

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS' TEACHER SELECTION CRITERIA

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The hiring of middle school teachers to positively impact student achievement—is this a process of teacher selection or teacher attraction for schools, respectively, with low teacher turnover and schools with high teacher turnover? Since research indicates that the most important variable influencing student achievement is having a highly qualified and effective teacher in the classroom, principals need to have an understanding of their criteria and process for hiring the best teachers for their schools. This qualitative multiple case study investigated the teacher selection criteria and process used by middle school principals so that the findings could add to the body of knowledge that enables principals to make better hiring decisions.

Using John Seyfarth's Model of the Selection Process as a guiding conceptual framework, this research study sought to answer the questions: What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers? How do the unique characteristics of schools influence principals' teacher selection criteria? What process do principals use to select teachers using their criteria for selection? What facilitates principals' ability to select teachers who meet their selection criteria?

Six middle school principals in a large suburban public school district—three from middle schools with high teacher turnover and three from middle schools with low teacher turnover—were interviewed. Collected interview data were analyzed using a

manual coding process and NVivo, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software. For validation, an external auditor conducted a review of the qualitative data analysis and methodology.

A summary of the findings revealed that the principals' teacher selection criteria included job-specific (content knowledge, pedagogy, adolescent learner characteristics, ability to scaffold instruction/use data) and nonjob-specific (ability to build relationships, be collaborative, kid-oriented, flexible, enthusiastic, professional, committed to student learning) factors; unique characteristics of the school did not generally appear to influence the principals' teacher selection criteria; principals selected teachers through an interview panel process; and principals identified how central office, institutions of higher education, colleagues, and panel members could help facilitate hiring the best matches for their schools. The findings and analysis of data led to the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter V.

Knowledge of the principals' teacher selection criteria provides insight as to what principals are looking for so human resources staffers can create pools of candidates that match the principals' criteria. Future research can focus on the relative importance of job-specific and nonjob-specific factors, whether principals are actually using their espoused criteria for selection, and the impact of their hiring decisions on the longevity and effectiveness of the teachers they select using their criteria.

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TEACHER SELECTION CRITERIA

by

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Poy Jean Mah, who has instilled in me a strong work ethic and family values. She brought my two brothers and me to America when we were toddlers to reunite with my father and older brother and sister. My mother left a life of leisure in Hong Kong playing mah-jong to live in a foreign country where she did not speak the language and had to work long hours in a laundry. She left a spacious house in Hong Kong to live on top of our family laundry. My father passed away when I was nine years old leaving my mother to take care of Bill, Wally and me with the help of my older brother, Peter. My mother never complained. With her strong work ethic she continued to work at a friend's Chinese laundry and then at a Chinese grocery store making tofu to provide for her family. She was proud that her children were educated. However, she could not understand why I kept going to school. After getting my bachelor's degree in special and elementary education, she could not understand why I would go back for a master's degree to be a reading specialist. After all, I was a girl and did not need that much education—because she believed that Chinese men do not want to marry women who are too smart. She did not understand why I would continue my education and get another master's degree in guidance and counseling. When I told her I was going for my Ph.D., she shook her head and said, "If you're so smart, why are you still going to school when you're so old?" Even though my mother and I had different perspectives in life, we shared the same work ethic and commitment to family. She passed away nine years ago and left a big hole in my heart. Though I miss her every day, I know that she will be with me in spirit at commencement when I receive my Ph.D.

To my two lovely daughters, Jessica and Stefanie, who have inherited our strong work ethic and sense of family—they are the joy of my life and make me so proud of them everyday.

Finally, with much love and appreciation, to my husband, Dick—whose love and support has enabled me to advance in my career and obtain this highest degree so I can continue to make a difference in the education of all children.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Overview

Quality of instruction is a prerequisite for improving student achievement in schools. "Instruction is the most powerful tool schools have to influence student learning and [teachers] must possess the explicit competencies that drive student performance and be relentless in attaining that performance" (Strategic Management of Human Capital, 2009, p. 5). In *A Blueprint for Reform, the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, President Barack Obama has set "a new goal, that by 2020, the United States will once again lead the world in college completion. To ensure the success of our children, we must do better to recruit, develop, support, retain, and reward outstanding teachers in America's classrooms" (USDE, 2010, p. 1).

More recently, findings from the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), which published *The Status of Programs and Practices in America's Middle Schools: Results from Two National Studies* (McEwin & Greene, 2011), showed that the middle school concept (i.e., interdisciplinary teaming, advisory programs, exploratory offerings, common planning time, flexible scheduling), if implemented with fidelity, would increase student achievement. Therefore, there is a need to hire teachers with specific characteristics to teach at the middle level and engage all students in an environment that is academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable for all young adolescents.

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that students taught by highly effective teachers achieve greater academic performance than students with low-performing teachers (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Therefore, the decision to hire a teacher may be one of the most important decisions made by principals (Baker & Cooper, 2007; Brady, 2006;

DeMitchell, 2007; Seyfarth, 2005; Smith, 2005; Webb & Norton, 2003). The decision to hire a teacher for middle level education may prove to be more challenging since it requires educators who understand early adolescence and have been specifically prepared to engage students in meaningful learning experiences to address their academic growth and personal development during these transitional years (NMSA, 2010). The diverse characteristics of early adolescent learners compound the identification of what makes a teacher effective in middle school. In addition, unique school characteristics, middle school teacher shortages (particularly in math and science), and high turnover rates (particularly in urban and rural schools) further complicate the teacher selection process for middle school principals.

An analysis of principals' personal perceptions of their primary responsibility for human resources processes in Norton's (1999) research study on the work of school principals in human resources administration revealed that 96% of the principals reported the selection of staff as being their most important human resources function. Therefore, principals need to invest time and commitment and have an understanding of their criteria for selection in making these crucial decisions to hire the best teachers for their schools to improve teaching and learning.

Since some school districts are moving toward more site-based management and decentralization of personnel decisions to the school level, the importance of the principal's role in hiring decisionmaking is continuing to increase (Seyfarth, 2005). On the contrary, the principals in this study are required to select from a teacher candidate pool created by central office human resources staffers whose criteria for selection may differ from principals' teacher selection criteria. Therefore, this qualitative multiple case study examined the criteria that principals use to select teachers to ensure alignment in criteria used in the district to build teacher candidate pools.

Chapter 1 introduces the study with a discussion of middle school issues along with the statement of the problem, research questions, context of the study, purpose of the

study and methodology. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the definitions of terms pertinent to the study, limitations, potential significance and the organization of the study.

Statement of Problem

This qualitative research study on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria attempts to address the issue of hiring effective middle school teachers who are able to promote teaching and learning to increase student achievement. Principals in today's middle schools are under pressure to effectively manage the daily operations of running a school in addition to creating a schoolwide vision, establishing a school culture conducive to teaching and learning for both students and staff, and being highly accessible to parents, business and community members, central office officials, and policymakers (Hertling, 2001; Wiseman, 2005).

In addition, under the 2001 *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation, principals are responsible for leading their schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in terms of student achievement for all student groups (Keller, 2007; MSDE, 2008). *A Blueprint for Reform, The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (USDE, 2010) stresses the importance of hiring great teachers and great leaders in the classroom—*Elevating the profession and focusing on recruiting, preparing, developing, and rewarding effective teachers and leaders* (2010, p. 13).

With the current middle school teacher shortages, particularly in math and science, and high turnover rates in high poverty middle schools, principals are challenged to recruit, hire, and retain teachers who meet their selection criteria in these areas. Research suggests that 33% of new teachers leave the profession after three years, 46% leave within five years, and high poverty public schools have much higher teacher turnover rates than affluent public schools (Ingersoll, 2003). As a result, sometimes principals may hire teachers for these hard-to-fill positions solely on documented teacher

certification without consideration of whether the teachers are a "good fit" for the school or have the right attitude and disposition to motivate students to learn.

As a result, hiring a person who is not a good fit with the job-related factors (i.e., knowledge, skills, expertise) and organization-related factors (school's contextual needs and culture) can reduce the effectiveness of instruction, jeopardize existing working relationships among staff members, and require costly remedial support (Bowman, 2005; Webb & Norton, 2003). Furthermore, research on teacher education, licensing, and hiring practices reveals the use of idiosyncratic criteria, variable standards, and procedures that often impede the selection of the best candidate for the job (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1987).

Context of the Study

This study was done in a large suburban public school district in the mid-Atlantic region comprised of 130 elementary, 38 middle, 25 high and 7 special schools. The district contracted an external research firm to conduct a review of the middle schools to develop a comprehensive plan to produce a rigorous middle school education program that promotes teaching and learning and prepares all students for high school standards.

Findings from two focus groups of middle school principals indicated that "non-measurable" teacher qualities and dispositions (e.g., student-oriented, don't give up when students don't get it, sense of humor) were sometimes more important than knowledge, skills, or content expertise—that *students don't care what teachers know...they want to know that teachers care* (B. Lee, personal communication, 2006). Some principals commented that they could not find teacher candidates who were good matches for their schools in the applicant pools established by human resources staffing specialists in central office. As a result, implications arose for future research to investigate the criteria

for teacher selection that middle school principals used to hire teachers for their schools as compared to the selection criteria used by central office human resources staffers.

To examine what characteristics middle school principals look for in hiring teachers, this qualitative, multiple case study provides in-depth interviews with six middle school principals in a large suburban school district to investigate what teacher characteristics they look for in recruiting and hiring teachers as viewed through the theoretical framework of John Seyfarth's (2005) *Model of the Selection Process*.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the teacher selection criteria used by middle school principals so that the findings will add to the body of knowledge that enables principals to make better hiring decisions. The results of this multiple case study will also enable human resources staffers in the school district:

- To align their selection criteria to what middle school principals are looking for in hiring teachers for their schools
- To build teacher candidate pools more conducive to the hiring needs of the principals
- To be able to recommend teacher candidates to middle school principals to ensure a "good fit."

The rationale for proposing to do a qualitative case study using a multiple case design was a planned study of a contemporary phenomenon (middle school principals' teacher selection criteria) in a real life context (principals at six middle schools) bounded by time (June-August 2008 for interviews) and place (six middle schools in a large suburban public school district).

Maxwell (2005) used the term "goal" to include not only purposes, but also motives and desires to help guide design decisions to ensure that the study is worthy of investigation. He described the following practical goals for doing a study:

1. Generating results and theories that are understandable and experientially credible, both to the people you are studying and to others;
2. Conducting formative evaluations, ones that are intended to help improve existing practice rather than to simply assess the value of the program; and
3. Engaging in collaborative or action research with practitioners or research participants. (pp. 22-23)

Since the goals for this study are among Maxwell's identified practical goals conducive for qualitative studies, the methodology used here was appropriate to examine the criteria that middle school principals use to hire teachers.

