



Excellent Educators Report

**An analysis of educator recruitment, hiring, and retention in
Delaware schools**

Claire Robertson-Kraft, Nina Hoe, Samantha Sangenito & Elinor Williams

ImpactED

University of Pennsylvania

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Executive Summary

Overview

Research demonstrates that teacher effectiveness is the most important in-school factor influencing the rate of student learning. To hire top talent, studies suggest that districts should aim to hire teachers in the spring. As a small state in a densely populated region, Delaware faces significant competition from surrounding states in recruiting and hiring excellent educators. In recent years, the state of Delaware has demonstrated its commitment to recruiting and hiring excellent educators through Senate Bills 16 and 51, which promote early hiring by projecting enrollment earlier and increase the rigor of teacher preparation, respectively.

Data from the Spring 2016 hiring season revealed that the percentage of teachers hired before August 1st has increased and that districts hired more teachers between May and August compared to prior years. However, data shows that charter schools, on average, hired teachers earlier than districts and that certain positions such as high school math and science, foreign language, speech therapists, psychologists, and nurses remain challenging for districts and charter schools to staff.

ImpactED at the University of Pennsylvania was commissioned by the DDOE to gather information on the 2016 recruitment, hiring, and selection practices that led to these outcomes. The evaluation utilized mixed methods:

- ✔ **Quantitative Data Collection:** Survey administered to all human resources directors in Delaware districts and charter schools
- ✔ **Qualitative Data Collection:** Interviews/focus groups with administrators and teachers from two case studies, one district and one charter school

This report shares key findings & recommendations in each of the following sections:

- ✔ **Teacher Hiring**
- ✔ **Teacher Recruitment**
- ✔ **Teacher Selection**
- ✔ **Teacher Effectiveness**

Teacher Hiring

Findings

- ✔ Approximately 25% of districts indicated that hiring early was their first priority, while only 1 of the surveyed 10 charters did.
- ✔ While districts recognized the importance of hiring early, most had summer target hiring dates and reported challenges with early hiring.

- ✔ Efficient systems and policies promote early hiring.

Recommendations

To increase the number of educators hired early, districts should:

- ✔ Collaborate with principals to create enrollment projections and budgets in late winter to determine vacancies in the spring
- ✔ Establish a spring deadline for the voluntary transfer period and leverage incentives for earlier notification of resignation and retirement
- ✔ Streamline the hiring process using online systems (like Join Delaware Schools)
- ✔ Communicate early and often with applicants during the selection process
- ✔ Increase the number of offers extended to promising candidates for hard-to-staff positions
- ✔ Partner with education preparation programs to identify promising candidates (particularly in high needs areas) earlier in the hiring season

The state can support these efforts by building out the Join Delaware Schools platform and revisiting the current unit funding process and policy to ensure that it meets the needs of LEAs and facilitates early hiring practices.

Teacher Recruitment

Findings

- ✔ Districts and charters primarily recruit teachers from local universities.
- ✔ The most frequent strategies for recruitment by districts were not always the ones they reported to be most successful.
- ✔ Diversity recruitment required targeted strategies.

Recommendations

To increase the effectiveness of recruitment efforts, districts should:

- ✔ Create or grow existing programs that promote the profession to high school and college students, such as the Teacher Academy, Educators Rising, and Grow Your Own programs
- ✔ Identify and market unique monetary and non-monetary incentives
- ✔ Use Title IIA funds to support recruitment budgets
- ✔ Continue to build partnerships and specific programs with local universities to develop teacher pipelines

The state can support these efforts by developing policies that promote the alignment between teacher preparation and recruitment, and encouraging districts to develop Grow-Your-Own programs.

Teacher Selection

Findings

- ✔ Districts prioritized hiring decisions at the school level.
- ✔ Districts and charter schools' selection strategies varied, and more charter schools than district schools have implemented selection strategies such as sample teaching.

Recommendations

To improve the quality of selection efforts, districts should:

- ✔ Design written/interview questions that are specific to the needs of the student population
- ✔ Use sample lessons, feedback, and data and results from the performance assessment or performance based portfolios to gather applied information during selection
- ✔ Involve a team of school staff in the selection process

The state can support these efforts by providing a forum to share best practices between charter schools and districts in the state.

Teacher Effectiveness

Findings

- ✔ Most districts and charter schools are using observation to identify impactful teachers.
- ✔ Districts and charter schools can use their knowledge of students' and teachers' needs to inform teacher recruitment efforts.
- ✔ Aligning teacher preparation, recruitment, and induction can improve hiring outcomes.

Recommendations

To ensure alignment between teacher recruitment/hiring/selection practices and teacher effectiveness, districts should:

- ✔ Track hiring data on teacher retention and effectiveness to inform recruitment and selection
- ✔ Ensure that teacher recruitment processes are aligned with teacher induction practices
- ✔ Use teacher effectiveness data to inform hiring needs

The state can support these efforts by promoting policies and systems that align teacher preparation, recruitment, hiring, induction, and professional development practices.

Future Research

We recommend that future research examine how the specific recruitment, hiring, and selection methods featured in this report correlate with teachers' effectiveness once in the classroom. HR Directors should be asked to inform future iterations of the survey and more in depth case studies should examine district, school, and teacher perspectives at multiple stages of the process. This more robust analysis would allow the DDOE to determine the efficacy of recruitment, hiring, and selection practices.

2016 Excellent Educators Report

Overview

Research demonstrates that teacher effectiveness is the most important in-school factor influencing the rate of student learning. To hire top talent, research suggests that districts should aim to hire teachers in the Spring and that districts that wait to hire until mid-to-late summer lose significant numbers of high-quality applicants. Across the country, districts have reported challenges with early hiring, particularly in high needs areas.¹ As a small state in a densely populated region, Delaware faces significant competition from surrounding states in recruiting and hiring excellent educators.

In recent years, the state of Delaware has placed an emphasis on teacher hiring. In 2011, the state legislature enacted Senate Bill 16 (SB 16), which required the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) to estimate each district's enrollment by April 15th of the preceding school year. This guarantees that districts will receive at least 98% of the funding justified by the enrollment estimate. In 2013, Senate Bill 51 was designed to increase the rigor of the state's teacher preparation process and align those requirements with licensure. These policies demonstrate the state's commitment to recruiting and hiring excellent educators.

ImpactED at the University of Pennsylvania was commissioned by the DDOE to gather information on district's recruitment, hiring, and selection practices across the state in the 2016 hiring season (February – October 2016). This report is based on the Excellent Educators Survey, which was administered to all Delaware school districts and charter schools in Winter 2016/17. This survey data was supplemented by analysis from two case studies, one charter and one district.

This report builds on the 2015 Talent Practices Report² and is organized in the following sections:

- ✔ **Methodology.** This section describes the approach to quantitative and qualitative data collection, which included an annual HR director survey and in-depth case studies.
- ✔ **Hiring Outcomes.** This section provides an overview of key hiring outcomes in districts and charter schools and compares district outcomes to prior years where relevant.
- ✔ **Key Findings.** This section provides best practices and challenges associated with teacher hiring, recruitment, selection, and effectiveness. Each sub-section opens with a research overview, includes key survey data, and features best practices from the case study profiles.
- ✔ **Recommendations.** This section provides recommendations for the DOE, districts, and charter schools in the areas of talent recruitment, hiring, selection, and evaluation.

¹ Teacher-recruitment challenges: A special report. (2016, January 25). *Education Week*. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/teacher-recruitment-challenges-2016/>

² Robertson-Kraft, C., & Hejlek. (2016). *2015 Delaware talent practices report*. Philadelphia, PA: Operation Public Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Methodology

This evaluation utilized mixed methods to explore talent recruitment, hiring, and selection in districts and charter schools in Delaware. Quantitative data provided aggregate information on these practices among Delaware's district and charter schools, while qualitative data more thoroughly explored relevant best practices and challenges. Additional information on the measures and analytic methods is included below.

