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In School Personnel

American Association of School Personnel Administrators



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8 PROMISING PRACTICES FOR RECRUITING

By Emily Douglas & Naima Khandaker

A growing body of evidence suggests that workplace diversity can serve as a key driver of organizational success. For instance, through an examination of various data points from the National Organizations Survey of more than 500 for-profit companies, Herring (2009) found that a workforce consisting of both genders and a variety of racial backgrounds was correlated with a number of positive business outcomes, including increased sales revenues, more customers and higher profits relative to other firms in the industry. One possible explanation for these results comes from MIT research suggesting that working in homogeneous environments may lead employees to assume their surroundings are more predictable and controllable than they actually are, which may compel them to forego careful planning in favor of risky or adverse decision-making (Apfelbaum, 2013).

Benefits of diversity are apparent in education research as well, such as a study from Clewell, Puma, and McKay (2001) suggesting that black and Latino students may benefit academically from having teachers who are of the same racial background. Similarly, an analysis of data from Tennessee's Project STAR experiment found a correlation between random assignment to racially similar teachers and improved test scores for both black and white students (Dee, 2004). This is not to suggest that students should, as a rule, be placed with teachers who share their racial or ethnic background—but rather that diversity among educators in a building could potentially increase the ability of that school as a whole to connect with various types of students. In fact, diversity at all organizational levels could also promote more strategic decision making, an increased ability to build relationships with parents or other stakeholders and a number of other positive outcomes.

Organizations looking to attract employees from diverse backgrounds have a number of options for enhancing their recruiting and hiring processes. Following are a few examples from school districts and education-focused organizations around the country:

1. Growing Teachers and Leaders

“Grow your own” strategies may take many forms, based on the premise that outstanding educators and highly invested community members should have opportunities to grow professionally and increase their impact on their school. These programs may involve support and tuition assistance to help paraprofessionals or parent volunteers earn teaching licenses, or help existing teachers earn certifications for hard-to-staff areas (e.g., mathematics, science, special education) or leadership roles. One program supporting this approach is the Idaho State Board of Education's Grow Your Own Teacher Scholarship Program, designed to place Bilingual Education, English as a Second Language, and Native American teachers in classrooms serving historically underserved populations. Another is the Grow Your Own Teacher Education Initiative in Illinois which develops locally-based teacher pipelines through partnerships between schools, institutions of higher education and community organizations.

2. Expanded Online Recruiting Efforts

New technologies offer several ways to connect with prospective employees. For instance, Education Week hosts virtual job fairs that allow educators to chat with recruiters, receive career advice, and apply for jobs. Many employers are also posting career opportunities on social media sites, such as LinkedIn. In fact, a 2013 survey by Jobvite found that 94 percent of respondents were already using, or planned to use, social media for recruiting that year. Respondents also indicated that social recruiting has contributed to significant improvements around candidate quality and quantity, employee referral quality and quantity and time to hire.

3. Partnerships with Alternative Certification Programs

Alternative certification programs—which recruit and/or train nontraditional candidates to become teachers, principals and central office administrators—are helping districts around the country tap into

new talent pools. Many of these programs, such as Teach for America and New Leaders, actively recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds. Others, such as Troops to Teachers, are more niched, but help districts increase diversity by hiring veterans and other nontraditional educators. A major draw of alternative certification programs for many districts is that they often work closely with district leaders to address local staffing needs (e.g., STEM or special education teachers).

4. Employee Referrals

Well-designed employee referral programs can help organizations reach individuals who otherwise may not have applied, while adding the peace of mind that comes from selecting employees from a pool of staff acquaintances rather than complete strangers. Additionally, according to CareerBuilder, effective employee referral programs are among the most cost-effective recruitment methods, often generate a plethora of high-quality résumés and can help boost employee morale and brand recognition. While a referral program may not be the most effective strategy for increasing diversity in every organization—especially if the existing staff is a relatively homogeneous group—it offers a cost-effective option for expanding the talent pool overall, which could support diversity initiatives in some cases.

5. Recruitment Stipends

Some districts have begun offering recruitment stipends to teachers and building leaders willing to work in identified hard-to-staff schools and positions. Among these is Houston Independent School District, which is using a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant to support the program.

6. Leadership Training

When building and district leaders foster a safe and inclusive workplace culture, they pave the way for increased diversity. On a survey conducted by Cornell University and the Society for Human Resource Management, 58 percent of responding organizations noted that they train HR staff and supervisors on effective interviewing of people with disabilities. Nearly half (45 percent) of respondents believed this

training to be very effective in recruiting or hiring people with disabilities, and another 37 percent found it to be somewhat effective.

7. Building and Communicating a Brand

Establishing a brand can be highly effective in increasing an organization's visibility, boosting recruitment efforts and in turn, strengthening the odds of attracting a diverse and qualified pool of applicants. The brand should communicate to potential employees about the organization's culture and values. Finding internal champions—such as high-performing employees who can represent the district at job fairs or be available to answer applicants' questions—can help reinforce the district's brand and key messages.

8. Leveraging Partnerships

A handful of districts around the country have collaborated with local, state or federal partners to offer housing assistance for new teachers in an effort to boost recruitment efforts. For instance, communities such as Fairfax County, Va. and San Francisco participate in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Good Neighbor Next Door program that provides financial assistance to help teachers purchase their first home.

Diversity should be a key focus of the recruiting and hiring process in schools. As the research has shown, attracting teachers, leaders and other staff with a variety of backgrounds can lead to better organizational decisions, stronger relationships with internal and external stakeholders and most importantly, improve the learning environment for students.



Emily Douglas currently works for Battelle for Kids, a nonprofit that provides counsel and solutions to advance education internationally. As the Director of Human Capital, Emily works with schools and state departments across the country to build and improve human capital and performance management systems. Emily also writes for Education Week, as the K-12 Talent Manager. In 2013, Emily was recognized by Workforce magazine as an HR Game Changer. This award honors the next generation of workplace leaders under forty who are making their mark in the field of Human Resources. Recently, she was also recognized by Microsoft Education as a Global Hero in Education. Emily is also the founder and executive director of Grandma's Gifts, a nonprofit that provides goods and services to families and organizations in Appalachia. She started this organization in 1993, at the age of eleven, in memory of her Appalachian grandmother who grew up in poverty and died from breast cancer. To date, the organization has provided more than \$12.8 million in assistance and is run completely by volunteers. Emily can be contacted at edouglas@battelleforkids.org or on twitter at @EmilyDouglasHC.