Research Questions

Since we do not know what criteria middle school principals bring to the hiring process, this qualitative multiple case study will examine and describe middle school principals' teacher selection criteria to answer the questions:

- What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers?
- How do the unique characteristics of schools influence principals' teacher selection criteria?
- What process do principals use to select teachers using their criteria for selection?
- What facilitates principals' ability to select teachers who meet their selection criteria?

Conceptual Framework

This study used a multiple case study methodology (Yin, 2003; Stake, 2006) as the framework for collecting data and analyzing results. John Seyfarth's *Model of the Selection Process* (Seyfarth, 2005) provided a guiding conceptual framework to limit this

investigation bounded by time, place, and phenomena studied. The description and operationalization of Seyfarth's guiding conceptual framework is presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, respectively. By incorporating the assumptions shared by others and learning what we can about their interpretations and perspectives, our own conceptualizations are enhanced through the investigation.

Definition of Terms

Educational Load, High/Low – Method for identification of schools most in need of support to improve academic achievement for allocating supplementary resources to support quality education. Educational load takes into consideration a school's percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), ESOL students with limited English proficiency, and students older than grade age. Educational load also takes into account the school's internal and external mobility rates and other factors which may correlate with school achievement level such as the percentage of students in special education. Schools with high percentages in these areas are identified as schools with *high educational loads* and often face greater instructional challenges than do schools with a *low educational load* with lower percentages in these areas. Appropriate resources are allocated to assist schools with *high educational loads* in delivering educational services that reinforce the academic opportunities for students. Therefore, schools with *higher educational loads* would receive more supplementary resources than schools with *lower educational loads*.

Middle School – A school usually including grades five to eight, six to eight, or seven to eight—with six to eight being the dominant organizational plan—serving early adolescents, ages 10-15 years of age—often with organizational structures such as the development of teacher and student teams and creation of "advisory" programs (McEwin & Greene, 2011; Jackson, 2000).

Middle School Principal – Lead administrator at a middle grades school who ensures that policies and practices exist for a safe and conducive learning environment. Effective middle school principals possess a deep understanding of middle school philosophy, early adolescent development, teaming, student advocacy, exploration, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices to nurture, sustain, and advocate for a comprehensive, student-centered program devoted to the growth and development of early adolescents (NMSA, 2010).

Middle School Teacher – Teacher who teaches at a middle grades school. According to Jackson (2000), effective middle school teachers know the nature of early adolescents and the philosophy and organization of middle grades schools. They have knowledge/skills in: their academic discipline, using assessments to guide instructional decisions; knowing how people learning best, contributing to effective teams, comprehending young adolescents' developmental characteristics and needs, participating in schools' governance system, supporting a safe and healthy school environment, and engaging parents and community members in support of the students and the school.

National Middle School Association – Since 1973, NMSA has been a voice and resource to middle grade educators committed to the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents, ages 10 to 15—to develop more effective schools that academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable for every young adolescent. NMSA members are principals, teachers, school district personnel, professors, college students, parents, community leaders, and educational consultants across the United States, Canada, and 46 other countries.

Red/Green Zone Schools – The school district in this investigation developed a geographic mapping system according to student achievement results and demographic data to visually address the two disparate regions within the county. The identification of *Red* and *Green Zones* enabled the district to provide a differentiated approach to resource allocation and management support—differentiating what a school needs or a teacher

needs based upon what a student needs. Sixty of the most highly-impacted, under-performing elementary schools—representing almost 50% of total elementary schools and elementary student enrollment—resided in the *Red Zone*. These identified "focus schools" in the *Red Zone* comprised 80% of the district's total elementary FARMS (Free and Reduced Meals; poverty index) population, 75% of the total elementary ESOL (English as a Second Oral Language) population, 78% of the total elementary Hispanic population, and 70% of the total elementary African American population. The schools in the *Red Zone* received more management attention and resources under the differentiated treatment approach. For example, kindergarten teachers in the *Red Zone* had smaller class sizes of 1 to 15 students and received full day kindergarten. There were 67,127 K-12 students in the *Red Zone* schools with 75% minority, 37% FARMS, and 14% ESOL student populations as compared to 72,944 students in the *Green Zone* schools, which resided in wealthier sections of the county, with 38% minority, 9% FARMS, and 5% ESOL student populations.

Teacher Selection Criteria – Characteristics principals look for and identify as important in their hiring of teachers. Rebores (2001, p. 116) defines teacher selection criteria as those ideal characteristics that, if possessed by an individual to the fullest extent possible would ensure the successful performance of the job.

Teacher Turnover, High/Low – The definition of teacher turnover has three dimensions (Ingersoll, 2003; NCTAF, 2003): *Within-District Movers* – Teachers employed in a classroom teaching role in a school in Year 1 (e.g., 2005-06) who are employed as classroom teachers at a different school in the same district in Year 2 (e.g., 2006-07) are defined as "cross-school, within-district movers"; *Cross-District Movers* – Teachers employed in a classroom teaching role in school in Year 1 who are employed as classroom teachers at a different school and a different district in Year 2, are defined as "cross-school, cross-district movers"; and *Leavers* – Teachers employed in a classroom-teaching role in a school in Year 1 and not employed as classroom teachers in any district

in Year 2 are defined as "leavers." These teacher turnover definitions applied to the teacher turnover ratings of teachers who left their teaching positions at the schools in this investigative study. The six principals were purposively selected from the three schools in the district with the highest and three schools with the lowest average teacher turnover data for four years (2004-07).

Limitations

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 42), all proposed research projects have limitations derived from the conceptual framework and the study's design and case studies by their very nature have limitations because of the small number of subjects and are bounded by place, time, and phenomenon being studied. The following is a list of limitations of this research study:

1. The study is limited because of the small sample size of six middle school principals in a large suburban school district. However, detailed descriptions from the analyses of the in-depth interviews provided insight into the teacher selection criteria of middle school principals.
2. The findings and results of this qualitative study are not generalizable in the probabilistic sense to other populations (Yin, 2003) but they may be transferable to settings situated in similar contexts focusing on the same phenomenon. Since the principals selected for this case study were appropriate and diverse in terms of their school environments, interviewing additional principals would probably not have contributed any major significance to the study. This study is designed to address central office administrators' hiring practices in the district that were not aligned to what middle school principals were looking for in their selection of teachers. In other districts where central office administrators do not build candidate pools for teacher selection, the results of this study

may provide insight to whomever makes the hiring decisions for middle schools.

3. Limitations are inherent in the interviewing process since principals may not be truthful, willing to share information, nor provide enough data for analysis by responding in short narratives to questions. There was the possibility that the researcher might not be able to establish trust and engage the principal to respond in rich narratives to the interview questions nor accurately comprehend and record their responses. However, as a licensed professional counselor, the researcher used interviewing skills to probe, question, and encourage elaboration on responses from the principals to elicit and collect detailed, thick data for analysis. To ensure the accuracy, the principals' responses were tape-recorded. The researcher took comprehensive notes during the interview and provided a transcription of the interview to the principals for member checking.
4. Since the researcher is considered an "insider," her presence may have been viewed as a limitation, which will be further discussed in the *Insider Experience and Implications* section in Chapter 3, Methodology.
5. A limitation of this study is that only principals were interviewed even though all six principals indicated that they use a panel to conduct the interviews and considered panel members' feedback in making their hiring decision. Gathering information from other staff involved in the interview or decision-making process would have made this a more robust study.
6. Even though the middle school principals identified the characteristics they deem as most important in the teachers they hire, it is not known if they actually use their espoused criteria for selection when making hiring decisions or if the use of their criteria for teacher selection has resulted in

hiring the best matches for their schools to improve student achievement. Therefore, going beyond the immediate question of the characteristics principal look for in selecting teachers to the impact of their hiring decisions on the effectiveness (i.e., linking student performance to individual teachers and their instruction) and longevity of the teachers they select would be a next step for future research.

Significance

The significance of this study is to add to the qualitative research and knowledge base on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria. Currently, there is limited research on this topic so this study should provide insight into what characteristics middle school principals look for in selecting teachers who will increase student performance in their schools.

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study should help to clarify the teacher selection criteria used by middle school principals so that principals and central office administrators who make the hiring decisions will have a common understanding on the recruitment and selection of teacher candidates who are "good fits" for middle schools. As a result, staffing specialists will be able to build teacher candidate pools with teacher candidates who possess the characteristics that middle school principals deem as important.

This study has potential significance for district policy since information from the study supports the development of a specific job description for middle school teachers (in lieu of only one teacher job description for all elementary, middle, and high school teachers). With clear expectations of the role and responsibilities of a middle school teacher, performance tasks and problem-solving scenarios can be incorporated into the interview which may result in changes in the school district's interview process for middle school teachers. As a result, principals will have more influence on the teacher

selection process as they collaborate with central office administrators to build candidate pools aligned to the principals' teacher selection criteria.

Organization of the Study

This study on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria consists of five chapters. Chapter I opens with an introduction to the study identifying middle school teacher quantity, quality, and preparation issues. It presents the statement of the problem, research questions, context and purpose of the study, methodology, definition of terms, limitations and significance.

Chapter II reviews the literature on the principals' role as a human resources manager, principals' hiring practices, issues surrounding middle school teachers on the national, state, local, school, and student levels including trends in certification, and the guiding conceptual framework for this study, Seyfarth's Model of the Selection Process (2005).

Chapter III restates the purpose of the study, provides rationale for the case study approach and multiple case study design along with disclosure of insider experience and implications. It also presents the operationalization of the guiding conceptual framework, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, and cross-case analysis. The chapter closes with a discussion of standards of validation and ethical issues.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study. It begins with a brief overview of the methodology and research questions leading to a description of the school district and sample population in the study. It presents a summary of the data analysis of the findings from schools with low and high teacher turnover rates, which leads to the conclusions of the study.

Chapter V provides a summary of the study restating the purpose, problem, research questions, methodology, and standards of validation. It presents conclusions and recommendations based upon the findings of the study, and implications for future

research and practice. This chapter closes with a personal reflection by the student investigator.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

One of the most important decisions that principals make that impacts student performance is the hiring of highly effective teachers. Research shows that students assigned to ineffective teachers lag significantly behind students taught by effective teachers and this issue compounds over time (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Rothman, 2005). Conversely, low-performing students with several effective teachers in a row can catch up with their peers (Rothman, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Because of the dearth of research on middle school principals' criteria for teacher selection, this study will add to the body of knowledge to assist middle school principals in the hiring process. To investigate the characteristics that middle school principals look for when hiring teachers, this study draws on a review of the literature in the areas of: Middle school education, middle school principals and teachers, and principals as human resources managers.

