

Georgia Offers Solutions to Shortage of Teachers and Administrators

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Abstract: This study investigated the recruitment trends and practices of teachers and administrators in 67 Georgia school districts. A researcher-designed instrument was used to solicit the needed research data. Findings indicated that it was more difficult to recruit teachers than administrators. Common practices employed by school districts in recruiting teachers and administrators were also identified. Most of the school districts agreed that the best strategy for recruiting teachers and administrators was to grow your own.

Introduction

The problem of teacher and administrator shortage has been called to the attention of educators and legislators nationwide (Hammond, Muffs, & Sciascia, 2001; McCreight, 2000). Most school districts have tried to address the problem by offering employment incentives (Murphy & Novak, 2002; Potter, 2001). In the State of Georgia, school districts are concerned about the shortage of teachers and administrators in the coming decades. They recognized that the problem is as serious as, if not more serious than, other states (Georgia Department of Education, 2002). To cope with the problem of teacher and administrator shortage, school districts in Georgia have employed unique strategies in recruiting teachers and administrators. What Georgia school districts have done could be meaningful lessons for other states to learn.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the recruitment trends of teachers and administrators in Georgia school districts. Common practices Georgia school districts used to address their problems of teacher and administrator shortage were also examined. Specifically, this study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What are the trends of recruiting teachers and administrators in Georgia public schools?
2. What are the practices of recruiting teachers and administrators in Georgia public schools?
3. Do school district size and growth pattern make any difference in the extent of difficulty in recruiting teachers and administrators in Georgia public schools?

Significance of the Study

The problem of teacher and administrator shortage is serious. Drastic measures are taken by school districts in Georgia to minimize the negative effects it may have on the education process. School districts work hard to improve their recruitment strategies by offering the best practices of employment. However, most school districts try to resolve their own recruiting problems without referencing one another. No collaborative channel is established to serve this purpose. A major contribution of this study is to provide an arena for school districts to share with their fellow school districts the best practices used to recruit teachers and administrators. It also serves as an excellent source of reference for school districts nationwide that are facing the same recruiting problems.

Conceptual Framework

Studies have indicated serious nationwide shortage of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels at present and in the coming decades (Cromwell, 2002; Feistritzer, 2002; National Education Association, 2002). Teachers are particularly in great demand for areas of math, science, and special education (Haselkorn, 1996; National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse, 2002). Strategies to deal with the teacher shortage problem were suggested by Certo and Fox (1999), McCreight (2000), and McKibbin (2001). Murphy and Novak (2002) further highlighted programs to address the elements of the teacher shortage problem. Kortokrax-Clark (1987) and Wilder (1999) studied the background of the minority teacher shortage problem and stated that the shortage is a growing issue that could lead to serious educational consequences. In his study of teacher shortage, Gonzalez (1999) found that student ethnicity and district size made a significant difference in the number of teaching vacancies in school districts but not district wealth.

The problem of school administrator shortage is even worse (Bell, 2001; *Education World*, 2000, October). "Where have the principals gone?" is the general outcry (*Education World*, 2000, November; NASSP, 2002; Sinatra, 2002). Strategies for making the position better include better pay, job description revision, redefinition of duties, district support, and the power to make change (Chirichello, 2001; McCreight, 2001; Moore, 1999). New York and West Virginia have looked to a collaborative effort between the universities and the school districts in training top teachers to evade a looming principal shortage (Cunningham & Hardman, 1999; Murphy, 2001). Current literature also reveals that women and minority school administrators are most difficult to recruit (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; NASSP, 2001). Hammond, Muffs, and Sciascia (2001) suggested solutions based on district in-house development of woman and minority teachers for the principalship and the retention of veteran principals.

Procedures and Methodology

All the 180 school districts in Georgia were invited to participate in this study. A total of 67 school districts responded with enrollment size ranging from 391 to 116,670. Even though the sample districts stand for only 37% of all the districts, the sample distribution by size, by type and by geographical area is representative of the characteristics of the school districts in Georgia. For research purpose, they are divided by enrollment size into three categories (1 = enrollment below 5,000, 2 = enrollment from 5,000 to 20,000, and 3 = enrollment above 20,000).