Naima Khandaker joined Battelle for Kids in 2010. She currently serves as a Human Capital Specialist and has supported Battelle for Kids' work in strategic compensation in districts throughout the country in Tennessee, Georgia, Texas, and Ohio. She also assisted BFK's Human Capital team with the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of tools and processes for selecting career pathway candidates. Prior to coming to Battelle for Kids, Naima spent two years teaching first grade in Washington, D.C. through Teach for America. This approach led her students to achieve significant growth in math and reading proficiency and earned her a Transition to Teaching DC Award for creating an interactive classroom environment. Naima remains engaged with Teach for America's alumni network and worked with the organization to select candidates for its 2010 corps. Naima also worked as a research assistant at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. This fall Naima will begin work on her PhD at Ohio State University. Naima can be contacted at nkhandaker@battelleforkids.org



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DIVERSITY DOUBLE CHECK

By Katie Anderson & Melody Smith

Diversity is good. Discrimination is bad. Even children grasp this concept very early in their education, supporting the idea behind Robert Fulghum's best-seller "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." Like most of the fun and resonating points in that book, the concept of fair play is simple—so simple, in fact, that treating people fairly governs more than just the playground. It is a standard by which we operate the very heart of our educational system and a fundamental component of the Constitution and its Amendments, which offer equality and protect liberty and justice for all—even if you are purple.

How does diversity matter?

Despite the simplicity of the concept and the readily available intelligence on the subject, our nation continues to struggle with discrepancies in treatment between those deemed as the majority and those whose demographics and life experiences differ from that majority. Other countries and cultures have displayed horrific intolerance for those of different ethnicity, races, religions and gender. Some argue this intolerance of difference is human nature, and even those who have experienced discrimination on a personal level have suggested that hatred exists organically between different people. But, ironically, while inequality and intolerance continue to exist, there is a movement of equal strength challenging nations, businesses, organizations, families, and individuals to increase their understanding and tolerance of human differences.

Researcher and author Arin Reeves, PhD., argues that consciously welcoming diversity into the workplace increases problem-solving and leads to a healthier and more productive environment. She believes that this kaleidoscopic environment can lead to actual change, overcoming inequality and encouraging all members to be active participants in a democratic society.

Most employers and supervisors understand and are generally supportive of the basic value of increasing diversity in the workforce. After all, a workforce encompassing an array of diverse backgrounds yields unique experiences and insights into critical, out-of-

the-box problem solving and lends a better overall perspective for job performance. The value of this diversity of ideas is perhaps most obvious in the classroom.

Beware of traps for the good-hearted diversifier!

While "diversity is good; discrimination is bad" may be a simple concept, implementing it can be challenging. As well-intentioned as an employer may be, he or she must be reasonable, impartial and cautious throughout the hiring process.

It is well-known that federal, state and in some instances, local laws prohibit employers from basing hiring decisions on protected characteristics such as race, sex, religion, national origin, color, age, disability, veteran status, genetic information or family status. Naturally, making hiring decisions based on one of these protected classes may land an employer in hot water.

But what about the well-intentioned employer who asks an interview question that appears discriminatory—when their actual goal was to increase diversity in their staff? Employers can avoid refusal-to-hire claims by confirming that interview questions (1) are job-related and (2) avoid mundane topics that could elicit information ripe for discrimination claims (i.e. when did you graduate high school?). Questions that are particularly risky generate information about protected characteristics that are not obvious, such as genetic information or a disability.

What questions should be avoided?

Interviewers should avoid lines of questioning that veer from the job position sought or the skills and qualifications the applicant brings to the position. For example, the following questions could inadvertently lead to a national origin discrimination claim:

- Where are you from? No really, where?
- How long has your family been in the United States?
- How did you learn to speak Arabic?
- You grew up in Argentina? Really? You don't have an accent.

- Where were your parents born?
- Are you a first-generation American?
- Your last name is Alvarez—you will really connect with our Latino kids, right?
- You look to be of Hispanic descent . . . do you know Salma Hayek?

Or these for a sure-fire religious discrimination lawsuit:

- What religion are you?
- Do you attend church every Sunday?
- Will you ask to wear religious clothing or want to observe certain religious holidays?
- None of our current students wear hijabs; can you only wear it after work?

What questions can I ask?

How does an employer reviewing diverse applicants minimize the risk of a discrimination claim? Lines of questioning that allow an applicant to share his or her experiences as they relate to the open position can provide meaningful insight into the applicant's background and are a much truer measure for diversity than those that reveal where an applicant was raised or the color of his or her skin.

For example, consider the following interview questions to ask all applicants for a classroom teaching position:

- What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with backgrounds different than your own?
- Describe a situation in which you utilized your



Katie Anderson is a counselor and litigator focusing primarily on representing governmental entities, including school districts. Katie helps governmental entities with a variety of challenges regarding Constitutional law and civil rights, Texas Public Information Act, Texas Open Meetings Act, employee grievances and investigation, discipline and termination, policy drafting, contract negotiation, Section 8 housing and more. Katie serves as legal counsel for Texas PRIMA, is an active member of the Council of School Attorneys, and a proud member of the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas Alumnae Association. Katie's full bio is available at www.strasburger.com/attorneys/6/0/katie-anderson.

Melody Smith is a litigation attorney who represents and defends clients in matters involving employment disputes, business and commercial disputes, contract disputes and business torts. Melody focuses on the representation of governmental entities and frequently lectures on issues impacting school districts. Her most recent presentations include "PACKING HEAT: Implications of Guns on Campus" for the TASP/AE Winter Conference and "Social Media in the Workplace" for the Texas Association of Community Colleges Human Resource Professionals Conference. Melody's full bio is available at www.strasburger.com/attorneys/170/0/melody-smith.



multicultural skills to solve a problem.

- Our district recognizes culture diversity as the fabric for transformational change in the way we educate our students and community. What experiences have you had that would allow you to be effective in our district?
- What talents, interests, perspectives and/or experiences do you have to enable you to enhance the understanding of diversity within our district?
- Describe your experience in serving or teaching underrepresented communities.
- Give me an example of how you have reached out to gain trust and understanding from students who come from different backgrounds than yours.
- Do you speak other languages which could help us reach out to immigrant communities or non-English-speaking parents in our district?