Quantitative Data Collection

We worked with DDOE Leadership to develop and administer a survey to human resources directors in each district and charter school in the state. This survey captured critical information on educator recruitment, hiring, selection, and evaluation practices during the 2016 hiring season (February – October 2016). Descriptive analysis was used to identify key findings and explore district trends over time.

- ✔ **Excellent Educators Survey.** All 19 of Delaware's traditional public school districts responded to the Excellent Educators Survey, as well as 10 of the state's 25 charter schools, although several of them did not respond to many of the questions. Throughout the report, we compare results from the survey to prior years' data for the districts. The 10 charter schools participating in this year's survey were not the same as those participating in the 2015 survey, so charter data is not comparable across years. **Given the low response rate from charters, we focus more on the district responses in this report.**

Qualitative Data Collection

We used longitudinal survey data, along with conversations with DDOE Leadership, to identify two case studies, one district and one charter school, referred to as District Profile and Charter Profile throughout this report. This qualitative data collection was used to provide a more in-depth profile of educator recruitment, hiring, and selection practices.

- ✔ **HR Director/Principal interviews.** At the district, we interviewed the HR Director and the district's recruiter, and at the charter, we interviewed the Head of School and a Dean who was involved in the hiring process. These interviews helped us build a better understanding of best practices and challenges related to talent recruitment, hiring, and selection.
- ✔ **Teacher focus groups.** In both the charter and district, we conducted focus groups/interviews with new hires, to gather information on teachers' perceptions of the recruitment, hiring, and selection process.

Data collected from these case studies was coded and analyzed for key themes. Results from these case studies are used to supplement findings from the survey and have been noted in call-out boxes throughout the report.

Hiring Outcomes

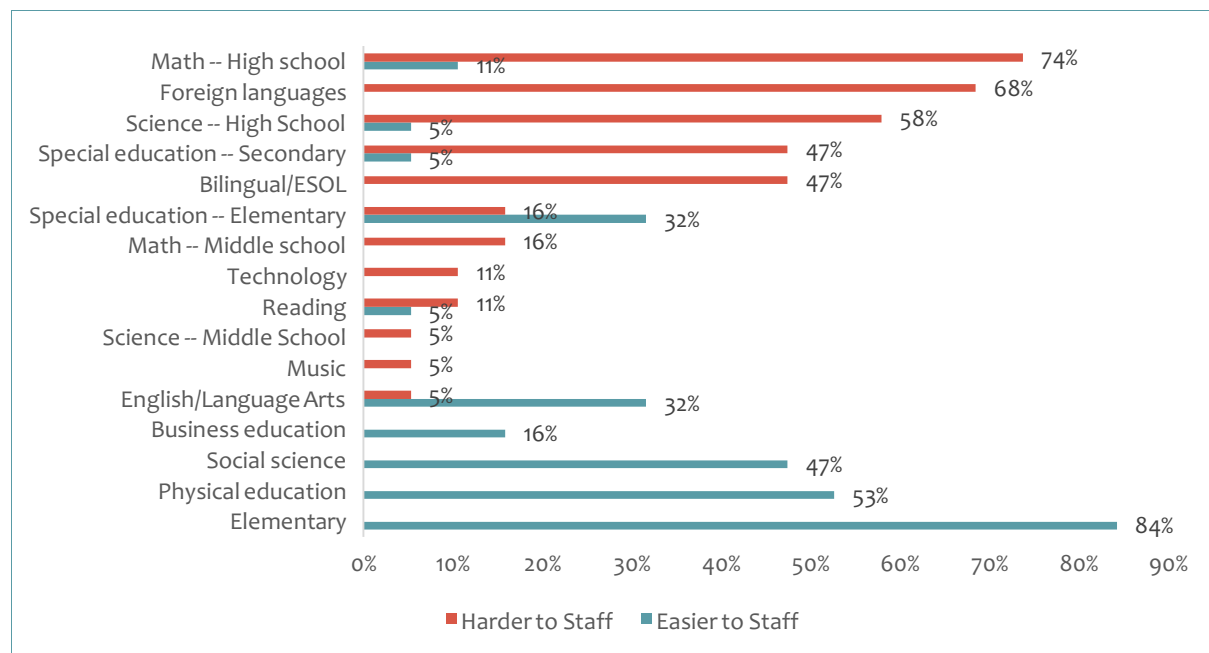
Staffing Overview

In the 2016 hiring season, 1,335 teachers were hired to teach in the state of Delaware. This represents an increase from the 964 teachers during the 2015 hiring season and 862 in the 2014 hiring season. Across the country, districts have reported challenges with hiring in high-needs areas like math, science, and special education.³ These national trends played out in Delaware, and districts and charter schools reported similar positions as easiest and hardest to staff when compared to prior years.

- ✔ **Hardest to Staff (Instructional):** Districts most frequently reported that the hardest instructional positions to staff were High School Math, Foreign Language, and High School Science.
- ✔ **Easiest to Staff (Instructional):** Districts most frequently reported that the easiest instructional positions to staff were Elementary, Physical Education, and Social Science.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 below shows the proportion of districts that indicated specific instructional positions as being the hardest and easiest to staff. This chart and corresponding findings only include district schools because only 7 of 10 charters who took the survey responded to the question (representing only 28% of charters overall).

Figure 1. Harder and Easier to Staff Instructional Positions



³ Teacher-recruitment challenges: A special report. (2016, January 25). *Education Week*. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/teacher-recruitment-challenges-2016/>

As noted above, the chart below and corresponding findings only include district schools.

- ✔ **Hardest to Staff (Non-Instructional):** Districts most frequently reported that the hardest non-instructional positions to staff were Speech Therapist, School Psychologist, and School Nurse.
- ✔ **Easiest to Staff (Non-Instructional):** Districts most frequently reported that the easiest non-instructional positions to staff were Guidance Counselor, Classroom Assistant, and Special Education Case Manager.

Figure 2. Harder and Easier to Staff Non-Instructional Positions



➤ District & Charter Profile: Diversity Talent

Districts and charter leaders also reported challenges with the lack of diversity in the talent pool, noting that graduates from in-state education prep programs did not reduce the diversity gap between the teacher and the student population. Both district and charter leaders noted that this was a priority in their recruitment and hiring efforts. The Head of School at the charter school noted:

- *“Based on the population we serve, we have a high number of students being raised by single moms so there is a void of African-American males in their life. We have a lot of African-American males here in leadership positions but fewer teachers... Sometimes parents have concerns that you have a teacher that doesn’t know my kids. Kids feel like they can connect better with a teacher who knows their experience. But we prepare our teachers as well as we*

Hiring Timeline

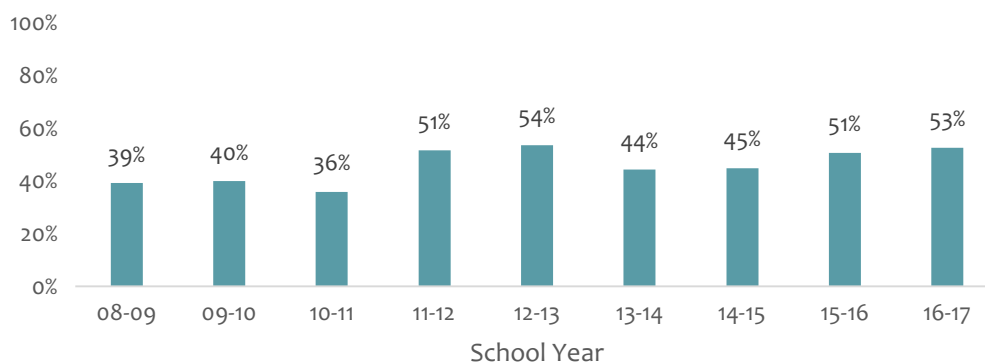
As noted above, over the past several years, the state of Delaware has placed an emphasis on early hiring. In 2011, Senate Bill 16 (SB 16) required the DDOE to estimate each district's enrollment by April 15th of the preceding school year, and in 2014, House Bill 259 (HB 259) made this permanent.

This guarantees that districts will receive at least 98% of the funding justified by the enrollment estimate. Before SB 16, districts waited until September 30th to learn the level of state funding they would receive, which created significant budget uncertainty for the districts and led to many teachers being hired after the school year had already begun.