Two-third of the participating school districts have enrollment below 5,000 and only 8 districts have enrollment above 20,000. By growth percentage, the participating school districts are classified into four groups (1 = declining enrollment, 2 = less than 1% growth, 3 = 1-2% growth, 4 = more than 2% growth). About half of the districts in this study reported to have experienced more than 2% annual enrollment growth while only 4 districts reported a decline in enrollment. To conduct the study, a researcher-designed instrument (see attachment), based on review of literature, was sent to all school districts in Georgia to solicit data about how their teachers and administrators are recruited. Questions on the survey were focused on collecting data on recruiting trends and practices. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations, and percentages. Analysis of variance was used to examine the impact of school district size and growth pattern on school district recruitment difficulties.

Survey Instrument

In this study, the survey instrument was self-designed by the researchers. The contents and organization of the questions in the instrument were based on the review of current literature. Five personnel directors of school districts were invited to critique on the validity and consistency of the instrument. The revised instrument was pilot tested and reworked before it was sent to the school superintendents for survey. Most of the questions in the survey relate to basic facts and figures of school district employment. Other items require respondents to check all the recruitment practices that apply. Section I of the survey consists of items requesting for demographic information of the school district. Section II contains 8 items pertaining to recruitment trends: numbers of retired, resigned, and new employees. Section III is focused on topics of recruitment practices to include 9 entries on techniques, 17 on incentives and 6 on strategies.

Findings

Recruiting Trends in Georgia Public Schools

Data provided by respondents were analyzed to observe the trends in recruiting teachers and administrators. Result of the analysis identified some noticeable recruitment trends:

Trend to hire Georgia graduates

Graduates with education major from Georgia universities stand a better chance of employment by Georgia school districts as teachers and administrators. Findings in this study showed that school districts in Georgia had a tendency to recruit graduates of local universities to serve in teaching and administrative capacities (54.7% for teachers; 52.5% for administrators).

Trend to hire more teachers than administrators

Participating school districts continued to recruit more new teachers than the year before. This was to replace retired and resigned teachers and also to meet the needs of district growth and class size reduction mandate. However, participating school districts seemed to have recruited fewer administrators the year before. Data indicated that only 158 school

administrators were hired for the year 2001-2002 while 118 retired and 80 resigned in the year 2000-2001.

Trend of difficulties in recruitment

Data provided by school districts were responses to a 4-point scale questionnaire (0 = not difficult; 1 = difficult; 2 = moderately difficult; 3 = most difficult) indicating the extent of difficulty in recruiting teachers and administrators at different school levels. Results indicated that recruiting teachers and administrators was more difficult at the high school level (teacher mean = 1.23; administrator mean = .68) than middle school level (teacher mean = 1.06; administrator mean = .55) and elementary school level (teacher mean = .79; administrator mean = .48). The findings also disclosed that it was more difficult to recruit teachers than administrators at all school levels (see Table 1).

Table 1 Extent of Recruitment Difficulties by School Level and by Type

School Level	Type of Position	Mean	S.D.
Elementary	Teachers	0.79	1.03
	Administrators	0.48	0.75
Middle	Teachers	1.06	0.96
	Administrators	0.55	0.81
High	Teachers	1.23	1.02
	Administrators	0.68	0.93

Scale: 0 = not difficult 2 = moderately difficult
 1 = difficult 3 = most difficult

To determine in what academic disciplines the recruitment of teachers was most difficult, the researchers analyzed the data by frequency distribution. Out of 15 academic disciplines listed, the 5 disciplines identified by the respondents to be the most difficult in recruiting teachers were special education (frequency = 56), science (frequency = 52), math (frequency = 51), foreign languages (frequency = 28), and language art (frequency = 18) (see Table 2).