The goal of developing a diverse working environment is to create a multicultural and multi-experienced workforce that brings diverse perspectives and skills to the educational process. When evaluating your interviewing strategy, make certain to double-check that your questions are aimed at hiring diverse experiences and insights, not simply a diversity of national origins or other protected classes.

Remember the idea of fair play governing the playground? The point of fair play rules isn't just to make everyone behave nicely; it is to include everyone who can make the games more fun, more joyful and more dynamic. If you're not sure that your interviewing process helps you achieve that type of workplace, check with your school's legal counsel to review and revise as necessary.

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THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY IN A SCHOOL DISTRICT

By Tamira Griffin

How many times have you heard someone talk about diversity and asked yourself, “I wonder what kind of diversity they are referring to?” So often, we think of diversity as only a matter of ethnicity or gender. These, along with other legally protected categories are, indeed, important components of diversity. However, as employers, we value other kinds of diversity, as well, such as types of work experience, specialized training, areas of professional expertise and educational background. There are many levels to diversity.

For school districts, diversity is especially important since our students represent the make-up of our communities. It is important that our employees also reflect the communities we serve.

There are a number of books and studies that reinforce the theory that diversity is good for the organization. One in particular is “Cultural Intelligence: Living and Working Globally” by David Thomas and Kerr Inkson, which describes how our personal lens shapes our behavior, how what we do impacts others and the advantages of becoming culturally aware.

Our district has long recognized the value of diversity with our students, staff and community. Plano ISD’s diversity programs are designed to enhance relationships across ethnic, racial, linguistic and economic lines; help all stakeholders embrace diversity as natural and positive aspects of society; and assist program specialists in understanding the difference between substantive change and cosmetic change within school programs. We believe that diversity has several components, including: leadership, policies, curriculum, parent/community connection, collaboration with campus multicultural committees, learning/work environments and employee recruitment and retention.

Leadership: to provide leadership for acceptance of diversity as a natural part of today’s education and to expect campus/department heads to provide diversity learning experiences for all staff.

Policies: to ensure that district policies promote equitable treatment for all learners and employee groups.

Curriculum: to expand multicultural curriculum to be inclusive, not exclusive to broaden views beyond one’s



own cultural bounds, to consider students’ perspectives and experiences, to discuss social contexts, including issues of equity and justice and to plan activities that foster critical thinking and the development of self-awareness.

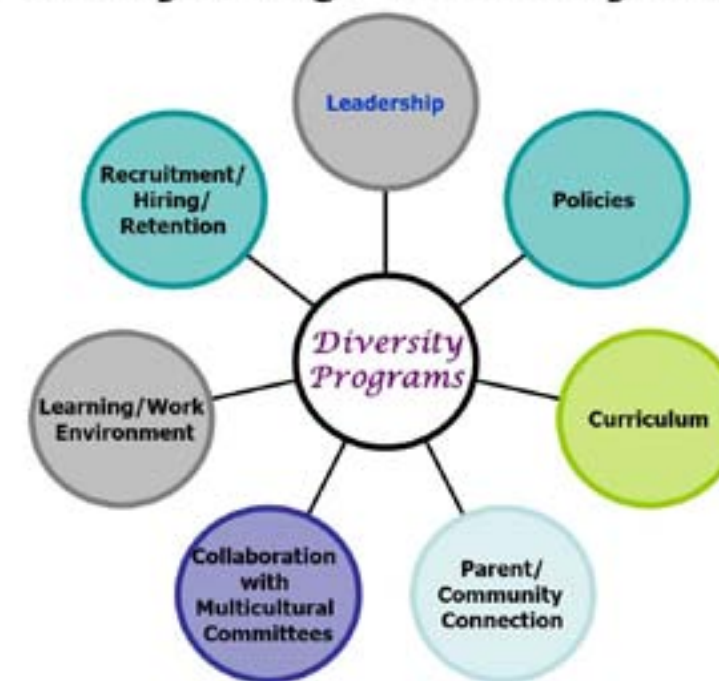
Parent/Community Connection: to ensure teachers and administrators are culturally sensitive and to address teacher sensitivity in regards to parent conferences and community participation in schools.

Multicultural Committees: to research and join community groups and diversity initiatives, to form district/campus committees as needed and to embrace our role in the broader community.

Learning and Work Environments: to promote cultural competency for all staff and students and to create opportunities for students and staff to build relationships.

Employee Recruitment and Retention: to increase minority/diverse hiring at all levels, to provide encouragement to principals to include diverse representation on interview teams, to include minority-rich recruiting sites, to provide training for principals and staff regarding cultural awareness and sensitivity and to focus on building and sustaining relationships.

Diversity Program Components



Having a diverse workforce allows students to gain deeper ways of thinking from multiple perspectives and positive interactions with diverse role models, gives students and teachers exposure to people of varied backgrounds, which could minimize misconceptions, helps address the achievement gap and bridges the relationship between home and school. Our student population represents over approximately 140 countries and over 100 different languages. Like many districts, Plano ISD’s student demographics have changed significantly in recent years. The district’s response has been to focus on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, hire culturally competent staff and train existing

staff on becoming culturally competent.

In 1989, the Multi-Ethnic Committee (now called the Diversity Advisory Committee) was established with the mission “to advocate for, promote and ensure stronger relationships, improved communication and enhanced understanding between Plano ISD and its diverse communities.” Interestingly, the origin of the committee stemmed from an insensitive skit during a high school pep rally, which demonstrated a need for better communication and understanding within the community, students, administration and staff. The committee has 21 members and functions as a board-appointed advisory committee. It is made up primarily of citizens and campus administrators. An HR representative serves as the liaison between the committee and the district. The HR liaison also assists DAC officers in facilitating meetings and other activities. All of the committee’s functions

are advisory in nature. Sometimes the committee may create subcommittees, chaired by a member of the primary committee, for independent study on specific issues. DAC has studied and made recommendations on various issues and programs over the years. Today, the committee primarily focuses its attention on district programs or issues affecting the students and staff of the district as it relates to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, socio-economic or special needs/disability situations. The committee has benefited the district in many ways, but it has had an impact on the community as well, including: the annual Martin Luther King celebration, Diversity Leadership Awards, assistance with the district's Recruitment Open House and assistance with communication and support in the community.

