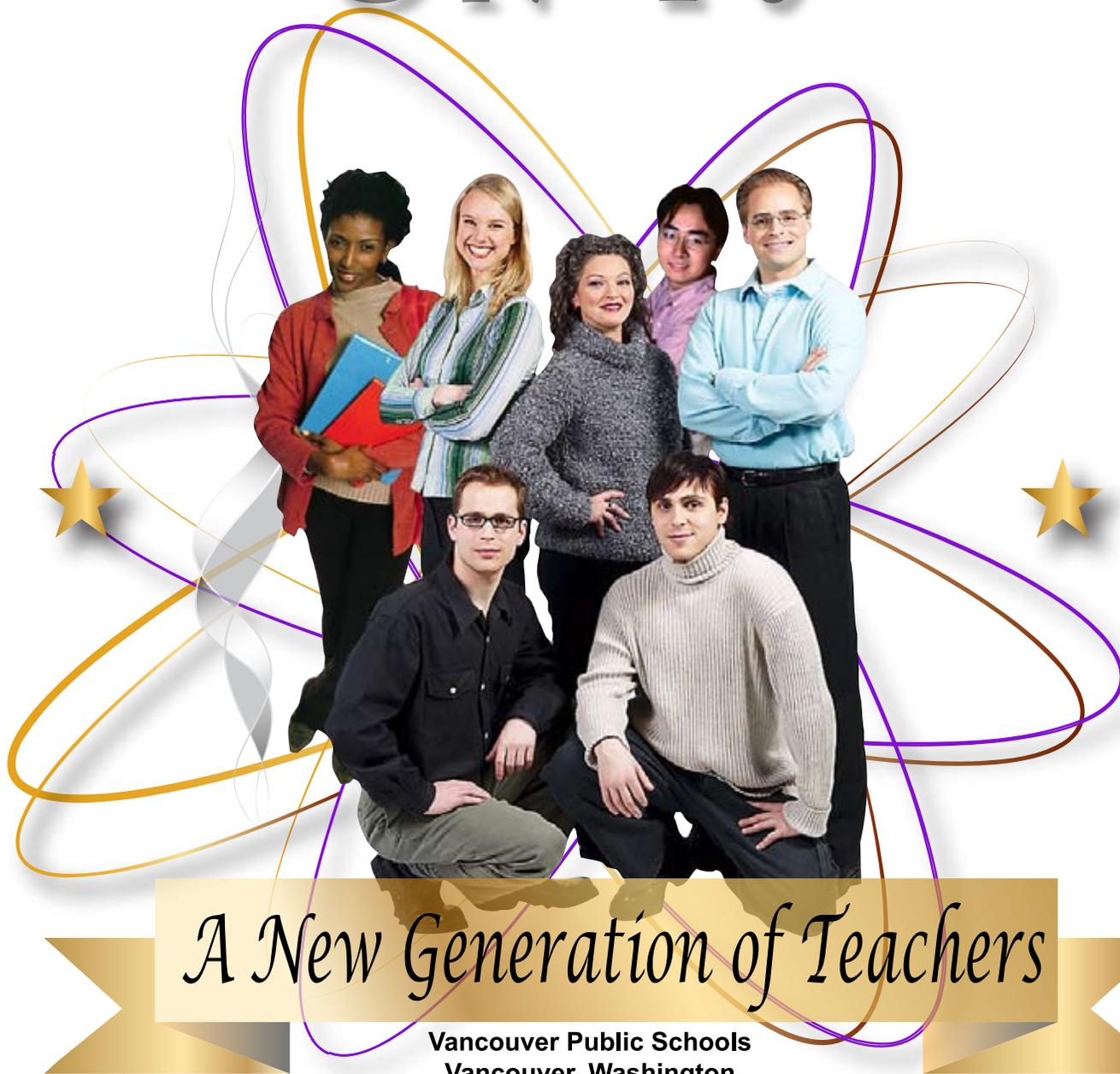


# HOLDING ON TO



*A New Generation of Teachers*

Vancouver Public Schools  
Vancouver, Washington

# *Vancouver Public Schools Recognized*

**National School Public Relations Association** presented the Golden Achievement Award for Exemplary Practice with New Educator Training

**American Association for Employment in Education** presented the Innovative Programs and Practices Award for Teacher Recruitment and Retention, A Systemic Solution

**American Association of School Personnel Administrators** presented the C. S. Robinson Award under the theme *No Child Left Behind*, Recruiting and Retaining Quality Teachers: A Systemic Approach for Creating a Values-Based Culture

**American Association for Employment in Education** presented the Innovative Programs & Practices Award for Reinventing Induction

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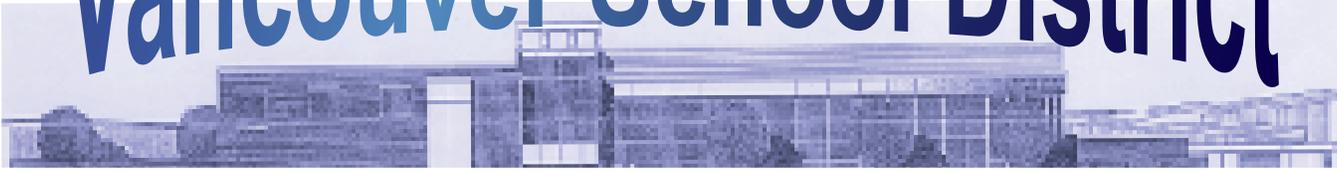
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*“If we can stop the revolving door from spitting out our teachers, we can solve our teacher shortage while retaining committed, experienced professionals.”*

*–Lorae Roukema*

# Vancouver School District



## A SYSTEMIC SOLUTION: *Finding and Keeping Great Teachers!*

Like school districts across the nation, Vancouver School District (Vancouver, Washington) is confronting the challenge of finding, employing, and retaining great teachers in an extremely challenging and competitive labor market.

The challenge has been complicated in that two-thirds of Vancouver's 1,300 full time teachers have or will become eligible for retirement within a single five-year window. At the same time, Washington State has slipped to eighteenth in compensation.

As a large urban district, Vancouver's 22,500 students are composed of over 50% economically disadvantaged and fifteen percent second language students, conditions which further challenge recruiting efforts. Comparable districts experience a 50% retention rate over a five year period.

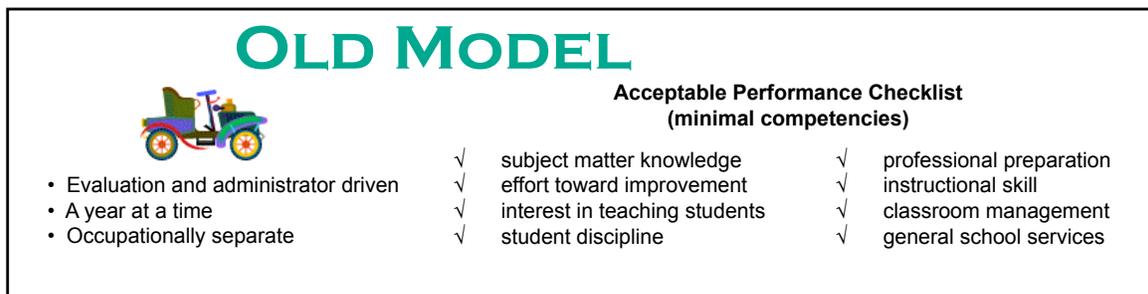
Today, four years into the retirement window, Vancouver has replaced seventy percent of its full time teachers and is reaping the benefits of a cumulative retention rate of 91%. The key is a systemic-based reinvention of the human resource management program. The cost represents an 'underwhelming' \$2.5 million (3.5% of the certificated salary budget) in added compensation, \$35,000 per year in recruitment, and \$200,000 per year in additional professional development. Critical to success is a highly collaborative labor-management partnership.

The reinvented program components are represented not as linear or sequential pieces, but as a systemic model consisting of:

- **Compensation:** realignment of a salary schedule that traditionally favored teachers in their later years of employment to one that provides more rapid increases for new teachers. The senior teachers, those who would forego part of their future increases, ratified this change in the great spirit of all educators to do what is right for kids.
- **Extended Duties:** addressing the reality that effective teachers spend large amounts of time outside of the student day, week, and year to fulfill their professional role. While fully compensating teachers for these volumes of time is beyond the reach of public school districts, Vancouver used local levy funds to provide a \$4,000 - \$5,000 (based on experience) professional stipend to honor this quality of great teachers. It is essentially the community's way of saying, "We appreciate all that you do for our children both within and outside the instructional day!" It was the teachers' way of saying, "We are professionals, not hourly employees."

## A Systemic Solution: Finding and Keeping Great Teachers

- **Assessment and Evaluation:** abandoning a traditional model (*Figure 1*) of teacher evaluation and professional development that was administrator driven, evaluation oriented, and focused on a one-year snapshot. District teachers adopted a new model (*Figure 2*) that is teacher driven, professional growth oriented, career focused and fully integrated. It is built upon five criteria common to all educators and forty critical element competencies. In supporting this change, our teachers said, “If you are prepared to approach evaluation as a tool to drive professional growth, we are prepared to commit to broad-based, multi-year competency development.”