✔ The percentage of teachers hired before August 1st has increased from prior years.

The passage of the law led to a significant increase in the number of teachers hired by August 1st, from 35.7% in 2010-2011 (the year prior to the law) to 51.4% in 2011-2012 (the year after the law was passed), as illustrated in Figure 3 below. The percentage of teachers hired by August 1st has been increasing steadily since the 2013 – 2014 hiring season and is up to 53% for the 2016 hiring season (e.g., the 2016-2017 school year).

Figure 3. Percentage of Teachers Hired Before August 1

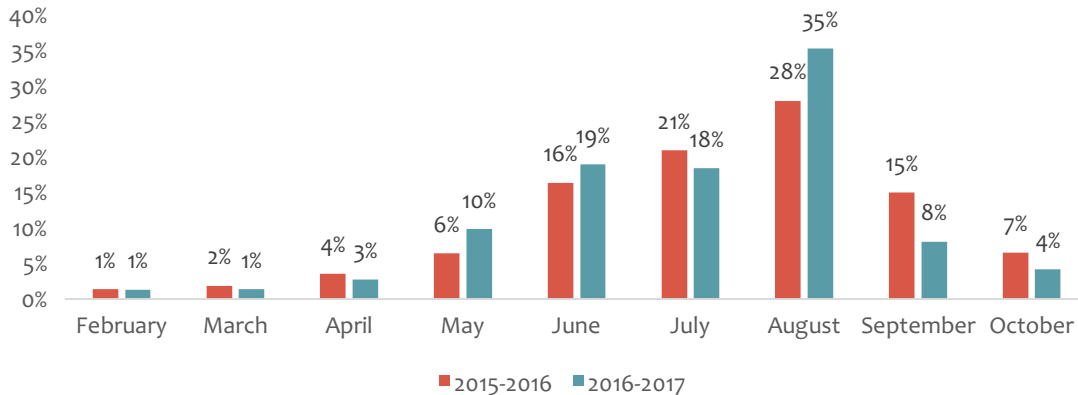


✔ Most notably districts hired more teachers in August as compared to the prior hiring season.

As compared to the 2015 hiring season, in the 2016 hiring season, districts hired higher proportions of teachers in August, which led to lower rates of hiring after the start of the school year.

- In the 2015 hiring season (i.e., for the 2015-2016 school year), 78% of teachers were hired by August 31st, with 28% hired in August. This meant that 12% of teachers were hired after the school year began.
- In the 2016 hiring season (i.e., for the 2016-2017 school year), 88% of teachers were hired by August 31st, with 35% hired in August. Only 12% of teachers were hired after the school year began compared to 22% in 2015-2016

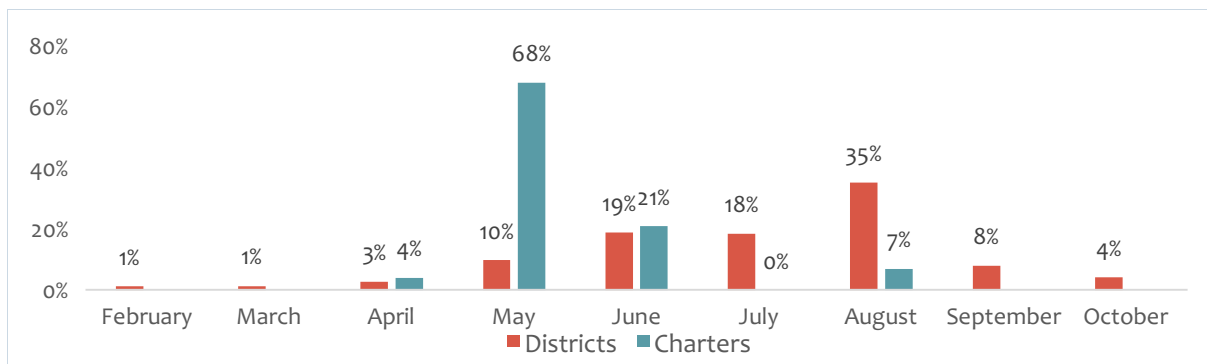
Figure 4. Percentage of Total New Hires in Districts Year-to-Year, by Month



✔ **The charter schools who participated in the survey hired teachers earlier than districts on average.** As demonstrated in Figure 5 below, the 10 charter schools in Delaware that took the survey hired a higher percentage of their teachers by the end of May when compared to district schools. Since only 10 of Delaware’s 25 charter schools took the survey this year, this may not be representative of charter schools in Delaware. However, this is consistent with last year’s results.⁴

- The ten charter schools who responded to the survey hired 72% of teachers by the end of May and 0% of teachers once the school year had begun.
- Districts hired 15% of teachers by the end of May and 12% of teachers once the school year had begun.

Figure 5. Percentage of Total New Hires in Districts and Charter Schools 2016 Hiring Season, by Month



⁴ Robertson-Kraft, C., & Hejlek. (2016). *2015 Delaware talent practices report*. Philadelphia, PA: Operation Public Education, University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/355/2015%20Delaware%20Talent%20Practices%20Report%20.pdf>

Key Findings: Best Practices & Challenges

This section presents key findings in four areas – hiring, recruitment, selection, and effectiveness – that likely contributed to these hiring outcomes. We explored the best practices that appeared to positively influence successful hiring outcomes, as well as the challenges that remained, and how these challenges could be addressed. Each sub-section opens with a brief research overview, includes key survey data, and features profiles with best practices from the case studies.

- ✔ **Teacher hiring (with a focus on early hiring).** This section explores hiring processes, including dates and timelines, as well as notification and resignation processes.
- ✔ **Teacher recruitment (with a focus on diversity recruitment).** This section explores recruitment strategies and applicant pools, with a focus on diversity recruitment.
- ✔ **Teacher selection (with a focus on rigorous practices).** This section explores selection processes and roles of various staff in the process, with a focus on more rigorous practices (e.g., sample teaching and reflection).
- ✔ **Teacher effectiveness (with a focus on the alignment to recruitment).** This section explores processes for identifying highly effective educators and explores how this process connects to both recruitment and retention.

Teacher Hiring (Focus on Early Hiring)

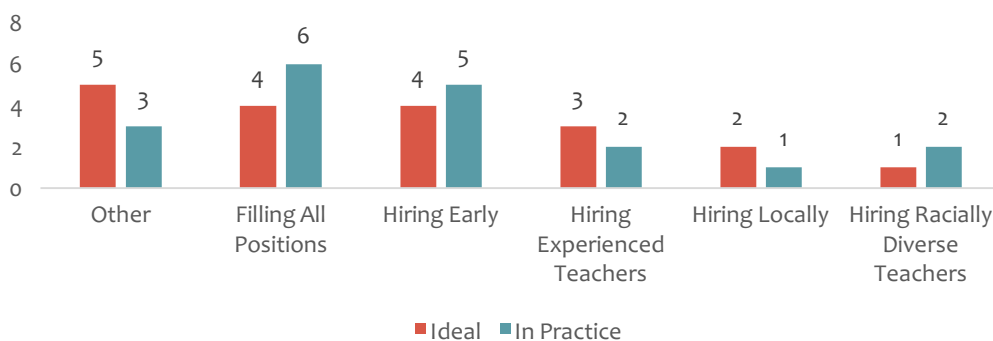
Research demonstrates that when districts hire teachers earlier in the hiring season, it increases the likelihood that they will hire top talent. One study found that teaching applicants begin to withdraw from the hiring process in May because they are offered jobs elsewhere, and 40% withdraw by the end of June. Moreover, more-qualified applicants are disproportionately likely to withdraw during an extended hiring process and take jobs with districts or schools that make offers earlier.⁵ As a result, districts that wait until the end of the summer to hire teachers are less likely to be choosing from a pool of well-qualified applicants. The bullets below discuss the practices of Delaware districts and 10 of the 25 charters with respect to early hiring.

