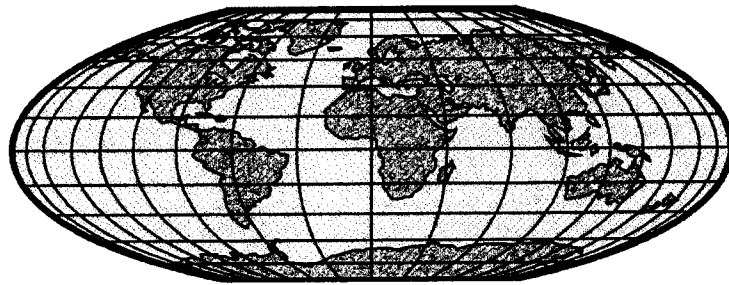


Norfolk Public Schools Recruitment and Retention Task Force Final Report

NORFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
TASK FORCE
FINAL REPORT



May 2, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Recruitment/Retention Task Force

FROM: John O. Simpson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Final Report: Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force

Attached is a first draft of a final report from the Task Force. Please review this draft and make any additions, deletions, changes or comments that may improve the report. We have scheduled a final meeting for Tuesday, May 16, 2000 at 7:30 a.m. in the conference room (1200). I hope that your schedule will permit you to attend. If not, please forward any recommended changes to Mrs. Rachel Hightower, School Governance, 800 East City Hall Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. My sincere thanks again to all of you for your valuable input.

MEMBERS OF THE RECRUITMENT/RETENTION TASK FORCE

Ms. Brenda Barrow, Teacher of the Year, Norfolk Public Schools

Mr. Barry Bishop, School Board Member, Norfolk Public Schools

**Mrs. Inez Blount-Mason, Principal, Tanners Creek Elementary, Norfolk Public
Schools**

Dr. Patricia Dillard, Senior Coordinator, Human Resources, Norfolk Public Schools

Mr. Perry Gilmer, Norfolk Southern Corporation

Mr. John Gordon, Vice President of Human Resources, Sentara Healthcare

Mrs. Alveta Green, School Board Member, Norfolk Public Schools

**Mr. James Hixon, Senior Vice President of Employee Relations, Norfolk Southern
Corporation**

**Ms. Rachel Hightower, Assistant Superintendent, School Governance, Norfolk Public
Schools**

**Mr. Charles Hill, Vice President of Human Resources, Landmark Communications,
Inc.**

Mr. Algje Howell, Community Member

Mrs. Susan Long-Molnar, Corporate Communications Manager, USAA

Dr. Thomas McAnulty, Senior Director, Human Resources, Norfolk Public Schools

Ms. Lee Ann Ned, Regional Senior Vice President, USAA - Mid Atlantic Region

Dr. John O. Simpson, Superintendent, Norfolk Public Schools



PURPOSE

Norfolk Public Schools' vision is to "become a world-class system by advancing individual and organizational excellence supported by a community of learners. All staff, parents and community members will demonstrate high expectations for themselves and each child served."

Attracting and retaining a top quality teaching staff is critical to becoming a world class school system. The task force was charged with the following responsibilities:

1. **Determine the urgency of recruiting a competent teaching force**
(To what extent does Norfolk face shortages in teaching applicants for vacant positions?)
→ Identify strategies to recruit the most qualified teachers

2. **Determine the urgency of retaining a competent teaching force**
(At what rate are competent teachers leaving Norfolk and for what reasons?)
→ Identify strategies to retain competent teachers

DATA PERTINENT TO THE TASK

School districts across the nation are increasingly in competition for good teachers. It is estimated that U. S. schools will need to hire approximately two million public school teachers in the next decade. At the same time, states are raising the standards for teacher certification while incentives and support given to teachers entering the profession lag behind other professions. As a result, the nation is losing many of the best candidates.

If Norfolk is to attain its goal of becoming a world class school system, we must attract and retain a world class teaching staff. A recent study by Linda Darling-Hammond, a Stanford University education professor, found that the strongest predictor of how well a state's students performed on national assessments was the percentage of well-qualified teachers - educators who were fully certified and had majored in the subject they taught. Nine out of ten Americans in a 1988 public opinion poll indicated that "ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every classroom" is the second most important step that could be taken to lift student achievement, outranked only by ensuring school safety.

At a time when we are facing possible teacher shortages in years to come, we must take steps now to attract and maintain a qualified teaching staff or risk scrambling in the future to fill teaching spots. Compounding this challenge is the fact that there are greater job opportunities now, particularly for women and minorities in areas that command higher salaries.

