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Human Resources: Staffing for Success helps charter leaders to think creatively about their use of organizational structure, recruitment, selection, goal-setting, coaching and development, evaluation, and rewards to achieve their missions.

Human Resources: Staffing for Success

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Background

Making the most of your human resources is one of the principal imperatives of any organization. For charter schools especially, meeting this imperative presents both great challenges and opportunities. It presents challenges because charter schools must invent their own approaches to finding the right staff, organizing them effectively, supporting their performance, and fostering a work culture that produces results. But charter schools also face compelling opportunities to do things differently when it comes to mobilizing and motivating staff, just as they do when it comes to teaching and learning.

This overview is designed to help charter school leaders think, plan, and act in ways that make the most of their best assets – their teachers and staff. Three basic issues are addressed (1) organizational structure (2) recruitment and selection, and (3) supporting performance. This summary also provides a list of [Additional Resources](#) which will provide assistance in your task of converting your staff’s skills and knowledge into behaviors that support your school’s specific vision, needs, and objectives.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the school can have a great influence on how leaders carry out their jobs, as well as how the school’s staff members respond to its leaders and tap into their own leadership potential. Whether you talk to scholars of organization or to real school leaders, you’ll quickly find there’s a vigorous debate about “the best way” to structure an organization.

Many charter schools chose to use a traditional organization structure of a volunteer board of trustees overseeing a paid staff. But there are alternatives to this common approach, including the teacher cooperative model. For example, [Minnesota New Country School](http://mncs.k12.mn.us) <http://mncs.k12.mn.us> has no employees. Instead, all of the teachers are members of a cooperative that contracts with the school’s board of trustees to operate the charter school. Together, teachers set the school’s curriculum and instructional approach and decide how to spend the school’s funds. Even more unusual is the fact that teachers “manage” themselves — hiring new colleagues, evaluating staff performance, even setting pay and dismissing teachers who aren’t meeting expectations. Members of the cooperative, known as [EdVisions](http://www.edvisions.com) <http://www.edvisions.com>, say the structure puts teachers in a unique position to lead their school. It also holds them uniquely accountable for achieving results, since their continued contract depends upon producing outcomes. And since their own compensation depends upon the broader spending choices and fiscal

health of the school, teachers have strong incentives to spend and invest in ways that they think will “pay off” in results for students.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruiting and selecting effective staff is one of the most important processes to ensure your school operations support the school’s purpose. The recruitment and selection process requires planning and real thought into answering the questions: *What are we looking for? Where are we going to look? and How are we going to select the best candidate?* The following ten-step process will help you decide how to answer these questions.

1. Write a role description for each staff role.

To do this well, you must articulate the major work areas (classroom teaching, staff team work, parent relations, etc.), goals, and behavioral expectations/competencies for each role. Be sure to be as concrete as possible and to include any “extracurricular” duties (e.g., committee assignment, student groups/sports team supervision) generally expected of the position.

2. Identify required and desired qualifications and characteristics.

Pull directly from your role description. A few general categories to consider include: subject matter knowledge; instructional and assessment practices; classroom management skills; knowledge of child development; awareness of typical issues facing the school’s student body behavioral competencies (such as in teamwork and cooperation, goal-setting overcoming obstacles, and interpersonal influence skills).

View sample charter schools’ [teaching positions and statements](#) of desired qualities of teachers.

http://www.uscharterschools.org/res_dir/res_primary/res_jobdescript.htm

<http://www.pioneerinstitute.org/csrc/cshb/teacherjob1.cfm>

<http://www.pioneerinstitute.org/csrc/cshb/teacherjob2.cfm>

<http://www.pioneerinstitute.org/csrc/cshb/principal4.cfm>

3. Identify potential sources of staff.

Use your existing personal and professional networks heavily, and build on any new relationships quickly to create new recruiting sources. See [Additional Resources](#) for numerous recruitment ideas, including suggestions on how to recruit teachers of color.

4. Promote your school.

The key to hiring the best candidates is to promote your school so that the best-matched candidates are more likely to accept positions. Be sure to share a copy of the mission and all relevant materials with all candidates, share student and parent testimonials, and give finalists tours of the school and let them observe classes.

5. Recruit

Be sure that your recruitment effort is multi-pronged, reaching out to several pools of potential candidates.

6. Determine how you will screen candidates.

Education and experience cited can be checked through references. Content knowledge may be checked through testing, references, and indicators of educational achievement; interviews typically are not an effective way to check content knowledge unless extensive time is available. Competencies or behavioral characteristics may best be screened through interviews or on-the-job observation (if possible). Consider any legal and regulatory restrictions on hiring that apply in your state. Review the [Personnel Policies and Practices Resource Guide](http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/personnel/) <http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/personnel/> to be sure that you are abiding by employment laws and regulations. Also check out our [Legal Issues page](http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/legal.htm#issues) http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/legal.htm#issues.