- ✔ **Several Delaware districts prioritized early hiring, but this was not reported as a priority by participating charter schools.** The survey asked two questions to better understand how districts were thinking about their hiring objectives. First, the survey asked directors to identify which of the listed hiring outcomes are the most important for a successful hiring season *under ideal circumstances*. The next question asked the directors to identify which of the listed outcomes they prioritized *given the current circumstances*.
 - As demonstrated in Figure 6, four districts reported “Hiring Early” as an ideal hiring outcome and five reported that it was an outcome they currently prioritized.

⁵ Levin, J., & Quinn, M. (2003). *Missed opportunities: How we keep high-quality teachers out of urban classrooms*. NY, NY: The New Teacher Project.

- However, under ideal circumstances, the most commonly selected answer was “Other,” which districts defined as hiring best-fit candidates, staff with similar backgrounds to the students, and hiring from Grow Our Own programs, which will be discussed in the following section on recruitment.
- The charter schools who participated in the survey did not report early hiring as an ideal or actual hiring priority. When asked, under ideal circumstances, which hiring outcome was the most important for a successful hiring season, none of the charters identified early hiring. Under current circumstances, only one charter reported that hiring early was the first priority.

Figure 6. Districts’ Ideal Outcomes Vs. Currently Prioritized Outcomes



✔ **While districts recognized the importance of hiring early, the majority had target hiring dates in the Summer and reported considerable challenges with hiring early.**

Overall, 17 of the 19 districts indicated that their Local Education Agency (LEA) had a target date by which it aims to fill the majority of instructional positions. The most common target hiring date was July 1st (reported by 8 districts) with only 3 districts aiming to fill the majority of positions by May 1st and 2 by June 1st. In contrast, 6 of the 10 charter schools aimed to fill the majority of instructional positions by May 1st. Districts shared several challenges with hiring early, most notably:

- Teachers accepting one position early and then later reneging to accept another
- Delays due to internal voluntary transfers
- Late resignations or retirements
- Challenges with projecting student enrollment given the growing student population in some districts

✔ **Efficient systems and policies promote early hiring.** District and charter leaders in our case studies reported that efficient systems and policies supported a more streamlined hiring process. The case study profile on the following page demonstrates how one charter made use of these systems to hire early.

- As noted in Figure 8, Join Delaware Schools was identified as one of the top 3 most successful recruitment practices. Join Delaware Schools is an online system that provides prospective candidates with information about teaching in Delaware and helps districts streamline the hiring process.
- Early notification dates and incentives for retirement and resignation supported early hiring. Notably, 17 of 19 districts reported they have policies that require or encourage teachers who intend to retire to notify the school by a certain date but only 2 of 19 required or encouraged teachers who intend to resign to notify the school by a certain date.

➤ Charter Profile: Personalized & Efficient Hiring Process

Charter X has an efficient and transparent hiring process. The charter begins its hiring season early and takes advantage of advertising open positions on Join Delaware Schools. The hiring coordinator makes a concerted effort to respond to applications immediately and keep in frequent contact with applicants throughout the process. Applicants appreciate the fast-paced process as it makes them feel that the school truly values their talent.

- *“[The hiring coordinator] reached out immediately, like it was an immediate—I saw the opportunity, was I interested, yes, she must’ve looked over my resume, it was like two days, and then she emailed me—and was like, I’m interested. I was like, wow... they’re really interested...”*
– Teacher

Teachers reported that while they were interested in district positions, districts did not use JoinDelawareSchools.org as much and lacked consistent communication.

- *“I felt like there were at least a few district openings on there and I applied to them but got no responses. Mostly when I got responses, they were from charter schools.”* – Teacher

The charter also tailors its online advertisements to emphasize its unique school culture and values. Emphasizing unique aspects of the school encourages candidates that match those values to apply – increasing the chance of finding a best-fit candidate.

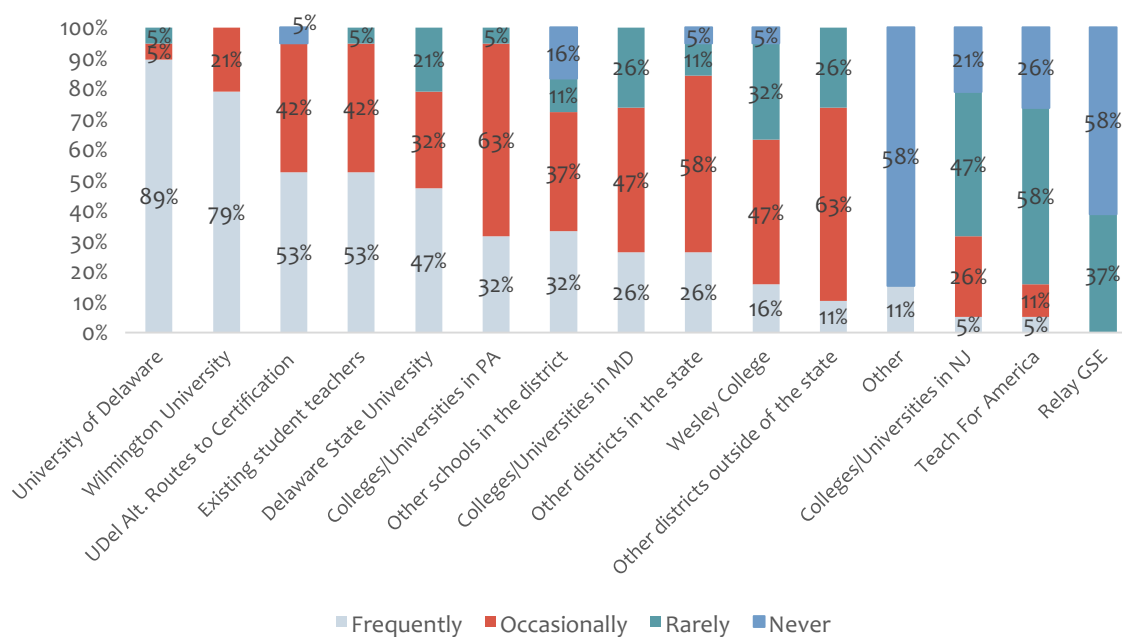
- *“I was hugely interested in being in an arts-integrated school, so when I learned that Charter X was an arts-integrated school I was very intent about calling and emailing the Head every day for like months.”* –Teacher
- *“I applied and got a quick response... districts did not reply to me because they were not ready for recruitment yet. So I chose Charter X over another school based on the environment, again, their vision here, and what I saw at the moment and that I had experience with their population.”* –Teacher
- *“Our strongest teachers have been new teachers that were very on board with and bought into what our organization stands for.”* – Staff Hiring Team Member

Teacher Recruitment (Focus on Diversity Recruitment)

Research has demonstrated that new teachers tend to seek employment near where they grew up or went to college.⁶ DDOE data indicates that of teachers in Delaware with five or fewer years of education experience in 2012-2013, 59% received their bachelor's degrees in Delaware.⁷ Moreover, the Delaware Aspiring Educator Survey of 348 early-career teachers indicated that 79% of the teachers who grew up in Delaware rated Delaware as their first-choice teaching destination, and 56% of the teachers who attended college in Delaware rated staying in Delaware as their top choice. Teachers who did not grow up in Delaware or did not attend college in Delaware were much less likely to rate Delaware as their preferred place to teach.⁸ Since Delaware is a small state, this makes talent recruitment, and in particular, recruitment of diverse teachers, challenging.

- ✔ **Districts are primarily recruiting teachers from local universities.** As was the case in prior years, the most frequently drawn upon applicant pools were University of Delaware and Wilmington University. Districts reported that since they relied on local universities, the candidate pool was limited, particularly for diverse talent. Figure 7 shows the frequency with which districts indicated recruiting from various applicant pools.

Figure 7. Use of Applicant Pools



⁶ U.S. Department of Education, International Affairs Office. National Council on Teacher Quality. (2004, October). *Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers: Background report for the United States*. Washington, DC: Author.

