Talent Playbook

For single-site leaders and others who care deeply

about talent but have limited capacity to take action

great MN SCHOOLS

Introduction

Dear School Leaders,

Our community owns among the worst opportunity gaps in the United States; from reading fluency to graduating high school, we are not preparing all of our children to flourish. However, improving how children experience school is possible when we work together to ensure they have a great teacher and school leader, and our educator workforce reflects the rich diversity of our community. Schools that work demonstrate that all kids, including those who face significant barriers, can succeed: In Minneapolis, 56% of students on Free and Reduced-price Lunch who graduate from high-performing schools persist into their third year of college, while less than 15% of students graduating from low-performing schools do.

We're committed to more schools that work for students of all ethnicities, means and origins. And as we support and invest in building on schools' promising practices, school leaders have asked for deeper guidance on strategies for building and sustaining effective talent management systems. This Talent Playbook provides a guide on what works. We have studied and learned from nearly 20 high-performing, single-site leaders and talent experts across the country to distill the most-important activities leaders should take to recruit and retain great people.

We created the Talent Playbook for leaders who have flexibilities and decision-making authority in their building, but who have fewer resources (capacity, time, money) than school leaders within a larger district or charter management organization context. In the charter sector, single-site leaders represent 65% of all charter schools across the country and nearly 60% of all charter school students. While single-site leaders were the impetus for us to create this resource, much of the guidance provided in this Talent Playbook is relevant for leaders of most schools, regardless of school governance context. This guide provides clarity on critical actions to help you hire, develop and retain the best people to advance student learning.

In the first section, we offer a short Talent Diagnostic to pinpoint where you are and where to get started.

In the second section, we highlight how the best school communities prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion.

Finally, in the third section, we offer Five Key Plays and resources that can make an immediate impact:

- Play 1: Create a Talent Calendar
- Play 2: Decide What You Have to Do and Delegate the Rest
- Play 3: Track and Aggressively Manage Toward Retention
- Play 4: Build Your Brand (EVP)
- Play 5: Get Hiring Right

The Key Plays are listed sequentially and designed to offer a play-by-play roadmap to talent success. We invite you to read in sequence; however, we have designed each section to be stand-alone, so that you can navigate to the areas relevant to your needs. In addition, we have compiled all resources and templates in a shared Google Drive folder.

- If you only have five minutes to read today, start with the Quick Play for a Big Payoff (p. 35)
- If you have more than a few minutes, start with the Talent Diagnostic (p. 5) and pick a place to begin (we recommend Key Play #1)

We are excited for you to get started.

Great MN Schools

Authors

The Single-Site Talent Playbook was created in a partnership between EdFuel, Great MN Schools and New Schools for New Orleans in response to the needs of constrained single-site leaders in New Orleans, Minnesota and across the country. Our hope is that by implementing these best practices or five Key Plays, leaders will be better positioned to attract and retain high-quality, diverse teacher talent in a more efficient and effective way.

EdFuel is a mission-driven, national non-profit that empowers education organizations to effectively recruit and retain diverse and high-quality staff through comprehensive and equitable talent management systems. Utilizing a capacity-building approach, EdFuel supports single site schools, charter networks, traditional districts and education nonprofits to design inclusive and equitable talent practices, including in the areas of recruitment, hiring, onboarding, performance management, compensation, staffing structures and succession-planning.

For more information email Kristina Campa-Gruca (kcgruca@edfuel.org) or visit visit www.edfuel.org.

Every student has the desire and capacity to learn, and we believe that our community's schools can and should ensure that children of all ethnicities, means, and origins are prepared for success in career and life. Our organization brings together a broad coalition of partners, families, educators and funders to drive change, including working alongside schools committed to building on their promising practices and community partners equipping families with transparent data and other resources to empower them as advocates for their own children as they navigate schools.

For more information email info@greatmnschools.org or visit greatmnschools.org.

New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) has a mission to deliver on the promise of excellent public schools for every child in New Orleans. Our four strategic priorities include (1) investing in schools and partnering with the Orleans Parish School Board to improve the quality of New Orleans' school options, (2) helping schools make the curricular and instructional shifts necessary to meet more rigorous academic standards, (3) taking a leading role in coordinating solutions to the city's teacher recruitment and retention challenges, and (4) providing communications and policy support to help public schools in the city.

For more information, visit newschoolsforneworleans.org.

Table of Contents

Five-Minute
Talent Diagnostic

Diagnose Your Talent Needs

With so many priorities on your plate, we know that narrowing in on the actions that will make the biggest difference and are tailored to your needs is critical. To know where to go, it helps to know where you are starting. We have created a short talent self-assessment that will provide insight into the aspects you are doing well, and the areas you may want to focus on.

We believe equitable and inclusive talent systems lead to strong schools that produce great outcomes for students. This diagnostic provides insight into the key practices that drive the creation of equitable and inclusive talent systems at single-site schools.

This diagnostic is meant to provide school leaders with a quick and easy tool to assess the health of their talent practices and identify where things are going well and where there might be opportunities to improve. The diagnostic is a companion to the key talent plays named in the Single-Site Talent Playbook, and it is not exhaustive of all talent systems.

To determine your school's strengths and areas for growth, complete the diagnostic beginning on page 7.

Note: To prepare for this diagnostic, you may refer to any culture, organizational health, or staff satisfaction data (i.e., from TNTP's Insight Survey, 5Essentials, or Gallup 12). If you do not have this data, you can make your best guess given the information available to you now.

RECOMMENDED OVERALL TALENT SYSTEM GOALS

- My school retains at least 80% of high-quality teachers each year
- At least 80% of teachers and staff are satisfied or highly satisfied working at my school
- At least 80% of our recruitment pipeline is comprised of high-quality, diverse candidates reflective of the student body

Diagnostic Measures

For each prompt, please rate your school from 0 to 3 using the following:

- **3:** True / We do this at least 90% of the time
- **2:** We do this at least 50%–90% of the time
- **1:** We do this less than 50% of the time
- **0:** False / We do not do this

	TOTAL
Key Play #1: Create a Talent Calendar	
A talent calendar exists and organizes all talent activities over the year	
Talent calendar has been shared with key staff members who have a contributing or ownership role in the activities	
Talent calendar includes at least bi-annual step backs on diversity, equity, and inclusion talent metrics	
Talent calendar organizes hiring activities based on a goal of hiring the majority of staff by the end of May for the upcoming school year	
Key Play #2: Decide what you have to do and delegate the rest	
School leader has a clear understanding of their key strengths, areas for growth, and work-related joys and uses this information to inform delegation of talent work	
School leader shares responsibility for key talent functions with an informal group of staff or a formal leadership team	
Staff members who support talent work have clearly defined decision-making and input rights	
Key Play #3: Track and aggressively manage toward retention	
Retention of high-performing teachers is at least 80% each year	
Comprehensive staff feedback (on topics including overall satisfaction, leadership, adult culture, etc.) is solicited in the form of a formal survey at least twice per year (i.e., TNTP's Insight, Gallup Q12)	
"Stay Conversations" are held with staff by winter break each year	
Exit surveys and/or interviews are held with each staff member, and notes are analyzed to observe trends in attrition	
New hires receive a welcome packet and/or email from the leader	
A welcome event is held for new hires to meet each other and returning staff	
New hire onboarding is designed to include both HR and policies, academics, and staff culture and expectations	
Mentors are provided to new staff members	

Diagnostic Measures (cont.)