Middle School Education

National Perspective

In the early 1900s, junior high schools were established to reorganize public education in the United States into a three-tier system—elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. In 1947, Gruhn and Douglass' six functions of the junior high school set the standard in the revitalization of junior high. The middle school movement began in the late 1960s. It transformed junior high schools that emphasized subject matter specialization, departmentalization, and extensive extracurricular programs and activities patterned after senior high schools into middle schools that were developmentally appropriate for young adolescents. In 1963, Dr. William Alexander presented at a Cornell

University conference, "*The Junior High School: A Changing View*" and proposed a framework for a middle school that is based on the developmental readiness, needs, and interests of young adolescents.

In 1973, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) emerged, focused on middle grades education and the developmental needs of 10- to 15-year-olds. The NMSA published a position paper, *This We Believe* (1980) establishing professional guidelines for middle school education. Later revisions of this document (NMSA, 1995; NMSA, 2003) incorporated evolving research and practice on educating young adolescents, resulting in the identification of *Keys to Educating Young Adolescents* (NMSA, 2010). The NMSA identified four essential attributes (i.e., developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable) and 16 characteristics for successful middle level education. The four essential attributes can be realized and best achieved through the 16 characteristics (grouped in three categories) that are interdependent and need to be implemented together:

1. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (Value young adolescents; active learning; challenging curriculum; multiple learning approaches; varied assessments)
2. Leadership and Organization (Shared vision; committed leaders; courageous and collaborative leaders; professional development; organizational structures)
3. Culture and Community (School environment; adult advocate; guidance services; health and wellness; family involvement; community & business).

NMSA is committed to the educational and developmental needs of students ages 10 to 15 and promotes the middle school concept of schools that are academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable for all young adolescents. However,

most middle schools in the United States have been unable to meet the developmental needs of young adolescents.

In 1986, New York's Carnegie Corporation established the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. The Council appointed a Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents to study the developmental needs of young adolescents and the conditions in middle school. This task force, led by David W. Hornbeck, former Maryland superintendent of schools, included members from the fields of medicine, academia, public school education, private sector, and government, including two prominent politicians, Bill Clinton and Nancy Kassebaum. Instrumental in putting middle level education on the national agenda, this task force reported eight recommendations for transforming the education of young adolescents in their publication, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989):

1. Large middle schools should be divided into smaller learning communities so students will receive sustained individual attention.
2. Middle schools should transmit a core of common knowledge to all students fostering curiosity, problem solving, and critical thinking.
3. Middle schools should be organized to ensure success for all students through cooperative learning and other developmentally-appropriate approaches.
4. Teachers and principals should have major authority and responsibility to make decisions about young adolescents' schooling.
5. Middle school teachers should be specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and recognized distinctively for this accomplishment.
6. The education and health of young adolescents must be inextricably linked—schools should promote good health, life sciences and their applications.

7. Families are allied with school staff through mutual respect, trust, and communication.
8. Schools should be partners with community organizations in educating young adolescents and promoting service learning.

To foster adoption of these *Turning Point* recommendations, assess the implementation of the recommendations, and determine the nature and extent of any benefits associated with implementation, a Carnegie Corporation team conducted a decade-long follow-up effort, the Middle Grade School State Policy Initiative (MGSSPI). Lessons learned from MGSSPI and other national middle grades improvement efforts were published in *Turning Points 2000, Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (2000) which examines how to improve middle grades education by focusing on curriculum, student assessment, instruction, and specialized training for middle school teachers.

Even though *Turning Points* does not recommend a particular grade configuration, middle schools now exceed 15,000 nationally with approximately 90% containing grades 5-8, 6-8, or 7-8, with grades 6-8 schools being the dominant organizational plan. Less common middle school configurations are grades 4-8, 6-7, and 7-9 (McEwin & Greene, 2011).

NMSA has become the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) which recently published *The Status of Programs and Practices in America's Middle Schools: Results from Two National Studies* authored by McEwin and Greene (2011). The first national study, *2009 Survey of Randomly Selected Middle Schools*, investigated the overall status of programs and practices in middle schools. The second study, *2009 Highly Successful Middle School Survey*, investigated the nature of middle level programs and practices in some of the nation's most successful middle schools.

The results from the two studies were compared to determine the level of authentic implementation of developmentally responsive, research-based programs and practices in successful middle schools. The most important finding, from surveying the

national random sample of 827 public middle schools and 186 highly successful middle schools identified as Schools to Watch or NASSP Breakthrough Middle Schools, is that the middle school concept and philosophy remain legitimate. The middle school concept, espousing practices such as interdisciplinary teaming, advisory programs, exploratory offerings, common planning time for core teachers, and flexible scheduling (NMSA, 2003), was implemented with more fidelity in highly successful middle schools. These schools chose not to go back to traditional programs and practices such as departmentalization, rigid scheduling, and no common planning time that are more appropriate for high schools.

A comparison of the results from the two surveys showed a significant gap among schools between the levels of principal support for recommended middle level components and the actual implementation of those same programs and practices. It was noted that standardized testing pressures, opposition from traditionalists, and economic factors might have impacted the use of developmentally responsive practices. However, principals in both studies viewed standardized testing as a positive influence on academic achievement, curriculum rigor and clarity, remediation practices, and professional development for teachers.

Compared with randomly sampled middle schools, highly successful middle schools more frequently used interdisciplinary team organization (90% vs. 72%), flexible block scheduling plan (30% vs. 14%), cooperative learning (85% vs. 64%), inquiry teaching (57% vs. 43%), and advisory programs (65% vs. 54%). Highly successful middle schools also provided core teachers with ten common planning periods per week (40% vs. 28%), emphasized critical thinking and problem solving (61% vs. 38%), had greater percentages of core teachers holding separate middle level teacher certification, and a smaller percentage of schools where 51% or more students qualified for free or reduced lunch (27% vs. 36%).

In contrast to the randomly sampled middle schools, highly successful middle schools less frequently used direct instruction (71% vs. 81%) and organized school schedules using daily uniform periods (45% vs. 72%). While middle schools in both studies emphasized the teaching of basic subjects and offered rich curricula with a variety of elective subjects, the core subjects in highly successful middle schools averaged 236 minutes a day as compared to the average of 221 minutes a day in the random sample. The percentage of students on or above grade level in math and reading on standardized tests was higher in the highly successful middle schools. Overall, middle schools authentically following the middle school concept and philosophy were more likely to be associated with higher student achievement scores and other positive student outcomes. As a result, states across the country have established organizations supporting the middle school concept and philosophy.

State Perspective

On the state level where this study is situated, the Maryland Middle School Association (MMSA), an affiliation of the Association of Middle Level Education, promotes collaboration among middle level educators and community stakeholders to support the needs of adolescents through developmentally appropriate rigorous programs that meet the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social needs of adolescent learners. The purposes of this organization are to promote the middle school as a distinct educational structure; provide a forum for information exchange on middle schools; identify middle school staffing requirements and professional development; provide professional leadership in middle school activities in Maryland; and advance middle school philosophy and education programs through research and development, position papers, and legislation.

An advocate of middle school reform, Dr. Nancy Grasmick, then Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, convened the Middle Learning Years Task Force in 1998. It

proposed recommendations on upgrading instruction, redefining teacher education programs, and restructuring school environments. In response, Dr. Grasmick convened a Middle School Certification Committee to develop regulatory language and program recommendations for middle school certification at Maryland Institutes for Higher Education. In September 2006, she convened the Middle School Steering Committee to improve teaching and learning in the middle grades. This committee was charged to make recommendations supporting the goal that "All middle school students will be provided a rigorous and relevant core academic program that engages them in learning, develops critical literacy skills, and prepares them for high school success, postsecondary enrollment, and 21st-century careers" (MSDE, 2008, p. 11). The committee, comprised of middle-level education stakeholders, published a report in June 2008, *The Critical Middle: a Reason for Hope*. It listed the following 16 recommendations to improve the quality of education for middle-level learners:

1. Extend the middle school day and school year as dictated by the needs of the learner.
2. Prepare students to complete algebra by the end of 8th grade.
3. Provide students integrated math, science, and technology instruction with a focus on problem-solving and real-world application.
4. Enroll every student in a sequential world-language course in 6th grade.
5. Stress reading, writing, and thinking skills in each discipline as an integral component of the subject.
6. Provide all students fine-arts instruction that develops their literacy in music, dance, theater, and visual arts.
7. Teach information literacy and use technology in all subjects.
8. Teach those skills that, in addition to content mastery, are essential for school success.

9. Provide accelerated and enriched instructional pathways for advanced learners.
10. Ensure that teachers are prepared to work specifically with the middle-level learner.
11. Provide all middle school teachers high-quality professional development.
12. Establish a leadership team in every middle school, led by a principal who is an instructional leader.
13. Regularly assess student learning and use assessment results to guide instructional, course-taking, and organizational decisions.
14. Emphasize students' mastery of essential skills.
15. Partner with students and parents, using student data to guide educational decisions.
16. Develop flexible schedules that provide adequate time for students to master concepts and skills and for teachers to collaborate.

In response to the recommendation to ensure that teachers are prepared to work specifically with the middle-level learner, Dr. Grasmick established the Ad Hoc Middle-Level Work Group to redefine elementary and secondary preparation programs based on NMSA standards and recommendations from *The Critical Middle: A Reason for Hope* and identify courses for recertification of middle-level teachers. The work group issued their report in December 2009 with recommendations for elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs and performance-based teacher candidate competency. The work group recommended that teacher preparation programs should include:

- Knowledge and understanding of the middle-level learner
- Field experiences with middle-level learners
- Teacher candidates involved in articulation transition from elementary to middle and middle to high

- A conceptual understanding of algebra scaffolding up from earliest grades in elementary to know what an eighth grader is required to know and do
- Opportunities to make cross-disciplinary applications and apply technological solutions through integrated STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) instruction in a team approach
- Reading courses with elements pertinent to the middle-level learner such as gender differences in learning to read, and adolescent and young adolescent literature
- Disciplinary and international literacy to gain greater understanding of the global community
- Professional dispositions related to the middle-level learner (grades 4-9) in the assessments system—requiring sensitivity to their cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs

Recommendations for performance-based teacher candidate competency include the candidates' ability to:

- Use reading, writing and thinking strategies specific to their respective content areas through interdisciplinary assessments
- Integrate the arts within their classrooms including visual literacy
- Include skills for lifelong learning such as critical thinking, problem-solving, organization, communication, and 21st century skills of middle-level learners
- Work successfully as a member of an interdisciplinary team through participation in a strong leadership team
- Provide meaningful, specific, and descriptive feedback as an assessment tool and incorporate authentic higher order thinking

assessments to identify strengths using a variety of developmentally responsive assessment measures

- Identify essential elements of instruction, re-teaching, extending and enriching when appropriate, and scaffolding for the middle-level learner
- Partner with parents to support students' developmental needs and participation in community activities that contribute to their welfare and learning while maintaining privacy and confidentiality of information when appropriate
- Facilitate the transition from elementary to middle and middle to high with an understanding of middle school structures including grade arrangement, interdisciplinary teaming, and various scheduling options.