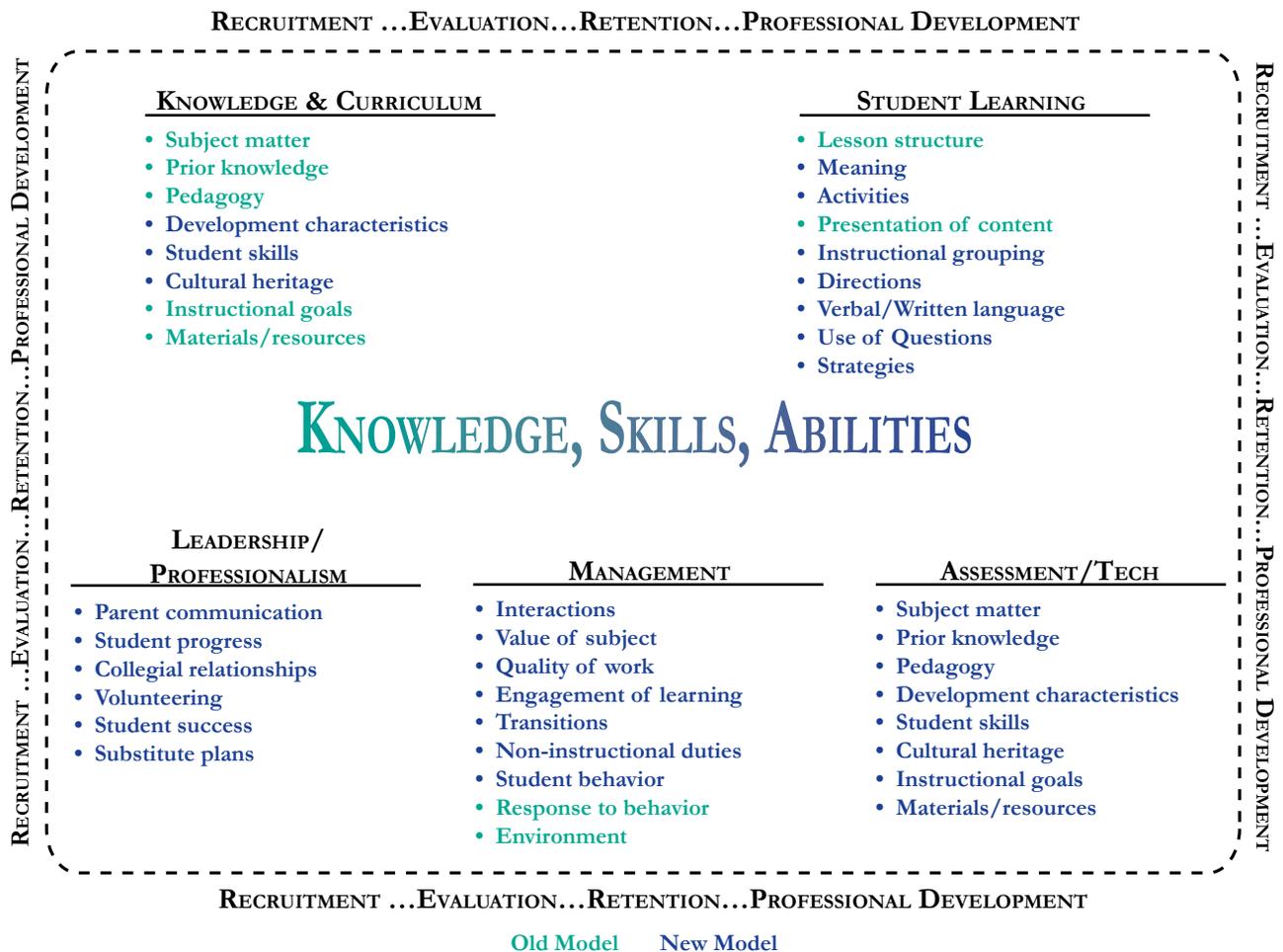
(Figure 1)



(Figure 2)

- **Professional Growth and Development:** moving away from the idea of professional development as a single event, individually oriented. The new integrated and expanded professional growth program is driven by an educator’s self-assessment against the same criteria and competencies that drive recruitment, evaluation, and retention (*Figure 3*). These competencies are in-turn tailored to the District’s strategic vision, goals, and mission and provide the framework for identifying, developing, and delivering professional development. They essentially define and eliminate the mystery of what constitutes a great teacher in the Vancouver School District. It reflects a commitment to develop each teacher to the exemplary level in each competency over a career. To back up its commitment, the District increased each teacher’s professional development account from \$500 to \$800 per year with the opportunity to claim up to \$1,800 from unused funds in the pool.

Not surprising, these competencies target many of the very areas that lead to teacher frustration and departure from the profession. These integrate the process of salary advancement, certification, and expanded endorsements. What used to be three competing priorities for teachers are now mutually supportive.



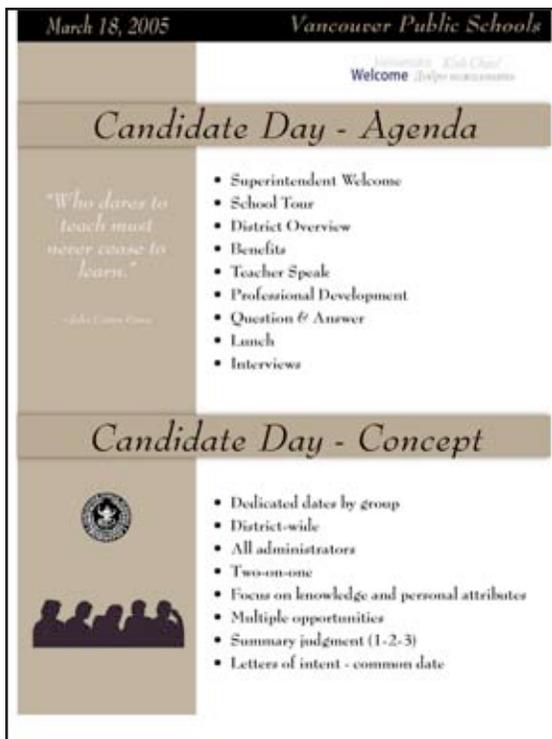
(Figure 3)

- **Recruitment:** changing from position and building based to district-wide recruitment to accelerate the recruiting period from August/September to April/May. Concurrently, recruiting tools were redesigned to place emphasis on the transportable qualities of a great teacher rather than on single position bias. Accompanying this component is a statistically valid forecasting system to project quantity and certification requirements and a philosophy that emphasizes multiple endorsements.



“More attention has been paid to recruiting teachers than to establishing ongoing programs (i.e. recruitment, professional development, retention) or to removing incompetent teachers. Programs (districts) that recruit on the basis of money incentives and high college achievement could fail to achieve any long-term goals unless programs (districts) pay attention to the preparation of teachers for teaching and to on-the-job professional development.”

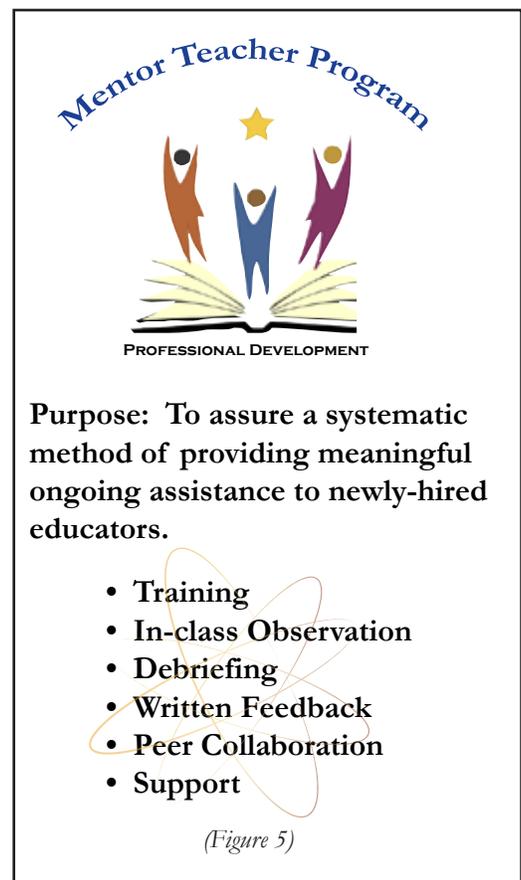
–Gerald Bracey & Alex Molnar



(Figure 4)

- **Mentoring and Induction:** development and implementation of a training program where teachers (experienced or inexperienced) arrive a week ahead of other teachers and are immersed in a mentor driven, five day program (Figure 5). Community businesses host the entire week to demonstrate community support for teachers. The program focuses on those critical skills that (1) aren't effectively learned in college, and (2) are tailored to the Vancouver School District's vision and goals. Teachers become comfortable with their mentor and with the district's support program to support newcomers. They learn the community, they network with each other, with administrators, with school board members, and with master teachers. They learn what resources are available and how to access the resources as mentors provide a systematic method of defeating the reasons why districts lose great teachers: difficult work assignment, unclear expectations, role conflict, isolation, inadequate resources, reality shock, salary, certification, leadership, culture.

- **Interviewing:** progressing from single-candidate interviews to candidate days (Figure 4) wherein all building administrators are engaged in candidate evaluation with two-on-one interviews. Administrators interview and evaluate on the same qualities and competencies that drive professional development and evaluation. All interviews are for district-wide placement (specific vacancies are unknown as the current teacher reassignment process is still underway). Candidates may interview multiple times to avoid losing great teachers who simply had a bad interview. They are then grouped in three tiers with the top tier receiving a "Letter of Intent" immediately following the candidate day process. Specific placements come in the following months as current teacher reassignments, retirements, leaves of absence, etc. become known. Ninety-eight percent of all candidates confirm their letters of intent, opting for a great district over a specific position.



## A Systemic Solution: Finding and Keeping Great Teachers

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What kind of teachers has this system produced? They are the top 5% of approximately 4,000 candidate/recruitment contacts per year. Of the teachers hired, 50% are from our home state of Washington, 20% are from our neighboring state of Oregon, 20% are from the neighboring five-state region, and the remainder come from around the nation and around the world. While we reach people electronically, nobody is offered a position in Vancouver if he/she has not participated in a candidate day and “walked the ground.” Among the new teachers, 48% have a master’s degree, they average 3.9 years of experience, the average GPA is 3.7 with over 50% at or above 3.9, and they have an average age of 31.8 years. They are the best of the best and are truly GREAT teachers!

The Vancouver experience demonstrates that even in a difficult labor market, educators recognize that the same system qualities that produce great districts (vision, commitment, planning, integration, and follow-through) will produce great careers when applied to the employees.



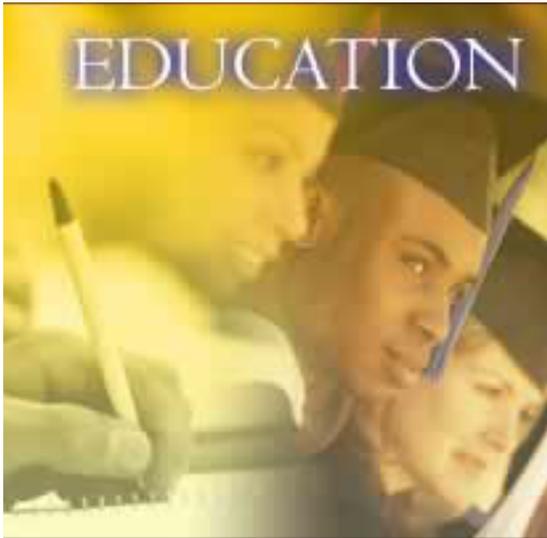
 **“Turning the teacher situation around demands a strategy that works to bring individuals of the highest caliber into the profession, surround them with a network of committed peers who support and reinforce their professional development, and reward them appropriately for their work.”**

**–Jonathan Watts Hull**



# RECRUITING & RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS

## A SYSTEMIC APPROACH: *Creating a Values-Based Culture*



### 10 Year Window

- 2.2 million teachers needed
- 50-66% will be first time teachers
- More than 90% of districts nationwide need minority teachers
- Only 7% of former teachers are returning to teaching.  
– *South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment*

*No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) adds new purpose to an old challenge... ***how to recruit, develop, and retain high-quality educators.***

School districts have always struggled to find and keep teachers. Within the next ten years, it is estimated that 2.2 million of America's 3.0 million teachers will be replaced. Of this number, research says that more than 50% will be first time teachers, and half of those hired will not stay beyond five years!