Key Play #4: Build your brand	
There is a defined (written) employee value proposition (EVP), which explicitly articulates your key differentiator as an employer[1]	
The EVP is based on staff's lived experiences (as measured by staff interviews, surveys, etc.)	
The EVP is differentiated for sub-populations (i.e., younger staff, staff of color, staff with children, etc.)	
The EVP is prominently displayed on the careers section of the website and job descriptions	
Key Play #5: Get hiring right (hire early)	
Majority of teachers and leaders are hired by end of May for the following school year	
Hiring decisions are shared within 6 weeks of an initial applicant submission	
A hiring committee is in place and is responsible for executing key hiring activities (i.e., reviewing resumes, initial calls, etc.)	
All hiring staff participate in anti-bias training	
Hiring rubrics and/or scorecards are in place to mitigate bias and are consistently used	
Referrals are routinely solicited from target staff members for hiring purposes	
A formal process or applicant tracking system is in place and consistently updated	
The recruitment pipeline is diverse for teachers and all staff	
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	
A diversity statement, which articulates your school's vision and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, exists and is reflected in marketing materials	
Diversity practices are reflected in your talent calendar	
Diversity and inclusion goals are in place and revisited at least bi-annually	
Leadership regularly examines talent practices by demographic factors (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.)	
Leadership, teachers, and staff are reflective of student demographics (i.e., race, ethnicity, culture, etc.)	
GRAND TOTAL	

1. Employee Value Proposition is a statement that reflects your employees lived experience and details your organization's competitive advantage or value proposition as an employer in at least one of four key areas: Compensation and Benefits, Working Environment, Professional Growth, and Mission / Fit.

Interpreting Your Score

IF YOUR SCORE IS 90 OR MORE...

You have several key plays in place and healthy talent practices to support them.

- Review Section 2: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to further strengthen your talent systems
- Identify the areas with the lowest scores and consult each Key Play for additional resources and examples of the key play in action
- Share your best practices with others!

IF YOUR SCORE IS BETWEEN 53 AND 89...

You have some key plays in place.

- You may have just started to put a few best practices in place
- Identify the areas with the lowest scores and then identify ideas for how to strengthen your talent systems
- If you do not have a talent calendar, begin with Key Play #1: Create a Talent Calendar

IF YOUR SCORE IS LESS THAN 53...

You are just getting started.

- Review Key Play #1: Create a Talent Calendar and create an action plan to develop your own calendar
- Reach out to Great MN Schools to discuss potential opportunities for support

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Now - Not Later.

DEI: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

DIVERSITY (of people and perspectives): understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing individual differences

EQUITY (equal results): the pledge of fair treatment, opportunity and advancement while striving to identify and eliminate barriers

INCLUSION (creates a sense of belonging and value): puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection

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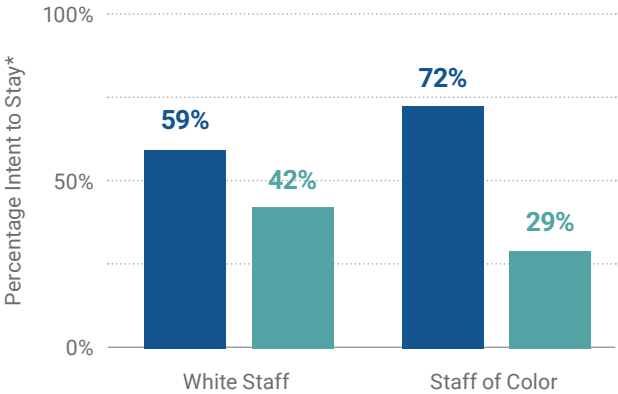*"If DEI is important to a leader, it needs to be part of their talent vision."*

National Talent Expert and Charter School Funder

There are powerful evidence that shows how educators' perception of a school's DEI-related values can impact hiring and retention. Many make decisions to join or stay at a school based on their perception of its diversity, commitment to equity, and inclusivity. As the accompanying chart shows, this is particularly true for staff members of color.

Research from Koya Partners and Education Pioneers found that, among education organizations, 98% of leaders agreed that DEI was important, but only 1 in 3 dedicated any resources toward achieving an equitable and inclusive organization. In Key Play #5 (p. 28) we provide guidance on building a more diverse and equitable hiring system.

Amidst all other responsibilities, DEI should be a throughline woven into the fabric of the organization, leadership decisions, and talent systems.

Figure 1: Staff Intent to Stay in Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Organizations. From "Unrealized Impact: The Case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" by Xiomara Padamsee and Becky Crowe, p. 29. 2017.

Equitable Systems Impact Retention

Bar chart — Percentage Intent to Stay*

White Staff: 59% (Org. perceived as diverse, equitable, and inclusion), 42% (Org. perceived as NOT diverse, equitable, and inclusion)

Staff of Color: 72% (Org. perceived as diverse, equitable, and inclusion), 29% (Org. perceived as NOT diverse, equitable, and inclusion)

■ Org. perceived as diverse, equitable, and inclusion

■ Org. perceived as NOT diverse, equitable, and inclusion

*Intent to stay is defined as agreeing or strongly agreeing with survey question "I fully expect to be working in this organization three years from now."

1   **Track DEI data.** To know where you need to go, you must understand where you are. At a minimum, leaders should have data on the key metrics listed below. You can collect years of experience (along with optional questions about gender and race) through your online application form and the rest through a new hire data collection or an onboarding survey. In addition, Promise54 recommends collecting the following data (in terms of legal compliance, all demographic data is optional for employees to provide):[4]

- Employee gender, age, race, and years of experience
- Leader gender, age, race, and years of experience
- Hiring by race/ethnicity. What percentage of your hires are people of color?
- Candidates by race/ethnicity. What percentage of your applicants and interviewees are candidates of color? What percentage of offers made are to candidates of color?
- Employee turnover by race/ethnicity. What is the attrition rate for your employees overall vs. when broken down by race/ethnicity?
- Promotions by race/ethnicity. What percentage of your promotions go to people of color vs. overall?
- Pay equity by race/ethnicity. How do you compensate people of color vs. overall?