On the recommendations of DAC and a curriculum audit, in 2002, the district created a Diversity Steering Committee (DSC), made up of a cross section of campus and district leadership. The DSC assisted with initiatives in the areas of student learning, diversity development, communications and human resources. In 2008-2009 a diversity training initiative was included as one of the district's goals with the aim of training district staff to assist them in gaining a better understanding of other people's ethnic, religious and other diverse backgrounds. This training was an outgrowth of input from both DAC and DSC. The DSC was charged with the task of implementing this program. Cultural Competency modules were originally created by DSC members with work-embedded scenarios. The desired outcome was to support culturally proficient communication and understanding with employees and students, employees and parents and employees with other employees. The cultural competency initiative was geared toward positive impacts, including: improved student relationships, decreased over/under-representation of employees in certain positions and decreased communication gap between school and home. The modules were extremely well-received. Out of the original learning experiences grew annual cultural competency training for all employees, which began in 2009-2010. Since that time, training areas have included religion, age/generational issues, economics and inclusion, cross-cultural communications and Plano ISD's culture past, present and future. The expectations are always to recognize the diversity of our community; identify areas of uniqueness and commonality, analyze our demographics, create a sense of belonging and build and maintain relationships.

The district's diversity efforts have been a collaborative effort between HR, curriculum, campus administrators and others. The annual training has been well-received, and every year we get positive feedback which helps continually improve the program.

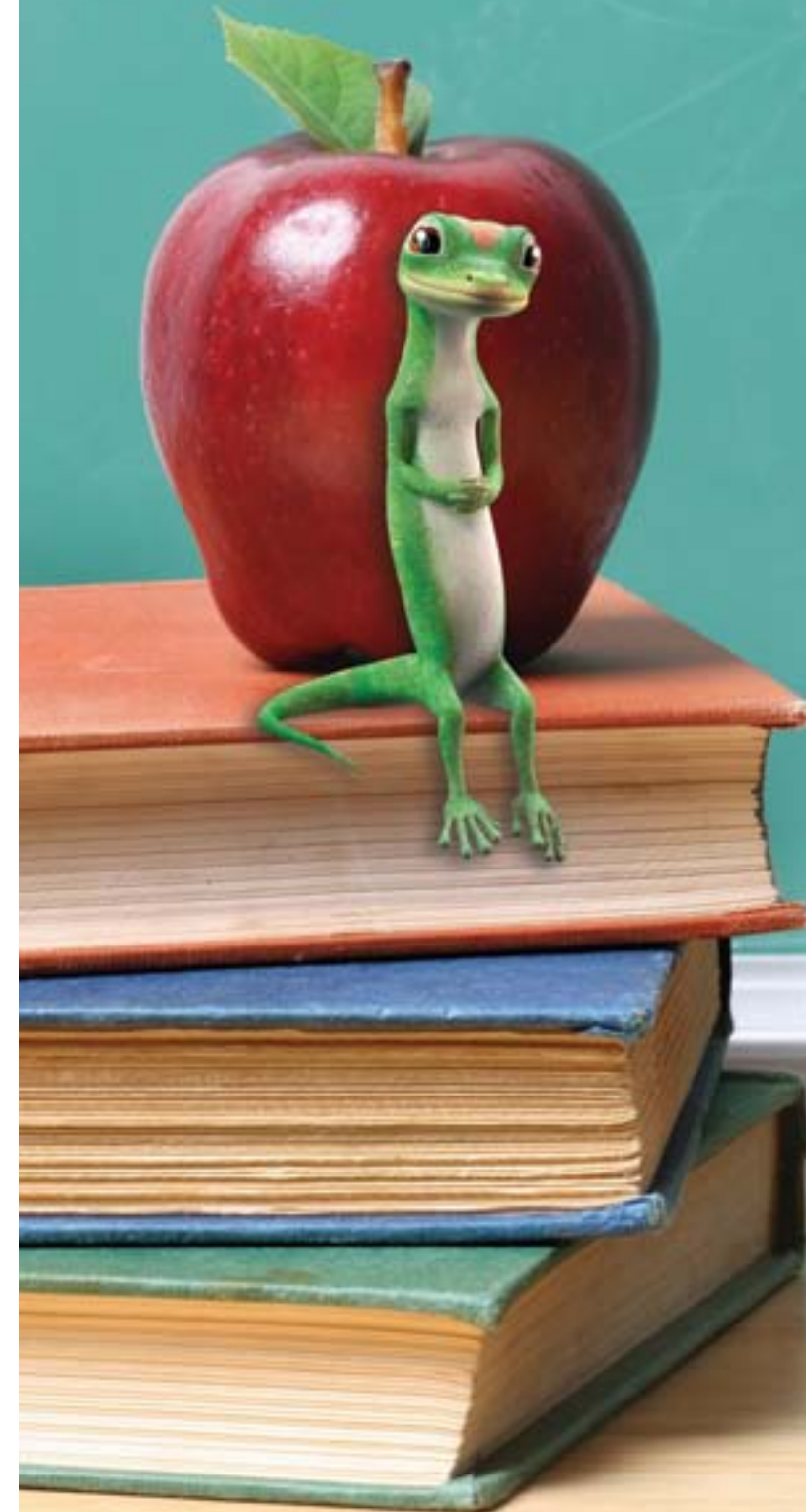
Districts have many different ways of approaching diversity based on their unique circumstances and requirements. For Plano ISD, we have found that looking at diversity within a broader context, along with promoting a culture of open dialog, inclusion of various stakeholders and continuous learning has benefited our students and staff.



As the Chief Human Resources Officer for the Plano ISD, Tamira leads a team of approximately 50 employees in the areas of benefits, compensation, district health services, employee relations, personnel records, position inventory, professional learning, risk management, staffing and substitutes. The Plano ISD HR division supports over 6,900 employees and 1,300 substitutes who serve approximately 55,000 students at 72 campuses. Tamira has earned lifetime certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) and, in 2011, completed the pilot year of the AASPA credentialing program earning the designation of Certified School Human Resources Administrator (CSHRA). She also earned a Registered Texas School Business Administrator (RTSBA) credential through the Texas Association of School Business Officials. Among other community and professional leadership positions, she has served as President of the Dallas Human Resource Management Association, Inc. and the Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators. She was honored to be selected as the first recipient of the Dr. Mary Hopkins TASPAA Personnel Administrator of the Year award in December 2012.