If demand alone were the challenge, the problem might be less significant. But just as demand is growing, supply is dwindling. Research by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) concludes that 40% of education graduates will never become teachers. Of those that do, 15.7% will leave annually due to lack of professional support, poor leadership, low pay, or personal reasons. NCTAF places the cost of recruiting, hiring, preparing, and losing one teacher at \$50,000.

The struggle to find and keep teachers has been elevated by increased questioning of teacher quality. Recruiting experience at career fairs across the country confirms that quality is eclipsing quantity as the greater challenge. In the past, quality concerns focused on classroom skills and competence and the complexity of addressing non-performing teachers – certainly a critical focus for student learning and for NCLB.

More recently, values have become a critical component of the quality question and have been thrust into the forefront in the most compelling of ways, driven not so much by children learning as by children being abused. In a 2004 U.S. Department of Education Study conducted by Charol Shakeshaft of Hofstra University, it was concluded that 10% of all children will suffer abuse at the hands of an educator during their K-12 years. While creating a loud cry for effectively ridding the system of teachers who abuse, an even louder cry exists to assure such teachers never enter the system. Add the pre-existing concern with how to effectively deal with non-performing teachers, and the mandate quickly becomes "screen poor performers and potential abusers out of the system at the point of hire."

## Recruiting & Retaining Quality Teachers—A Systemic Approach: Creating a Values-Based Culture



(Figure 1)

Now add another dimension under NCLB – all teachers must be “highly qualified.” The blending of all these demands presents a mega-challenge to public education. School districts must, in a dwindling pool, find teachers who:

- are highly qualified in their content area,
- demonstrate competency in the practice of teaching, and
- possess unquestionable personal values and attributes.

In essence, districts are asked to hire highly qualified educators in sufficient numbers to meet our needs – and then keep them!

In the Vancouver School District, the belief is that the solution begins with a systemic reinvention of human resource functions and programs within public education (Figure 1). Human Resources (HR) can no longer be the province of the former school principal, and the integral functions of HR can no longer be spread across different departments, leaving HR with little more than a personnel processing role. With an integrated, professional human resource program as the cornerstone, districts can address a systemic and integrated HR solution.

To implement its current model, Vancouver School District first brought all the components of a comprehensive HR program under one umbrella: workforce planning, organizational development, recruitment and placement, compensation and benefits, professional development and evaluation, and employee and labor relations. Vancouver next shaped a systemic solution based upon integration of all HR functions and activities – both in the HR office and as practiced by administrators throughout the organization. At the core of the systemic change was a pre-occupation with personal values and professional career growth.

Critical to the process was the belief that:

- **Every Vancouver teacher can and should be a great teacher** based on criteria relevant to Vancouver. This means finding teachers with commitment, passion, energy, and enthusiasm, and who believe at a deep and personal level that they are both advocates for every child and teachers of all children—teachers who will excite children to learn and excite colleagues to engage.
- **Professional Development is a critical lynch pin.** It lends flexibility to recruitment, is critical to reinforcing values and building expectations, and allows teachers to focus across a career instead of on single training events. Strategically, it must provide teachers with a seamless integration of personal growth, professional growth, curriculum, salary advancement, and continuing certification.
- **Evaluation should be teacher driven through career focused self-assessment**, and have as its core purpose assessing and planning for professional growth against the “great teacher” criteria. Evaluation cannot be a series of snapshots-in-time designed primarily for dealing with non-performing teachers. It is the essential vehicle for career management; it begins with an initial self-assessment during new teacher induction and becomes a living, dynamic tool from that point forward.



## Recruiting & Retaining Quality Teachers—A Systemic Approach: Creating a Values-Based Culture

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- **An ultimate objective of every HR function**, be it within the HR office or in a supervisor’s performance of HR duties, is to continuously and consistently build and reinforce a constant set of values and expectations. This holds true across the spectrum from induction and training to performance management and discipline.
- **Retention only happens by organizational design and strategic program development.** It is not, and cannot be, an employee driven outcome.

Vancouver School District put both the HR organizational changes and the systemic program changes in place over the past six years. The efforts were launched in response to:

- a projected five-year retirement of two-thirds of the workforce,
- the cultural shift in education to personalized learning and accountability, and
- demand for high levels of personal values and personal attributes.

The district has now replaced approximately 70% of its 1,350 teachers and achieved a cumulative retention rate of 90% since instituting systemic recruitment and retention program changes. These results occurred within a large urban district of 21,000 students with more than half of all students at the poverty level as measured by free or reduced lunch programs.

Astonishingly, the Vancouver School District draws in almost 4,000 yearly candidate contacts for every 200 employees hired. In effect, this allows the district to select the top 5% of the targeted candidate pool. What kind of teachers has this system produced? Of the teachers, 25% are from local sources, 25% from across Washington State, 20% from our neighboring state of Oregon, and 30% from around the nation and around the world. This targeted geographical diversity allows the district to better mirror the backgrounds of our students while enriching student learning and organizational development through a broad expanse of experiences, perspectives, and ideas.

Among the new teachers, the average GPA is 3.7 with more than 50% at or above 3.9. They have an average of three years of experience and an average age of approximately 32. Half of the new teachers come to the district with advanced degrees and 35% of those who don’t will acquire them within the first three to five years of service.

The “values-based” recruitment, induction, and retention focus is characterized by principals and central office administrators with such comments as:

- “Over the last eight years our district's approach to teacher recruitment has **fundamentally changed - for the better**. Rather than sit back and wait for teachers to come to us, we now **aggressively seek out the best and brightest** teachers by sending recruiting teams of Human Resource specialists and building principals to career fairs across the United States. **The initial task of these recruiting teams is to identify great people who love life, love kids, and have a passion** for teaching. Our track record would show that our recruiters are adept at finding the best candidates. Once identified, these candidates are invited back to visit our district and undergo a second interview with building principals. Those who measure up to our high standards are offered contracts and placed into building vacancies in coordination with principals.”
- “I appreciate **how** we do the Candidate Day. Thanks for all of the **effort the entire team** devotes to bringing the best and the brightest teachers to Vancouver.”

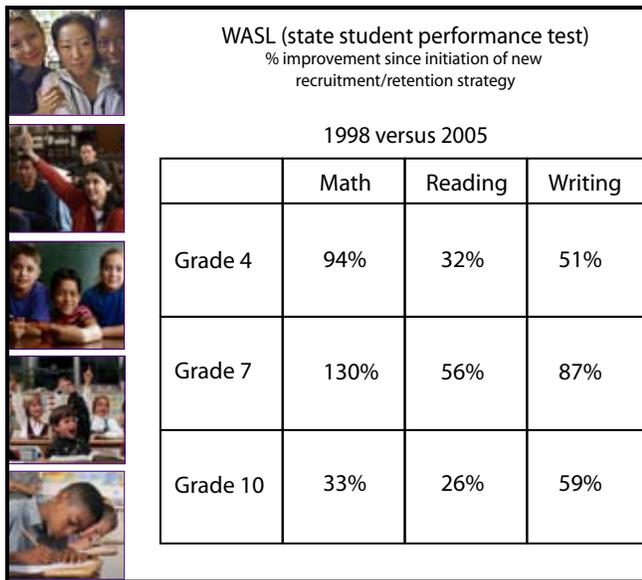
## Recruiting & Retaining Quality Teachers—A Systemic Approach: Creating a Values-Based Culture

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- “My only feedback is that our **incredible team makes this process possible and smooth**. Okay, so I don’t have a lot of years to compare this with, but I think it’s great!”
- “I have a unique perspective as a recruiter, building principal, and central office administrator. I’ve represented the district on numerous recruiting trips, had the pleasure of supervising a number of new teachers in my own building, and personally witnessed the larger group of new hires at schools throughout our 21 elementary schools. **Without question, we are now identifying, hiring and retaining better educated and committed educators than ever before**. I have repeatedly heard principals say that they have total confidence in this recruiting process and know that whoever is placed in their building will be well prepared and approach their job with energy.”
- “For years I was involved in a collaborative interview process where I was required to interview a minimum of five candidates for each specific opening after having read the personnel files of all interested candidates. I then convened an interview committee consisting of staff members and parents and arranged interviews for the five selected candidates. If the interview committee couldn't agree on any of the candidates, I set up more interviews for new candidates. Needless to say, it was a very time consuming process and often left interview committee members feeling like they settled for second best in order to reach group consensus. **The process used by VSD is wonderful. It is in-depth, involves building administrators** in the selection process, and gives us a chance to talk with promising young educators at length. **Before the candidates are interviewed by principal teams at Candidate Day, they have already been through screening interviews and a file review**. When a candidate is offered a job by VSD, I feel confident that he/she has had many positive interview experiences with several VSD administrators and shows promise as being a strong addition to the VSD teaching staff.”
- “I know that when my building receives a teacher who has gone through the systemic recruitment process, **he/she is a skilled teacher of the highest caliber** and is a teacher who has the personal qualities to be a strong addition to my staff.”
- “One of the benefits I see from this process is that **VSD newly hired teachers are a strong addition to the district, not just to a specific school**. In processes where teachers are hired specifically for one school by one principal, there is often a mismatch when the principal or teacher changes work sites. I haven’t found this to be true when teachers are hired by and for the district.”

“Values-based” induction is characterized by new hires with such comments as:

- “Wow! I’ve taught in three other districts and I’ve **never felt so invited** to join a new team. The commitment to new employees has been most impressive.”
- “This district is **second to none** from top to bottom, hands down. They have the right **attitude** and are very organized and thorough.”
- “This training was so **powerful and helpful**. After this week, I feel better prepared and like I have a better understanding of VSD culture.”



(Figure 3)

Beyond principal observation, there are many ways to view results. One of the more obvious and common methods is to address student learning. Vancouver students are required to take a Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in Math, Reading, and Writing in grades 4, 7, and 10. As indicated in *Figure 3*, student performance has increased across elementary, middle, and high school. The percentage of student performance increase is indicated in *Figure 3* in the appropriate boxes. Increases have been measured by comparing the growth of students since the inception of our new recruitment and retention model (1998 versus 2005).