Table 2 Difficulties in Teacher Recruitment by Subject Area

Subject Area	N	Frequency	Percent
Special Education	67	56	92.8
Science	67	52	86.1
Mathematics	67	51	84.5
Foreign Languages	67	28	46.4
Language Art	67	17	28.2
Vocational Education	67	16	26.5
Technology	67	9	14.9
Fine Arts/Visual Arts	67	7	11.6
Speech/Language Pathology	67	5	8.3
Media Specialist	67	5	8.3
ESOL	67	3	5.0
Early Childhood	67	2	3.3
Agriculture	67	2	3.3
Physical Education	67	1	1.7
Consumer Science	67	1	1.7

Common Recruitment Practices of School Districts

Recruitment Techniques Used

In the review of literature, 8 common techniques used by public school districts in recruiting teachers and administrators, were identified: newspapers/magazine job advertisement, on-line job advertisement, searching on-line for resumes, professional associations, job fairs, school district WEB-site, in-house job announcement, and recruitment at universities. Out of the 8, the 3 most commonly used recruitment techniques identified in this study are on-line job advertisement (used by 93.9% of school districts), in-house job announcement (used by 80.3% of school districts), and recruitment at universities (used by 83.3% of school districts). (See Table 3)

Table 3 Frequently Used Recruitment Techniques

Techniques	N	Frequency	Percent
On-line job advertisement	66	62	93.9
Recruitment at universities	66	55	83.3
In-house job announcement	66	53	80.3
Job fairs	66	48	72.7
Newspapers/magazine job advertisement	66	40	60.6
School district WEB-site	66	34	51.5
Searching on-line for resumes	66	33	50.0
Professional associations	66	26	39.4

Recruitment Incentives Offered

To attract the best teachers and school administrators, school districts offer incentives in addition to basic salaries as a significant part of their recruitment plan. Some of these incentives as stated by Cromwell (2002) include medical insurance, dental insurance, professional liability coverage, retirement plan, local salary supplement, professional travel fund, vacation leave, sick leave, sabbatical leave, personal leave, merit pay, moving expenses, housing allowance, bonus pay, school district vehicles, and professional development opportunities. School districts in this study were asked to check all the incentives they used as part of their recruitment effort. Findings of this study indicated that their most frequently used incentives were medical insurance (80.3%), retirement plan (81.8%), local salary supplement (90.9%), sick leave (90.9%), personal leave (83.3%), and professional development opportunities (80.3%). The least frequently used incentives were housing allowance (1.5%), bonus pay (10.6%), and availability of school district vehicles (7.6%). (See Table 4)

Table 4 Frequently Used Recruitment Incentives

Incentives	N	Frequency	Percent
Local salary supplement	66	60	90.9
Sick leave	66	60	90.9
Personal leave	66	55	83.3
Retirement plan	66	54	81.8
Medical insurance	66	53	80.3
Professional development	66	53	80.3
Dental insurance	66	52	78.8
Professional travel fund	66	31	47.1
Vacation leave	66	29	43.9
Professional liability	66	18	27.3
Merit pay	66	8	12.1
Moving expenses	66	8	12.1
Bonus pay	66	7	10.6
Use of district vehicles	66	5	7.60
Housing allowance	66	1	1.50

Recruitment Strategies to Address Teacher and Administrator Shortage

School districts have employed many strategies to address the critical areas of teacher and administrator shortage. Responses from the research participants have identified the frequency of use of these strategies as follows: attractive salary increase (25.8%), enhanced employee benefits (19.7%), grow-our-own plan (63.6%), lower the selection criteria (4.5%), and the use of headhunters (1.5%), with an overwhelming tendency towards the grow-our-own plan (see Table 5). Other suggestions by school districts to address the shortage problem include: (1) Hiring teachers and administrators through alternative and probationary certification; (2) Creating a positive working environment to support teaching and administration; and (3) Starting early with recruiting activities.