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A LEADER PLEASE...BUILDING A DIVERSE APPLICANT POOL

By Mark Benigni & Thomas Giard

Facing an accountability movement that includes a new teacher evaluation and development system, as well as the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balance Assessment conversion, educators are operating in uncertain times. Add to the mix, shrinking financial resources and additional federal and state regulations, the need for distributed leadership becomes even more essential to the success of our public schools. So how will we secure dynamic, diverse and effective leaders? We have seen schools and organizations launch nationwide searches, enlist the assistance of head-hunting firms, hire marketing agencies to capture their message and at times, just panic. We also have seen school districts hire non-educators to lead their school districts with limited success and questionable results. What we have come to realize is that our greatest opportunities to attract highly-skilled multicultural and multiethnic leaders lies within our own district. How will we develop our most important resource—our staff? How will our organization support our employees' hopes, dreams and desires? How will we assure that every school has effective leadership that reflects and values the diversity of our students, supports our staff and assures student growth? And, of course, how will we pay for it?

In Meriden, our teachers' union and management decided to address this problem head on by developing leadership capacity at all levels to improve student achievement and assure leadership continuity, diversity, coherence and effectiveness. We knew we had to inspire, excite and motivate our

staff by investing in their personal and professional growth and including them in the decision making process. Our central office team and union leadership discussed "The Dream Manager" by Matthew Kelly. We took his message to heart and we put his thoughts into action. Kelly stated, "An employee is responsible for adding value to the life of a company, and a company is responsible for adding value to the life of an employee." So we began to systematically plan on how we could add value to our teachers, staff and future educational leaders by developing a support framework and a comprehensive and coherent talent development system.



As Meriden rolled out their new teacher evaluation and development process, a commitment was made to provide educators with the development and growth opportunities they may need. So union and management created the MTSS Team (Meriden Teachers Sharing Success) to recognize our exemplary educators and to provide support and growth opportunities for teachers. MTSS team members, tenured Meriden Public School teachers who have taught the same grade level for years and led their students to substantial student growth for four consecutive years, opened their classrooms for peer visitations and availed themselves for reflection. MTSS Team members can assist their colleagues in the continual growth process.

Professional development line items finally opened to individual teacher requests. By reallocating funding that was used to pay outside consultants, we were now able to honor teacher professional development requests and pay our own teachers to provide training to our staff teams. Teachers could

now choose professional development opportunities that they felt would best support their learning and growth. Teachers volunteer to serve on administrative interviews, help design interview protocols and facilitate teacher feedback surveys. We decided to develop tomorrow's leaders today as the Meriden Public Schools launched the Leadership Academy. The mission of the Meriden Public Schools' Leadership Academy is to build and develop leadership capacity throughout the district through collaboration, professional development and support in order to increase and sustain student achievement. The program is designed for aspiring teacher leaders, current teacher leaders, effective teachers looking to increase their personal and professional growth and aspiring administrators. Minority candidates are encouraged to apply and participate in these development opportunities.

The Meriden Public Schools' Leadership Academy is a one year learning experience that includes targeted in-district professional development sessions on all facets of effective leadership, attendance at select conferences, shadowing opportunities and the development of district leadership projects tied to school improvement plans. We are developing a cadre of diverse educators committed to developing their leadership skills, expanding their leadership knowledge base, widening their cultural competence and taking an active role in school and district improvement and student success.

Together, union and management are breaking down the barriers that have isolated educators from their colleagues and peers and building a leadership pool that is diverse, knowledgeable and ready to lead. Our peer-coaching program provides educators with an opportunity to observe other educators in action. The premise of our program is that our best teachers are our best teachers and that together they can improve student learning. The major roles of a peer coach are to collaborate, provide beneficial feedback, share effective teaching strategies and reflect on teaching and learning. Peer coaches use an established protocol to share honest and open feedback with their peer coach and to guide their reflections on what they learn from each other.

Our in-district college partnerships have provided unique learning and professional development opportunities for our staff. The Master in Education Certification Program from the University of New Haven is housed at Lincoln Middle School in Meriden. The program also requires participants to complete

a year-long internship in a public school setting, and many interns work with a teacher mentor in our district. Our teachers are sharing their expertise and assuring that future educators have the foundation and skills needed to be successful.

Southern Connecticut State University runs an educational leadership cohort model at Washington Middle School in Meriden. This administrator certification program has been well received by our staff and has encouraged many teachers, including minority educators, to begin their journey into educational leadership. It has also allowed coursework and discussions to focus on our district initiatives and has helped us build a cadre of future administrator applicants. As an urban school district with salary constraints, building our own diverse pool of administrative candidates is not just helpful, it is essential.

In an era of increased accountability, we must remember that greater support will lead to sustained improvement. The final four components of the Meriden Public Schools' Talent Development System are new teacher induction, executive coaching, administrator professional development and non-certified staff professional development.

As a district, we are moving forward together with a good balance of trust and compromise. We are a collaborative team that has created a unified and inclusive vision for our district. We believe that every child is entitled to a high quality education, teachers and leaders impact every child's achievement, collaboration improves student learning and building leadership capacity at all levels sustains our mission to see our students make positive progress. Just this past year, we saw the highest scores in district history in Grade 3 Reading, Grade 5 Science, Grade 6 Math, Grade 7 Reading and Grades 7 & 8 Reading and Writing. We also have experienced greatly improved school climates and cultures. Since 2010-2011, suspensions are down 32 percent, expulsions are down 80 percent and arrests are down 54 percent.

In the past two years, we have seen internal minority candidates land key leadership positions in our district, including principal positions, as well as district-level leadership positions. In the Meriden Public Schools, we value the diversity of our students and staff, and we know we can build a diverse leadership pool by investing in a talent development system that develops our own teachers and leaders.



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MULTICULTURAL CHAMPIONS IN MY JOURNEY

By Javier Melendez

My life is replete with moments of deep multicultural awareness that have significantly shaped who I am. It was not until recent self-reflection that I fully understood to what extent. The truth is that many young lives have been impacted by these turning points inspired by multicultural champions. I am one of those lives. In my senior year at the University of Puerto Rico, I was invited to attend a recruitment session held by a professor/recruiter from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. When the session began, one thing became painfully obvious to me; the more he spoke (English) the less I understood him. Yet somehow he knew precisely who I was. Then to my amazement he began explaining the purpose of his visit in fluent Spanish. My language barrier instantly banished. Our visitor had learned Spanish from years of teaching experience in Peru and Colombia, and now he wanted to reciprocate by supporting Spanish-speaking students to advance their higher education studies.