⁷ 'The Set': Where are Delaware's teachers prepared for the profession? (2013, March). Retrieved from http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/domain/271/the%20set/March_Set_2013.pdf

⁸ 'The Set': Where do aspiring educators want to work and live (2015, December). Retrieved from http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/domain/37/the%20set%20monthly%20data%20briefs/The_December_2015_Set.pdf

- ✔ **The most frequently reported recruitment strategies were not always the most successful.** Districts and charter schools were asked to identify strategies that they used most frequently to recruit teachers, and which of those strategies yielded the most successful applicants. Figures 8a and 8b shows the responses for the districts and charters respectively.

For Districts:

- The most successful overall strategies were posting jobs on the school/district website, and recruiting from Delaware Project Search and Join Delaware Schools.
- Presentations at job fairs and networking/word of mouth were reported as the most frequently used but not among the most successful.

Figure 8a. Recruitment Strategies Frequently Employed and Strategies Selected as Top 3 by Districts

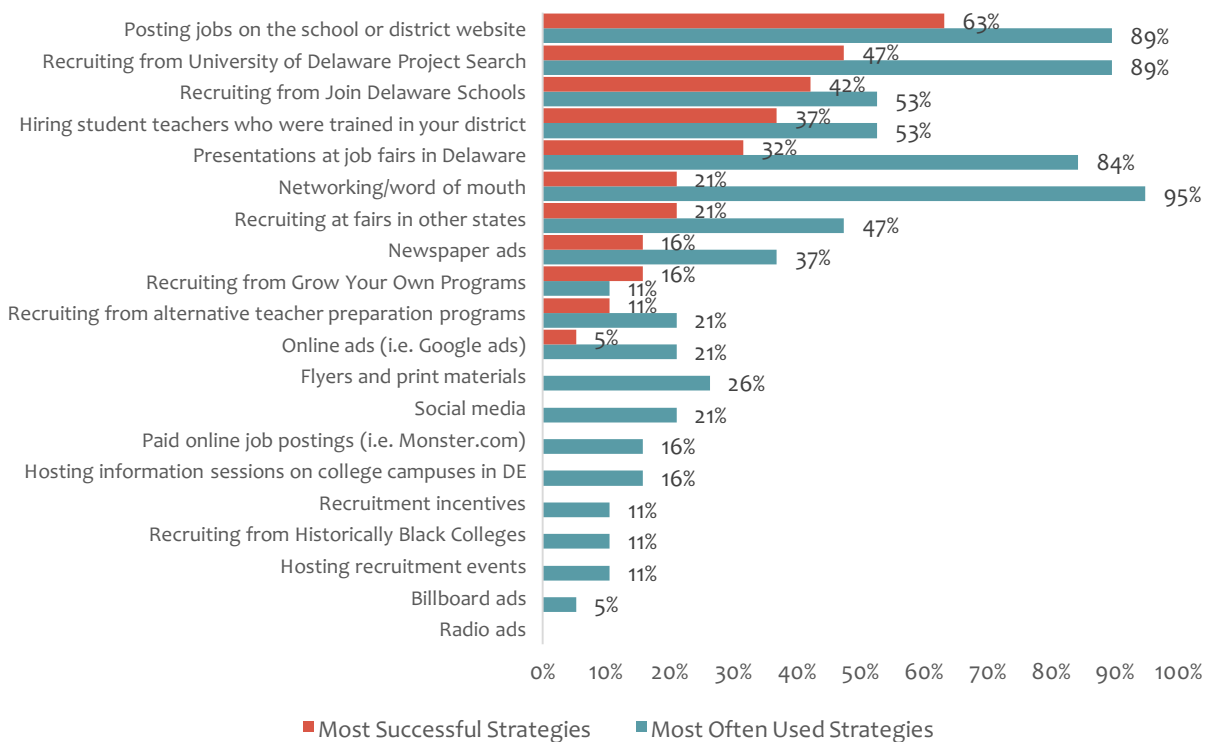
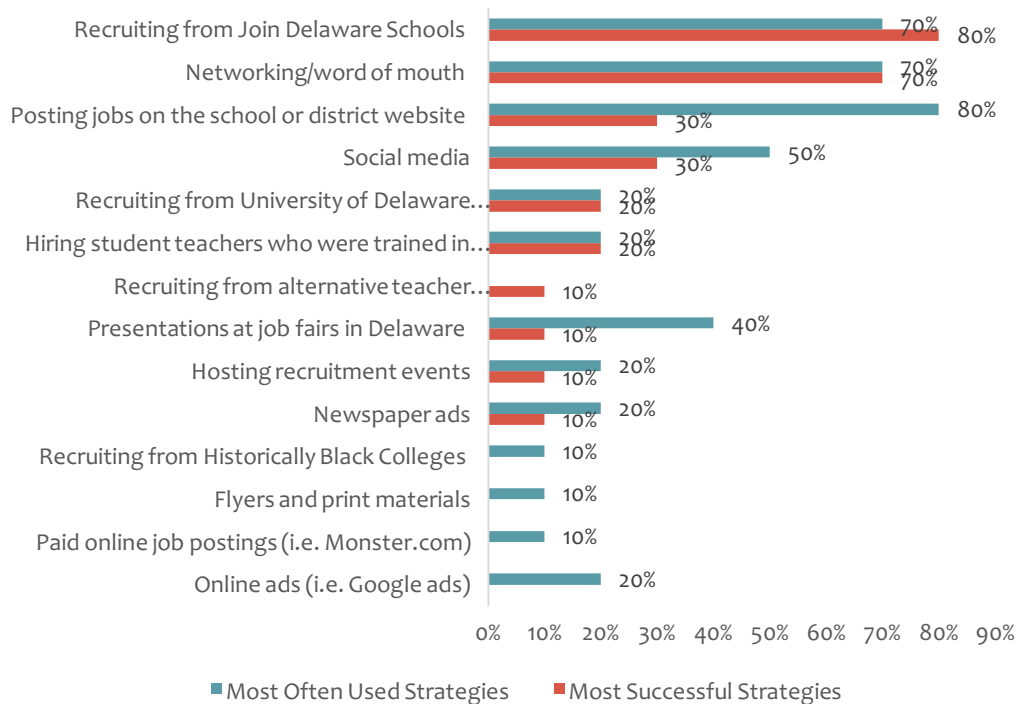


Figure 8b. Recruitment Strategies Frequently Employed and Strategies Selected as Top 3 by Charters (10)



For Charter Schools:

- Recruiting from Join Delaware Schools and networking were reported both as most successful and the most frequently used.
- Charter schools were more likely to report using social media (50%) compared to districts (21%).
- Charter schools were less likely to report presenting at job fairs (40%) compared to districts (84%)

✓ **Districts had limited recruitment budgets.** Fifteen of the 19 districts reported having a recruitment budget, with an average of \$8,586, and a range of \$1,000 - \$20,000. None of the participating charter schools reported having a recruitment budget.

- Recruitment budgets were most commonly used for flyers and print materials, newspaper ads, and paid online job postings.
- Five districts reported using Title IIA funds for their recruitment budgets.

✔ **Diversity recruitment required more targeted strategies.** Districts and charter leaders reported that recruiting diverse talent required more intentionality. In particular, they asked the state for the following support in recruiting teachers of color:

- Supporting “Grow Your Own” programs and other early introduction interventions for the teaching profession in local middle and high schools
- Providing incentives for teachers of color (such as tuition reimbursement). Only three districts offered recruitment incentives, which included: an interest-free relocation loan, a signing bonus, and a relocation stipend. None of the 10 charters reported offering recruitment incentives. However, our case studies revealed that charter schools and districts utilized more non-traditional incentives (e.g., tuition reimbursement, shared values) for recruiting teachers of color.

➤ District & Charter Profile: Incentives

Districts and charter schools can attract candidates using both monetary and non-monetary incentives other than the traditional recruitment incentives. These strategies are particularly valuable for recruiting diverse candidates.

District X takes advantage of a stipend offered by the state of Delaware to pay for courses required for teacher certification. They also offer a stipend and tutoring for the Praxis exam for teachers in their Grow Your Own Program. One teacher shared that this reimbursement made getting her degree possible:

- *“I had to go back to school to get my Masters degree... it was good because I was able to use tuitions reimbursement for my Behavioral Science degree.” – District Teacher*

Incentives do not have to be monetary. Charter X and District X both attracted candidates using non-traditional incentives, such as a clearly stated mission and vision, a reputation for high expectations, and a strong support network for teachers.