One of the less common methods is to assess performance management problems and employee misconduct. This method is particularly appealing in trying to determine if the district is succeeding in attracting teachers with higher values and greater qualifications and is building a culture of high quality educators. During the same period that Vancouver has replaced 70% of its teachers, it has reduced performance and discipline problems by 80%.

Vancouver’s success has led to a partnership with the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Washington School Personnel Association (WSPA). Through the partnership, two comprehensive workshops and a new employee orientation and induction program have been developed. The first two-day workshop provides school districts with the opportunity to apply an integrated HR model to their own district and develop a values-based systemic solution to recruitment, development, and retention. The second two-day workshop provides them with a strategic approach to building and reinforcing values and expectations through effective management of performance and misconduct. Finally, a new employee orientation and induction program provides a comprehensive means of introducing new employees to the culture, values, and expectations of the organization while fulfilling legal and practical responsibilities for assuring employees have full notice of their roles and responsibilities as members of a public school system.

Response to the workshops developed in collaboration with OSPI and WSPA has been overwhelming and are characterized by such evaluation comments as:

- “Great materials, ideas, and practical approach!”
- “Excellent and inspiring information.”
- “Comprehensive and specific. Excellent systemic ideas with broad-based focus on recruitment.”
- “Entire workshop extremely useful. Great class! I will use the information and materials in my job.”
- “Amazing handouts and materials. Worth more than the price of the entire workshop.”
- “This kind of information wasn’t made available to administrators even 10 years ago.”

## Recruiting & Retaining Quality Teachers—A Systemic Approach: Creating a Values-Based Culture

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For all the debate over NCLB, it has helped move us in new directions. In its most apparent form, it requires teachers who are fully prepared in the subject areas being taught. At a more transparent level, it requires teachers who accept accountability for the needs and abilities of every child, who believe at every level that they are advocates for the children, and who embrace the values that serve as the exemplars of public education. In short, it requires teachers who serve the very best interest of children. Not surprisingly, the promise of focused, high quality, committed, and values-based organizations attracts teachers who have the best qualifications and the greatest commitment, and who can best fulfill the spirit of “*No Child Left Behind*.”



# Revolutionized Recruitment, Hiring & Induction of New Teachers



Vancouver School District (VSD) has developed a reputation as “A district on steroids!” It earned this notoriety by creating a high powered Human Resource (HR) program that has revolutionized recruiting, hiring, and induction practices for all new district employees. A substantial portion of the District’s investment in new teachers occurs before they teach their first lesson. VSD’s week-long orientation for new educators is an intense, but finely-tuned, orchestration of activities designed to help new employees understand the values and expectations of the district and rapidly develop a strong sense of belonging.

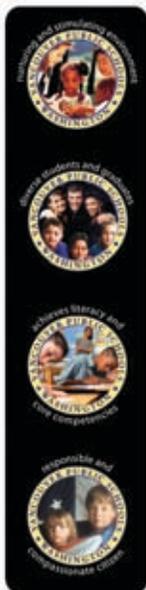
This radical transformation of the Human Resources unit began when the school board sought to attract a highly accomplished HR executive to redesign the district’s Human Resource functions. The Professional Development and HR directors reviewed the research on teacher retention. They also looked beyond education to study best practices in the business world to identify the characteristics of a “world class induction program.” They produced a restructured HR model that brought all the components under one umbrella: workforce planning, organizational development, recruitment and placement, compensation and benefits, professional development and evaluation, and employee and labor relations. The centrality of the HR function to the district’s improvement strategy is evident by its director’s status as an associate superintendent.

These systemic changes were driven by the district’s mission:

**MISSION**  
of the Vancouver Public Schools

*La misión*  
de las Escuelas Públicas de Vancouver

*Наша миссия*  
Государственные школы Ванкуверского района



*is to assure that,*  
*es la de asegurar que,*  
*видят свою основную задачу в том, чтобы*

*within a nurturing and stimulating environment,*  
*en un ambiente educacional y estimulante,*  
*в благоприятной и стимулирующей обстановке*

*each of our diverse students and graduates*  
*cada uno de nuestra diversidad de estudiantes y graduados*  
*каждый из наших самых различных учащихся и выпускников*

*achieves literacy and appropriate core competencies,*  
*adquiera la instrucción y las aptitudes esenciales apropiadas,*  
*достиг необходимого уровня грамотности и знаний по основным предметам,*

*and becomes a responsible and compassionate citizen.*  
*y llegue a ser ciudadano responsable y compasivo.*  
*а также стал ответственным гражданином, откликающимся на нужды других.*

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Vancouver is a moderate size district of 22,000 students housed in 34 schools. It includes a mix of urban and suburban neighborhoods that are increasingly diverse (23% students of color, 16% non-native speakers), with poverty rates (49%) at the elementary level higher than the largest urban district in the state. To address the challenge of meeting the needs of their student population, the superintendent emphasized that interaction between skilled teachers and eager students was critical. Therefore, after a projection analysis forecast that the district would face a wave of retirements in the near future, the district felt it was imperative to attract top notch teachers to maintain their high standards.

To ensure that the district would retain those they recruit, the new HR model required both financial and political support. First, they had to convince the school board that full-time mentors were needed. Then, they had to find the resources to pay for the new positions. This was accomplished by pooling TAP, I728, and Title II funds. And most important, they had to find five multi-talented experienced teachers who could nurture newcomers to become contributing members of the profession. At the heart of this plan is the belief that teacher retention is vital to achieving the district's mission, and the first step is recruiting and hiring the best people available.

## HIRING

To find superior candidates, the district took their show on the road, hitting job fairs in strategic locations across the nation. VSD sends a large team, usually composed of two elementary, two middle, and two high school principals, and several people from HR. Early on, the recruiters identified strong teacher preparation programs that were turning out well-trained novice teachers, particularly in the Midwest. The district recruits as far away as Chicago, North Dakota, Missouri, and West Texas, where they have found value systems that match the personal qualities the district is seeking—dispositions like passion for education and children, enthusiasm, energy, collaboration, and respect for cultural heritage. In these parts of the country, Washington's low salary scale (relative to national averages) is more competitive than those in candidates' home states.



When VSD recruiters go out, they take along a storyboard that describes Vancouver School District and provides the information that candidates have indicated they want to know: the district's goals, demographics, resources, support systems, and the unique aspects that sets this district apart from others. At the fair, VSD representatives pre-screen candidates based on initial conversations. Each candidate is rated on a 3-point rubric. A score of "1" means, "this is a great person," and they are referred to a second recruiter who does a pre-screening interview on the spot. If the second interviewer agrees that, "we can't let this person get away," the candidate is referred to somebody from HR

## Revolutionized Recruitment, Hiring & Induction of New Teachers

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and invited to Candidate Day. Typically, the recruiters see almost 4,000 teachers each year, from which they hire about a hundred and twenty from the top 5%. Their philosophy is that induction begins at the first point of contact at these fairs, so they begin courting those who show promise right away.

Candidate Days are held on four Fridays scheduled periodically between February and June. Each time, 50-80 people are invited to attend. Those teachers come at their own expense to spend a day in the district. This expectation demonstrates the district's conviction that Vancouver is a great place to work. One administrator displayed his pride when he announced, "if you want the hallowed ground of Vancouver School District, you have to come out here."

During Candidate Days, the attendees meet the superintendent, get an overview of the district, and have an opportunity to tour a couple of facilities. They see a video that introduces the district's stance on effective teaching. District leaders emphasize that they look at both current qualifications and potential. The district promises to provide the training needed to acquire new skills. The candidates also hear a teacher's perspective about the mentor support and professional development opportunities the district has to offer. Then the superintendent, school board members, and the mentor team join the candidates for a catered lunch.

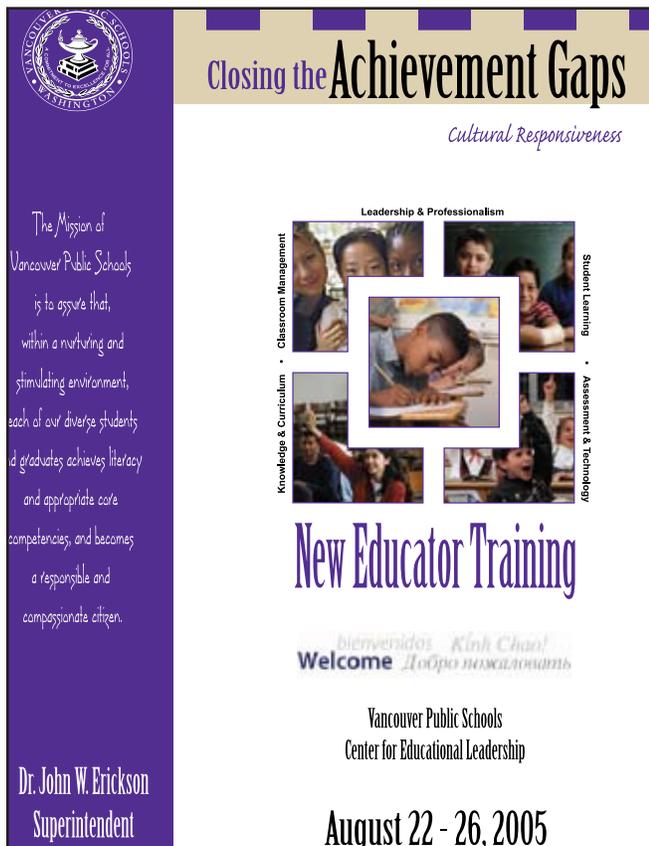
After lunch, the candidates are interviewed by a team of two principals who alternate between active interviewing and active listening. These teams are hiring for the district, not for their own school, and not for a specific position. The principals rate the candidates from 1+ to 3, and a 1+ means, "we don't want that one to leave Candidate Day without a letter of intent." Those selected are congratulated on their new position and told, "you're expected at New Educator Training." Most candidates know their teaching assignment by June, but there are always a few who don't find out their specific placement until just before school starts.

The centralized hiring process reflects the district's quest to hire the best possible candidates, regardless of the position. At the same time, there are always a few specific positions, such as high school band director, that are advertised. The district also makes a concerted effort to increase the diversity of the teaching force by recruiting fluent Spanish speakers and teachers of color.