2   **Collect comprehensive feedback from staff** through an employee culture survey (such as Insight – see p. 13) and two-way feedback meetings to learn about employee perceptions concerning how the school is doing and what is going well or not for them.

3   **Conduct an equity audit**. Equity audits typically include an evaluation of differences in pay, performance, retention, etc. by employee race, ethnicity, gender, and other indicators to examine strengths and areas for growth in your talent systems and practices. For information about specific DEI practices and strategies, check out Promise54's Unrealized Impact.

4   **Pick two measurable DEI goals** that you want to prioritize around hiring, recruitment, retention, or employee culture. As you collect data, you can track progress toward these critical goals all year.

5   **Find experts to provide knowledge, capacity, or training** for you, your leadership team, and/or your entire staff. This could be someone already in your building or an external provider.

6   **Find or adapt a definition of DEI that resonates with you / your team.** Creating a common language is critical to ensure you start with shared understanding and meaning. Often, schools adapt other DEI definitions and statements as an entry point into this work. As your DEI work evolves, you can add new language to your school's mission statement or core values. Along the way, be sure you are having conversations with leaders, employees, and your school community around what DEI work is and why it matters to you and your school.

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4. Padamsee, Xiomara and Becky Crowe. "Unrealized Impact: The case for diversity, equity, and inclusion." Promise54 and Bellwether Education Partners, (2017).
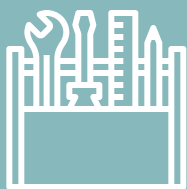
- Sample DEI statements

- For information about specific DEI practices and strategies, check out Promise54's Unrealized Impact.

SPOTLIGHT: TNTP INSIGHT SURVEY

TNTP's Instructional Culture Insight Survey gives leaders concrete feedback on the aspects of school culture that matter most for teacher and student success. The tool evaluates teacher perception on key organizational health measures, including diversity, equity, and inclusion; learning environment; leadership; compensation; and other elements of the talent cycle.

If you are interested in signing up for Insight, please reach out to Great MN Schools.

Five Key Plays

Key Talent Plays Cheat Sheet

#1 **Create a Talent Calendar**

- Place key talent actions on a monthly calendar to ensure you and your team are prioritizing the most important things at the right moments

#2 **Decide what YOU have to do and delegate the rest**

- Optimize your time by identifying what talent activities you enjoy and are best positioned to own
- Activate teachers, mid-level leaders, and other stakeholders to do remaining work

#3 **Track aggressively and manage toward retention**

- Build intentional retention efforts into all stages of the talent cycle, from hiring to onboarding and beyond
- Hold "stay conversations" with your high-performing staff by winter break
- Track staff responses and follow up

#4 **Build your brand (EVP)**

- Identify your competitive advantage as an employer by asking staff why they joined and what makes them stay
- Incorporate your EVP into your website and job descriptions

#5 **Get hiring right (hire early)**

- Set a goal of hiring at least 90% of your staff by May and backwards plan your talent actions to achieve this goal
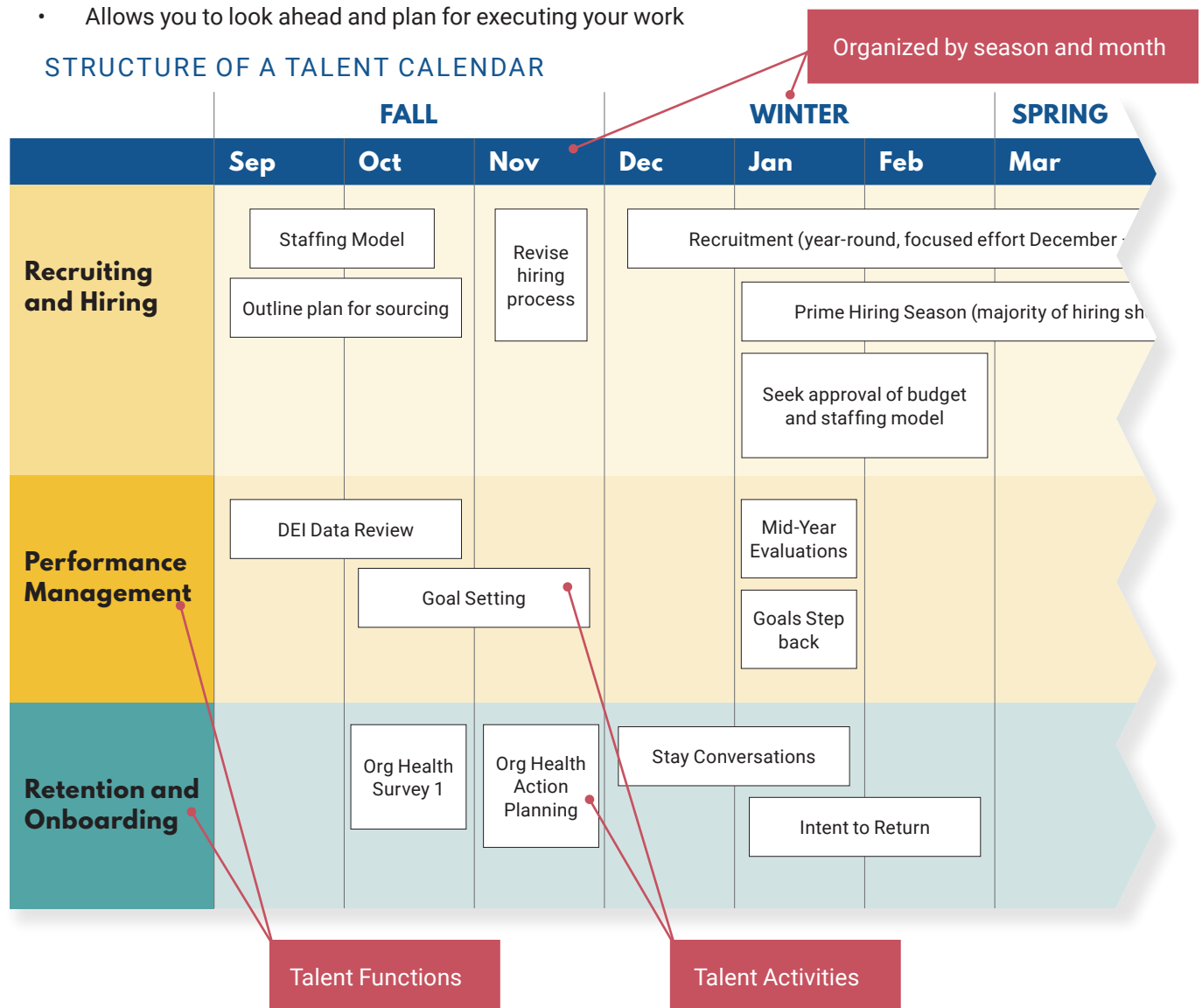- Ask high-performing, diverse staff members for referrals

Key Play #1: Create a Talent Calendar

In the same way great teachers plan for the year and create individual units and lesson plans, you should have a detailed plan for your talent year. Talent Calendars are critical tools as so much of the talent work done by leaders is "invisible," unseen by staff or other stakeholders, but critical to the overall success of the school. With myriad responsibilities, leaders should take the time to make that work visible by naming the most important talent activities and organizing them on a month-by-month Talent Calendar.