- *“Everyone says, you know, District X is the place to be, they are challenging, they expect very high expectations of their teachers and students and there’s a lot of support.” –District Teacher*
- *“I feel like they really did care about me personally and what it would take for me to grow and succeed. “ –Charter Teacher*

➤ District Profile: “Grow Your Own”

Grow Your Own is a program that District X uses to develop candidates before moving them into full-time teaching positions. Grow Your Own program participants are selected from current paraprofessionals who want to become teachers, most of whom are also local and invested in the district. The three-year program allows participants to complete their certification and take the Praxis exam to meet district requirements. They are eligible to earn a stipend while completing their student teaching, which is the only cost of the program (\$2,000 stipend/candidate). District leadership notes that this process has been particularly useful in recruiting diverse teachers.

The program exposes candidates to different grade levels, teaching styles, and classroom environments before facilitating their placement in one of the schools in the District. This process increases the likelihood that they will be a strong fit for the District and their school. As one teacher remarked:

- *“It’s my first year teaching...and I’m so comfortable here and I just feel like everything’s going well. I mean I just feel like I was prepared, and...I feel like being a para really helped me because I went in all different rooms all day and saw what I liked and I didn’t like, strategies, and I just felt prepared and I think being a para really helped that.” – Teacher*

For school administrators, the Grow Your Own program streamlines the hiring and placement process. Since District administrators are familiar with Grow Your Own candidates, they are able to find them positions that suit their teaching styles and needs. Grow Your Own candidates are guaranteed a position within the District, which means the District also has flexibility to place them based on different schools’ student enrollments as counts become finalized.

- *“In our Grow Your Own program, we’ve already built the relationships with these candidates so we know where they’re going to be a best fit.” – District Recruiter/Mentor Coordinator*

This first cohort of Grow Your Own candidates is in its first year in the classroom and early data shows they are successful. District staff intends to track program participants throughout their teaching careers to determine the program’s effectiveness in improving teacher quality and retention.

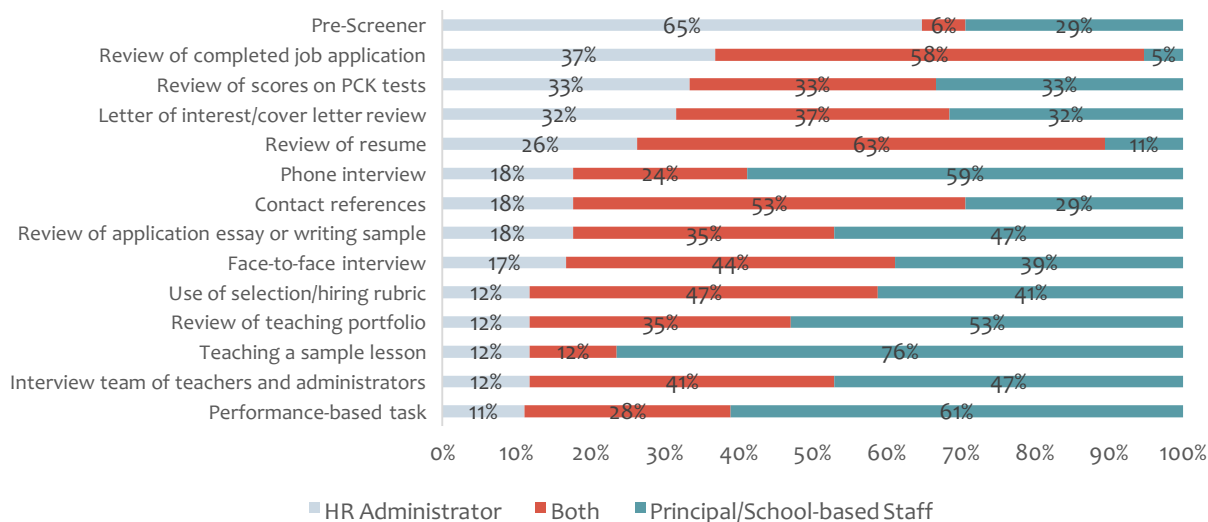
Teacher Selection (Rigorous Methods)

To ensure high-quality candidates, research demonstrates the importance of selection processes that involve collecting comprehensive information about each candidate under consideration. The more information principals can gather on the likelihood of a candidate’s success in the classroom (e.g., through methods like sample teaching and performance assessments), the more likely they are to make strategic hires that result in effective instruction in the classroom.⁹ School-based staff, including principals and current teachers, are best equipped to determine fit for a particular campus or role.

✔ **Districts prioritized hiring decisions at the school level.** Figure 9 below shows each selection activity and the proportion of districts indicating that the activity fell into the responsibility of the HR Administrator, principal or school-based staff, or both.

- HR administrators were more involved in early stages of the process and less in the later stages of the process, where the Principal/School-Based Staff was more involved.
- In our case study visits, both district and charter leadership emphasized the importance of the “fit” of the candidate and indicated that principals and teachers were best equipped to make these decisions. As Figure 10 demonstrates, 100% of charter schools and 84% of districts reported always or frequently using interview teams of administrators and teachers as part of the selection process.

Figure 9. Selection Activity Responsibility

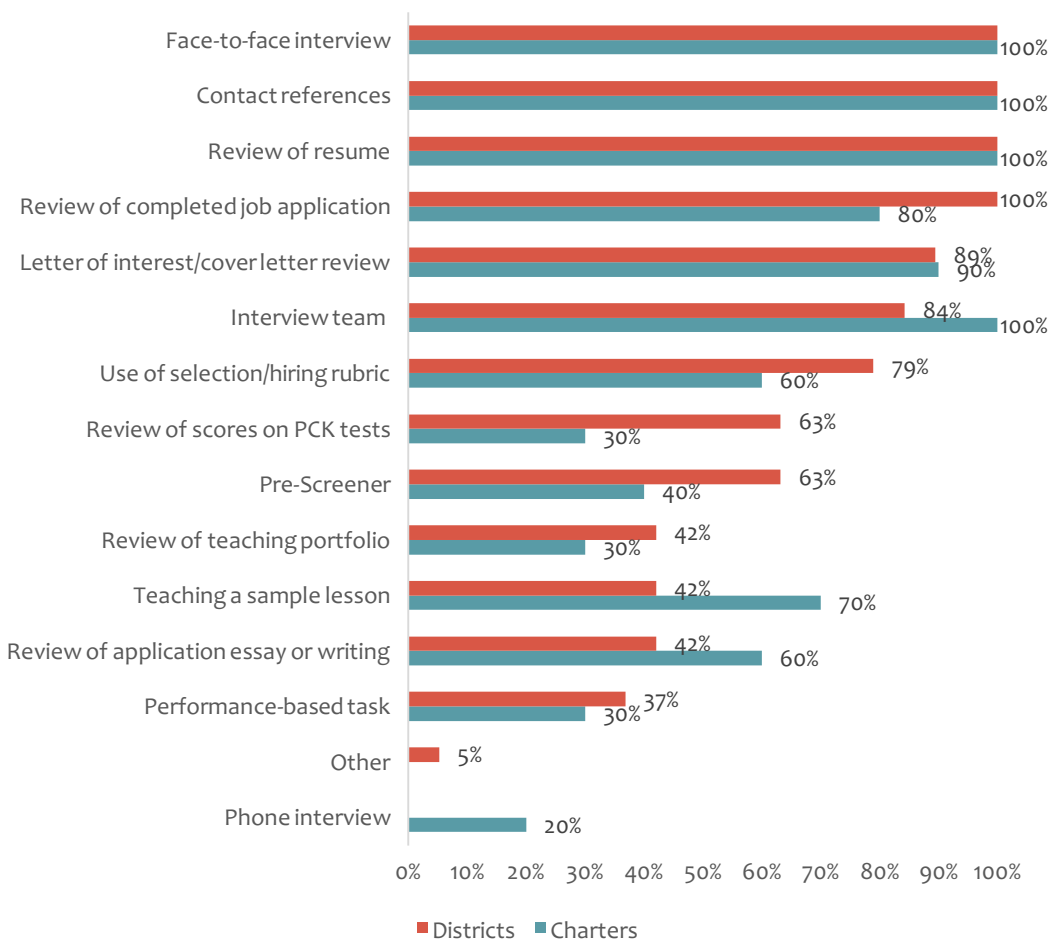


⁹ Walsh, K, Putman, H., & Lewis, A. (2015). Attracting the best teachers to schools who need them most. *State Education Standard*, 15(2), 25-31.