To entice people into teaching, states and districts are offering incentives such as scholarship and loan forgiveness programs, cash bonuses, housing, moving assistance, free graduate level courses and stipends for teachers who have earned National Certification. Additionally, states are challenged to retain their veteran, master teachers. Thirteen states give cash awards to successful schools, although only half allow the money to be used for staff bonuses. Research has shown that new teachers improve dramatically during their first few years on the job. Therefore, it is critical that we retain teachers for at least five or six years so that they can reach their potential. Research also indicates that teachers leave schools that have discipline problems and where they perceive a poor overall school climate. Teachers need to be prepared for the subjects they will teach and need to receive administrative support, especially in their first few years of service.

Twenty-eight states currently require or encourage a mentoring program for new teachers. Veteran teachers provide new teachers with structured support while they gain experience. Research indicates that teachers who had not participated in such a program were nearly twice as likely to leave after the first three years of teaching. Schools need to

become places where teachers have the time and support to examine, share and revise their lessons.

Studies indicate that one out of every five people (19 percent) who graduated from college in 1992-93 and began teaching in the public schools by 1993-94 had left the classroom by 1996-97. An estimated 3 percent more would have left the profession by 1997-98 for a total of 22 percent. It is important to note that the teachers who left were more often the ones that schools were most concerned with attracting and retaining.

What else does the literature say about why teachers leave the profession? According to a survey released in 1997 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), retirement, at 27.4 percent, is the single biggest cause, followed by pregnancy or child rearing (14.3 percent). Another 12.1 percent leave to pursue another career. A family or personal move is cited by 10.1 percent, other family or personal reasons by 6.5 percent, and health concerns by 4.7 percent. Another 3.4 percent leave to take a sabbatical or other break from teaching.

Additional causes include a combination of factors that relate to job satisfaction, including salary or benefits (6.5 percent), dissatisfaction with teaching as a career (5.3 percent), and school staffing actions (3.2 percent).

When the NCES asked dissatisfied teachers what specifically prompted them to leave, the factors most cited, in order of importance, were student discipline problems, poor student motivation to learn, inadequate support from administration, poor salary and lack of influence over school policies and practices. (The American School Board Journal, June 1999).

Of the reasons that appear to have potential for positive change, two continue to surface: on-the-job support and workplace conditions.

Teachers who did not participate in an induction program in their schools or districts were twice as likely to leave the classroom (20 percent) as those who participated in such a program (11 percent).

Teachers who indicated a dissatisfaction with student discipline and school environment were twice as likely to leave the classroom (22 percent) as those who were not dissatisfied.

RECRUITMENT

In 1998, teacher applications to the district dropped to a low of 954 from an annual average of approximately 1400 per year. The human resources department acted to redesign its teacher recruitment program and develop a Teacher Recruitment Plan that includes the following elements:

- ▶ Extensive recruitment at colleges throughout the mid-Atlantic and East Coast
- ▶ “Grow Our Own Partnerships” with local universities
- ▶ Widely advertised Job Fair
- ▶ Interviews of all qualified applicants
- ▶ Applications accepted over the Internet
- ▶ Extensive advertising of salary and benefits

As a result of task force discussions, the human resources department has been charged to expand the recruitment plan as follows in the upcoming school year:

1. Enhance WEB advertising by establishing links to relevant sites
2. Introduce video interviews
3. Employ use of RESUMEX technology to improve applicant tracking of teachers
4. Introduce focused advertising and interviewing for teachers beyond college fairs in areas identified as potential sources of licensed, quality teachers
5. Begin progressive expansion of benefits package, starting with collaboration with HUD on a Teacher Next Door program
6. Continue focus on theme highlighting and advertising the intrinsic value of working in Norfolk Public Schools
7. Utilize survey and other data more extensively to guide human resources actions
8. Work with local, state and federal governments to provide competitive salary and benefits
9. Investigate professional development opportunities for teachers on the internet
10. Involve teachers in recruitment efforts

Other task force recommendations are incorporated in the Norfolk Public Schools proposed budget for 2000-2001. They include the following recruitment initiatives:

- \$30,000 starting salary
- 6 college credits per year tuition assistance
- \$1,000 salary advance option
- \$100 up-front teacher supply allowance

RETENTION

In 1999, 14 percent of Norfolk's teaching force left, up from 7 percent in 1991 (Norfolk Public Schools Human Resources Annual Report, March 2000). School system data reveals that there has been an increase in retirees, and in the numbers seeking employment outside teaching, but that no-one factor fully explains the increased attrition rate.