In addition to recruiting broadly, Vancouver also hires a substantial number of people from within Oregon and Washington, or off its own substitute or student teacher list. But having been a substitute or a student teacher in the district does not guarantee the teacher a job. Unless a principal gives a strong endorsement, the district will not consider the applicant for a regular teaching position. Student teachers are interviewed and screened, but as one administrator explained, they are held to the same standard as everyone else:

"If we think that they have the potential to contribute as a part of our work force, we're happy to have you in our schools. And if not, we're in a large metropolitan area; there are other districts around—pick another one."

As a result of the arduous selection process, principals are not concerned that they do not get to interview the teachers who join their staff. One principal explained why she had confidence in the process, "I am accountable to my colleagues. I cannot recommend somebody for hire that I don't think is good enough for my school." Even if there is a particularly strong student teacher, the principal at the school where the intern did their placement cannot interview the candidate. It will be up to colleagues to decide if that teacher makes the cut; the principals have had to learn to trust each other's judgment.



**Closing the Achievement Gaps**  
*Cultural Responsiveness*

Leadership & Professionalism  
Student Learning  
Assessment & Technology  
Classroom Management  
Knowledge & Curriculum

**New Educator Training**

*bienvenidos KINH CHAO!*  
**Welcome Добро пожаловать**

Vancouver Public Schools  
Center for Educational Leadership

**August 22 - 26, 2005**

The Mission of Vancouver Public Schools is to assure that, within a nurturing and stimulating environment, each of our diverse students and graduates achieves literacy and appropriate core competencies, and becomes a responsible and compassionate citizen.

Dr. John W. Erickson  
Superintendent

Thus, the induction process starts with the selection of the candidates. Once a contract is signed there is an expectation that all new employees will participate in the week long New Educator Training and work with a mentor during their first year.

### ORIENTATION

The official welcome to Vancouver is the New Educator Training, where the district displays its polished ‘corporate’ approach to bringing workers into the ‘company.’ Having established a reputation as the Nordstrom of school districts with its emphasis on customer service, the district treats new employees as valued additions to an industry leader. Contributions and assistance from business partners have helped make this week quite an extravaganza.

When the new staff walk in, the atmosphere is immediately festive. A welcome banner is draped across the entryway, music is playing in the background, and a slide show is flashing on a big screen. The HR director and the recruiting teams that first spotted this new talent are familiar faces, waiting to welcome the new hires

onboard. The mentors, dressed as a team, are there to greet the new educators as well. The tables are decorated and coffee and pastries are provided by a local coffee shop. Administrators from the highest levels of the district, including the school board, join the new educators at their tables for lunch. After a rousing reception and a little socializing, the HR director formally opens the week by reaching out to the new arrivals to be sure that immediate needs are met—a place to stay, help with moving. The local credit union, a major sponsor of the week, offers to extend a line of credit to help new employees get into an apartment.

Having addressed the basics, they launch the week with some team building exercises and use the motivational Pike Place Market “Fish” video to inspire staff to strive for excellence. The superintendent follows this performance with his official welcome. However, the week is not all fun and games. Later that first day, teachers are introduced to ENVoY, a non-verbal management strategy and to the district’s technology tools. Also, that first afternoon the new teachers meet their assigned mentor and learn about the support they will receive. Throughout the week, those new to the district are introduced to every aspect of VSD: the role of the school board, the Personalized Learning Model for professional growth, the culture, and its professional standards and expectations.



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## Revolutionized Recruitment, Hiring & Induction of New Teachers

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On day two, all of the principals are introduced and given a chance to meet their new staff informally over lunch before going off to visit their new school. One of the days focuses on diversity, district demographics, and student performance data. Another is devoted to curriculum and instruction utilizing small group discussions with curriculum staff. Each day closes with a fun activity to reinforce the day's main message. All week long, in between the learning sessions there is also time for levity and celebration. There are drawings, and the "prize patrol" gives away gifts donated by business and community partners—gift certificates from Nordstrom, a wine cellar, a spa, and a ski resort.

Even difficult subjects like professional misconduct and harassment are handled in engaging ways, but the message is clear that VSD has strict professional standards and they will be enforced. On Friday, all new employees, including transportation, maintenance, and nutrition staff join the group to be briefed on legal and safety standards. It is an opportunity to impress upon all staff that in VSD "there are only two jobs, those who teach, and those who support teachers." At the end of the day before adjourning, the superintendent takes pride in sending the teachers off to start the school year with their first paychecks in hand.

That first week is considered new teachers' formal induction, but the rituals also build awareness of the district culture. Professional development begins on day one, and it sets the stage for the professional growth planning that all teachers will do as they look at their skills and identify those areas they want to develop—and that's where the mentors come in.

### MENTORING



The mentors' work with their protégés begins during the New Educator Training and continues for two years. During the first month, mentors generally pop in twice a month just to check on the novice teachers, answer questions, reassure and encourage, and help with any issues that arise. By mid fall, the frequency of visits drops to once a month, but their work becomes more focused. The mentor arranges to observe a lesson and, as soon as possible after the class, they debrief together. The mentor shares observations about the teacher's moves and the students' responses. Based on the feedback discussed, the two of them agree on a focus for the next observation. These observation/feedback sessions continue on a monthly basis. If appropriate, the mentor may offer to

teach a demonstration lesson or arrange for the novice to observe a master teacher to gain a better understanding of specific teaching objectives.

As both mentors and mentees gain a sense of the new teacher's strengths and weaknesses, the mentor will assist the first year teacher with developing the Professional Growth Plan, which will guide their work together for the rest of the year. The mentor will also help the novice collect evidence to document growth toward his or her goals.

Other critical ways the mentors provide support include:

- Communicating with the new teachers on a weekly basis via an email newsletter to keep them apprised of professional development offerings, teaching tips, or professional resources that may be helpful.

## Revolutionized Recruitment, Hiring & Induction of New Teachers

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- Connecting novices to district professional development courses based on the teacher's self-assessment of areas they want to address.
- Facilitating small group sessions for 'just-in-time' support for special topics such as elementary report cards or WASL preparation.

Vancouver's team of seven mentors somehow manages to serve phenomenal caseloads of 25-30 teachers each. The main way they handle the demand is through teamwork. The team is very collaborative, and their team leader helps problem solve whenever challenges present themselves. How they do it all speaks to their skill and dedication and to their passion for education; they put in incredibly long hours. It may also explain why they are limited to a two year term.

The workload requires extraordinary organizational skills. The mentors are assigned to work with teachers at the same levels they taught so they can draw on their knowledge and experience. The two elementary mentors each have a cluster of schools in geographic regions. Sometimes they have a number of new teachers in the same school, so they spend a day or two at that school to catch all of the new teachers, arranging conversations to debrief during recess, lunch, or before or after school. It requires juggling schedules and unannounced drop-ins and a lot of flexibility on everyone's part. However, once the mentors have built relationships and established their value, the less experienced teachers welcome their help whenever they can get it.

The special education mentor has to be even more versatile and strategic, as he supports teachers at every level and at schools across the district. It often requires meeting with teachers in the evening or on weekends. He has also had to learn all the shortcuts to get from one school to the next as quickly as possible.

These incredible caseloads are especially difficult when one realizes that the mentors have only two year terms to master their jobs. Mentors are teachers on special assignment, paid a teacher's salary, but on an extended year contract. So there is a lot to learn in a short period of time. New mentors attend the OSPI Mentor Academy and participate in a range of other trainings—cognitive coaching, presentation skills, WEA workshops. They have all been trained as ENVoY trainers. When one mentor moves on to another position, they help train the replacement.

The team leader is charged with grooming the mentors to become future administrators. They each develop expertise in different areas, Excel spreadsheets, facilities, clock hours, or budgets, and then they rotate responsibilities and train someone else so that each of them develops the skills they will need as an administrator. The mentor position has become a highly desired and respected position, in part because of the people chosen. They go through a rigorous selection process and have earned a strong endorsement from both principals and the teachers association for the work they do. Over the last five years, the seven former mentors who have moved on to administration view the time they spent mentoring as invaluable preparation for their new leadership roles.

One way mentors have made the job doable is that they don't try to cover everything. In the first year, mentors spend most of their time on classroom management. As teachers are ready, they gradually shift their focus to curriculum and instructional strategies. In the second year, teachers are expected to take more initiative by asking for help when needed. As they gain experience, the teachers tend to know what they need and small amounts of targeted help can accelerate their progress.

Further, mentors are not expected to be subject matter experts. They emphasize good lesson design and work on getting the fundamental components in place. They also look at the results in the student work produced. Although there is not always perfect alignment between the person's experience and those they mentor, the mentors generally have credibility with their protégés because of their classroom experience. And, because the mentors work so closely with all the district initiatives, support is continuous—where the mentor's work stops, the professional development program steps in.

### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Historically, VSD has had a commitment to staff development, but with the reorganization of Human Resources, professional development has become more focused and strategic. Aligned with the reflective process used in the TAP program to develop a professional growth plan, Vancouver has developed a reflective tool to guide a teacher's [career](#) development. It allows the teachers to be the drivers of their own professional growth. Using a continuous cycle, teachers are encouraged to follow a six-step reflective process:

- 1) Complete an annual self-assessment to identify possible areas of improvement.
- 2) Engage with colleagues in diagnosing professional development needs.
- 3) Participate in professional development classes (either offered by the district or a university), study groups, professional reading, or action research.
- 4) Implement new ideas.
- 5) Review student performance data to assess the impact of instructional changes.
- 6) Reflect on additional professional development needs and strengths, and complete a formal evaluation with an administrator.

Regardless of a teacher's experience level, all educators are required to participate in two to three days of All Educator Training just before school starts, following the New Educator Training. Each year it features a keynote speaker and a menu of professional development workshops from which teachers can choose. It includes a number of sessions on curriculum, assessment, instructional strategies, classroom management, and test preparation. A few sessions are required for certain teachers: ELL, foreign language, or specific grade levels where there is a new curriculum.

Throughout the year, the professional development department continues to offer an array of courses. Most of these occur after school and concentrate on VSD's priority areas of literacy and math. The district also worked out a cooperative arrangement with surrounding higher education institutions to offer "fast track" master's degrees. Facilitating opportunities for professional growth that help teachers advance up the state salary schedule is one way the district can offset the low salaries in Washington.

Every teacher is allotted \$800 each year for professional development. It can be used to pay for professional certification, credits toward a master's, clock hours, or a teacher could pay themselves for the time to attend a class. Because not everyone uses their full allocation, there are always some reserve funds. Teachers can apply for additional funding up to \$1800.

The Vancouver Education Association is a strong supporter of professional development and has worked collaboratively with the district to provide opportunities for career advancement. They also offer support to a small group of young educators each year to participate in Washington Education Association's SPARKS program. This day and a half retreat allows participants to explore possible leadership opportunities with the union.