✔ **Districts and charter schools selection strategies varied, and charter schools appeared to be more likely to use applied methods like sample teaching.** Districts and charter schools were asked to report how frequently they use the activities in the teacher selection process. Figure 10 below shows the number of district that reported “*always*” or “*frequently*” using specific strategies.

- All districts and charter schools reported always or frequently using face-to-face interviews, contacting references, and reviewing resumes.
- Districts were more likely to report using completed job applications, a selection/hiring rubric, scores on pedagogical content-knowledge tests, pre-screeners, and teaching portfolios.
- Charter schools were more likely to report using a sample teaching lesson and review of an application essay or writing sample.

Figure 10. Percentage of Districts and Charter schools that Always or Frequently Use Selection Strategies



➤ Charter Profile: Rigorous Selection Process

The selection process at Charter X is strategically designed to ensure efficiency. Steps are well-defined and fast-paced. This strategy allows Charter X to act quickly to identify and hire the best candidates as early as possible. Charter X also demonstrates their interest and commitment to the teacher throughout the hiring process. This method of consistent, timely communication makes teachers feel valued, while simultaneously defining the charter as a dynamic community that is interested in the best outcomes for each teacher and student.

The selection process has multiple steps:

- **Step 1: Written Application.** Applications are reviewed (using Join Delaware Schools), and applicants are contacted within days of the application submission.
- **Step 2: Phone Interviews.** The Head of School conducts short 20-minute interviews with candidates, which she uses to screen for fit for teaching in an urban environment. This also ensures that she meets candidates early in the process.
- **Step 3: Written response.** Following the phone interview, applicants submit a written reflection answering questions like the following:
 - Why are you interested in closing the achievement gap? What relevant experiences do you have working with schools serving low-income students?
 - Reflect on how our coaching and evaluation model (which is shared with the applicant) compares to your current level of support and the type of support you'd expect.
 - Our parents are very active. How would you work towards quality communication with parents? Attach a sample letter of introduction to your parents.
- **Step 4: 30-minute sample lesson.** Teachers teach a 30-minute sample lesson in the Spring, ideally with the students they would teach in the Fall. Following the sample lesson, teachers submit a reflection answering questions like the following:
 - What went well? What would you do differently? What would you do next?
 - What did you do to establish clear expectations? Ensure the directions were clear?
 - What were the group's strengths? What off-task behaviors did you notice?
 - What areas would you prioritize as high needs areas to improve with the students?
- **Step 5: Coaching/feedback session.** The instructional leadership team provides the teacher with feedback immediately following the session. Each teacher receives three things they did well and one action step they need to take to improve.

The process tests specific skills that match the unique needs of Charter X. At every step in the process, applicants are provided with feedback from the hiring team.

- *“Thinking about our selection process, I would never hire a teacher with skipping a step. For us, it’s made the difference in securing a really great candidate. The really great candidate wants to be pushed to think. We’re always pushing ourselves and them.” – Hiring Team Member*

Recent hires marveled at the quality communication, organization, and level of feedback throughout the process. As one teacher noted below, this indicated that Charter X was invested in staff:

- *“When I was interviewed, Charter X was more organized [than other districts], there was a hiring team that interviewed me as well as watched my modeling of teaching a sample lesson. I just felt like okay, they’re really interested in what my performance is going be, and the trust of hiring a teacher wasn’t just because they needed a teacher. They were really concerned about what type of teacher got into the position. The organization of their interview, and the modeling of the lesson was all organized, and well-thought-out.” – Teacher*

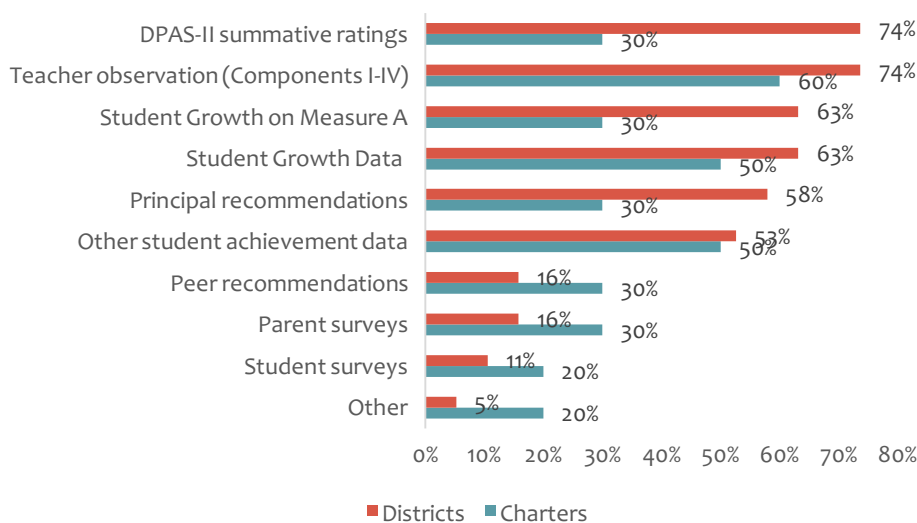
Teacher Effectiveness (Connection to Recruitment and Hiring)

Too often, teacher recruitment and hiring efforts are viewed as separate from policies focused on increasing teacher effectiveness once they are in the classroom. Indeed, research has shown that the pathway into teaching and through the early stages of a teacher’s career is characterized by a fragmented system of support.¹⁰ Supporting new teachers as they enter the teaching profession is an essential strategy for increasing effectiveness and improving retention.

✔ **Most districts and charter schools are using teacher observation to identify impactful teachers.** All 19 districts reported having a process for identifying their most impactful teachers. Figure 11 below features the percentage of districts and charter schools that reported using each of these sources of data for measuring impactful teachers.

- 14 out of the 19 districts (74%) and 6 out of the 10 charter schools (60%) reported using teacher observation to identify impactful teachers.
- Charter schools were more likely than districts to use non-traditional methods like peer recommendations, parent surveys, and student surveys to identify impactful teachers.

Figure 11. Most Commonly Used Strategies for Identifying the Most Impactful Teachers



Note that the charter school scores may be lower for the DPAS-II summative rating because more charter schools have alternative evaluation systems.

¹⁰ Goldrick, L. (2009, June). *A teacher development continuum: The role of policy in Creating a supportive pathway into the profession*. Santa Cruz, CA: The New Teacher Center. Retrieved from https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/BRF_ATeacherDevelopmentContinuum_TheRoleofPolicy.pdf

- ✔ **Districts and charter schools can use their knowledge of students’ and teachers’ needs to inform teacher recruitment efforts.** As discussed in the profile below, robust systems of coaching and evaluation can be used to provide teachers with high-quality support during their first year in the profession. These systems can also be used to identify students’ needs and the needed skills in teachers. It can also help leaders identify early in the year which teachers (veteran or novice) are unlikely to return the following year. These more informal projections can be used to inform targets for the hiring process.

➤ Charter Profile: Knowing Your School’s Needs

Charter X uses a coaching and evaluation process to support teachers’ professional growth and ensure quality teaching. Under this system, teachers receive a 15-minute observation and coaching session between 8-15 times per year. During this process, open and consistent communication and feedback helps leaders understand students’ needs and identify the profile of teachers who are most likely to be successful with that group of students. They are also able to identify teachers who are likely to leave at the end of the school year, which can support with hiring projections.

