on the specific needs of teachers in diverse schools
Aligned induction support
Strategic hiring of graduates

Source: National Center for Teacher Residencies⁹

Teacher residencies allow districts to establish a pipeline of potential teachers to support through their training and education with the expectation that participating residents will remain at their school for at least three years. Notably, many former residents often continue to grow in their original resident district by becoming mentors, principals, and senior administrators.¹⁰

Alternative Certification Programs

Partnering with alternative certification programs can help districts recruit from a larger, diverse candidate pool. Though nearly 90 percent of teacher candidates enroll in traditional teacher education programs operated through higher education institutions, candidates in alternative teacher preparation programs are more likely to be people of color. The overall candidate pool from these programs is smaller but more racially diverse than traditional programs.¹¹ Specifically, teachers of color comprise 35 percent and 42 percent of all enrollees in alternative higher education-based and non-higher education programs, respectively, and only 26 percent of traditional programs, signaling a racial gap within program demographics.¹²

Inclusive Job Postings, Descriptions, and Marketing Strategies

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.”¹³ It is critical that inclusive job postings only list the minimum job requirements and education levels necessary to begin employment.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ Inclusive job descriptions also avoid using words such as “expert,” as these language types often discourage diverse candidates from applying.¹⁶

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).¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

Figure 3: Traditional Vs. Positive Job Posting Language

TRADITIONAL ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE	INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
“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.”	“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.”

Sources: Multiple¹⁹

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.²⁰ The district now posts this language on its jobs application page and in several job postings (see Figure 4).²¹

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 District²²

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.²³

Avoiding Gender Bias

Gendered wording can maintain inequality in male-dominated positions.²⁴ Many job descriptions use words linked to male or female traits (see Figure 5). For example, terms such as “compete” or “dominant” are associated with men and often discourage women from considering job postings.²⁵

Figure 5: Examples of Gender-Coded Words

MALE-CODED WORDS	FEMALE-CODED WORDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aggressive ▪ Confident ▪ Decisive ▪ Assertive ▪ Independent ▪ Dominant ▪ Outspoken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sensitive ▪ Support ▪ Collaborate ▪ Honest ▪ Trust ▪ Interpersonal ▪ Compassion

Source: Monster.com²⁶

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.²⁷ 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

USE GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE	Avoid including words in your titles like "hacker," "rockstar," "superhero," "guru," and "ninja," and use neutral, descriptive titles.
AVOID SUPERLATIVES	Excessive use of superlatives such as "expert," "superior," "world class" can turn off female candidates who are more collaborative than competitive in nature. Research also shows that

	women are less likely than men to brag about their accomplishments.
RECONSIDER MAJOR REQUIREMENTS	Listing a specific major as a requirement can limit the number of applicants of one gender or the other.
STATE FAMILY-FRIENDLY BENEFITS	Parental leave, flextime, and child care subsidies benefit families and your future base of employees. Let candidates know what you offer.

Source: Glassdoor²⁸

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.²⁹ Figure 7 lists additional ways to eliminate racial bias in job descriptions and postings.

Figure 7: Eliminating Racial Bias in Job Descriptions

Never mention race or national origin
Avoid language that may deter qualified non-native English speakers from applying (e.g., “strong English-language skills”)
A “clean-shaven” requirement can exclude candidates whose faith requires them to maintain facial hair (it also indicates the position is for men only)

Source: Monster.com³⁰

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:³¹

- 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.

Figure 8: Discriminatory Vs. Inclusive Language Towards People with Physical Disabilities

DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE	MORE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
Access to your vehicle is not always necessary	Access to reliable transportation

Must be able to lift 50 pounds	Moves equipment weighing up to 50 pounds
Seeking able-bodied individual	No replacement. Avoid completely.
Bending and crouching under desks to install equipment	Positions self to install equipment, including under desks
Must be able to stand for entire shift	Must be able to remain in a stationary position during shift
Walks through building to access files	Moves throughout the building to access files.