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## Revolutionized Recruitment, Hiring & Induction of New Teachers

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To help young teachers meet the state's requirements for professional certification, VSD has worked with the two universities in town, WSU-Vancouver and City University, to facilitate the process. One of the mentors teaches the Pre-assessment Seminar and mentors sit on the teachers' ProCert Team. The district views the ProCert process as a valuable extension of their own self-assessment system. One administrator drew parallels between the certification requirements and their efforts to develop reflective practitioners:

“As teachers develop their portfolio exhibits, they have to be really specific about their goals and their growth plan. Rather than wait five years to develop that, teachers can start right away with developing those criteria and those exhibits, which makes it meaningful.”

To be sure the system is working as planned, the district regularly monitors all aspects of the professional learning continuum.

### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

An important feature of Vancouver's integrated HR system is a commitment to solicit feedback from stakeholders, monitor their progress, and make improvements each year. Every component of their program is evaluated:

- Candidate Days,
- New Educator Training,
- All Educator Training,
- The Mentor Program,
- Student Academic Performance, and
- Teacher Performance.

Consistent with their corporate approach, this district knows their numbers!

[VSD knows the outcome of their recruiting efforts.](#) The Candidate Days have received unanimous approval from all participants; they praised the organization of the day, the thorough information, and the friendly reception. The only reservation expressed has been the uncertainty of not knowing specific teaching assignments.

They also know where they found the most qualified candidates: 25% came from the local area, 25% from the rest of Washington, 20% from Oregon, and 30% from around the nation. Half of the teachers come with advanced degrees, and 35% of those who don't, earn them within the first five years of service.

[The district can identify the strengths and weaknesses of New Educator Training.](#) Overall, the newcomers have been totally impressed with the district's leadership and vision. Almost all participants reported that at the end of the week they felt quite knowledgeable about the district goals, expectations, and procedures, but somewhat less confident in the areas of curriculum, technology, and special services. The content that the participants valued most was learning about poverty issues. The only area that teachers fairly consistently reported they wanted more emphasis on is the curriculum they would be teaching.

[Evaluations of the All Educator Training help the district respond to teachers' needs.](#) Vancouver consistently brings in dynamic speakers. The array of elective sessions reinforce district learning priorities. Overall ratings of the event average 3.75 on a 4 point scale. Moreover, by soliciting input on training needs, VSD can plan their ongoing professional development classes.

## Revolutionized Recruitment, Hiring & Induction of New Teachers

They know whether the Mentor Program is meeting the needs of new teachers. New teachers overwhelmingly give the mentoring program high marks (97% found it beneficial). Areas where new teachers felt they grew the most in their year were related to classroom management. Both experienced and first year teachers thought two things could be improved. They wanted more building level support and reduced case loads for the mentors so there would be more time to visit other classrooms and to get help with curriculum and lesson planning.

The ultimate indicator of the program's effectiveness, of course, is whether new teachers stay. Since implementing their new system, 70% of the district's 1350 teachers have been replaced (as predicted), and among the replacements 88% of the new teacher hires have remained in the district.

VSD monitors the impact on student academic performance. Since the new recruitment and retention efforts were initiated in 1998, Vancouver's WASL scores have increased steadily. The rate of improvement exceeds the state average.

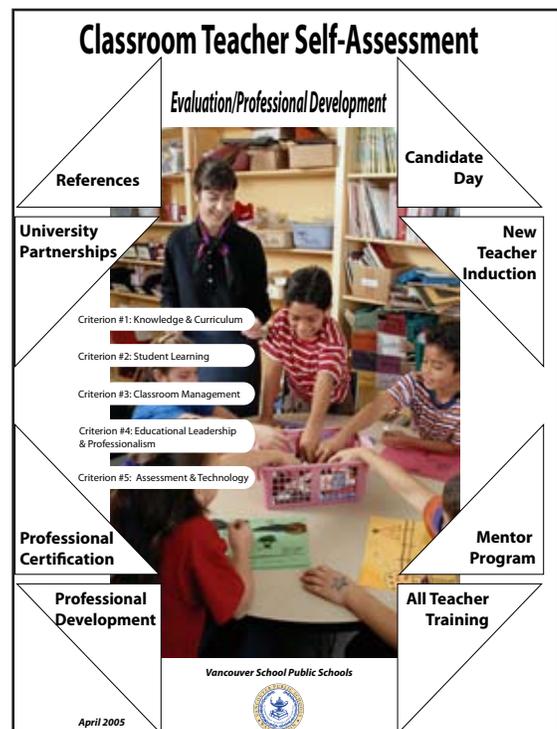
The district continues to work on systematically implementing an effective teacher evaluation:

The self-assessment tool used to drive teachers' own professional development aligns fairly closely with the standards for ProCert, but it is not yet aligned with the instrument that principals use. That issue will be addressed in a series of five workshops for principals on 'learning focused conversations,' already scheduled for 2005-06.

Vancouver's comprehensive HR system brings all staff support functions together to emphasize that professional learning is a career-long endeavor. It is creating a culture where everyone is invested in following a set of core values that define and reinforce professionalism:

- All teachers are district resources and are recruited, screened, and hired using uniform district-wide criteria.
- The district selects and controls the candidate pool by aggressively recruiting in targeted locations.
- Evaluation is teacher driven based on a career-long self-assessment process.
- Consistent program evaluation and data analysis lead to continuous improvement.
- Mentoring and induction not only helps build individual teacher capacity, it reinforces the district culture and values.

The district's investment in recruiting the best teachers underscores the belief that high quality teachers are essential if students are to achieve high standards. Further, one administrator explained that ensuring teachers have support to fulfill their potential is why mentors are vital to teacher retention, "Mentors are a pivotal connection between who teachers are and who they can become."



# Bridging Barriers to Teacher Success: Reinventing “Induction”



*The MISSION of the Vancouver Public Schools is to assure that, within a nurturing and stimulating environment, each of our diverse students and graduates achieves literacy and appropriate core competencies and becomes a responsible and compassionate citizen.*

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## OVERVIEW

“I called my mother and said, Mom, I have 110 new best friends! I’ve met my kindred spirit! I’ve come home!” Awesome comments, but not unexpected, and certainly not unintended. Vancouver School District (VSD) has revolutionized its method of finding new educators in creating what Vancouver calls “Values-Based Recruitment of High Quality Educators.” For its innovation in recruitment, Vancouver received the AAEE Innovative Program & Practices Award in 2002-03. Now Vancouver has applied that same innovation to the retention of high-quality educators.

Induction Programs are not new; but Vancouver’s concept of induction is nothing short of another revolution. In *How to Help Beginning Teachers Succeed*, ASCD (2000), and *The Revolving Door of the Teaching Profession*, L. Roukema (2004), we are given the most common reasons for losing teachers to the profession: difficult work assignments, unclear expectations, role conflict, isolation, inadequate resources, reality shock.

It’s easy to excuse ourselves from these issues. After all, we are bound by budgets, bargaining agreements, facility limitations, seniority in who gets the portable and who gets the top students. However, the Vancouver Induction Program confronts these issues head-on with strategic induction objectives to create: **belonging, community, and readiness.**

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## Bridging Barriers to Teacher Success: Reinventing “Induction”



The result? When Vancouver gathers its 1,350 educators in one location for its annual pre-school year, district-wide welcome back and professional development, its new teachers are not found off to the side, in a corner, feeling new. Quite the contrary, they are celebrating their own homecoming. They do indeed have many new best friends, have a high comfort level with their building administrators, know the entire district leadership team by name and commitment to them, have strong community connections, and have the self-assurance that they are an accepted, knowledgeable, and valued member of the professional learning community. How does this happen, what does it cost, how do we know it's successful, and what is the impact on classroom success and retention to the profession?

Driven by the unsatisfied yet critical role of high-quality educators in fulfilling the vision of Vancouver, the School Board used the opportunity of new leadership eight years ago to begin the redesign and transformation of the Vancouver's Human Resource (HR) functions. A restructured HR model brought all components of HR under one umbrella: workforce planning, organizational development, recruitment and placement, compensation and benefits, professional development and evaluation, and employee and labor relations. With the strength of an integrated HR program, and a review of the recruitment and retention research in both education and the world of business, a new approach was designed for each critical HR function to include the Induction Program.

A substantial portion of the Vancouver's investment in new educators occurs before they teach their first lesson. VSD's week-long orientation is an intense, but finely-tuned orchestration of meaningful activities designed to help new employees understand the values and expectations of the district and rapidly develop a strong sense of belonging.



The induction process starts with early selection of the candidates. Early selection (April/May) immediately results in the designation of a “sponsor” within the HR team to establish communications with the new educator and help as the educator prepares for a transition to Vancouver and to the school district. Upon identification of assignments (May/June) the sponsor role is handed off to the building administrator who continues to help with advance materials, relocation suggestions, and the formation of “buddy” relationships. The administrator becomes a focal point for all the questions a new educator has as he/she prepares to embark on a new career. The induction turns formal when the new educator participates in an extremely personal in-processing session and then begins participation the following week in the week-long New Educator Training. New educator training marks the transition from the preparation phase of induction to the mentoring phase. Induction is SYSTEMIC and seamless from selection, to sponsor, to processing, to preparation, to mentoring. It is not a week-long event, but rather a relationship

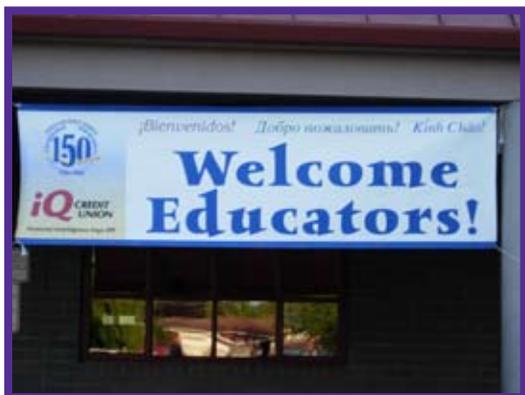
that spans the first two years of teaching. And, it embraces ALL educators new to Vancouver, not just the first-year educator. Feedback and surveys from educators confirm the need for meaningful induction based on being new to the district and not just new to education.



### OBJECTIVES

The objectives of new educator training have been specifically defined with a mentor/professional development team long before that first day begins, and they center around three distinct themes:

- **BELONGING** — to create a sense of identity by personally and collectively welcoming every individual to both a district and school culture,
- **COMMUNITY**— to collectively involve all levels of the organization in sharing past history and future directions while defining organizational values and expectations,
- **READINESS**— to focus on best teaching and management practices in an atmosphere infused with fun, laughter, collaboration, and the celebration of new beginnings.