- *“We found the longer you wait in hiring, the worse candidates you are able to get... Because of our coaching model, we have a very clear idea of the types of teachers we need and the ratings teachers are getting... This means we can project our needs earlier in the year” – Hiring Team Member*

- ✔ **When teacher preparation, recruitment, and induction are aligned, it can improve hiring outcomes.** Research reveals that more than a quarter of Delaware’s teachers leave the classroom during their three years of service. This attrition rate is considerably higher in urban areas.¹¹ Supporting new teachers is a critical strategy for improving teacher retention. As demonstrated in the case study profile on the following page, high-quality mentoring programs can also inform teacher recruitment and preparation. To ensure alignment across systems, districts should consider how staff supporting preparation, recruitment, and induction can collaborate to increase teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom.

¹¹ Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). *Is there really a teacher shortage?* Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education and Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

➤ District Profile: Alignment between Recruitment & Mentoring

District X's **Human Resources Coordinator** is involved in both recruitment and mentoring of new teachers. This dual role allows her to identify the specific needs for recruitment, facilitate teachers' placement in a best-fit District school, and oversee their progress once they are in the classroom. She works closely with colleges and universities in the area and also conducts recruitment tours of schools with prospective candidates so they can learn more about the variety of school cultures in the District. As one teacher shared, her knowledge of the District helped to facilitate successful placement:

- “[The HR Coordinator] brings people in...she knows what she’s doing so I think having that person in charge that’s so open, ‘I’m going to lay it out for you,’ someone honest, so I think having that person for other districts would be helpful...you knew what you were coming into when you came to interview.” – Teacher

After hiring, the HR Coordinator continues to be involved in the development of new teachers. She oversees the certification process and the District's **tiered mentoring program**. Her involvement and familiarity with new teachers during the recruitment process helps her to identify suitable mentors. The mentoring program incorporates mentor-mentee support and group meetings for all new teachers. As one teacher noted, District X provides support to early-career teachers that is tailored to their needs:

- “[I’ve been supported for] pretty much everything. We’re getting six observations on all the different components, you know, every time we’ve went we’ve been kind of prepared on what the components are, you know, how are you feeling in the year, and then we’re also working with our mentor on, like, lesson planning and they’re coming in to watch us and they’re giving us feedback. So I mean before I get an observation I feel like I’m prepared for what’s expected out of that observation.” – Teacher

The HR Coordinator also organizes the **District’s New Teacher Week**, a week-long professional development during the summer, which orients newly-hired teachers to best practices used in the District and allows them to connect with one another. Since she is knowledgeable about teachers' needs through her involvement in the mentoring program, she is able to structure the PD to be targeted to what new teachers need. As one teacher noted, the training was very thorough and covered all the key expectations:

- “I think the week of the new teacher...really, really, really helped because they cover, I mean all from lesson planning to classroom management to technology. They cover all aspects which is great.” – Teacher

Recommendations

Overall, our findings reveal considerable variation in practices between charter schools and districts, as well as within districts. The following recommendations draw from the research to provide concrete suggestions for ensuring all students have access to excellent educators.

Teacher Hiring

While Delaware districts have prioritized and improved early hiring efforts in recent years, almost half of district teachers are still hired after August 1st, limiting districts' ability to pick the best possible teachers. Multiple factors contribute to this delay. First, some districts have restrictive policies on internal voluntary transfer, resignation, and retirement. Second, other districts face challenges with projecting student enrollment and budgetary shortfalls. And finally, the competitive nature of the labor market means that teachers often accept one position early and then later renege to accept another. To increase the number of positions filled by the end of the school year, rather than over the summer months, districts and charter schools should:

- ✓ Create initial enrollment projections and budgets in late winter so that vacancies can be determined in the spring
- ✓ Establish a spring deadline for the voluntary transfer period
- ✓ Require resigning and retiring teachers to notify the district of their departure earlier and provide a monetary incentive for this notification to happen in the spring or disincentive if it doesn't happen (note this will require changes in collective bargaining agreements)
- ✓ Streamline the hiring process by proactively using centralized online systems (like Join Delaware Schools) for efficiently receiving, processing, and tracking applicants
- ✓ Communicate early and often with applicants during selection process so they feel valued
- ✓ Increase the number of offers extended to promising candidates for hard-to-staff positions (even if positions have yet to officially open up)

The state can support these efforts by continuing to build out the Join Delaware Schools platform and ensuring that state policy continues to encourage early hiring practices.

Teacher Recruitment

This study corroborates prior research that the majority of Delaware teachers are local, with districts reporting the University of Delaware and Wilmington University as the most common applicant pools. Given the small size of Delaware and the competitive regional labor market, this makes talent recruitment challenging, particularly the recruitment of teachers of color. To increase the effectiveness of recruitment efforts, districts and charter schools should:

- ✔ Create or grow existing programs that promote the profession to high school and college students, such as the Teacher Academy, Educators Rising, and Grow Your Own programs
- ✔ Identify and consider how best to market your district's/school's unique monetary and non-monetary incentives (e.g., tuition reimbursement, mission)
- ✔ Expand use of Title IIA funds to support recruitment budgets
- ✔ Continue to build partnerships and specific programs (e.g., ESOL, student teaching/residencies) with local universities to develop strong teacher pipelines from teacher preparation programs

The state can support these efforts by encouraging districts and charter schools to deepen partnerships with teacher preparation institutions and start – or expand – Grow-Your-Own programs.

Teacher Selection

While most districts and charter schools use traditional selection methods (e.g., face-to-face interview), there is considerable variation in other practices. Very few districts frequently use rigorous methods (e.g., sample teaching) that provide an understanding of the applicants' classroom effectiveness and fit for the population. To improve the quality of selection efforts, districts and charter schools should:

- ✔ Design written/interview questions that are specific to the needs of the student population
- ✔ Gather applied information during selection through performance assessments and sample lessons and provide feedback during the process and observe the applicants' reflective capabilities
- ✔ Involve a team of school staff in the selection process to ensure candidates are a strong fit for the school culture and context

The state can support these efforts by providing a forum to share best practices between charter schools and districts in the state.

Teacher Effectiveness

All Delaware districts and charter schools have a process for identifying impactful teachers. However, it's unclear the extent to which this process informs recruitment and hiring practices. To ensure alignment between teacher recruitment/hiring/selection practices and effectiveness in the classroom, districts should:

- ✔ Track hiring data on teacher retention and teacher effectiveness from various pathways and programs and use this data to inform the recruitment and selection processes
- ✔ Consider how staff supporting preparation, recruitment, and induction collaborate to increase teachers' effectiveness in the classroom.

- ✔ Use teacher effectiveness data to inform hiring needs

The state can support these efforts by examining how specific recruitment, hiring, and selection practices correlate with teachers' effectiveness once in the classroom. See Future Research section below.

Future Research

Below are several recommendations on the direction for future research.

- ✔ **Alignment between Recruitment, Hiring and Effectiveness.** The case studies profiled in this report provide rich examples of how to put many of these practices into action across the state. However, these findings do not speak to how (and if) these practices influence teacher effectiveness. Future research should examine how specific recruitment, hiring, and selection methods correlate with teachers' effectiveness once in the classroom.
- ✔ **Stakeholder Involvement.** The Excellent Educators Survey has seen several iterations over the course of the past few years. To ensure that this survey is accurately reflecting HR practices in Delaware, we recommend convening a group of HR Directors to provide feedback on the current questions, as well as suggestions for additional questions that may help improve the quality and relevance of the information gathered in future reports.
- ✔ **Deeper Profiles.** Our current case studies captured information from districts and charter schools at a snapshot in time (in January/February when the next hiring season is just beginning). Future profiles could examine district, school, and teacher perspectives at multiple stages of the process – e.g., during the recruitment process, during the selection process, at the tail end of the hiring season, and several months after the hiring season is complete. This would allow us to explore if perspectives shift over the course of the hiring season.
- ✔ **Comparative Analysis.** While this report offers concrete examples of practices within Delaware, future research could extensively examine how other states in the region approach recruitment, hiring, and selection efforts. This type of information is not currently publicly available (at least not systematically), so this would require ensuring other districts and states consented to participate in the research process.