Table 5 Frequently Used Recruitment Strategies

Strategies	N	Frequency	Percent
Grow our own	66	42	63.6
Increase salary	66	17	25.8
Increase employee benefits	66	13	19.7
Lower the selection criteria	66	3	4.50
Use of head-hunter	66	1	1.50

Recruitment Difficulties by District Size and Growth Percentage

Analysis of Variance was used to determine if district size and district growth percentage made any difference in the level of difficulty in recruiting teachers and administrators. Result of the analysis shows that district size was not a factor that contributed to the level of recruitment difficulty. (see Table 6) However, in examining district growth factors, no significant difference was found in recruitment difficulties among school districts of different growth patterns except at the high school level. Districts with declining enrollment found it significantly more difficult to recruit high school teachers than districts with 1 – 2% growth. (see Table 7)

Table 6 Analysis of Variance – Differences in Recruitment Difficulties by School District Size

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
E Teacher	Between Groups	3.575	2	1.788	1.71
	Within Groups	64.825	62	1.046	
M Teacher	Between Groups	1.539	2	.769	.819
	Within Groups	58.215	62	.939	
H Teacher	Between Groups	2.479	2	1.240	1.181
	Within Groups	65.059	62	1.049	
E Admin.	Between Groups	1.377	2	.689	1.224
	Within Groups	34.869	62	.562	
M. Admin.	Between Groups	2.241	2	1.121	1.745
	Within Groups	39.820	62	.642	
H. Admin.	Between Groups	1.343	2	.672	.764
	Within Groups	54.503	62	.879	

E = Elementary School

M = Middle School

H = High School

**Table 7 Analysis of Variance –
Differences in Recruitment Difficulties by School District Growth Percentage**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
E Teacher	Between Groups	5.187	3	1.729	1.549
	Within Groups	53.582	48	1.116	
M Teacher	Between Groups	3.655	3	1.218	1.303
	Within Groups	44.864	48	.935	
H Teacher	Between Groups	13.254	3	4.418	**5.071
	Within Groups	41.823	48	.871	
E Admin.	Between Groups	2.633	3	.878	1.391
	Within Groups	30.290	48	.631	
M. Admin.	Between Groups	3.783	3	1.261	1.753
	Within Groups	34.525	48	.719	
H. Admin.	Between Groups	1.210	3	.403	.434
	Within Groups	44.540	48	.928	

E = Elementary School

M = Middle School

H = High School

** $p < .01$

Discussion

In review of the findings of this study, the researchers reflect upon results of the previous studies and the current issues of teacher and administrator shortage. The following areas are worthy of discussion:

1. *Difficulties in teacher recruitment.* The findings of this study are in total agreement with other national surveys conducted in the last two years. It confirmed the findings of Cromwell (2002), Frisritzer (2002), and National Education Association (2002) that indicated serious nationwide shortage of teachers at all school levels, particularly in the demanding areas of math, science, and special education (Haselkorn, 1996; National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse, 2002).
2. Gonzalez (1999) found that district size made a significant difference in the number of teaching vacancies in school districts. The findings of this study do not support Gonzalez's study. However, a related outcome of this study was that declining school districts were found to have more difficulty in recruiting teachers than growing districts.
3. A significant finding of this study was that participating school districts were hiring fewer administrators to meet budgetary constraint and pressure to downsize the administrative structure. To manage this shortage of administrative assistance, some large school districts exercise flexibility by assigning central office administrators to assume administrative duties at the school level. Hiring fewer administrators temporarily is simply an act of organizational alignment. With continued enrollment increase and improved economy, this slow trend of recruiting administrators will soon be reversed.
4. A special finding of this study deserving our attention was the unwillingness of most school districts to lower their recruitment criteria in hiring teachers even though they

were facing serious shortage. The participating school districts are applauded for holding high standards in their recruiting effort.

- 5 Based on district in-house development of woman and minority teachers for the principalship, Hammond, Muffs, and Sciascia (2001) suggested solutions to address the school administrator shortage problem. Their ideas were echoed by the finding of this study that the best strategy for recruiting teachers and administrators was to grow your own. Consequently, many school districts have expanded their staff development programs to work on their teachers to be potential administrators. Inservice programs for current administrators are also proposed to address specific competencies needed for school improvement. The “grow your own” approach to address teacher and administrator shortage will be further examined by the researchers in upcoming studies.