Talent Calendars reflect a school's annual goals and organizes the highest-leverage activities leaders can take on at critical moments in the school year. A Talent Calendar:

- Helps leadership make smart decisions about how and when to allocate resources
- Ensures that you do the right talent work at the most ideal time
- Allows you to look ahead and plan for executing your work

STRUCTURE OF A TALENT CALENDAR

Organized by season and month

	FALL			WINTER			SPRING
	Sep	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**
Recruiting and Hiring	Staffing Model / Outline plan for sourcing		Revise hiring process	Recruitment (year-round, focused effort December ...)	Prime Hiring Season (majority of hiring sh... / Seek approval of budget and staffing model		
Performance Management	DEI Data Review	Goal Setting			Mid-Year Evaluations / Goals Step back		
Retention and Onboarding		Org Health Survey 1	Org Health Action Planning	Stay Conversations	Intent to Return		

Talent Functions

Talent Activities

1   **Draft your Talent Calendar**. Use EdFuel's Talent Calendar template as a starting point. You may also choose to start with the sample Talent Calendar (p. 37). At a minimum, your Talent Calendar should include:

- November-December: "career/stay conversations" with Irreplaceables—teachers so successful at advancing student learning that they are nearly impossible to replace (see Key Play #3)
- January and again in spring: "career/stay conversations" with all employees (see Key Play #3)
- By end of January: Intent to return surveys all completed
- Year round, or by January at the latest: Begin recruitment (see Key Play #5)
- March-May (rolling): Renewal letters
- March-May: Performance reviews
- By end of May: 90% hired
- September–October: Data review with a DEI lens (i.e. recruitment/hiring data, compensation equity analysis, etc.)

2   **Add in major milestones.** At a minimum, your calendar should include the fiscal year, budget deadlines, enrollment deadlines and major testing windows, along with breaks, holidays, etc.

3   **Identify key stakeholders.** Each talent stakeholder should be aware of the Talent Calendar and/or own pieces of it. (See Key Play #2 for ideas on how to ensure you're not doing this work on your own.)

4   **Revisit the Talent Calendar at least weekly.** Ensure your talent priorities and actions are aligned. Enter key milestones into a shared Google Calendar and invite key stakeholders so that everyone is on the same page.

MAKE TALENT CALENDARS MEANINGFUL AT YOUR SCHOOL

- Share the Talent Calendar with folks who support talent activities – it shouldn't be a secret
- Encourage them to hold you to these timelines
- Share in weekly or monthly memos and newsletters, highlighting key milestones on the calendar
- Collect survey data as feedback about areas in which you and your team can be more consistent with your talent practices

TOOLS & RESOURCES

- EdFuel Talent Calendar blank template (.doc)
- EdFuel Talent Calendar template with key milestones and ownership (.xls)
- Sample Talent Calendars for schools of various sizes and at various stages
- Sample Talent Calendar (Appendix, p. 37)

Key Play #2: Decide What You Have to Do and Delegate the Rest

As the primary leader, you are often pulled in many directions in your work and there is a lot of talent work to do. You cannot – and should not – do the work alone.

The most effective single-site leaders identify what areas of talent work are most critical for them to handle themselves and then delegate the remainder of the work to their team. Whether a formal leadership team or an informal group, having others who help to move the work forward will set you up to be successful and thrive.

ACTION ITEMS

1. **It starts with you.** Take a self-assessment to understand your strengths and areas for growth. Find the balance between what must get done, what you enjoy doing, and what you are good at doing.

   - *Identify your strengths and areas for growth as a leader.* You can use the COMPASS Leadership Assessment, take a 360° survey, or use another leadership assessment of your choice.

   - *Identify your source of joy. What do you enjoy doing?* While overseeing budgeting or compliance cannot be removed from your must-dos, understanding what brings you joy will help you prioritize holding on to the work you like and promote your long-term sustainability.

2. **Identify what needs to get done.** This EdFuel template lists Talent Calendar activities and provides a space for you to designate ownership (see step #3). Use this as a starting point and add other activities as-needed, based on your priorities.

3. **Identify what you'll do and what you'll delegate.** While each organization and each leader are unique, a leader's time is best spent by delegating rote or low-stakes activities and prioritizing high-impact and high-stakes activities. In general:

   DO:
   - Final round interviews
   - Candidate decisions and offer calls
   - Proven recruitment events
   - Overall accountability and equity of talent systems

   DELEGATE:
   - Resume reviews
   - Initial phone screens
   - Reference checks
   - Sample lesson prep and communication
   - Online job postings
   - Website updates

4   **Build a "talent team" in your building.** You can involve a wide range of folks in talent work if their roles are clear and they are held accountable to outcomes. These members can include the principal, assistant principal, deans, lead or mentor teachers, and families/parent representatives, depending on the task and the needs profile.

As decision makers and owners of key talent work, these individuals should be a diverse group, reflecting your student community in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, perspective, etc. You likely already have these folks on your team.

Since this group will influence the talent decisions you can make, taking time on the front end to explicitly share your vision, clarify responsibilities, establish measures of success, and clarify ownership and decision rights (i.e. RACI Decision-Making Framework) will allow you to maximize your time.

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"When I get busy, our talent work falls to the back burner. Sometimes it's months before I can get back to it."

Single-Site Leader and Co-Founder

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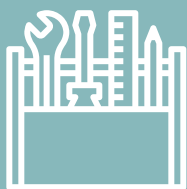
TOOLS & RESOURCES

- EdFuel Talent Calendar template with key milestones and ownership
- Leadership Compass Self-Assessment
- RACI Decision-Making Framework diagram

DIFFERENT APPROACHES FOR DELEGATING TALENT

Additional support can vary in form depending on the resources available and the management style of the leader. Below are three common structures we have observed and how the talent function is distributed in each. You should consider your interests, strengths, areas for growth, and capacity to manage when determining which delegation approach you will utilize.

