The Human Resources Challenge for

New Charter School Leaders

Example paper

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Many school leaders have a hand in the human resources activities of a school site. New charter school leaders are often faced with an elevated level of human resources responsibility. As the singular leader of a new school, this person must determine the appropriate level of involvement of stakeholder, make critical employment decisions, ensure staff has development opportunities, and manage payroll and benefit programs. These functions must be accomplished while spearheading the critical curriculum, instruction, and assessment aspects of a school. While the new school leader can delegate tasks to available board members and hired support staff, the leader still plays a critical role in implementation. This paper focuses on the new charter school leader’s role in employment practices and outsourcing.

**Employment Practices**

As is often true for new charter school leaders, the brunt of recruiting, screening, selecting, and hiring new teachers is on the same person managing most other new school start-up activities. For new charter school leaders, initial recruitment and selection of teachers can be challenging. New charters cannot provide a history of student success or staff satisfaction, nor can they guarantee that the students who show up on day one and stay in the school will be the projected number necessary to compensate for positions hired. Generally schools have difficulty hiring for special education, ESL, science, math, and foreign language teachers (Tyler, 2008), and the challenge of hiring for these positions as a new charter school is elevated. Often times, founding teachers bear more responsibility for tasks such as curriculum development, nominal duties, and administrative tasks. These responsibilities require additional skills and attributes, thereby reducing the candidate pool even further.

The challenge of compiling a pool of teaching candidates qualified and entrepreneurial enough to meet the needs of the position is compounded by the difficult task of communicating open positions to potential candidates. Unlike district schools and established charter schools, new charter schools are far less known and the likelihood of gaining applicants from unsolicited website traffic alone is slim to none. In addition, the startup budget for new charter schools is often incredibly small making the teacher recruitment line item equally minute.

As with other human resources decisions, the new school leader must focus on the strategic plan and outcomes to determine the appropriate steps for recruitment, selection, and hiring (Bastian, 2009). The strategic plan should help to dictate any decisions made, including where and how to recruit teachers, what the selection process should look like, and how to make hiring decisions. As the school leader and board members will already have a clear mission and vision in place, this system should reflect the mission and vision, thus making hiring decisions more unanimous across these two stakeholder groups.

**Outsourcing**

A new charter school leader must execute on varied tasks, making employment management outsourcing a positive option. While Patton (2006) cautions that exploring what options are right and not right for a school are critical when deciding on outsourcing, in the case of a new charter school operating as its own entity outsourcing certain HR functions is essential. Payroll and benefits administration are clear choices when outsourcing. It is important for school leaders to review multiple outsourcing firms to determine most cost-efficient and compatible option. In fact, outsourcing could prove to result in more benefits for less money. Just like other decisions made for a school, outsourcing decisions should align to the strategic plan.

A new charter school leader will also need to decide whether to outsource some professional development or keep professional development internal. For more established schools with low teacher turnover and staff members with expertise, outsourcing much of professional development may be unnecessary. However, for a small and new charter school, outsourcing professional development may be a very important decision. A newer school is less likely to have the amount of expertise, let alone the amount of time, to train teachers appropriately in all needed areas. This does not mean all development would need to be outsourced.

**Conclusion**

New charter school leaders will need to execute on varied tasks, directing numerous human resources responsibilities and making many human resources related decisions. The challenges that these leaders will face with employment practices and outsourcing will require steadfast decision-making. Ensuring all decisions come back to the strategic plan and school mission are critical to ensuring the proper decisions are made.

References

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