Regarding the identification of courses for recertification of middle-level teachers, the Work Group proposed:

- An alternative method to traditional teacher observation implementing a project-based approach (i.e., *The Framework for Teaching* by Charlotte Danielson, an equivalent credit option used successfully in some local school systems)
- Encourage additional middle-level courses/experiences for continuing professional development (i.e., neuroscience and its implications for learning, 21st century skills, STEM, technology)
- Encourage colleges/universities to develop graduate courses focusing on the middle-level learner.

Even though the state of Maryland has adopted certification regulations for the middle grades, few institutions of higher education in the state have developed teacher preparation programs leading to degrees in middle school education. Schools

concentrating on middle school teachers in the state are Stevenson, University of Maryland, Towson, and Coppin State Universities (www.braintrack.com/colleges-by-career/middle-school-teachers/state/md). Stevenson University (formerly Villa Julie College) was the first to offer a Baccalaureate degree in Middle School Teacher Preparation Program, with majors in English Language Arts/Social Studies and Math/Science, training teachers for grades 4-9 with a focus on middle-level course content and unique learning needs. University of Maryland College Park offers a Middle School Math and Science Education Program leading to a Bachelor of Science degree meeting the MSDE requirements for certification in grades 4-9 necessary for teaching middle school math and science. Towson University offers a Master of Science degree in middle school mathematics education. Coppin State University offers a Masters of Arts in Teaching degree that requires a minimum of 46 hours in middle school concentration and 40 hours in the secondary education concentration. In addition, there are many online distance learning institutions offering a Masters in Education degree in middle level education (e.g., Walden University, University of Phoenix, Liberty University).

The state uses the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) to assess reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and the science test is administered in grades 5 and 8. The MSA scores show how well Maryland students have learned the reading, mathematics and science skills specified in the state curriculum. The state's emphasis on teaching to standards, state assessments, and using data along with aggressive middle school reforms may have contributed to the Maryland public school system ranking first in the nation for the fourth consecutive year in *Quality Counts 2012* (Education Week, 2012). Quality Counts uses more than 100 indicators to develop its report on educational quality of public school systems.

Local Perspective—District Level

Responding to the national and state call to action to specifically prepare middle school teachers to teach young adolescent learners and address their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs, the public school district where this study is situated initiated a middle school reform effort. An external consultant firm conducted an audit of the middle schools in the district. As a result, five middle schools offering specialized programs participated in the first phase of a \$10 million, three-year middle school reform effort to train teachers, accelerate curriculum in reading and math, upgrade technology, and improve the leadership structure in the district's 38 middle schools (De Vise, 2007).

Middle school reform efforts included:

- Modernizing classrooms with Promethean interactive boards that function as chalkboard, projector and computer engaging students to provide immediate feedback
- New course offerings such as filmmaking and text
- Internships to develop a new generation of middle school principals, school-based math specialists, and literacy coaches who provide training to teachers in these critical content areas
- A consistent pathway for accelerated study with consistent assessments of students' abilities
- Expanded high school course offerings, new literacy courses, and expanded after-school and summer programs to increase skills in reading, writing, and math.

These five middle schools, benefiting from the first phase of the middle school reform plan, join three magnet middle schools offering specialized programs which are changing the middle school context in this public school district.

This reform movement to improve the middle schools is a result of an external audit report in the district indicating that:

- Students living in poverty and English Language Learners lagged behind in achievement.
- The standardized test scores and parent involvement were lower in middle than in elementary schools.
- Since teachers were less specialized, middle schools could not compete with the advanced course offerings in high school, resulting in a decline in academic rigor and increase in disciplinary problems.

The findings from the district's external middle school audit are consistent with the findings in the literature on early adolescence and middle schools indicating that students often become disengaged, do not receive the preparation they need, and fail to make a successful transition to high school (Shulman & Armitage, 2005). With declining test scores and emphasis on social context, middle schools have been charged with focusing too much on the social, emotional, and physical needs of adolescents to the neglect of meeting academic competencies (Beane, 1999a, 1999b). Since middle schools expose students to a variety of topics and experiences that lack depth, students only develop a superficial level of understanding and are not prepared for the rigor of high school. Other researchers suggest that students become disengaged with learning because of a mismatch with nature and culture of middle school environments and adolescents' developmental needs (Felner et al., 1997; Hicks, 1997).

Consistent with the recommendations from National Middle School Association and the Maryland Middle School Association, research on how middle schools can motivate students to learn (Epstein & MacIver, 1990; Lipsitz, Jackson, & Austin, 1997; Sternberg, 2001) reveal the following best practices for improving middle school programs:

- Interdisciplinary teams of teachers with common planning time
- Flexible scheduling
- Students assigned to an advisory teacher throughout the middle school

- Cooperative learning
- Exploratory course electives
- Parent workshops on early adolescence and parent involvement in the school.

The middle school reform at the district level incorporates these best practices and organizational structures to ensure learning environments conducive to meeting the needs of early adolescents.

School Level

Bringing the district's middle school reform efforts to the school level, middle school principals were organized into two focus groups to respond to the question: *What knowledge, skills, and content expertise are needed by middle school teachers to meet the needs of middle school students?* Based upon their school-based experience, principals in this school district moved beyond the organizational structures and best practices of highly successful middle schools to the identification of teacher characteristics they have observed in highly effective middle school teachers who get results in meeting the cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs of their middle-level learners.

In Table 1, the principals identified knowledge, content expertise, and skills they deem as essential in an effective middle school teacher. They considered knowledge on content or subject area, differentiation of instruction, variety of teaching strategies, early adolescent development, and technology as essential for a middle school teacher. In terms of content expertise, the principals identified the importance of knowing the curriculum and being able to teach reading, writing, and math through content areas. The skills that the principals identified as essential were classroom management skills, organizational skills, human relations skills, communication skills, ability to use a variety of instructional strategies addressing exceptionalities of students, and data analysis skills. However, beyond the knowledge, content expertise, and skills, the principals described

the importance of the following qualities and dispositions that are evident in teachers they consider to be highly effective: having a sense of humor and organizational agility/flexibility; is organized, collaborative, a team player, lifelong learner, and self-reflective; and believes that all students can learn.

Table 1

Middle School Principals' Responses

MIDDLE SCHOOL REFORM COMMITTEE
HUMAN RESOURCES PROJECT TEAM

RESPONSES FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TO THE QUESTION:
What knowledge, skills, and content expertise are needed by middle school teachers to meet the needs of middle school students?

Knowledge/content Expertise	Skills/disposition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content knowledge/curriculum expertise—in-depth background; knowledge of subjects taught; have content area certification • Content area teachers—able to teach reading, writing, and math across the content areas • Math teachers—need to know high school math through Algebra II—maybe even through pre-calculus • Interdisciplinary instruction and making connections across content areas • Science content expertise since Maryland School Assessments in science is coming • Adolescent development—knowledge of age appropriate adolescent behaviors so appropriate consequences can be selected • Knowledge of skill differentiation • Technology savvy • Knowledge of assessment and how to monitor student progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom management; "with-it-ness" • Skillful in using diagnostic, formative, and summative data collection/analysis to increase student achievement • Ability to deliver instruction employing a variety of grouping and instructional strategies for different learning styles and diverse learners; commitment to teach to multiple intelligences; being able to differentiate instruction for on-level and GT students within heterogeneous classrooms • Ability to communicate with teachers/parents • Ability to build relationships with students, teachers, and parents • Ability to be a team player; consults with peers • Ability to be self-reflective about their practice • Ability to guide student's character and self-confidence to be a self-advocating, independent learner • Belief that all students can learn and does not give up on students • Sense of humor • Experience with young adolescent learners

As a result of this data collection and analysis of feedback from the middle school principals in the focus groups, a new middle school classroom teacher job description was developed in the district, specifically for middle school teacher selection. Job-

specific functions included knowledge of content, adolescent child development and appropriate behavioral management strategies, ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students, ability to be able to use data for instructional decision-making, and ability to model inclusive, collaborative, democratic, and team-oriented approaches to teaching and learning. Nonjob-specific functions include personal attributes or dispositions such as believing that all children can learn, being enthusiastic, persistent, flexible, self-reflective about their own practice, and not giving up on children who have difficulty learning concepts. To add rigor to the findings of this research investigation on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria, this researcher proposes to triangulate the research findings with the data from these two focus groups of principals.

Even though the perceptions of the middle school principals in this survey were fairly consistent with literature on teacher quality and effectiveness, the following vignette from a meeting with some elementary principals demonstrates the disconnect between practitioners and policymakers in the identification of a highly qualified middle school teacher. At a meeting, some elementary principals expressed concern that their schools could only hire teacher candidates who met the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements according to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. As a result, this ruling limited the pool of teacher candidates available to Title I schools since the principals could not view files of teachers without the HQT designation. The principals shared that they have hired teachers who were designated as highly qualified in the eyes of the law but, in practice, were not good matches for their schools nor successful in meeting the needs of their middle-level students. Conversely, middle school principals reported that they have hired teachers who did not meet the current MSDE HQT designation, but were highly effective in improving the academic performance of their students and were major contributors to their schools' professional learning communities. Clearly, this vignette demonstrates the

discrepancy between principals' perceptions of highly qualified teachers and the NCLB's HQT definition promulgated by federal policy makers.

To further complicate the identification of highly effective teachers, in addition to a teacher's knowledge of content, pedagogy, and teaching skills, practitioners tend to focus on other teacher qualities such as strong work ethic, good people and communication skills, team player, genuinely likes kids, and empathy (Gordon, 1999, Slosson, 1999; Trimble, 2001) which are difficult to measure. The reported responses from the principals in the school district's middle school reform focus groups supported the importance of these nonjob-specific teacher qualities that are difficult to measure. These teacher dispositions are not considered in the HQT provision of the NCLB Act which is based on a straightforward relationship between teaching and learning.