In order to retain the best teachers, the district has implemented a number of retention initiatives that include the following elements:

1. A salary and benefits package that is competitive with neighboring districts
2. Monthly early release days for staff development activities
3. Planning time at elementary, middle and high schools for all teachers
4. A Teacher of the Year Program exists for all sites, with an overall recipient for the district
5. The Inspiration Awards Program recognizes teachers as "Most Outstanding" in a wide variety of categories
6. The Teacher Mentor Program provides new teachers with a trained mentor to ease the transition from college to the teaching profession
7. A three-day Teacher Induction Program is held at the beginning of the school year

As a result of task force discussions, the following initiatives are recommended:

1. The School Board should pursue partnerships with businesses to provide incentives such as free Internet access, lap-top computers, telephones in every classroom, housing and other extrinsic rewards
2. The district should identify ways to enhance the physical working environment for teachers
3. The district should continue to pursue ways to decrease teacher paperwork
4. The district should award six credits per annum tuition assistance to support ongoing teacher development
5. The district should restore the School Bell Award Program. This noncompetitive award acknowledges all teachers for a variety of achievements
6. Work with the Professional Senate in creating a committee of teachers to identify strategies for providing support to teachers in the area of discipline and in strengthening the teacher mentor program.

7. Work on a regional level with other districts to leverage state incentives for teachers (such as the California proposal to eliminate state income tax for teachers, etc.)
8. Reinstate the employee suggestion program to solicit ideas for improvements in the organization
9. Utilize information from district surveys (parents, teachers, and administrators) in developing improvement plans
10. **Create an action plan, utilizing recommendations within this report as a starting point, identifying time lines and methods of implementation and monitoring**

Additionally, during task force dialogues, a recurrent theme was that while incentives and rewards for teachers are important ingredients of an effective recruitment or retention plan, they are not enough without quality building level leadership. Principals have the enormous responsibility to inspire staff to greater heights with their own enthusiasm and belief in the vision; they create the spark that ignites the passion in others. The school culture needs to be built around collaboration, team building and empowerment. Leaders lead by example. The behavior of our leaders needs to be consistent with stated beliefs. Laughter and celebration of accomplishments need to be part of the culture. Principals need to provide support to teachers in instructional planning and delivery as well as in managing student behavior. Induction programs for teachers need to be comprehensive as well as provide ongoing assistance to teachers. To this end, it is recommended that the district focus professional development for principals on "Leading with Heart" - creating an environment in which staff want to learn and work. In short, quality leadership at the building level is essential in retaining a quality teaching force (Tirozzi, Education Week, March 29, 2000).

The following task force recommendations are suggested as a starting point:

- Expand the current induction and mentoring program for all new school administrators.
- Provide ongoing training for principals and teachers in team-building and leadership skills.
- Commit significant funds to allow for comprehensive, sustained professional-development programs for the principalship.
- Expand and improve the Norfolk Public Schools field-based principal preparation program.
- Encourage the state to provide additional financial resources to communities to allow for much-needed salary compensation to principals and assistant principals. Bonus incentives also should be considered.
- Ensure that the voice of the principal is heard at all levels of school reform

discussions and debates.

- Ensure that a cadre of teacher specialists/central office support staff is available to principals to provide enhanced support to new teachers struggling to make the transition from the university to the classroom.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Norfolk Public Schools current recruitment plan has reversed a decline in the number of applicants for teaching positions. The number of applicants in 1999 was 1407, up from 954 in 1998. This number is in line with the normal volume of applicants as recorded since 1991. The task force recommends that the district move forward to enhance its recruitment plan by adopting the task force recommendations outlined in this report.

In the Annual Report to the Board delivered in March, 2000 human resources reported that the attrition rate for teachers had risen from 7 percent of the faculty in 1991 to 14 percent in 1999, but that no one factor explains the increase. Incremental increases in a wide variety of areas including retirement, leaving the area, leaving the profession and returning to college explained the increased percentage of faculty leaving the district. The task force recommends that a focus on principal leadership is the key to retaining quality teachers and that retention initiatives centered on principal leadership and support for teachers should be adopted and implemented by the district.