DISTINCTION BY FUNCTION

Helpful in cases where there are leaders who split roles based on function (instruction vs. operations)

Leader A (Academics):

- May be viewed as primary organizational leader by students and families
- Owns coaching and development of all teachers
- Designs professional development and may oversee performance evaluation
- Participates in final-round interviews for instructional staff
- Co-designs onboarding plan

Leader B (Operations):

- Owns all recruitment and hiring systems (resume collection, phone screens, etc.) and data
- Manages all human resources and compliance-related activities
- Administers compensation and benefits systems
- Designs, administers, and analyzes staff surveys

FORMAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Useful if there is more than one formal leader (CEO and principal or principal and assistant principals)

Primary Leader:

- Viewed as primary school leader by internal and external stakeholders
- Leads the leadership team, delegates responsibility, holds leadership team accountable
- Participates in final interview day and makes final hiring decisions
- Thinks about how hires will fit into current teams

Leadership Team:

- Leadership team members fully own distinct work streams (i.e., one member reviews resumes, one conducts phone screens, one manages project plan, etc.)
- May take on high-volume activities (i.e., initial hiring activities, resume review, phone interviews, etc.)
- May plan and coordinate interview days and reference checks
- Weighs in on final hiring decisions

TALENT COMMITTEE

A talent committee can be composed of informal leaders: teachers, deans, and/or parents. High-volume, low-stakes activities are delegated, leaving the leader free to take on strategic, high-impact activities.

Primary Leader:

- Ultimately accountable for all talent activities
- Receives updates from talent committee members and looks at whole picture of talent
- Primarily serves as decision-maker in hiring, participating in final stages of interviews

Talent Committee:

- Screen resumes and complete initial hiring activities
- Host candidates for in-person interview days; may sit on hiring panels
- Administer surveys and support with analysis and messaging
- Serve as champions for talent priorities and adult culture
- Serve as school representatives and staff recruiters

Key Play #3: Track Aggressively and Manage Toward Retention

Retention begins the moment someone accepts an offer and begins onboarding. The strongest school leaders we studied did not wait until intent to return letters went out in the spring to work on retention—these leaders were constantly gauging how employees were feeling throughout the entire school year.

The graphic below shows the experience of teachers over the course of a year of teaching. In the first 45 days, they quickly move from Anticipation to Disillusionment. It is in this transition period that up to 20% of an organization's staff will decide to leave their workplace.[2]

Research shows us that staff who feel supported, developed, and connected to other adults in the building are more likely to be satisfied and remain at their school. When we asked single-site leaders and talent experts to name the single most-effective move to increase retention, every individual said the same thing: *Talk to your Irreplaceables, teachers so successful at advancing student learning that they are nearly impossible to replace.*

"Every minute you're not trying to keep your talent is one minute they are closer to leaving…"

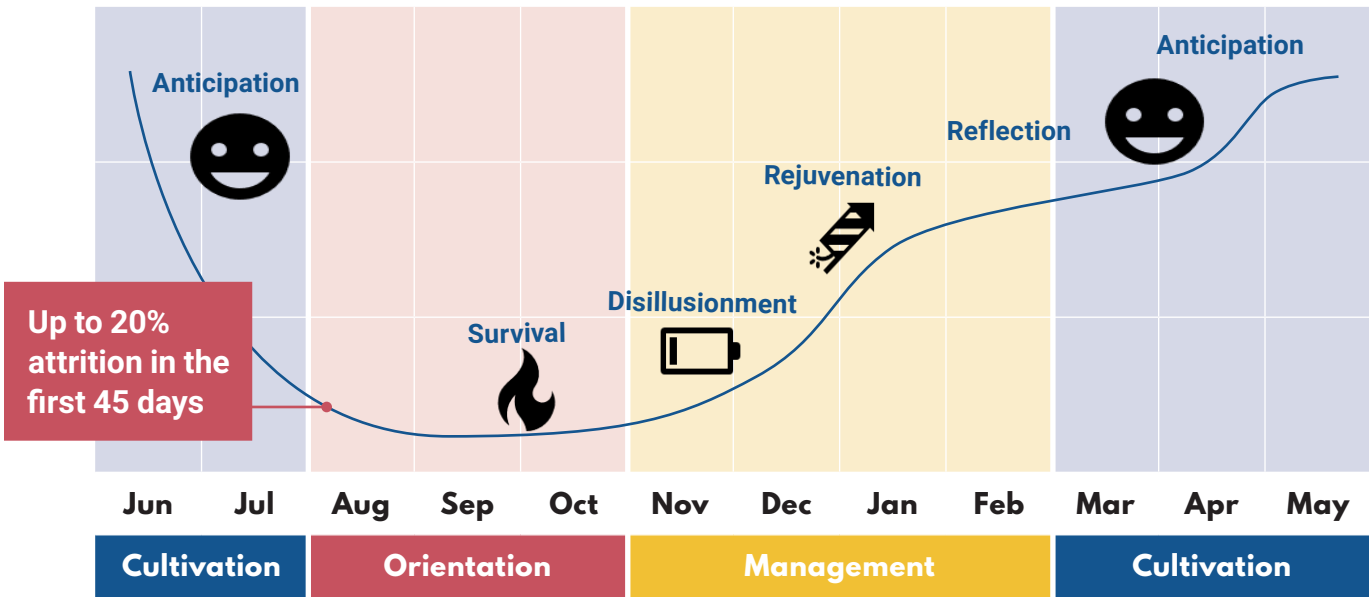*Charter Support Organization Leader*

Figure 2 : Adapted from "New Teacher Development for Every Inning," by Ellen Moir. Copyright 2016 by New Teacher Center

2. Hirsch, Arlene S. "Reducing New Employee Turnover Among Emerging Adults." Society for Human Resources, (2016).

1   **Start with strong onboarding.** First impressions matter, and they start the moment after an employee signs an offer letter. The time between accepting an offer and starting is critical and provides the opportunity to get new staff invested in the school. During official onboarding, share what staff will be held accountable for, how they should go about achieving success, and how you will support them in that endeavor. From the first moment, you will set the tone for your school culture and help employees feel invested in your community.

   - Send your new hires a welcome note letting them know you are excited they chose your school and share your big vision for the year ahead. Then, loop them in on team communication so they feel part of the team.

   - Connect your new hire to a "buddy," a current teacher who can answer any general questions they have about your school and begin to build a meaningful connection with them.

   In terms of formal onboarding (or orientation), TNTP has a useful take on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a charted set of human requirements that are essential to achieve complete self-actualization. In other words, it's a frame of requirements useful for positioning employees for success.

   - Use this sample onboarding plan as a starting point.