Conclusions

School districts in Georgia face the same difficulties as other states in their attempt to recruit quality teachers and administrators. Even though the demands for teachers and administrators are great, no school district is willing to lower its criteria for recruitment. Because of the difference in enrollment size and growth pattern, school districts in Georgia take advantage of their potentials and resources to recruit the best teachers and administrators in school. School district recruitment trends and practices identified in this study are unique examples of how school districts in Georgia, through an assessment of their particular needs, create a positive recruitment culture that focuses on growing teachers and administrators of their own.

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Attachment

**A Survey on the Trends and Practices of
Hiring Teachers and School Administrators in Georgia**

(School Administrators are referred to as school principals and assistant principals)

Section I Demographics

Name of School District: _____

Student Enrollment: _____

Growth/Decline Percentage: _____

Number of teachers and school administrators by level and by gender:

	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	Male School Administrators	Female School Administrators
Elementary	_____	_____	_____	_____
Middle	_____	_____	_____	_____
High	_____	_____	_____	_____

Percentage of teachers and school administrators by preparation and experience:

		Teachers	School Administrators
Preparation	Bachelor's Degree	_____%	<u>(Not applicable)</u>
	Master's Degree	_____%	_____%
	Ed. S. Degree	_____%	_____%
	Doctor's Degree	_____%	_____%
Years in Education	0 – 10 Years	_____%	_____%
	11 – 20 Years	_____%	_____%
	21 – 30 Years	_____%	_____%
	Over 30 Years	_____%	_____%

Section II Hiring Trends

1. How many teachers and school administrators retired from your school district at the end of 2000-2001 school year?

Teachers School Administrators

2. How many teachers and school administrators resigned from your school district at the end of 2000-2001 school year?

Teachers School Administrators

3. How many teachers and school administrators did your school district hire in 2001-2002 school year?

Teachers	School Administrators
_____	_____

4. How many teachers and school administrators will your school district need to hire in 2002-2003 school year?

Teachers	School Administrators
_____	_____

5. How difficult is it to recruit teachers and school administrators in your school district?
(0 = not difficult; 1 = difficult; 2 = moderately difficult; 3 = most difficult)

	Teachers	School administrators
Elementary	_____	_____
Middle	_____	_____
High	_____	_____

6. What subject area teachers are most difficult to recruit in your school district?
(List the five most difficult subject areas)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. What percentage of your teachers and school administrators are minorities?

	Teachers	School administrators
Elementary	_____ %	_____ %
Middle	_____ %	_____ %
High	_____ %	_____ %

8. Does your school district have the tendency to hire more or less beginning teachers and school administrators? (Please check one)

	Beginning Teachers	Beginning Administrators
Tendency to hire more	_____	_____
Tendency to hire less	_____	_____
No tendency either way	_____	_____

9. Does your school district have the tendency to hire more teachers and administrators who graduated from Georgia universities? (Please check one)

	Teachers	School Administrators
Tendency to hire more Georgia graduates	_____	_____
Tendency to hire less Georgia graduates	_____	_____
No tendency either way	_____	_____

Section III Hiring Practices

Please check all items that apply.

1. Recruiting techniques used by your school district:

- Newspapers/magazine job advertisement
- On-line job advertisement
- Searching on-line for resumes
- Professional associations
- Job fairs
- School district WEB-site
- In-house job announcement
- Recruitment at universities
- Others _____

2. Employment incentives offered by your school district:

- Medical insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Professional liability coverage
- Retirement plan
- Local salary supplement
- Professional travel fund
- Vacation leave
- Sick leave
- Sabbatical leave
- Personal leave
- Merit pay
- Moving expenses
- Housing allowance
- Bonus pay
- School district vehicles
- Professional development opportunities
- Others _____

3. What strategies does your school district use to address the critical areas of teacher and administrator shortage?

- Increase salary
- Increase employee benefits
- Grow our own
- Lower the selection criteria
- Use head-hunter
- Others _____