Business partners unite in contributing materials, gifts, food and beverages to make this week an extravaganza. In providing resources they define the community commitment.

As the new staff arrives, the atmosphere is immediately festive. A welcome banner is draped across the entry, lively music is playing, tables are decorated, and a slide show is flashing on a big screen. The HR director and the recruiting teams, which first spotted this new talent, are familiar faces waiting to welcome the new hires. The mentors, dressed as a team, are there to greet the new educators, invite them to enjoy morning refreshments provided by a local coffee shop, and introduce them to new colleagues. Administrators from the highest levels of the district, including the school board, join the new educators for lunch - and reappear throughout the week. After a rousing reception and a little socializing, the HR director formally opens the week by reaching out to the new arrivals to be sure that immediate needs are met—a place to stay, help with moving. The local credit union, a major sponsor of the week, offers to extend a line of credit to help new employees get settled.

### DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

While it is the systemic process from selection through the first two years of service in Vancouver that define the term “induction,” it is the week-long new teacher event that serves as the critical catalyst in the induction program. It is at this point that teachers new to the district first experience the collective commitment of the community, the district, and the school to their success.

The official welcome to Vancouver presents a polished and extremely visible corporate approach that boldly announces the district and community commitment to its valued teachers.



## Bridging Barriers to Teacher Success: Reinventing “Induction”

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Having addressed the basics, the mentor team launches the week with team-building exercises along with the motivational Pike Place Market FISH! video to inspire staff to strive for excellence. The superintendent, key administrators, and education association leadership follow with official welcomes. Later the first day, educators are introduced to ENVoY, a non-verbal management strategy, and the district’s technology tools in smaller groups. To further create a sense of belonging, the new staff meets with their mentor to begin building relationships and to learn about the support they will receive. Day one is about belonging and beginning to see the tools of their success.

On day two, teachers meet their principals in a relaxed and informal lunch followed by a principal guided school level orientation and welcome. As the week progresses, one day focuses on diversity, district demographics, and student performance data, and another is devoted to curriculum and instruction. To meet the needs of educators, curriculum staff and master teachers facilitate training in both large and small groups. The focus remains belonging and tools of success.

Throughout the week, formal presentations convey essential information and are designed to actively engage the educators, promote fun, and continue to facilitate group bonding. Even difficult subjects like professional misconduct and harassment are handled in engaging ways; however, the message is clear that VSD has strict professional standards and they will be enforced. Between the learning sessions the energetic prize patrol gives away gifts donated by business and community partners—such as Nordstrom, a ski resort, and area restaurants and gift shops. At the end of each day, a fun activity reinforces the day’s main message. District leaders and community sponsors continue to visit on a daily basis and take opportunities to speak to teachers individually and in groups.

The week culminates with teachers interacting with new classified and support staff to include drivers, food services workers, custodians, and staff assistants. Following a barbecue provided courtesy of the local public utilities district, the superintendent takes pride in handing the educators their first paycheck for the week’s work. He recognizes that for some of the new staff this paycheck helps with immediate needs. With checks in hand, the new educators gather to view a slide show that tells the story of the training week, from beginning to end. This poignant visual is put to music and brings laughter and joy, but more overwhelmingly...a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Just as closure is important to any lesson, the entire group then gathers in a circle for open microphone. This is a time for any individual to spontaneously share perceptions, reactions, and emotions regarding the week’s experience. This closure activity never fails to bring tears to participants. Words of appreciation are conveyed, individual recruitment stories are told, and affirmations shared that they are home. Clearly, an overwhelming sense of belonging is evident.

As the week concludes, new educators leave with a sense of new beginnings. They have been embraced by a district culture that honors, values, and loves GREAT educators. The support does not end here. This week’s training is merely considered the new educators’ formal induction. Professional development begins on day one and it sets the stage for the professional growth planning that all educators will do as they look at their skills and identify areas to develop. This is where a comprehensive, personalized mentoring program is initiated to meet the needs of each and every teacher.

## BUDGET

New Educator Training is funded from a variety of resources. Educators are paid a union-negotiated hourly rate of \$21 per hour for the forty-hour training they attend. A combination of local, state, and Title II federal dollars help defray the cost. A local credit union covers the cost of most breakfasts and lunches as well as table decorations. A popular high-class restaurant is featured for lunch one day, the local education association provides a meal, and a regional gas company sponsors a huge barbecue on the final day of training. Materials for the induction are covered

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## Bridging Barriers to Teacher Success: Reinventing “Induction”

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through the state teacher mentor program. A detailed induction budget breakout for our 2006-2007 new hires is as follows:

Educator Contracts (104)	\$91,250	Breakfasts/Lunches (donated)	\$10,200
Resource Notebooks	\$1,500	Prizes and Giveaways (donated)	\$4,000
Instructional Resources	\$6,600	Presenters (veteran teachers)	\$5,000

### IMPACT

A most significant feature of Vancouver’s integrated HR system is a commitment to continuous monitoring and analyzing of feedback. Each year, the new educator induction program is evaluated by participants. This crucial information is used to reflect on what went well and to adjust based on feedback from the consumer. Consistently, new hires speak glowingly about the team’s ability to carry out a meaningful AND fun-filled induction program. While this is only one segment of a systemic model, new teacher evaluation on a four-point scale from this past year indicates: met objectives, 3.99, appropriate facilities, 4.01, instructor skill, 3.96 and print materials, 3.99. Verbal feedback from the training expresses the following sentiments: “Awesome!”



“Rock on!” “I loved it!” “Great experience.” “Incredibly well-planned.” “Great as it is.” A detailed breakout of the project’s impact is available upon request. This comprehensive evaluation reviews not only the impressions and insights from new educator training, additionally, it compiles feedback upon first point of contact from a district representative.



**Can a district dramatically impact teacher success and teacher retention through innovative, systemic induction? Vancouver’s rolling, cumulative five-year retention rate hovers at 90%! The answer is, YES!**

# NEW TEACHER INDUCTION/ORIENTATION STANDARDS

*(Taken from the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction, 2005)*

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## KEY ELEMENTS

## REFLECTIVE QUESTION FOR ANALYSIS

<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	How does your school, district, and community welcome new teachers? How does your school/district make new teachers aware of its vision, mission, and culture? What process does your district use to introduce new teachers to key people in the central office and school community? What methods does your district use to introduce new teachers to your district's geography and demographics?
<b>Cohort</b>	How does your district introduce new teachers to each other and give them opportunities to share their experiences and needs? How does your district introduce new teachers to veteran teachers?
<b>First Days</b>	How does your district assist new teachers with setting up their classrooms and with planning for the first few critical days of school?
<b>Tools and Tips</b>	How does your district give new teachers information about benefits, subbing, etc.? What are your district's plans for providing new teachers with tools such as schedules, class lists and keys in a timely manner? If your district has a teachers' union, how are new teachers oriented to the association? If your new teachers attend an orientation prior to the start of school, how does your school/district pay them for these days, and what additional provisions for timely payment do you make as they begin their contracts?
<b>Induction Program</b>	How do new teachers learn about your district induction program and the expectations for participation in it? How does your district introduce new teachers to their mentors and communicate mentor/teacher role responsibilities? Are the people responsible for coordinating orientation activities able to do so effectively as a result of training, resources, and prioritization of this work among other responsibilities?
<b>Guidelines and Curricula</b>	If your district has a specific lesson or unit design model, how do you assist new teachers in understanding and adopting it? How does your district inform new teachers of its management models and student behavior policies? How does your district communicate its parent volunteer and parent contact policies to new staff? How does your district introduce new staff to its standards of professional practice?
<b>Evaluation</b>	How does your district introduce new teachers to its evaluation procedures?
<b>Resources</b>	How does your district inform new teachers about special services and other intervention resources and apprise them of their roles in accessing these services? How does your district inform new teachers about available technology and media services?

## Characteristics of World-Class Inductions

*(Dr. John Sullivan, San Francisco State University)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goals are identified        | <input type="checkbox"/> Productive the first day             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior personnel involved   | <input type="checkbox"/> NOT boring or ineffective            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is on-going                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Is global, personalized              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Begins before the first day | <input type="checkbox"/> Addresses diversity                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrates the first day    | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduces turnover                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is collegial at all levels  | <input type="checkbox"/> Is monitored, measured, and rewarded |

# Values-Based Recruitment & Retention

## — A Systemic Solution

There are 3,000,000 teachers in America who are teaching and 6,000,000 teachers who made a different career choice. Each year, 250,000 teachers leave the profession compared to approximately 17,000 who reenter the profession. Our nation's colleges and universities graduate 240,000 education students annually. However, only 85,000 will actually enter the profession (Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, 2003; Education Commission of the States, 2006; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future).

It's no surprise that many teaching positions remain vacant throughout the year while many other positions are filled by less than fully qualified teachers. The vast majority of district strategies are focused on the 85,000 new graduates who enter the profession and the 250,000 experienced teachers who move each year. In essence, we compete among ourselves for the shortage and we typically do so through financial incentives. In the final analysis, we bid up the price but never change the size of the qualified pool.



Now we add another dimension - that of “highly qualified” as defined by *No Child Left Behind*. The resulting mega-challenge is easily stated but hard to overcome. We must, in a dwindling pool, find teachers who are highly qualified in their content area and who are well prepared in the practice of teaching. In an era of alarming misconduct headlines, we must also find teachers who possess unquestionable personal values and attributes. We must do so in sufficient numbers to meet our needs - and then we must keep them!

The Vancouver School Board, equally concerned with the projected retirement of 65% of the teaching staff and a rise in misconduct and performance issues, directed a comprehensive analysis of the district's Human Resource Management (HRM) program. The review pointed to an all-too-common situation in public school districts: the lack of a systemic and integrated human resource management program, the lack of values assessment, and the presence of a professional development program focused almost exclusively on curriculum rather than on development of the whole person.

Vancouver, like many districts, treated human resource management activities as discrete, unassociated functions and, for the most part, performed the functions with personnel clerical staff and school principals turned HR Director. Heavy reliance was placed on the belief that character flaws or performance deficiencies would occur during the probationary period when it is less demanding to terminate employment. In effect, the system had a bias to hiring and retaining marginal employees, while avoiding strategies designed to seek out and attract high quality employees.

- Candidates sought out the District rather than the District seeking out candidates.
- Candidates were screened primarily on experience, certification, and transcripts.
- Most employees were hired at the beginning of the school year.
- Screening and hiring decisions were left to individual schools.
- HRM was relegated to personnel processing and accounting, and contract administration.