With our communication restored, I learned that he was representing a major university and he was offering full scholarships to prospective graduate students for the College of Education at SUNY Stony Brook. I also discovered that a group of professors had recommended my candidacy for one of the scholarships. I was thrilled and more than ready to go to New York, but it was not that easy. Being that my mother was poor, I had no money for the airfare, personal spending or even a place to stay once I arrived to New York. My professors came to the rescue. Their relentless support led them to take a collection among themselves which helped cover my airplane ticket and some badly needed clothing for the trip.

Boarding the airplane was one of my longest walks ever - uncertainty kept assaulting my courage - until the moment of no return. The airplane door was finally closed and I was going to New York or bust!

I arrived at JFK International Airport with very little command of the English language and \$30 in my pocket left over from my professors' collection. There was literally no one waiting for me and nowhere to go. My options were to remain in the airport (forever it seems) or make it from the airport to Stony Brook, Long Island. I made it to the university and was splendidly supported by its faculty and staff. By the way, till this day I am proud of my survival skills and having this chip on my shoulder "as long as I have \$30 in my pocket, there is nothing anyone can do to me because I would still be breaking even."

As you can imagine, I was supposed to be frightened by these challenges. There was one powerful reason why I was not—my mother. She had made the trip before I did. I was indeed following her footsteps. My mother arrived to New York years earlier, without friends and fearful of what destiny had in store for her. She was poor but driven with the ambition to succeed—not in a grand financial way but just for herself and her family. My mother arrived in a great but strange city where she knew no one, could not speak the language or even defend herself against every day prejudice. After long days of hard labor in a shoe factory, she continued her education at night school, and after years of this grinding routine, she finally mastered enough skills to leave behind the painful factory work. She had the courage and determination to succeed. She was a champion.

Her example taught me an important life lesson. It taught me to have compassion for people, to be generous with my talents and strength and to use them to help people in need. My mother also taught me to show gratitude to this nation that gave us a chance to succeed. Because of her, I promised to not let any form of discrimination enter my heart and to become a champion of all the virtues intrinsic to multiculturalism, fairness and a genuine understanding of other people's perspectives and circumstances.

After completing my graduate schooling and years into my professional career, I was challenged to be loyal to my promise. I was tapped by the superintendent to lead the newly created district office of multicultural services. It

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was a great opportunity for collaborating with all kind of people at various levels of a large and growing district. I quickly convened a district-wide multicultural committee comprised of various executives, school administrators and other team members. And of critical importance, we had the superintendent strategically and personally overseeing the committee's efforts.

This committee of champions worked tirelessly on crafting a credo which could be embraced by the entire district community. The outcome of the intense dialogue was a framework for multiculturalism. It was disseminated and posted at all schools and work locations. To this day the poster serves as a reminder of the positive relations among the various cultures represented in our richly diverse district. It reads as follow:

Actions to Foster a Positive Multicultural Environment

1. Be fair and respectful when relating to parents, communities, students and staff.
2. Consider the views of persons from diverse ethnic, social and educational backgrounds in decision making.
3. Establish a climate where adults and students do not tolerate behavior that is racist, bigoted and insensitive to cultures that are different from others (inflammatory actions such as distributing racist materials or expressing ethnic slurs will not be tolerated).
4. Seek and address the perceptions of school staff, students and parents regarding educational equity.
5. Review and select the curriculum, teaching techniques and materials suitable for a multicultural educational environment.
6. Analyze student academic performance data by race, age and gender to develop strategies that address the specific needs of these groups.
7. Implement practices in hiring, recruiting and promoting that lead to a harmonious multicultural workforce in schools and other work locations.
8. Promote positive daily interactions between cultures at schools and work locations.

Creating this framework depicting our conviction was an important step in the implementation of a multicultural environment. It became a vision of the future, one which uncompromisingly includes the hopes and goals of many diverse communities.

One may say it is the result of so many multicultural champions who meaningfully touched my life journey.



Javier Melendez currently serves as the president for the Florida Association of School Personnel Administrators and is the Director of Human Resources and Special Projects. He was elected to serve two consecutive two-year terms as the president of FASPA. Through these positions, Javier has been able to acquire new talent through partnering with higher education institutions for successfully placing and hosting more than 600 university students per semester from 17 colleges and universities. He also has a passion for program development, instruction, public relations and public speaking. Javier's background in recruitment led him to create a plan which produced 1,000 new teachers during six consecutive years. In addition, during this time, Javier developed a partnership with the Central Florida Educator Federal Credit Union dispensing interest-free \$800 loans for eligible new hire teachers. He also created a unique partnership with the Central Florida Hotel Lodging Association to provide lodging at hotels for newly hired teachers. Javier can be contacted at javier.melendez@ocps.net.

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS IN URBAN AND NON-URBAN SETTINGS

By Dr. John Arnold

The body of literature on the personal attributes related to teacher effectiveness is significant. John Arnold, PhD., Director of Applied Psychology and Organizational Research at Wayne State University and Lead Researcher at Aspex Solutions, shares his findings of a recent study on the predictors of teacher effectiveness and how different predictors exist for urban and non-urban school settings.

In reviewing the literature on predictors of teaching effectiveness, a significant number of researchers have focused on personality characteristics. Though this research has a long history, it appears relatively unsystematic, with no dominating framework for conceptualizing personality (what Austad and Emmer (1970) called an "eclectic gathering" of constructs) and with sporadic articles on varied topics, resulting in few consistent findings (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Because of this, it is difficult to draw many conclusions regarding the relationship between personality factors and teaching success, but an attempt to describe and integrate the research is made here along with a description of those dimensions for which there is promising evidence.

Virtually any time it has been studied, the dimension of adaptability/flexibility has been consistently supported as a predictor of teaching success. Reviewing research in the area, Darling-Hammond (1999) concluded that this characteristic was one of few consistently supported personality factors. Though most investigation into this characteristic has not been recent, a number of studies have indeed supported the relationships between this competency and success (Berliner & Tikunoff, 1976; Schalock, 1979; Walberg & Waxman, 1983).

Another important characteristic of success is a teacher's skill in managing the classroom through planning classroom activities, organization in the classroom and communication with students. Emmer, Evertson and Anderson (1980) described the practices of effective and ineffective classroom managers at the beginning of the school year. Effective management was evidenced by both behavioral and instructional practices that provided more control over students and

order in the classroom. For instance, teachers who were effective managers communicated and enforced more rules and procedures, monitored the class during activities more closely, handled disturbances promptly, structured tasks better, addressed student concerns more effectively and were clearer with task instructions.