Student Level

There is consensus in the literature that the most important variable influencing student achievement is to have a highly qualified teacher in every classroom (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Rivers & Sanders, 2002; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Sanders & Horn, 1998). Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that low-achieving students of effective teachers gained about three times as much in achievement as those taught by the least effective teachers. Students assigned to ineffective teachers lag significantly behind students taught by effective teachers compounding over time (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Rothman, 2005).

More recently, Hanushek (2011) reported in an analysis of his research that a year with a teacher in the top 15% for performance (based on student achievement) can move an average student from the middle of the distribution (the 50th percentile) to the 58th percentile or more. With a teacher in the bottom 5%, a student may plummet from the middle of the distribution to the bottom third at the end of the school year. Therefore, a string of good or bad teachers can dramatically change the academic success of a child

towards being college- or career-ready upon graduation. The results of Hanushek's study apply to suburban and rural schools as well as schools serving disadvantaged populations of students.

Furthermore, Hanushek's research shows that students with higher math, reading, and science scores tend to earn more money throughout their lifetimes. A student graduating at the 85th percentile on the achievement distribution can be expected to earn 13% to 20% more than the average student—yielding a difference in present value of earnings of \$150,000 to \$230,000 on average. Therefore, a teacher in the top 15% of quality can, in one year, add more than \$20,000 to a student's lifetime earnings and for a class of 20 students, a good teacher is adding about \$400,000 in value to the economy each year. In contrast, a teacher in the bottom 15% of the distribution is subtracting at least \$400,000 from the economy each year. With this information, we can calculate the economic impact of a good or bad teacher, bringing the issue from the student level back to the national level in terms of the United States' status in the global economy.

The consulting firm of McKinsey & Company's report (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), *How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top*, reviewed why students in other nations outperform students in the United States. McKinsey studied 25 of the world's school systems—including 10 top performers—suggesting that three things matter most: getting the right people to become teachers, developing them into effective instructors, and making sure that the system is able to deliver the best instruction for each child. They found that high-achieving nations do not let bad teachers stay in the classroom for long. Their report indicates that the United States could climb to the top of the international rankings if we replace the bottom 5% to 10% of teachers with average teachers. To get the right people to become middle school teachers, this current investigation examines middle school principals' teacher selection criteria and the teacher characteristics they deem as important to increase student achievement.

Middle School Teachers

The literature supports the importance of recruiting and hiring the right people to become middle school teachers because of the impact they will have on the early adolescent learner. However, knowing what characteristics to look for in the selection of middle school teachers in addition to the inconsistencies among states' middle school teacher certification and licensing presents barriers in hiring the best. The following section will discuss identified characteristics of effective middle school teachers, the certification and licensure programs for middle school teachers, and the growth of middle school teacher preparation programs across the country.

Characteristics of Effective Middle School Teachers

The National Middle School Association (NMSA, 1995, 2001, 2003, 2010) asserts that effective middle school teachers make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents, understand the developmental uniqueness of this age group, and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject matter they teach. The duality of commitment (significant academic learning and developmentally appropriate contexts) has implications for the professional preparation of middle school teachers and the refinement and extension of their knowledge, dispositions, and skills to perform their roles as student advocate, role model, supporter of diversity, collaborator, and lifelong learner.

According to the NMSA, as a student advocate, the middle school teacher is committed to advocating developmentally appropriate school programs, practices and assessments, and educating family members and external audiences on the developmental realities of early adolescence. As a role model, the committed middle school teacher needs to model appropriate behaviors for adolescent students such as cooperation with colleagues, appreciation of differences, dispositions toward others, and healthy development. As a supporter of diversity, the teacher embraces the needs, interests, and

special abilities of their students beyond race, ethnicity, and gender to include developmental differences, learning styles, and exceptionalities. As a collaborator, the middle school teacher actively engages with the interdisciplinary team, other teachers, administrators, and support staff to improve student achievement and is involved in programs (e.g., advisories, intramurals, clubs) and other aspects of the middle school learning environment. As a lifelong learner, the committed middle school teacher models continuous learning to students by reading, experimenting, and focusing on new materials and teaching strategies, emerging technologies, and new subject matter knowledge through seminars, formal coursework, travel, trainings and other learning opportunities.

Middle School Teacher Certification/Licensure

NMSA cites the importance of middle school teachers making a conscious decision to teach young adolescents and to receive training on the specialized knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be successful in meeting the challenges of teaching this age group. However, certification programs for middle school teacher education vary by state with approximately 28 states and the District of Columbia offering a middle school license. Eighteen other states require a middle school endorsement in addition to either an elementary or secondary school license. Teachers may also need to obtain a subject-specific endorsement for the subject they teach. The grades which middle school licenses cover, ranging from 4th-9th grades, also vary by state. Middle school education degree programs are offered at universities and colleges as well as online schools.

www.braintrack.com/degree-programs-and-certifications/articles/middle-school-education-degrees)

Formerly NMSA, the Association for Middle Level Education's *Middle Level Teacher Certification/Licensure Patterns by State* (Table 2) indicates that there are 47 states with middle level license/certificate or endorsement

www.amle.org/ProfessionalPreparation/CertificationLicensurebyState).

Table 2

AMLE Middle Level Teacher Certification/Licensure Patterns by State

State	License Type	Grade Levels	State	License Type	Grade Levels
Alabama	License	4-8	Montana	None	None
Alaska	Endorsement	5-8	Nebraska	Endorsement	4-9
Arizona	Endorsement	5-9	Nevada	License	7-9
Arkansas	License	4-8	New Hampshire	License	5-8
California	None	None	New Jersey	Endorsement	5-8
Colorado	None	None	New Mexico	Endorsement	5-8
Connecticut	License	5-9	New York	Endorsement	5-9
Delaware	License	5-9	North Carolina	License	6-9
D. C.	License	5-8	North Dakota	License	5-8
Florida	Endorsement	5-9	Ohio	License	4-9
Georgia	License	4-8	Oklahoma	Endorsement	4-8
Hawaii	License	5-9	Oregon	License	5-9
Idaho	None	None	Pennsylvania	License	4-8
Illinois	Endorsement	5-8	Rhode Island	Endorsement	5-8
Indiana	License	5-8	South Carolina	License	5-8
Iowa	Endorsement	5-8	S. Dakota	License	5-8
Kansas	License	5-8	Tennessee	License	5-8
Kentucky	License	5-9	Texas	License	4-8
Louisiana	Endorsement	4-8	Utah	License	5-9
Maine	Endorsement	5-8	Vermont	License	5-8
Maryland	License	4-9	Virginia	License	6-8
Massachusetts	License	5-9	Washington	Endorsement	5-9
Michigan	Endorsement	5-9	West Virginia	License	5-9
Minnesota	License	5-8	Wisconsin	License	5-9
Mississippi	Endorsement	4-8	Wyoming	License	5-8
Missouri	License	5-8			

Number of states with middle level license/certificate or endorsement: 46 + DC

Number of states with middle level license: 28 + DC

Number of states with middle level endorsement: 18

Note: This information was gathered by examining documents available at Web sites that provide certification/licensure regulations for each of the states. It is clearly understood that state licensure standards change frequently and that some of the information provided here may have changed. Persons interested in more detailed information should contact each respective state. This chart is intended only to identify trends in middle level licensure. The term "license" is used to mean that a separate middle level license is available and the term "endorsement" is used to mean that the middle level teaching license is available only as an add-on credential for those also qualifying for a different license; for example adding a grades 5 through 8 mathematics middle level endorsement to an elementary education teaching license.

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Middle School Teacher Preparation Programs

Since many states allow teachers with elementary or secondary education degrees to teach middle school, middle school education degree programs at universities and colleges are not as easy to find as other teaching degrees. There are about 130 institutions of higher education that offer middle school teacher education programs leading to certification. However, schools that offer middle school education programs and are also ranked in U.S. News and World Report (2012) are: University of Maryland College Park, University of Georgia, Ohio State University, University of Cincinnati in Ohio, University of Chapel Hill, and Greensboro in North Carolina, North Carolina State University and Hofstra University in New York. Ohio has many institutions of higher education offering middle teacher licensure programs. As result, school districts in search of recruiting qualified middle-level teachers specifically trained to work with early adolescents may target these institutions of higher education in their recruitment efforts.

NMSA (2001) established Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards (programmatic and middle level performance-based) for individuals completing initial, masters, and doctoral level programs. The two programmatic standards provide the middle level courses and experiences necessary to effectively prepare teacher candidates and ensure qualified faculty with middle level experience and expertise. The seven performance-based standards describe specialized knowledge, dispositions, and performances needed to successfully teach adolescents and focus on what middle level teachers should know and be able to do:

Standard 1 Young Adolescent Development

Standard 2 Middle Level Philosophy and School Organization

Standard 3 Middle Level Curriculum and Assessment

Standard 4 Middle Level Teaching Fields

Standard 5 Middle Level Instruction and Assessment

Standard 6 Family and Community Involvement

Standard 7 Middle Level Professional Roles

Along with these programmatic and performance-based standards, NMSA acknowledges that each institution of higher education has unique attributes that influence middle level teacher preparation programs and requires the institution to write a contextual statement regarding their program. Because of the need for middle school teachers, particularly in the areas of math and science, institutions of higher education are responding by increasing specific middle school teacher preparation programs to meet the demand and supply needs of school districts.

Middle School Students—Adolescent Development

Adolescence is a time when middle school students transition from childhood into adulthood, making decisions that determine their futures (Alvermann, 2009). Early adolescents struggle for independence, identity, and acceptance while undergoing intellectual, emotional, physical, sexual, social, personal, and moral developmental changes (Strahan, L'Esperance, & Van Hoose, 2009). Middle school environments need to be responsive and supportive in meeting the developmental needs of their students. The National Middle School Association's position paper, *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* (2003), asserts that the school's organization, curriculum, pedagogy, and programs must be based upon the developmental readiness, needs, and interests of young adolescents.

Intellectual and Emotional Development

Research on learning (Cross, 1999) provides evidence that learning is about making connections neurologically, cognitively, socially, and experientially. The neurological structure of the brain changes during adolescence (Caskey & Ruben, 2007). Even though the brain grows to nearly adult size by age six, the "neural pruning" is a process that eliminates unused connections and solidifies brain circuitry peaks in early

adolescence along with an increase in myelination that speeds up the transmission of electrical impulses from neuron to neuron. As a result, the physiological processes increase the efficiency of brain functions but key parts of the brain do not mature until late adolescence. For example, the prefrontal cortex (guides executive functions such as planning, reasoning, anticipating consequences, sustaining attention, and making decisions) and hippocampus (guides central memory and emotional reasoning) mature later. From her neuroimaging and neurochemical investigations, Willis (2007) described how parts of the adolescent brain become hyperactive and block learning when experiencing stress. Therefore, it is important for middle level teachers to create learning environments that produce emotional satisfaction and engage students through multiple sensory modalities so that the metabolic activity of the brain accelerates and thinking becomes more constructive.