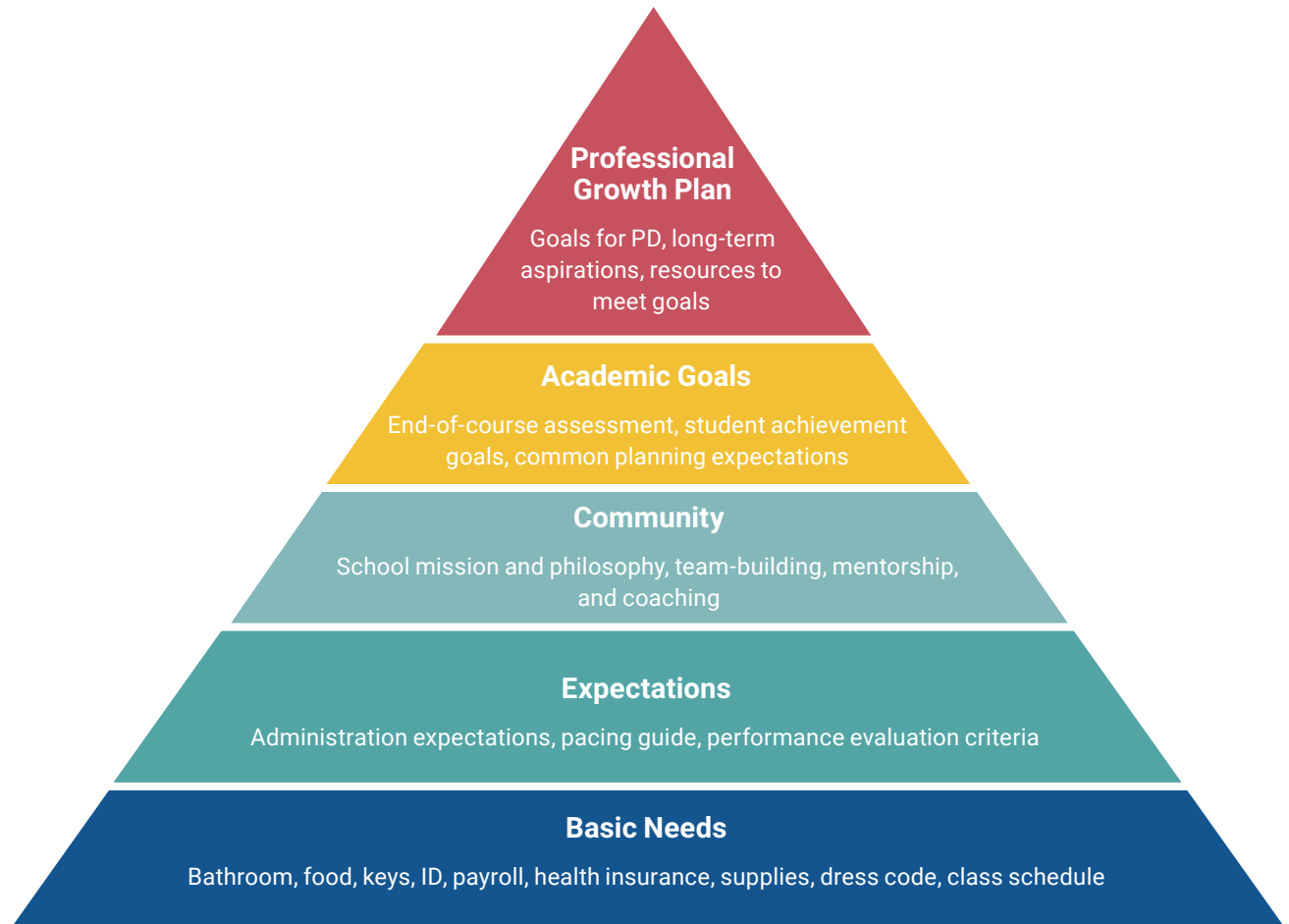   - Ensure each level of the hierarchy shows up at least twice over the course of a one-week orientation.

Professional Growth Plan
Goals for PD, long-term aspirations, resources to meet goals

Academic Goals
End-of-course assessment, student achievement goals, common planning expectations

Community
School mission and philosophy, team-building, mentorship, and coaching

Expectations
Administration expectations, pacing guide, performance evaluation criteria

Basic Needs
Bathroom, food, keys, ID, payroll, health insurance, supplies, dress code, class schedule

Figure 3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for New Teachers, from "Onboarding New Teachers: What They Need to Succeed," TNTP. 2012.

2   **Create a way to track retention and review the tracker each week with your leadership team.** It can be as simple as using an employee list and marking staff red / yellow / green based on how likely they are to return. The critical piece of this is to ensure the data you are using is not your best guess, but based on what they have actually said to you or your team.

3   **Schedule 15-minute "Career/Stay Conversations" with your Irreplaceable teachers before Thanksgiving or winter break.** These conversations can take place during existing weekly or bi-weekly check-ins, during office hours, or for 15 minutes before or after school. Conversations should accomplish three objectives:

- Tell them why you think they are valuable to the school and that you want them to stay
- Learn where they feel successful and what they are struggling with
- Ask for feedback on what can be improved or what would need to be different for them to stay for 1, 3, 5, or 10 years

You can find EdFuel's sample conversation structure here.

4   **Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative employee satisfaction data at least quarterly.**

- Employee satisfaction: Leaders should administer a culture survey (Insight, Gallup, etc.) approximately every 4-6 months to get a pulse on staff satisfaction and any potential areas for concern.
- Individual feedback: Leaders should track high-level takeaways from conversations with employees, especially where that person has shared specific feedback on how to improve the school.
- After you collect feedback or hear trends, share what you heard and how you're making changes as a result.

5   **Leverage local opportunities to recognize and reward your staff.** Nominate your teachers to the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program (deadline is typically early December) and the Minnesota Teacher of the Year Award (deadline is typically late September).

- Sometimes it really is the thought that counts: Forward the nomination to the teacher so they can see what you've written about their great work.
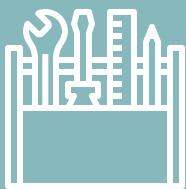
TOOLS & RESOURCES

- Achievement First Intent to Return Survey
- Achievement First "Career or Stay Conversations" script
- TNTP Teacher Recognition email template
- TNTP Irreplaceables retention action plan
- EdFuel sample onboarding plan
- New Schools for New Orleans Retention Blueprint

OFFICE HOURS SUPPORT COMMUNICATION AND RETENTION: A CASE STUDY

After noticing an uptick in staff attrition, a Chief Operations Officer at a single site reached out to her staff to better understand the issue. She examined her Insight Survey data and hosted focus groups, asking employees to share their perspectives on what leadership was doing well and what they should do differently. The data was clear: Employees felt isolated, wanted clearer communication, and wanted to feel valued.

To ensure that she did not have a surprise again, she started hosting bi-weekly office hours over a two-hour block on Friday afternoons, wherein any employee could sign up for 15 minutes to meet with her (by signing up online or on paper). On day one, there was a line of 10 people waiting for their face time with the COO. During these short check-ins, staff members shared what was on their mind and she and the employee problem-solved together in real time. The COO uses each conversation to apply the "Career/Stay Conversation" framework.

Over the past year, the COO has observed a notable improvement in staff morale. On the most recent culture survey, employees reported feeling more connected, more satisfied overall, and less likely to leave.

Key Play #4: Build Your Brand and Articulate Your EVP

Do you know why your staff members joined your school and why they remain there?