Good (1979) summarized some of the findings to date in this area, concluding that "teachers who are effective managers will probably have at least a moderate influence upon students' achievement in basic skills," and that these skills may be especially important for elementary school teachers due to the lesser managerial skills of students at younger ages. Findings support the notion that effective classroom managers have students who demonstrate greater achievement (Emmer & Stough, 2001). The conceptualizations of management practices differ from study to study, but on a basic level, management behaviors associated with planning, organizing and communicating have been supported as predictors of success.

Another line of research has addressed teacher success in urban environments. For instance, culturally relevant beliefs have also demonstrated importance as a characteristic of success for teachers working with African-American students in urban schools (Love and Kruger, 2005). Such findings underscore a larger problem of identifying what characteristics of teachers lead to success in urban environments. While this issue is not entirely related to race, there is a large disparity between the percentage of nonwhite teachers and the percentage of nonwhite students in public schools (especially in urban settings), and many teachers do not have the background that might facilitate handling students with differing cultural backgrounds (Sleeter, 2001).

The proportion of students and families living in poverty is also typically high in urban settings (Haberman, 2004). This leads to a number of stressors that contribute to teacher turnover, which is a costly problem in urban settings; approximately half of teachers in large urban districts leave within the first

five years of the job (Haberman, 2004). Teachers in general, regardless of ability to be successful in urban settings, simply do not desire to work in them (Haberman, 1994). As a result, urban schools fill positions with temporary substitutes and teachers who aren't fully qualified more often than schools in other settings (Jacob, 2007). These issues are especially important given evidence that the effects of teachers on student outcomes are larger in low socioeconomic status schools than in high socioeconomic status schools (Hattie, 2009).

Martin Haberman (e.g., Haberman & Post, 1992; Haberman, 1993; Haberman, 1994; Haberman & Post, 1998; Haberman, 2004) has conducted a long line of research into the problems plaguing teachers in urban school districts. According to Haberman and Post (1998), proper selection of teachers is much more important than training them. This is because there are certain predisposing factors that enable an individual to be an effective teacher in an urban setting that are not able to be trained. While not an empirically investigated list of attributes, they observe that the best teachers in these settings share a number of characteristics, such as being a little older (between 30 and 50), having attended an urban high school, living in a city (and having lived in a "violent" one) and being aware of their own racism, sexism, and classism. These characteristics, to some extent, reflect life experiences being in and dealing with urban environments.

Just as important as background experiences are behavioral patterns displayed in the teaching context. Haberman (1993) demonstrated that the Urban Teacher Selection Interview, which broadly measures persistence, response to authority, application of ideas to practice, approach to at-risk students, the basis of teacher-student rapport, response to bureaucracy and fallibility predicted the degree of a teacher's future success in an urban school. Classroom management is also cited as a cause of burnout (Haberman, 2004), reinforcing the importance of this aforementioned skill.

Aspex Solutions had the opportunity to conduct original research into the importance of the themes described above. Specifically, it constructed an inventory that incorporated the above themes as well as additional themes suggested by focus groups of

teachers and administrators. It then administered the inventory to over 900 teachers on a confidential basis and asked the teachers' principals to respond to a confidential survey about the teachers' in-classroom behaviors. This yielded over 600 cases with both teacher and principal data. The two sets of data were correlated and the results verified the importance of the themes. Statistically significant relationships were found for student relationship skills (including cultural competence), classroom planning and organizing capabilities, proactive styles of addressing issues, perseverance and being results-oriented.

Most of these themes would be expected to apply to both urban and other environments, and there is research that supports this. The special demands of urban school districts, however, almost certainly amplifies the importance of ensuring the teachers who are put into inner-city classroom possess these characteristics.



John Arnold, PhD., has more than 25 years of providing consulting services to leading school districts and companies. Prior to joining Aspex Solutions, John was a Senior Vice President in the Human Resources Consulting Group of Aon Consulting, where he directed the U.S. consulting practice and provided account management

services to a number of high-visibility national and international clients, many of whom are Fortune 10 and 100 companies.

Arnold has published and presented a number of professional papers, including publication in the Journal of Applied Psychology and presentations at the national conferences of the American Psychological Association, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and the American Association of School Personal Administrators.



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TRANSFORMING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA: RECOMMENDED PERSONNEL STRATEGIES TO MOVE HR ADMINISTRATORS

By Gwendolyn Conner

As with individuals, organizations would like to believe they are sound, structured and a prime candidate for success. Unless organizations change, they will continue producing the same results. Albert Einstein is noted for describing this type of mentality and behavior as insane—doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. So, what is the role of human resources administrators in this transformation process?

Marquardt (2011) asserted that the significant intensity of “numerous economic, social and technological forces” has dramatically altered organizational environments to the extent that organizations are defined as adaptable or extinct. Osland and Turner (2011) further stated “ongoing demographic trends have made diversity a fact of organizational life.” Demographic trends in the twenty-first century will include, but not be limited to an “increasing percentage of African Americans, Hispanics and Asians in the American workforce, an aging population, and expanding female labor force participation.” Researchers (Ryan and Haslam, 2005) further spoke to the inclusion of generational mixes when describing the future demographic makeup of organizations.

With knowledge of organizational trending, teamwork will take on new meaning. Robbins, DeCenzo and Wolter (2013) defined team as a “workgroup whose members are committed to a common purpose, have a set of specific performance goals and hold themselves mutually accountable for the team's results.” Formulation of teams will require leaders to assess their strengths and weakness relating to the diversity of its employees. As noted by Osland and Turner (2011), acknowledging diversity and stereotypical threats do not mean that you are endorsing the attitudes or behaviors.

The Role of Human Resources Administrators

The transformation of public education in South Carolina is drastically impacting our role as human

resources administrators. Kotter (2012) noted, at first glance into an organization, leaders never have a complete sense of all the changes needed. How befitting is such a statement for human resources administrators while performing our role as professionals. It is evident by the ongoing issues surrounding teacher and principal performance evaluation, the Affordable Care Act, social media, globalization and the economy, that human resources administrators will assume a more proactive role in the overall decision making process as our role continues to evolve. Suggested strategies for moving human resources administrators from an industrial age to a transformational information and knowledge worker age include, but are not limited to the following:

Strategy 1. Employ the right leaders to foster a learning organization. The days of choosing an applicant because they dressed apart, responded intelligently to a question and attended a household name institution are no longer the only key ingredients for staffing successful learning organizations. Clawson (2012) asserts that having the “right team members and the right leadership processes” does not equate to an effective team. However, it is critical to the success of an organization to have its “members in the right roles.”