Through cognitive connections, adolescents learn to problem solve. Piaget's (1972) stage theory of cognitive development describes four stages that children pass through at varying times and rates. Early adolescence is a time of transition from concrete operations (i.e., ability to reason logically using concrete objects) to formal operations (i.e., logical reasoning of verbal statements without particular objects). Therefore, middle level teachers need to scaffold instruction and use multi-sensory approaches to meet their students' cognitive developmental levels to guide students in creating new connections to learning. Students can deal with abstract mathematical concepts and use language to expand thinking and reflect on experiences only if they are in the formal operations stage of cognitive development. Otherwise, middle level teachers need to consider using manipulatives with students still in the concrete operations stage. As young adolescents' reasoning grows more sophisticated, they become more aware of their own unique talents and interests developing multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2006).

Social constructivists believe that learning occurs when people try to make sense of the world around them (Cross, 1999). Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theories

describe how intellectual development grows through social interactions. When students are engaged with other children and adults around them, they are able to expand their prior knowledge and language use (Wood, Roser, & Martinez, 2001). Ravenscroft (2007) found that dialogue is essential to learning in his study of adolescents engaged in digital dialogue games versus a traditional classroom learning setting. Since dialogue among students helps to clarify their thoughts and advance their thinking, middle level teachers should consider using project-based learning approaches to promote collaboration and purposeful dialogue.

Experiential learning consists of the pedagogical use of experience to improve learning (i.e., learning from experience) and the use of learning relevant information to improve performance (Cross, 1999). Researchers have found that adolescents' involvement in meaningful learning activities is characterized by "flow" when they are immersed in the activity and enjoy what they are doing, often losing track of time (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 1989). Middle level teachers who are sensitive to their students' goals and interests can encourage such immersion by empowering students to take control of their learning, fostering conditions that promote experiential and emotional aspects of learning.

According to McDevitt and Ormrod (2007), there are three major ways that emotional development grows more sophisticated during transitions to early adolescence:

1. As adolescents start to recognize ambivalence in their own feelings and in others, they learn to temper emotional responses with reflections on meaning which may result in a stronger sense of confusion wondering how they really feel.
2. As adolescents understand more about their own feelings, they begin to better understand what others are feeling resulting in a greater capacity for empathy.

3. Adolescents' growing capacities for emotional understanding lead to self-consciousness regarding their own feelings which is empowering for some adolescents but may cause others to be more vulnerable to depression and anxiety.

Goleman (1998) asserts that parents and teachers need to be more proactive about teaching "emotional intelligence" (EI) to help students identify and manage feelings appropriately, motivate themselves, and respond to the feelings of others. Qualter, Hutchinson, and Pope (2007) found in their study that students with high or average EI cope better with transition to high school than adolescents with low EI in terms of grade point average, self-worth, school attendance, and behavior. Since students with low baseline EI scores responded well to intervention programs, middle level teachers can deploy such programs to increase the development of EI competencies in their students.

Physical and Sexual Development

Early adolescents experience physical changes such as an average weight gain of 40-50 pounds and average gain in height of 10-20 inches (Balk, 1995). However, these weight and height changes come in irregular growth spurts, often resulting in students feeling self-conscious about their changing bodies. Middle level teachers need to understand that these ongoing physical changes can influence adolescents' self-esteem, eating-related attitudes, social support network, the amount of teasing by peers, and perceptions of friends and family (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2007; Jones & Crawford, 2006). In addition, since their bone growth surpasses muscle growth and 40% of total lifetime bone mass is accumulated during this period, early adolescents are susceptible to bone fractures or breaks and need to have adequate calcium intake to increase bone density to support rapid growth.

Puberty changes occur in males between 9.5 and 14 years old and for females between the ages of 8 and 13 years old (Children's Hospital Boston, 2007). During

puberty, adolescent females experience breast development, pubic hair development, underarm hair (12 years of age), and menstrual periods (10-16.5 years of age).

Adolescent males experience testicle and penis enlargement, pubic hair development (13.5 years of age), hair under the arms, on the face, voice change, and acne (15 years of age), and nocturnal emissions/wet dreams (14 years of age). These sexual changes begin to occur when the primary sex hormones, estrogen and testosterone, are produced.

However, the different rates of sexual development often lead to concern and anxiety among young adolescents and females tend to be less satisfied with their body image and become more weight-conscious. Middle level teachers need to be sensitive to their students' possible negative view of self and provide guidance as they struggle to understand their own sexuality and how to interact with the opposite sex during this stage of development.

Social, Personal, and Moral Development

Early adolescents' most important developmental accomplishment is a strong sense of identity. They often define themselves by how they are treated by significant others in their lives such as parents, teachers, friends, and other family members.

Therefore, their identity formation is impacted by their social, personal, and moral development. Roesset, Eccles, and Sameroff's (2000) longitudinal study of almost 1500 young adolescents shows that how well their experiences support a sense of competence and autonomy and the quality of their relationships with peers and adults will shape adolescents' view of themselves, their social well-being, and their success in school.

Since young adolescents are in a transitional stage, they tend to vacillate in their social and moral behaviors from being childlike to being like adults. Connected to their quest for independence is the development of moral reasoning which is influenced by friends and social networks in addition to parent and personal authority. Moral development is the acquisition of standards about right and wrong and engaging in prosocial behaviors

that reflect concern for other people's rights and needs (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007). Supportive parenting styles that stimulate moral reasoning positively influence adolescents' establishment of social and moral boundaries though many young adolescents find it difficult to withstand peer pressure. Middle level teachers need to be aware that young adolescents' mood fluctuations may be related to their successful or unsuccessful experience of gaining acceptance by their peers. Positive peer and academic experiences nurture the self-concept of young adolescents. To meet the personal needs of their students, middle level teachers need to provide an environment where students feel secure, successful, and supported (Strahan, L'Esperance, & Van Hoose, 2009).

The National Middle School Association's *Teacher Preparation Standards* (2005) cites seven standards summarizing what middle level teachers should know and be able to do. Young adolescent development is the first standard providing a foundation for the rest of the standards (middle level philosophy, middle level curriculum/assessment, middle level teaching fields, middle level instruction/assessment, family and community involvement, middle level professional roles) because the essence of outstanding instruction is being responsive to the developmental needs of the students. Principals can use these standards to hire effective middle level teachers to promote student achievement.

Principals as Human Resources Managers

There is consensus in the literature that hiring the best possible candidate for a teaching position is one of the most important decisions principals make as human resources managers. Principals' hiring decisions make a long-term difference to school-district quality. A school district's success in attracting, selecting, and retaining good teachers determines its ability to improve student achievement and prepare students to become responsible and productive citizens in adulthood (Bolz, 2009; Peterson, 2002; Rothman, 2004; Seyfarth, 2005). This section begins with a review of the research on the

characteristics of highly qualified and effective teachers that principals need to consider as hiring managers, principals' perceptions of effective teachers, and teacher selection criteria, followed by an examination of hiring practices and the relationship between principals and Human Resources.

Highly Qualified Teachers

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 defined highly qualified teachers as being certified or licensed by the state and demonstrating content knowledge in the subject they teach. This definition addressed the issue of teachers teaching out of their certification fields to ensure that all students were taught by teachers knowledgeable in the subjects they teach. The law stressed the importance of content mastery and verbal ability over pedagogy, which promoted further research on the effects of a teacher's knowledge and skills on student outcomes as a dependent variable. Even though there is agreement on the intention of this act to raise teacher standards, NCLB's definition of highly qualified as those teachers fully licensed or certified by the state is ambiguous because there is no consistency as to what defines full state certification (Gelman, Pullen, & Kauffman, 2004). Moreover, a study of the 2001-2002 teacher licensure requirements in all 50 states of the United States found that to obtain state licensure, teacher candidates were required to pass a test of basic skills in 37 states, a test of content knowledge in 33 states, a test of pedagogical knowledge in 26 states, and classroom performance assessments in 9 states (Youngs, Odden, & Porter, 2003). The highly qualified teacher requirement of NCLB has been the least thoroughly enforced of all the provisions in the act (Haycock, 2005). As a result, the NCLB Act added to the confusion of defining highly qualified teachers because there is a disconnect between policy and practice regarding the perceptions of teacher quality.

Fenstermacher and Richardson's (2005, p. 195) analysis of the concept of teaching further embraces the importance of student outcomes by suggesting that the identification of highly qualified teachers requires principals to analyze three elements of teaching—logical acts (defining, demonstrating, explaining, correcting, and interpreting), psychological acts (motivating, encouraging, rewarding, punishing, planning, and evaluating), and moral acts (models such traits as honesty, courage, tolerance, compassion, respect, and fairness). These three acts of teaching sensitive to internal (linked to the phenomenon) and external (how phenomenon is responded to by others) criteria provide principals a framework for judging teaching quality without actual evidence of student learning. The researchers define quality teaching as a combination of good teaching and successful teaching. Good teaching focuses on tasks, is learner sensitive, and the content is taught according to standard (logical, psychological, and moral acts). In addition to good teaching, three other factors are cited as being critical for student learning to take place—the learner's willingness and effort, supportive social environment, and opportunities to learn—which are evident in successful teaching which focuses on achievement, is learning dependent, and helps students learn what is intended in a lesson.

Berliner (2005) agrees with Fenstermacher and Richardson's concept of good teaching with logical, psychological, and moral acts and that combining good teaching with evidence of student learning (i.e., successful teaching) is necessary to define teacher quality. However, after reviewing current tests of teacher quality and finding them inadequate, he asserts that assessing these dimensions of teaching using paper-and-pencil tests is difficult, particularly for the psychological and moral acts. Berliner cautions that inadequate assessments for teacher quality, which do not assess the constructs on which they claim to be based, may actually lower the quality of teachers entering the profession. He advocates a construct-centered approach to assessing teacher quality—ideally, using multiple observers on different occasions. However, in practice, this hiring strategy

would not be feasible or cost effective for large school districts with limited human resources personnel and principals who may not have the time or the staff to observe potential teachers on different occasions.