Source: Monster.com³²

Additionally, advertising jobs and providing application materials in multiple ways and formats (e.g., district website, social media, large print, Word and PDF documents, audio) helps candidates with differing ability limitations in finding and applying to open positions.³³

Inclusive Marketing

Districts can effectively target and recruit diverse candidates through inclusive marketing. Inclusive marketing “refers to the messaging, people, processes and technologies that enable marginalised or underrepresented groups to fully experience and connect with brands.”³⁴ Inclusive marketing also promotes perspectives from minority groups and other historically discriminated populations, allows districts to enhance communication with diverse community stakeholders, and reduces implicit biases.³⁵

Adapting strategies from businesses and corporations, districts should begin developing inclusive marketing by surveying and conducting focus groups with current teachers and staff from minority and historically underrepresented groups to solicit their opinions and perspectives on recruiting diverse candidates. Districts should then examine the diversity of their human resources, recruitment, and marketing departments, followed by hiring or contracting with individuals who can provide any missing viewpoints. Before publicizing content, district marketing content generators must examine their assumptions and adhere to six inclusive marketing principles (see Figure 9).³⁶

Figure 9: Six Principles of Inclusive Marketing

START WITH TONE	In planning marketing messaging, consider its intended subject, topic, message, and overall impact of marketing messaging to reach the right and respectful tone.
BE INTENTIONAL WITH LANGUAGE	Carefully consider every word, symbol, or phrase – not just what the words say, but also word placement (how and where).
ENSURE REPRESENTATION	For example, before publishing an advertisement, a brochure, or uploading website content, consider if it reflects society.
CONSIDER CONTEXT	Examine the circumstances that inform an event or piece of content. Context could mean the historical or cultural influences and extends to the content’s order and hierarchy.
AVOID APPROPRIATION	Engage in cultural respect and awareness by being mindful of nuance and historical context, honoring and learning the culture, seeking guidance and diverse opinions, evaluating intent and impact, and elevating authentic voices.
COUNTER-STEREOTYPE	Feature content going against a standardized image representing an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.

Source: Salesforce³⁷

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.³⁸

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.”³⁹ Posting jobs on social media also allows districts to reach more diverse candidates.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ Additionally, hiring a diversity recruitment company can assist in recruiting and marketing to diverse candidates.⁴²

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.

Screening Candidates

Before selecting candidates for interviews, using a blind, standardized application review process helps employers increase hiring of typically-overlooked individuals.⁴³ In a blind hiring process, employers remove “identifiable characteristics from a resume that are not related to the job or experiences needed for success.”⁴⁴ Common non-related job characteristics on resumes include names, addresses, and graduation years.⁴⁵ Software programs such as Pinpoint, Textio, and Blendoor remove irrelevant data and make applications anonymous.⁴⁶ Hiring managers can also conduct blind application reviews manually using the following practices:⁴⁷

- Export candidate information onto an Excel sheet and hide columns that include their name;
- Tell candidates to remove certain information from their resumes before applying; and
- Use a black Sharpie before reviewing printed resumes.

As part of the selection process, having candidates submit work samples or complete an assignment related to the posted job responsibilities requires hiring managers to assess candidates' work quality instead of unconscious biases (e.g., gender, appearance, age). Additionally, assignments also allow application screeners to compare the work of multiple candidates directly.⁴⁸

Inclusive Interview and Application Questions

Developing a standard interview format with identical questions for all candidates allows employers to reduce their biases when interviewing job applicants.⁴⁹ Hiring managers tend to hire individuals similar to themselves, often excluding diverse candidates.⁵⁰ Standardized questions enable hiring managers to “focus on the factors that have a direct impact on performance” and exclude personal biases.⁵¹ Employers across all industries can quantify interviews by creating an “[interview scorecard](#),” allowing interviewers to compare ratings and practices with colleagues. When employers use interview scorecards or rubrics consistently, they promote diverse candidate hiring and provide quantitative data for long-term analysis.⁵²

Inclusive interview questions “screen-in” rather than “screen out” diverse candidates. All interview questions must avoid unnecessarily eliminating candidates (e.g., only focusing on prior experiences). If a candidate does not appear to meet job requirements, consider different ways for candidates to move forward in the hiring process (e.g., short phone conversations, work samples).⁵³

Employers across all industries generally consider behavioral interviewing to be the most effective interview method. This process examines “a candidate’s past experiences by asking candidates to provide specific

examples of how they have demonstrated certain behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities.⁵⁴ Employers then use answers to behavioral interview questions to project the candidate's future performance.⁵⁵ 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).⁵⁶

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: Multiple⁵⁷

Districts also need to have responses to diverse candidates' questions. Common questions themes address the district's supports for diverse teachers, diversity initiatives, and career development.⁵⁸ Likely questions from candidates include:⁵⁹

- 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).⁶⁰

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



Source: LinkedIn, 2019⁶¹

In 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.⁶² Noisy interview environments often distract and discriminate against candidates with neurological difficulties.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴

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



Source: University of Colorado Boulder Environmental Studies Program⁶⁵
 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.⁶⁶ Figure 13 lists best practices for creating an inclusive atmosphere for virtual interviews.

- 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: Multiple⁶⁷

Figure 13: Best Practices for Creating an Inclusive Virtual Interview

Project Evaluation Form

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