Human resources administrators must also be able to identify applicants with a greater potential to move the organization forward. Learning organizations create cultures of inclusion and not exclusion. Employees are lifelong learners and are afforded opportunities to be innovative through trial and error. Marquardt (2011) says learning organizations take measures to encourage bravery when making decisions and believes organizations should “promote responsible risk taking and be open to new approaches and processes.”

There should be some margin of error as mistakes can provoke thought and can be the “source of new ideas and new ways of doing things.” If organizations are going to successfully transform into learning organizations, learning inside organizations must be

equal to or greater than change occurring outside the organization, said Marquardt (2011). Marquardt further stated that once learning is acquired, opportunities for the learning to be nurtured and built upon must be provided in order to affect change.

Strategy 2. Educate leaders on the importance of creating an environment where diversity is viewed as a strength and not a weakness. Osland and Turner (2011) stated stereotyping “occurs when we attribute behavior or attitudes to people on the bias of the group or category to which they belong.” When this happens, negative perceptions are formed and attributions are distorted.

Stereotypical threats describe the “psychological experiences of a person who, while engaged in a task, is aware of a stereotype about his or her identity group suggesting that he or she will not perform well on that task.” Oland and Turner (2011) further stated that leaders who fail to manage diversity create an environment where morale is damaged, turnover rises, and significant problems regarding communications and conflict escalates. Therefore, leaders must understand what may be important to some staff members may not be equally important to another. Valuing others and what is important to them enriches employee and employer relations. Therefore, human resources administrators should take a proactive approach in identifying ways to ensure diversity is not tolerated but celebrated.

Strategy 3. Prepare to foster learning that allows you to better assist others. Too often human resources administrators resolve issues, employ others and revise or implement policies using antiquated information from yester years’ seminars and lectures. Learning affords learners an opportunity to put into practice what they have attained and is described by Marquardt (2011) as “just-in-time” learning. Marquardt also believes learning is where “change is the responsibility of the learner.”

For example, conflict is inevitable and is expected to ensue in some form or fashion. However, the methodology for resolving conflict nowadays differs vastly from how conflict was resolved in the industrial age. This difference is in part due to the shift in workplace demographics. Pruitt and Kim (2004) described conflict as a “divergence of interest, a belief

that the parties’ current aspirations are incompatible.” It is imperative that disparities or disagreements are resolved quickly but not at the expense of the organization. Lifelong learning teaches us that conflict is also an “emergent, dynamic phenomenon, in which parties can—and do—move and shift in remarkable ways,” said Bush and Folger (2005).

Strategy 4. Understand the role of technology in your organization. Advanced technology is revolutionizing organizations everywhere. To stay abreast, human resources administrators need a general understanding of what’s happening with computers, the internet, telecommunications, etc. Marquardt (2011) stated that “fundamental changes in work processes, integration of business functions at all levels within and among organizations, shifts in the competitive climate of many industries, new strategic opportunities to reassess missions and operations, basic changes in management and organizational structure and organizational transformation by managers” are major areas where information technology will have effects on the workplace, learning and employees.

Canton (2006) described technology as a “double-edged sword” (p.228). Technology is believed to be both a blessing and a curse. Marquardt (2011) cited Olivier Serrat (2009) as saying “greater learning organizations learn faster and better, and that the necessary speed and accuracy involved is possible only through wise use of technology”.

According to Thompson (2012), “Information technology has created a culture of 24/7 availability.” As human resources administrators across the nation continue making a mad dash to implement and enhance current technology to ensure compliance with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, they should ensure their negotiation skills are sharply honed. Thompson (2010) further stated one major shortcoming in negotiation is “settling for terms that are worse than your best alternative (also known as the ‘agreement bias’)” out of an obligation to reach an agreement. As vendors approach you with what they believe to be the latest and greatest cutting edge technology, please beware. What works well for one organization, may not work as well with your organization.

Strong (2007) said, “Building technological change

into the strategic planning process prepares an institution to anticipate, recognize and adapt to change . . . Technological change is somewhat predictable, and doing nothing is not an option.” On the other hand, organizations must also prepare to counter intruders actions with implementation of smarter technology that will provide higher levels of security.

Conclusion

Northouse (2012) believes leaders set the tone in organizations by “providing structure, clarifying norms, building cohesiveness and promoting standards of excellence.” As human resources administrators, our leadership role is critical in the transformation of public education in South Carolina. Old paradigms die hard said Covey (2004). Therefore, we should find our voice and inspire others to find theirs as we prepare to move from effectiveness to greatness.

Human resources administrators can make the transition from effectiveness to greatness by being proactive regarding our role in the evolutionary trends impacting public education. These trends include, but are not limited to career readiness, growth, development and advancement, optimization of teacher quality, recruitment, retention and evaluation, technology advancement and globalization, health and retirement benefits, salary disparity, workforce diversity and compliance with Federal and state mandates. As human resources administrators with innumerable talent, skills, intellect and experience, we must better position ourselves to utilize our voice and inspire others to do the same during this inevitable paradigm shift from an industrial age to a transformational age.



Gwendolyn Conner is a native of Aiken County and is employed in Lancaster County as Director of Human Resources for the Lancaster County School District (over 1,600 employees and 11,600 students). As a member of the Senior Leadership Team, she is responsible for the oversight of all human resources functions including, but not limited to succession planning, recruitment, compliance, benefits, organizational development, and employee relations. She began her career in human resources in September 1996 in the private sector. In October 2011, she was elected to the Executive Board of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA). In September 2012, she was named the 2012-2013 Personnel Administrator of the Year by the South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA) Personnel Division. In May 2013, she was appointed member of the SC Teacher Loan Program Advisory Committee. In June 2013, she was elected President for the Personnel Division of SCASA. In October 2013, she wrote an article about the role of human resources administrators in the transformation process in public education in SC. The article was published recently in the Palmetto Administrator (Vol 29, Winter 2014) magazine. The article can be viewed online at http://issuu.com/scasa/docs/pa_final_for_web starting on page 45.

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