Even though initially the predominant focus of teacher quality research was on the characteristics that lay solely in the teacher, Barr (1952, p. 172) raised the question that "teacher effectiveness" may be essentially a relationship between teachers, pupils, and the other persons concerned with the educational undertaking, all affected by limiting and facilitating aspects of the immediate situation. Her insightful recommendation for future research eventually led to studies exploring the effects of teachers' actions and student learning—a process-product approach to research highly effective teachers (Hess, 2004; Walsh, 2001). Furthermore, the report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which described how schools in other countries were surpassing our educational attainments, catapulted the focus from studying teacher characteristics to studying the value-added effects that the characteristics had on student performance (Sanders & Horn, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). More recently, other teacher quality studies have moved the focus from teacher characteristics and student outcome to also emphasize the context of the learner and the ability of the teacher to be effective in the culture and changing dynamics of the student's environment (Stronge, 2002).

Since researchers and practitioners agree that a teacher designated as highly qualified by NCLB does not necessarily mean that the teacher will be effective in raising the academic performance of students, the concept of teacher effectiveness has been extensively studied in recent years. Studies examining the characteristics of effective teachers have focused on how teachers use their knowledge, teaching skills, and characteristics in a multiplicity of ways to create successful learning environments for students (Schalock, 1979; Stronge, 2002; Stronge & Hindman, 2006; Whitehurst, 2002). Other researchers examined how teacher attributes such as teacher preparation, degrees,

certification, and experience relate to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rice, 2003). As a result of the studies on teacher quality and teacher effectiveness, a commission proposed an expansion of the NCLB law that would require schools to ensure that all high school seniors are proficient in reading and math by 2014. This law would require teachers not only to be highly qualified and demonstrate mastery in the subjects they teach but also to be highly effective as evidenced by their students' improvement on test performance (Paley, 2007), which adds more pressure on the principal as a human resources manager.

Hiring Effective Teachers

There has been much interest in the study of teacher quality, teacher effectiveness, and the need for hiring effective teachers to promote student achievement. As early as the 1950s, Thurman (1950, p. 214) emphasized the importance of teacher quality but acknowledged wide-spread disagreement as to what makes a good teacher, wrestling with the selection of teacher candidates because of their academic attainments versus personality traits and qualities. After years of research on teacher quality and effectiveness, there continues to be a lack of consensus on defining highly qualified teachers. However, there is consensus in the literature that the most important variable influencing student achievement is to have a highly qualified and effective teacher in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Rivers & Sanders, 2002; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Sanders & Horn, 1998) but there are many different ways of looking at teacher quality.

Early teacher quality research focused on the individual teacher by assessing the teacher's personality traits and attitudes (Barr, 1952; Barr, Eustice, & Noe, 1955; Calabria, 1960; LeFevre, 1967; Thurman, 1950; Umstattd, 1937). The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory was a popular research and screening instrument to select teachers by

predicting how the teachers will get along with students in interpersonal relationships (Barr, Eustice, & Noe, 1955; Rocchio & Kearney, 1955).

In 1978, J. T. Saunders' review of research on teacher effectiveness found no established relationship between teaching skills and student learning outcomes. He attributed the differences in student learning to learner differences such as the student's socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and innate ability rather than teacher differences. With the societal changes around the 1980s and 1990s with increasingly diverse student populations, advanced technology in the classroom, and educational policies demanding more teacher accountability for student achievement, the focus shifted from solely studying teacher characteristics to also studying the outcomes or performance of the students. Hence, the identification of highly qualified teachers now focused not only on teacher characteristics but also on how these characteristics positively impacted student performance.

Dr. William Sanders addressed the controversy of measuring the effects of a teacher on student performance by developing a value-added assessment system to measure achievement gains by students with specific teachers over time (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Sanders and Rivers found that low-achieving students of effective teachers gained about three times as much in achievement as those taught by the least effective teachers. His Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVASS), also referred to as the Educational Value-Added Assessment System (EVASS), has been used by school districts across the country to support the theory that high-quality teachers are central to student academic attainment.

With the ambiguity surrounding the definition of highly qualified teachers, principals may tend to rely on the findings of the research on highly effective teachers to construct their own criteria for teacher selection. Rice's (2003) research suggests that during the teacher selection process, principals can look for these characteristics associated with higher levels of student achievement: years of teaching experience,

knowledge of subject area and pedagogy, selectivity of the college or university they attended, being certified in the subject area they teach, and high verbal abilities.

Concurring with Rice, Bassett (2003) describes effective teachers as teachers who have academic degrees, high verbal abilities, and strong knowledge base in the subjects they teach in addition to caring about their students and being high performers themselves in school and college. In addition to having strong subject knowledge, Silcock (1993) describes effective teachers as being able to accommodate instruction to individual learner conditions and to manage time and material resources to maximize student learning opportunities.

To address the increasing complexity of teachers' roles and responsibilities, Yin and Kowk (1999) presented a framework of seven models to study the criteria and characteristics of teacher effectiveness through the different lenses which included:

- Teacher's personality, attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary for achieving goals/tasks (goal/task),
- Knowledge and competence in utilizing different resources efficiently (resource utilization),
- Ability to meet performance standards through effective teaching and working processes(working process),
- Ability to identify and satisfy the needs and expectations of multiple constituencies (school constituencies satisfaction),
- Training, certifications, knowledge, and skills important for teachers' accountability and reputation (accountability),
- Knowledge and competencies necessary to avoid potential problems in their work process (absence of problems),
- Ability to analyze and reflect on changes and develop strategies for continuous improvement (continuous learning).

Because of the complex task of teaching, teacher effectiveness has been defined as an elusive concept (Stronge, 2002). Based upon a review and synthesis of research on effective teaching, Stronge grouped common characteristics of effective teachers into three categories: teacher as an individual, teacher preparation, classroom management, and the way a teacher plans, teaches, and monitors student progress.

Even though there is no agreement in the literature on defining highly qualified teachers, there is greater consensus on how practitioners, policymakers, and academia define teacher effectiveness in terms of the impact that the teacher has on the academic growth of their students. However, while the criteria presented in the literature on the selection of highly effective teachers is useful, we need to know the apparent influences on the primary decisionmakers, namely principals, who actually hire teachers to improve student performance in their schools.

Principals' Perceptions of Effective Teachers

Doctoral dissertations and literature on principals' hiring practices and their perceptions of highly effective teachers add to the body of knowledge of effective teacher characteristics. Bolz's (2009) qualitative doctoral research study examined what practices six elementary principals used to screen teacher candidates during the hiring process and the effectiveness of these strategies in identifying characteristics of quality teachers. He found that the principals used a paper screening process to review letters of recommendation, resume, cover letter and transcripts to identify a limited number of candidates to interview. An analysis of six criteria considered as indicators of a highly qualified teacher revealed that a higher level degree, teaching experience, teacher certification, content knowledge, and personal attributes were important to the principals but that general knowledge and ability did not get much attention from the principals in their consideration to hire. Since the principals developed their own screening process because the school district did not have a defined process for screening candidates,

principals admitted that they question how effective they are at screening teacher candidates.

In her doctoral dissertation research, Raptakis (2005) examined the parents', teachers', and principals' perceptions of the characteristics of high-quality teachers and the differences in their perceptions of a highly qualified teacher in the elementary and middle schools. She found that middle school principals ranked as most important these attributes of an excellent teacher: high expectations for self and others, encourages active listening, has a passion to help students learn and grow, uses a variety of assessments, participates in professional development, relates knowledge to real life, uses praise and encouragement, is caring, empathetic, respectful and fair, allows for individual differences, and manages classrooms effectively. The least critical attributes of an excellent teacher were being National Board certified, has many years of experience, passed proficiency test, has a provisional certificate, and passed state math, reading, and writing tests, which is consistent with the finding from this qualitative research study on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria.

In her doctoral research, Hindman (2004) examined principals' interviewing practices and how they associated interview statements with levels of teacher effectiveness which led to the development of an interview protocol to discriminate between effective and ineffective teachers, *The Teacher Quality Index, A Protocol for Teacher Selection* by Stronge and Hindman (2006). She used Stronge's (2002) framework for identifying characteristics of effective teachers in the following categories: teacher as a person, classroom management and organization, organizing and orienting for instruction, implementing instruction, monitoring student progress and potential, and professionalism. Hindman developed questions for her survey targeting these qualities of effective teachers: personal characteristics, classroom management, organization for instruction, instructional delivery, and assessment. Researchers and practitioners use this survey in an effort, respectively, to further research and hire effective teachers.

Perkins (1998) conducted an analysis of teacher interview questions and practices used by middle school principals in her doctoral research. She found that the principals' questions and what they said they were looking for did not always align. The seven middle school principals in her study described the following desirable characteristics in teachers they would hire: enthusiastic, energetic, intelligent, communicative, knowledgeable in content areas, team player, good interpersonal relations skills, personable, and approachable. The findings from this researcher's investigative study researching middle school principals' teacher selection criteria support the reported characteristics of highly effective teachers found in these doctoral dissertations.

Principals' perceived characteristics of effective teachers are also documented in the literature. Westbrook (1998) identified the following teacher qualities sought by principals: strong academic background, qualifications, communication and teaching skills, ability to establish relationships with parents and students, teacher's continuing education, a love of teaching, going the extra mile, dedication, enthusiasm, and extracurricular interests. Johnson and Roellke (1999) surveyed secondary school teachers and teacher educators and found that they rated enthusiasm, interpersonal communication and oral communication as being important in hiring a teacher and class preparation as important for teacher effectiveness. Many of these same qualities are reported by R. E. Smith's (2005, p. 75-77) *Characteristics of Effective Certificated Staff*: flexibility, commitment to accomplishment, enthusiasm, communication skills, conceptual and technical skills, professional orientation, modeling appropriate behavior, and relating to students, staff, and parents as important criteria. Furthermore, Larson (2006) describes similar desirable teacher characteristics such as flexibility, adaptability, response to constructive criticism, teamwork, and collaboration. These identified characteristics of effective teachers have been included in the formulation of teacher selection criteria in the research and across various educational organizations.

Teacher Selection Criteria

Some researchers suggest that judging a teacher's effectiveness and selecting a teacher is not the same thing (Newton & Newton, 2001). Johnson (1994) asked secondary school principals to rate criteria for selecting a teacher and judging a teacher's effectiveness. His analysis revealed five criteria important for teacher selection: communication, credentials, experience, presentation (appearance and resume), and activities (evidence of leadership) and four criteria important for teacher effectiveness: interaction skills, discipline, preparation, and activation (ability to motivate and involve learners).

Based on teacher effectiveness research leading to increased student learning, researchers developed criteria for selecting highly qualified and effective teachers. In 1992, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) developed a set of useful job-specific criteria for the selection of beginning and experienced teachers, identifying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers need to be effective (Table 3).