One critical way to get the right people in the door – and keep them – is to ensure that you know and talk about your brand. Being able to share clearly and authentically what makes your school different requires the development of an Employee Value Proposition (EVP), your key differentiator as an employer.

An EVP represents everything of value you provide to your employees—pay, benefits, training, career development opportunities—which is then marketed to potential employees. This is not an aspiration; it must reflect **the lived experience of staff members**, not what you want to be true one day. Generally, a competitive advantage falls into one or more of the following categories: Mission & Fit, Total Compensation & Rewards, Working Environment, Professional Growth.

MISSION & FIT

Daily work is connected to a higher purpose

TOTAL COMPENSATION & REWARDS

Current pay and benefits are adequate and fair

Opportunity and time horizon for future pay

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Congenial place to work where people feel valued

School culture, school safety, work hours and flexibility

Strong leadership at school and district levels

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Opportunity to pursue mastery

Opportunity to increase influence, responsibility, and autonomy

Figure 2: "Employee Value Proposition" by EdFuel

To define your school's EVP, use the strategies on the following page.

1 **Start with a focus group**—identify three to five of your irreplaceable employees. Start with a small, manageable group that represents those who best embody your school. Over time, you can expand this group to include one-third of your employees, then half, and, ultimately, you can survey all of your employees.

2 **Understand your employees' real experiences** and their perspectives on what makes your school unique and a place they want to stay. Hear from employees directly through 1:1 discussions, focus groups, exit surveys, and/or culture surveys (i.e., Insight, Gallup, etc.). In conversations, start with these three questions:

- What brought you to our school initially?
- What keeps you here?
- What might help you stay here long term?

3 **Synthesize your data and identify trends.** Are all employees noting professional development or growth opportunities as their primary reasons for joining or staying? If they're not, do not include it in your EVP. It is essential that your school's EVP reflect the lived experience of employees, not your best guess.

4 **Craft your EVP messages.** Take a look at some of the samples we've collected and adapt them to reflect what you heard from your employees.

5 **Confirm your message is right.** Go back to the staff in the focus group (along with one or two additional people) to confirm that what you are sharing about your school rings true for them.

6 **Use your brand wherever you can.** Now that your EVP is defined, it should be communicated with your current staff and in recruitment and hiring. Add your EVP messages to job descriptions, emails to candidates, and offer letters. Share EVP messages in newsletters or emails. The more people hear it, the more they will internalize it and talk about it.

TOOLS & RESOURCES
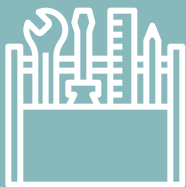
- Sample EVPs
- Sample recruitment messages with EVP integration
- TNTP EVP-Website diagnostic questions
- **Do you know how competitive your school's salaries are compared to your competitors' salaries?** If you are a leader of a charter school and are interested in compensation studies, you can take part in the MN Charter School Compensation Report and request to become a member.
- EdFuel offers school-specific and city-wide compensation reports. If you are interested in learning more, email info@edfuel.org.

CODIFYING CULTURE TO SUPPORT RECRUITMENT AND REPLICATION: A CASE STUDY

A single-site leader considering replication decided to codify their culture by articulating their EVP. To do so, they analyzed their culture through focus groups and interviews with all employees. Among other questions, they prioritized understanding the following:

- What initially attracted you to working here?

- What keeps you here?

- What is special about working here?

- What would you change?

Four key EVP trends emerged:

- Nurturing school environment

- Rigorous academic program

- Diversity of student, staff, and family population

- Collaboration (academic model requires intensive collaboration across teachers)

The leader decided that if retaining their best teachers was the top priority, they needed to have 1:1 conversations with each of them. Therefore, the head of school and assistant principal sat down with every one of their best teachers and had a Career/Stay Conversation that included the question, "What would you need to see/want to feel comfortable staying here for the long haul?"

One clear trend emerged: The majority of their best teachers were parents and identified the stress of childcare as a potential barrier to staying for the long term. In response, the school piloted a childcare initiative and incorporated their four EVP trends on their website and in recruitment messages to potential candidates.

Key Play #5: Get Hiring Right (Hire Early)

In 2014, TNTP found that the highest-quality teacher candidates are hired between March and May.[3] As a result, many schools have shifted their hiring timelines even earlier (in some cases starting as early as January). Practically, this means that your competitors may be on their second round of hiring before you post your first job.

To hire the most-effective candidates, single-site leaders must align their systems to achieve this goal: **Hire at least 90% of staff no later than the end of May.**

ACTION ITEMS

1 **Set a hiring goal to hire at least 90% of staff no later than the end of May.** Each staff member should understand the goal, rationale, and urgency so that they can appropriately prioritize hiring and recruitment work.

2 **Establish and backwards-map any systems and structures needed to achieve the goal.** Revisit the Talent Calendar you created in Key Play #1 and align your recruitment and hiring activities to support an end of May deadline. Note: The sample Talent Calendar has been created with this timeline in place.

3 **Figure out what you do that works and what will need to shift.** Assess last year's hiring strategy. What worked and what did not work? What prevented you from hiring early? Then, systematically remove the challenges. Consider: Do your recruitment calendars and fiscal cycles support making earlier hiring decisions?

4 **Leverage others.** Single-site leaders have told us that they are often the bottleneck, holding up processes because they are juggling countless other responsibilities. See the tips in Key Play #3 for ideas on how hiring work can be delegated responsibly.

5 **Strategically seek referrals.**

- Employee referrals are the #1 source of candidates in terms of volume, quality, and cost. More than 60% of hires come from formal or informal referrals, and in some cases all high-quality hires were sourced by referral. Interestingly, of the 10 single-site leaders interviewed, only one offered a stipend for referrals.

- Remember: If your staff is not already diverse, referrals will only perpetuate this (studies show our networks often reflect us). Prioritize seeking referrals from your diverse, highly effective staff in order to diversify your pipeline (refer to the case study in this section).

- When you create a culture people love, they become your loudest cheerleaders and best recruiters.

3. Tomes, Emily. "For Top Teachers, Hire Early." TNTP, (2014).

6   **Move candidates through the hiring process in under six weeks** — no candidate should be in the pipeline for longer than six weeks or you are at risk of losing them. Leverage your staff and create a hiring tracker which includes key hiring activities and their dates so that you can easily view candidates' total time in the hiring process.

7   **Track candidates by source.** Add a question to your application: "How did you hear about our school?" Use this data to determine any adjustments to the following year's recruitment strategy. For example, if your results show that LinkedIn yielded one high-quality candidate and cost $100 per month, consider re-allocating those funds to higher-yield candidate sources.

BONUS   **Know your recruitment pipelines.** Recruitment pipelines and candidate sources depend on the local context and are often highly specific to each city or region.