7. Prepare materials and organize assistance.

Compile documents (such as the resume, cover letter, references, assessments from classroom observations, etc.) into a profile to be reviewed before interviewing the candidate. Create or adopt some type of rating system that will allow you to assess and compare each candidate more objectively. Determine who is involved in the selection process – your school would probably be well-served by using a review panel composed of members who each bring different perspectives to the table.

8. Make initial selections.

Once you have assembled the appropriate materials and assessed the individual candidate, you will be ready to make your initial selection decisions. Keep in mind that if you want your teachers to work as a team you will need to consider how each hire will contribute as a team member when making selection decisions.

9. Notify all candidates of outcomes.

Communicate offers in person by phone (with follow-up written offers). Clarify the role for which you are offering a job, compensation/benefits (see later section) and timing of the job (*When does it start? Is it a 10 or 12 month schedule?* etc.) As soon as possible, consider communicating rejections to borderline candidates by phone (with follow-up letter). Let all other unsuccessful candidates know your decision in writing, and express your thanks for their trouble; letters need not be customized, just polite.

10. Draw up the contract.

In general, some topics you may want to incorporate into a contract include: professional expectations and standards, duration of contract, work year, work day, salary, benefits, evaluation, days allotted for illness and personal needs, leaves of absence, termination stipulations, and grievance procedures.

View [Additional Resources](#) for additional information in how to recruit and select the people best suited to fulfilling your school's mission and goals.

Supporting Performance

Supporting staff performance is really about channeling staff time, talent and energy to support your school's mission and goals. Supporting performance involves an interrelated set of four primary activities – setting goals, coaching and developing, evaluating, and rewarding -- all designed to help your school's people achieve results that support the school's mission.

Setting Goals and Expectations

Without clear expectations, it's difficult for staff to know where to focus their energies, how to improve, or whether they're doing a good job. When setting goals and expectations, keep in mind these points:

- Align individual and team goals with school goals.
- Set goals at all relevant levels of the school.
- Consider multiple goals and measures.
- Make goals “SMART” -- Specific, Measurable, Ambitious but Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based.
- Structure the process of goal-setting carefully so that teachers and staff buy into the goals they are asked to meet.

Coaching and Developing

Clear expectations can go along way toward helping staff succeed, but to build staff's capacity to meet goals, you need to build an effective professional development program. The guiding criterion for professional development should be in “results gained,” not “days allotted.” Short-term sessions are one way to help teachers build capacity to be effective, but being in a charter school should provide them with opportunities that break out of the wearisome “workshop mentality.” See [Additional Resources](#) for information to help you develop and implement innovative and effective professional development programs.

Evaluating

Staff members who are committed to their own and school success will be hungry for any information that helps them understand how they can keep doing better and better. A well-designed evaluation process and appropriate reward system can help you feed the natural desire of committed staff to succeed.

Evaluating staff should have two major purposes: (1) to fuel ongoing changes in teaching practices and staff development and (2) to allocate rewards of various kinds. The best evaluation processes address both measures of achievement (*to what extent have we met goals?*) and underlying causes (*why?*).

See [Additional Resources](#) for information about evaluating staff, including evaluation tools and some sample approaches from charter schools.

Rewarding

Rewards must be designed carefully to reinforce the behaviors and results that reflect your school's mission, goals and work process. The keys to successful reward systems which are valued by staff is to gather wide input, and devise a pay system that aligns with the school's broader culture and decision-making processes, communicates the system clearly, and maintains consistency over time.

Keep in mind that while most charter schools across the country have adopted traditional rewards systems, many others have taken advantage of the opportunity to experiment with new options. The reward system of the [Family Learning Center's](http://www.flconline.org/) <http://www.flconline.org/> breaks the mold — but it also shatters the caricature of “merit pay” that leads many educators to think performance-based pay can't work in schools. View their [Instructional Performance Pay Schedule](#) http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/sd/perf_pay.htm to learn about the four levels of performance pay for instructional roles are based on specific, valuable skill and responsibility areas. View [Additional Resources](#) for more information about compensation and supporting performance.

This summary was based on [Mobilizing and Motivating Staff to Get Results](http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/motivatingstaff/) (<http://www.uscharterschools.org/gb/motivatingstaff/>), a resource guide for charter school leaders, co-authored by a team led by [Public Impact](http://www.publicimpact.com) (www.publicimpact.com) in North Carolina.

Additional Resources