School districts are excellent at measuring knowledge, skills and abilities. Districts know how to interpret resumes, transcripts and grade point averages. Districts know how to interview for pedagogy. Districts recruit with a focus on learning everything about an applicant's educational and employment history and then attempt to assess the applicant's instructional ability. What districts learn is very much on the surface - it is what can be seen and heard. It tells much about preparation and history; it tells little about quality, character, and values.

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Vancouver’s solution is based on a systemic and integrated model of HRM grounded in the belief that:

- Every teacher can and should be a great teacher based on criteria relevant to the district. Lowering the bar as a concession to supply and demand cannot be tolerated.
- The Collective Bargaining Agreement has to be responsive to recruitment, development and retention of “great” teachers. Seniority must give way to quality.
- Professional Development must be focused across a career instead of single training events, and must provide teachers with a seamless integration of personal growth, curriculum, salary advancement, and continuing certification. Teachers cannot be left to fend for themselves in navigating the complexity of certification and career advancement. Evaluation should be teacher-driven and have as its core purpose assessing professional growth against the “great” teacher criteria. Measuring lifelong progress and adjusting strategies must take precedence over evaluations as snapshots in time.
- Mentoring and induction are as critical to defining and building organizational culture and creating a strong sense of belonging as they are to building individual capacity. Mentors are the pivotal connection between who teachers are and who we want them to be - it’s much more than pedagogy. Teachers are school district-wide resources and should be recruited, screened and hired against district-wide criteria. The more narrow the job focus when assessing candidates, the more likely biases will enter the process.
- Assessing values must be at the heart of the recruiting strategy, and the ultimate objective of every HRM function is to continuously and consistently build and reinforce values.
- Retention doesn’t just “happen.” Retention takes the same planning, organization, and strategic intervention as recruitment. Great teachers don’t just stay; they are nurtured into a life long commitment.
- Vancouver has now replaced over 70% of the teaching workforce using a values-based recruitment and retention model. Just as 70% of the workforce has changed, there has been an 85% decline in performance and misconduct cases. Retention is at an all time cumulative high of 88%.



“If we don’t figure out how to recruit and support these new people, we will lose them, and the whole fabric of the schools will unravel. We will find that we are running organizations filled with short-term workers – what someone once described to me as Christmas help. As a society, we just can’t afford that.”

—Susan Moore Johnson

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# Values-Based Interviewing

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“Mostly, the interviewer watched me while I filled out the application form.”

“I love the question “What is your greatest weakness? As if..!”

“He was more interested in writing things down than hearing what I said.”

“It’s not as though the questions were hard. I anticipated most of them and had already planned my answers.”

“There were a lot of questions, but I didn’t learn much about them.”

“They asked a lot about how to teach but not much about me.”

“I never had to say very much, they did most of the talking.”

Walk through a career fair and take in what is happening. There is an abundance of candy, pens, and key chains. There’s the ever-present sign about “check our salary.” There is the “exhibit” with the inevitable list of vacancies; special education, math, science. Numerous interviewers sit behind tables (let’s call them barriers); there are lots of boring interviewers and lots of teachers trying not to act bored. The only activity at many booths is the filling out of an application (what’s wrong with the resume?).

Then, in the midst of boredom, something different is happening at one booth. Recruiters and teachers are talking, laughing, sharing, and enjoying a rich conversation. To the observer, it doesn’t look like an interview and it certainly doesn’t look like a serious enough conversation to be a “career event.” It has little apparent structure. There are no applications on the table, the interviewer isn’t writing – in fact, you can only tell the recruiter from the teacher by who is dressed in black! Absent are all the gimmicks and souvenirs (do they really think the teacher’s career will turn on a key chain?).

This doesn’t just play out at career fairs. It can look much the same for an on-site interview. Many school districts devote the recruitment interview process to learning everything that can be taught and nothing of what can’t be taught. What is being learned? Is this a richer or poorer interview? How will the interviewer know if the teacher can write a lesson plan or knows how to use technology? What about transcripts, GPA’s and interview scores? Will they

## Values-Based Interviewing

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be able to judge a teacher without the detailed history of an application? Here too, we learn everything about one's past and little about one's potential.

Districts aren't the only loser in this traditional setting. Teachers answer questions, learn something about the school, and learn employment provisions. Teachers learn little about culture, values, vision, and leadership of the District that their careers will depend upon. Candidates may know salary and room location but not what the organization really stands for (in Millennial terms, "The Brand").

Research tells us that the critical selection areas should include lesson design; rapport with students, colleagues, and parents; and potential for professional growth. These descriptors are more difficult to measure than test scores, grade point averages and/or interview scores. Effective interviews give insight to both the art and science of teaching. This requires a very high level of engagement as opposed to filling out applications and a barrage of questions and answers.<sup>1</sup>

There are already too many teachers in the classroom who are disinterested in kids; teachers whose normal response to disruptive behavior is removal from the classroom (as though that improves learning); or teachers (especially secondary) who have little interest in a student's personal challenges even if they are standing in the way of learning? What about the last great lecturer, or the dogmatic instruction in math equations with which the student doesn't relate.

Values-based recruitment and interviewing has at its foundation a fundamental belief that teachers must walk through the door in possession of values and characteristics that will excite children and colleagues; that will cause the child to be motivated to learn; and that will cause colleagues to be equally excited. The rest can be taught and learned. These values include:

- Passion
- Belief in Children
- Advocacy for Children
- Vision
- Excitement
- Creativity & Innovation
- Energy
- Caring

A teacher with these core values and characteristics will cause children to learn and to achieve. Complement these values with a rich and competency-based mentor, induction and professional development program that teaches and enriches what can be taught, and the students will excel.

Values-based recruitment and interviewing looks to rich and engaging discussion; discussions in which teachers open up their feelings and communicate from the heart as well as the mind. Discussions in which the teacher learns about the character of the District and whether the School District, not the individual classroom, is a philosophical as well as an organizational "fit." It's not about "asking and recording," but rather listening and processing – by both the teacher and the interviewer. In effect, there are two interviewers at the table with two interviews taking place concurrently.

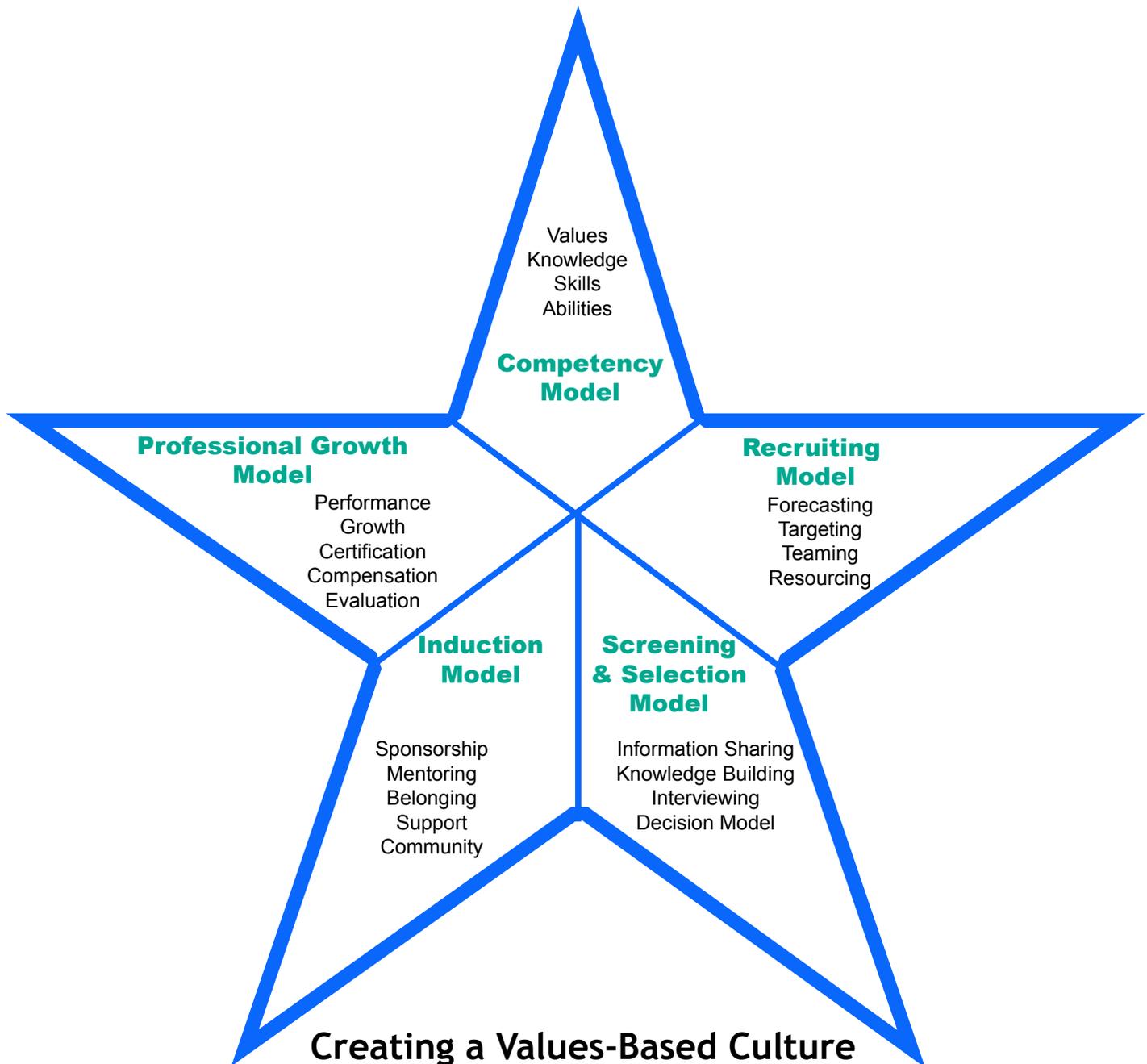
Teachers should look for those districts and booths where "something different is happening." Look for Districts that are focused on values and that communicate "Brand" from exhibit to interviewer to engagement. Look for interviewers who are interested in a teacher's capacity and desire to learn, and who will respond to that desire with a rich and competency based professional growth program. Don't make it about a "job." Make it about a "professional relationship" – a perfect 2-way fit of personality, vision, values and character!

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanann Kahley, Ed.D., Spring 2001, Dissertation: Predicting The Success of First Year Teacher Candidates Based Upon Indicators Determined Prior to Employment

# VANCOUVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## RECRUITING & RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS



### Creating a Values-Based Culture

## *A Systemic Approach*

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