In Minneapolis, there are a number of traditional and alternative pipelines leaders can utilize, including:

- Local teacher preparation programs including those at traditional colleges of education

- Teach For America Twin Cities

- TNTP Teach Minnesota pathway

DO YOU NEED TO BUILD STRONGER HIRING PRACTICES?

Check out EdFuel's Best Practices: Selection and Hiring for Charter Schools for best practices, case studies, and actionable templates and resources.

ALIGNING SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT EARLIER HIRING: A CASE STUDY

A single-site leader made the decision to align all operational systems to support an earlier hiring timeline. He partnered with his school's board of directors to shift budget impacts and get smarter about predicting budgetary needs despite fluctuations in student enrollment. This allowed him to remove one major roadblock to hiring: Understanding his budgetary constraints at the right time.

STRATEGIC REFERRALS: A CASE STUDY

One talent leader acknowledges that she had to evolve her approach for collecting candidate referrals from a blanket ask to all staff to a more strategic approach. Initially, she had asked all staff for referrals during team meetings and via email.

Unfortunately, she did not receive the quality of candidates that would be a great fit for the school, so she shifted her strategy, stating, "I don't want referrals from everyone. I do want referrals from my high performers and from people of color. I want the awesome people who love our school and know other awesome people that could love our school." She did this in three ways:

- Recognizing that individuals' networks are often comprised of people similar to themselves, she prioritized requesting referrals from (1) high-performing staff members and (2) other staff of color;

- She made the ask in person, during a 1:1 check-in, which secured the attention of the staff member, allowed her to convey any hiring priorities, and ensured she could collect the information in real-time; and

- During each 1:1 in-person meeting, she requested three pieces of information about three people (1–name, 2–email, 3–phone number), which provided her with information she could use to reach out to candidates immediately.

A NOTE OF CAUTION:

With limited resources, single-site leaders must be strategic and judicious about their recruitment investments. The cost of job fairs and pay-to-post job sites does not often outweigh the benefit, requiring more time and money than they yield in terms of high-quality candidates. When making these decisions, you should know your local talent market and where you can find diverse, high-quality candidates. Tracking where candidates come from will help you know what has been working for you.

If you do attend job fairs, have a plan (see: EdFuel's National Best Practices in Teacher Recruitment).

RECRUITING AND HIRING DIVERSE CANDIDATES[5]

We know that leaders are seeking additional guidance for finding and hiring diverse candidates. We have curated innovative strategies for you based on research conducted by The Education Trust – New York:

- Advertise job openings widely, specifically including outreach to professional networks serving educators of color.

- Include educators of color in candidate screening, interview, and promotion committees.

- Actively engage teacher preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), and other institutions that serve prospective educators of color for strategic recruitment of graduating students and alumni.

- Attend open meetings for local community organizations to build relationships and announce openings.

- Reach out to local teacher pipelines and partners who are focused on increasing the diversity of candidates entering the teaching profession (i.e.,TNTP's Teach Minnesota, Teach For America, pathways within local colleges and university education departments, and recipients of the Minnesota Legislature's Collaborative Urban Educator funding to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce in Minnesota).

- Provide training in implicit bias and cultural competence.

- Implement bias-reduction strategies, such as "name-blind" recruitment (where those responsible for hiring do not see personally identifiable information that can reveal race/ ethnicity and other factors until after they decide whether to grant a candidate an interview) and greater reliance on performance tasks instead of resumes.
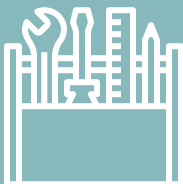
TOOLS & RESOURCES

- In lieu of a robust and expensive HRIS system, single-site leaders (and smaller networks) often leverage the accessible and fully integrated tools on G Suite for Education (it's free for schools!)

- EdFuel Sample Hiring Tracker

- EdFuel's Best Practices: Selection and Hiring for Charter Schools

5. *"The Educator Diversity Playbook." The Education Trust – New York, (2018).*

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

Thank you to leaders at the following organizations for your time and expertise in contributing to the Single-Site Talent Playbook.

Appendix

For these and additional resources,
visit bit.ly/SSTalentPlaybook

Quick Play for a Big Payoff

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOUR STAFF RETENTION NOW? START HERE.

When single-site leaders were asked to name the single most-effective move to increase retention, every single leader provided the same answer: Talk to your Irreplaceables—teachers so successful at advancing student learning that they are nearly impossible to replace.

Find time.

If you don't have time for a formal Stay Conversation or career discussion, even a short, 15-minute individual check-in can make an impact. Where will you find the time? Consider the following:

- A meeting with a parent, funder, or candidate was just canceled. You now have one hour free.
- A staff meeting wrapped up early. You now have 15 extra minutes.
- Hold one hour for weekly office hours or coffee chats (15 to 20-minute slots) for your teachers to visit and share what's on their mind.

Still don't have enough time?

- Identify two teachers at your school who are Irreplaceables
- Schedule time for check-ins in the next two weeks
- Ask them what they need to stay for the next one, five, ten years
- Take action where you can

Follow four prompts.

(be sure to write down responses in a tracker and share them with your leadership team!)

1. How are things going?
2. What should we keep doing?
3. What can we do differently?
4. Give them feedback and tell them you want them to stay at the school.

Key Talent Plays Cheat Sheet

#1 **Create a Talent Calendar**
- Place key talent actions on a monthly calendar to ensure you and your team are prioritizing the most important things at the right moments

#2 **Decide what YOU have to do and delegate the rest**
- Optimize your time by identifying what talent activities you enjoy and are best positioned to own
- Activate teachers, mid-level leaders, and other stakeholders to do remaining work

#3 **Track aggressively and manage toward retention**
- Build intentional retention efforts into all stages of the talent cycle, from hiring to onboarding and beyond
- Hold "Stay Conversations" with your high-performing staff by winter break
- Track staff responses and follow up

#4 **Build your brand (EVP)**
- Identify your competitive advantage as an employer by asking staff why they joined and what makes them stay
- Incorporate your Employee Value Proposition into your website and job descriptions

#5 **Get hiring right (hire early)**
- Set a goal of hiring at least 90% of your staff by May and backwards plan your talent actions to achieve this goal
- Ask high-performing, diverse staff members for referrals

	FALL			WINTER			SPRING			SUMMER		
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Recruiting and Hiring	Staffing model	Outline plan for sourcing	Revise hiring process	Recruitment (year-round, focused effort December – May)		Seek approval of budget and staffing model			Keep new hires warm	Last minute hiring / New hire event		New hire onboarding
				Prime hiring season (majority of hiring done by end of May)								
Performance Management	DEI data review	Goal setting			Mid-year evaluations	Step back on goals		End-of-year evaluations				
Retention and Onboarding		Org health survey 1	Org health action planning	Stay conversations		Intent to return		Org health survey 2	Intent to return / Stay conversation follow up	Staff onboarding planning and content creation		
									Org health action planning			