Talent for Turnaround: Support for Systemic Change

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Talent for Turnaround: Turnaround Leader Competencies

Catherine Barbour

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Session Objectives

• Discuss the unique challenges of leading in a turnaround school.
• Understand the importance of competencies in turnaround leader recruitment and selection.
• Reflect on current talent management practices.
• Understand how to recruit leaders with competencies to turn around persistently low-performing schools.
• Create an action plan to incorporate or improve competency-based recruitment and selection practices in your schools.
Using Turnaround Leader Competencies

Professional Learning Module

Recruit, Select, and Support: Turnaround Leader Competencies

Part 1: Understanding Turnaround Leader Competencies
Part 2: Recruiting and Selecting Turnaround Leaders
Part 3: Developing and Supporting Turnaround Leaders
Talent Development Framework
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“Turnaround efforts are made when organizations are in a state of entrenched failure. Leaders who would otherwise succeed often fall short in a turnaround.”

(Steiner & Hassel, 2011, p. 2)
Activity: What Sets Turnaround Leaders Apart?

Leading in Higher-Performing School  

Leading in Turnaround School
Leveraging Leaders

“The importance of leadership begs the questions of how to identify, support, and retain high quality principals, especially in turnaround schools where their influence is needed most.”

(Zhu, Hitt, & Woodruff, 2015, p. 4)
Competencies

- Competencies are underlying motives and habits—or patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking—that cause a person to be successful in a specific job or role.
- Competencies lead to actions that lead to outcomes.
- Competencies explain some of the differences in performance levels of leaders.

(Steiner & Hassel, 2011)
“Competency research suggests that outstanding performance in complex jobs—ones in which most candidates have a similar educational history and significant autonomy over daily work tasks—is driven more by underlying competencies than by readily observed skills and knowledge.”

(Steiner & Hassel, 2011, p. 5)
Turnaround Leader Competencies

- Achievement / Focus on Sustainable Results
- Monitoring & Directiveness / Holding People Accountable
- Initiative & Persistence
- Planning Ahead

- Self-Confidence / Commitment to Student Learning
- Belief in Learning Potential

- Analytical Thinking
- Conceptual Thinking

- Impact and Influence
- Team Leadership / Engaging the Team
- Developing Others

Driving for Results
Influencing for Results
Problem Solving
Personal Effectiveness

(Public Impact, 2008; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; UVA Partnership for Leaders in Education, 2014)
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Competency-Based Talent Management

- Years of experience and academic degrees are not accurate predictors of performance.
- Competencies—habits of behavior and underlying motivations—can be used to distinguish among performance outcomes.
- Using competencies to select turnaround leaders could increase the likelihood that turnaround efforts succeed.

(Steiner & Hassel, 2011)
Talent Management

FIGURE 1: Observable characteristics versus underlying competencies (Adapted from “The Iceberg Model” in Spencer & Spencer, Competence at Work, p. 11.)
Behavioral Event Interviews

Behavioral event interview (BEI) can be used to identify turnaround leader competencies.

- Competencies are key predictors of how someone will perform at work.
- Two leaders with the same training and number of years of experience may have very different performance outcomes.
- BEIs ask candidates to describe detailed actions and thinking in past work events.
- Knowing actions that candidates have taken in the past is a strong predictor of actions they will take in the future.

(Public Impact, 2008)
Activity: Principal Hiring Scorecard

Principal Hiring Scorecard

A high-quality principal hiring process has far-ranging impacts on the leadership and student learning in a given school. The principal hiring should be fair, rigorous, and data-driven, and its results should inform new principal induction and mentoring processes.

The first step in developing a strong principal hiring process is to identify the strengths and areas of growth for your district’s current principal hiring process. What elements of the process does your district currently do well? What aspects can your district improve upon? To find out, take the following survey.

*Note: This survey has been adapted for the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders Professional Learning Module: Recruit, Select, and Support: Turnaround Leader Competencies to reflect the use of turnaround principal competencies in the principal hiring process.

Survey

Instructions: For each question, please circle the response that best describes the principal hiring process in your district. There are no right or wrong answers.
Reflection: Competency-Based Leader Selection

Think-Pair-Share

- Where do competencies fit in your current leader selection process?
- How could your current leader selection process be modified to include turnaround leader competencies?
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Obstacles to Hiring Turnaround Leaders

- **A shortage of high-quality principal candidates**
  - More demanding
  - Limited authority and autonomy
  - Insufficient pay to attract enough candidates

- **Not selecting the best candidates from the limited pool**
  - Limited investments in recruiting and selecting candidates
  - Overreliance on internal candidates
  - Lack of rigor in selection criteria and processes

- **Administrative inefficiencies resulting in a loss of applicants**
  - Prolonged interview and hiring process and delays
  - Lack of clear vision and support for leaders

(Doyle & Locke, 2014; TNTP, 2006; Clifford, 2012)
How Can We Improve the Process?

- Make the job more appealing—and manageable.
- Pay great leaders what they are worth.
- Take an active approach to recruitment.
- Evaluate candidates against the competencies and skills that research shows successful principals demonstrate.
- Design the placement process to match particular schools’ needs with particular candidates’ strengths.
- Continually evaluate hiring efforts.

(Doyle & Locke, 2014)
Building a Candidate Pool

1. Define a Profile of a High-Quality Candidate
2. Develop and Execute a Recruiting Strategy
   - Project need
   - Prepare recruiters
   - Establish an identity
   - Attract and identify candidates
   - Determine those with the highest potential
   - Cultivate and convert high-potential candidates into applicants
3. Build a Pipeline of New Rising Talent

(Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010)
Competency-Based Recruiting

- Articulate the mission, vision, and goals
- Identify autonomy, support, and other appealing conditions
- Compensate for additional demands and responsibilities
- Develop criteria for identifying candidates with turnaround leader competencies
- Solicit recommendations and target outreach to external candidates
- Identify and cultivate high-potential internal candidates
- Eliminate barriers that might discourage potential talent

(Doyle & Locke, 2014)
Activity: Recruitment

Analyze job announcement and description.

- Why would a turnaround leader want this job?
- What are turnaround leader competencies articulated in this job description?
- Brainstorm some recruitment strategies that would lead to a strong candidate pool for this position.
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The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders and Public Impact have developed a professional learning module to provide guidance on coaching school leaders to develop leader actions to turn around persistently low-performing schools.
Action Planning for Competency-Based Recruitment and Selection

What are some next steps your district can take to improve your recruiting and selection of Turnaround Leaders based identifying needs from the Principal Scorecard?

Be prepared to share your next steps with the whole group.
Closing Comments
Thank You!

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References

Professional Learning Module:

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