Table 3

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Teacher Standards

Ten Principles of INTASC Standards that Embody the Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions that Teachers Need to be Effective	
1.	Understands central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) s/he teaches and can create learning experiences making subject matter meaningful
2.	Understands how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development
3.	Understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners
4.	Understands/uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills
5.	Uses an understanding of individual/group motivation and behavior that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation
6.	Uses effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom
7.	Plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students , the community, and curriculum goals
8.	Understands/uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner
9.	Is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices/actions on others and actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally
10.	Fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support Ss' learning and well-being

INTASC, 1992, p. 2

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) further examined the importance of advanced degrees, experience, education courses, traditional certification, teacher's race, subject area knowledge, teacher's level of literacy, selectivity of college and soft attributes in the selection of effective teachers (Walsh & Tracy, 2004). They found that:

- Advanced degrees, education courses taken before teaching have little impact on teacher effectiveness
- A few years of experience makes a teacher more effective however, after that, it's unclear.
- Traditional certification routes to teaching do not appear to yield more effective teachers than alternative routes.

- Matching teacher's race to student's race may be advisable as long as race does not override other important considerations; there is insufficient evidence to support hiring policies making the teacher's race a primary consideration.
- Strong preparation in secondary teacher's intended subject area adds significant value—insufficient evidence on the breadth and depth of subject matter training needed for elementary teachers.
- Level of literacy on tests is higher for more effective teachers.
- Colleges with more selective admission requirements produce more effective teachers.
- Soft attributes of teachers that matter the most are the hardest to measure.

Concurring with NCTQ's emphasis on the importance of soft attributes, Teach for America (www.teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/who-we-look-for/how-we-evaluate) and the Haberman Educational Foundation (Haberman, 2005) identify attributes in their criteria for hiring effective teachers to serve diverse students in poverty in urban districts. Teach for America identifies seven critical soft attributes found in teachers who produced the greatest student learning gains: high achieving, responsible, critical thinker, organized, motivating, respectful, and shares the goals of the organization. Haberman has identified the following attributes of successful urban teachers: had life experiences in a city, extensive relationships with diverse children, and work experiences prior to becoming a teacher; are members of a minority group or working class white family; started in a community college and majored in a field other than education as undergraduate; experienced living in poverty or has the capacity to empathize with the challenges of living in poverty; is part of a community where teaching is valued; and can multi-task and do several things simultaneously.

In summary, principals have many teacher selection criteria to guide them in the hiring of middle school teachers who would be good matches for their schools in urban or suburban settings. However, the principal's role in the hiring process depends on the school district's centralized or de-centralized hiring practices.

District Hiring Practices

Recent literature on teacher hiring practices has focused on how urban school districts are attracting large numbers of high-quality teachers only to lose 30% to 60% of all applicants because of slow hiring practices, delays in school budget timetables, and teachers' union seniority rules. In a study of four urban school districts in the Southwest, Midwest, and East, Levin and Quinn (2003) surveyed more than 300 applicants who withdrew from the hiring process. These applicants had higher undergraduate GPAs, were 40% more likely to have a degree in their teaching field and between 37% and 69% were candidates for hard-to-fill positions.

In a follow-up study to address the issues identified in Levin and Quinn's report, Levin, Mulhern, and Schunck (2005) studied five urban districts and found that "voluntary transfer" (incumbent teachers who want to move between schools in a district) and "excessed" (teachers cut from a specific school due to declines in budget or student enrollment) teacher rules delayed hiring which resulted in losing talented teacher applicants, bumped talented novice teachers, and required schools to pick up poorly matched or poor-performing teachers.

In 2006, California passed Senate Bill (SB) 1655 to become the first state to reform seniority-based teacher-transfer rules which regulate the movement of current teachers among schools, delayed hiring of new teachers, and negatively affected the ability of schools to hire the best-qualified teachers. SB1655 ensured that local teacher-transfer rules no longer interfere with principals making timely job offers and staffing their schools with high-quality teachers by stating that principals in low-performing

schools can refuse to accept teacher transfers and seniority-based voluntary-transfer processes must be completed by April 15, freeing principals to consider all teacher candidates equally and hire the best match for their schools. SB 1655 aimed to address collectively bargained staffing policies that limit principals' ability to hire high-quality teachers and to give schools more authority in hiring the selection of teachers for their schools (Scott & Rhee, 2006).

To further assist principals in the hiring of high quality teachers, some urban school districts have found success partnering with organizations such as The New Teacher Project which provides training to principals on how to select teachers that best fit their schools. Principals are coached on what to look for in resumes, receive help on selecting questions from a bank of 50 to 75 interview questions tailored to the needs of their schools, and are provided different ways to stay connected with new hires over the summer to ensure retention (Rossi, 2006).

To expedite and improve hiring practices, many school districts' human resources offices are turning to technology and applicant tracking systems, making it easier for applicants to search vacancies, apply online by emailing their resumes, and receive automatic communication responses throughout the process in a timely manner. Central office human resources staffers often review resumes, screen candidates for central office interviews and offer early contracts of employment to build the applicant pools for principals to review for teacher selection.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between principals and human resources in the school district where this qualitative study takes place. In this district, human resources obtains resumes from online recruitment using social networks, recruitment at job fairs, ads in major publications, and referrals from the Board of Education members, district personnel, and personal contacts. Human resources staffers use their teacher selection criteria to build teacher applicant pools and offer early contracts to applicants who score high on their paper screening and interviews. When principals have vacancies, they

contact their assigned human resources staffer who refers teacher applicants along with references to the principal for consideration. When applicants contact principals directly, the principal refers the applicant to human resources for screening because principals do not want to waste time meeting with applicants who are not certified.

The large suburban school district in this study has a centralized process for teacher selection to ensure the quality of the teacher hires and to save principals time from interviewing applicants who are not certified to teach or have poor references.

Principals' Role in the Hiring Process

As shown in Figure 1, after the principal receives referrals from central office human resources for teacher vacancies, the principal interviews the applicant at the school site, often using a panel of involved stakeholders. After obtaining information from the applicant during the interview, the principal and/or panel members decide if the applicant is a good match for the school. If yes, the principal makes the offer of hire to the applicant and sends the staffing recommendation to human resources to hire the applicant and assign to the school. After doing fingerprinting/background checks, once the applicant is cleared for hire, human resources assigns the teacher applicant to the school. If the principal and his staff interview a teacher referral from human resources and decide it is not a good match, the human resources staffer will continue to work with the principal until a teacher referral meets the principal's hiring criteria.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES
IN SCHOOL DISTRICT**

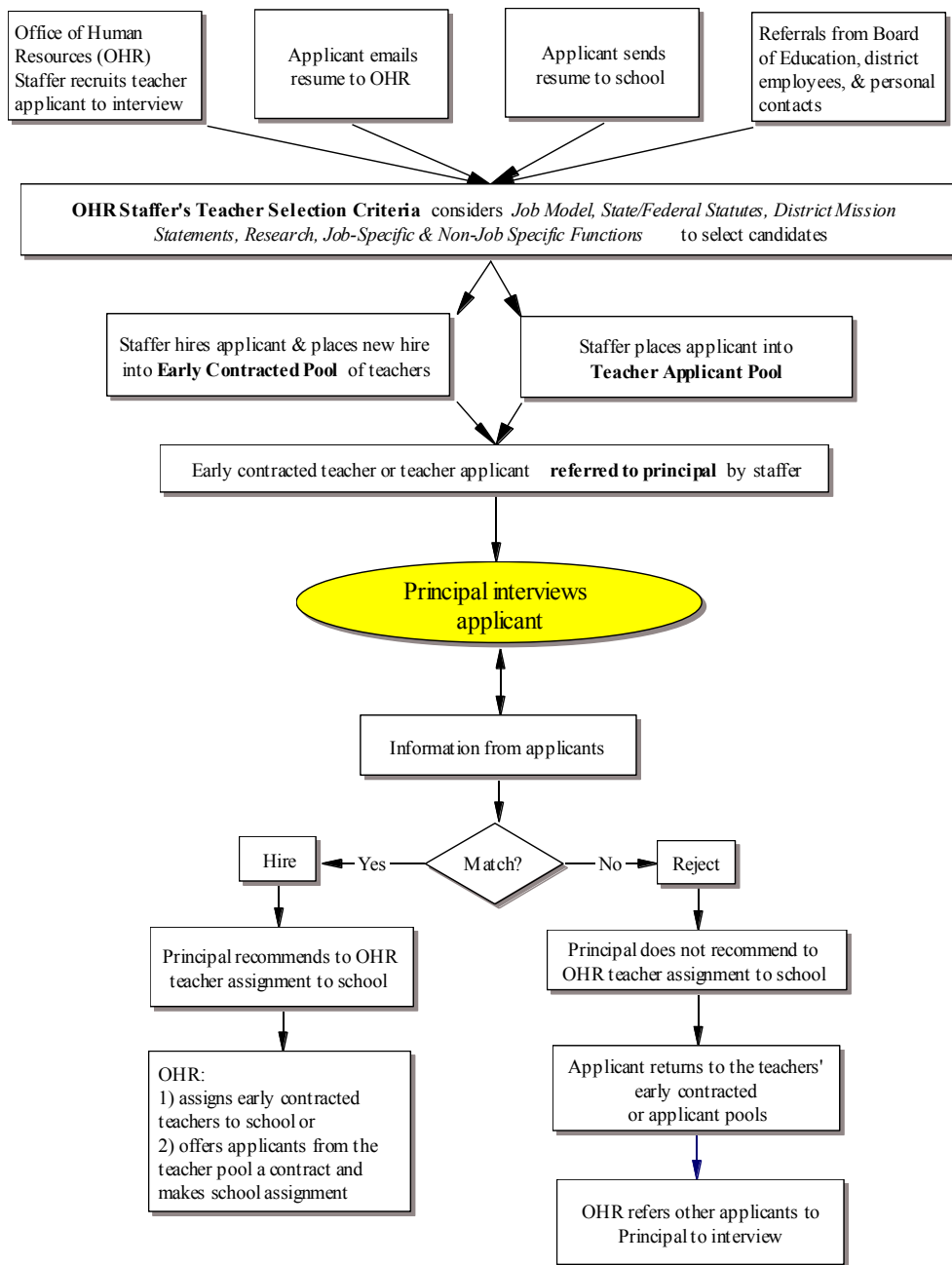


Figure 1. Relationship Between Principal and Human Resources

Principals play an important role in determining the quality of their schools because through the teacher hiring process they can make a difference in student achievement and bring about improved student learning (Seyfarth, 2005). Approximately 80% of a school district's budget is usually allocated for human resources functions, covering the cost of salary, benefits, and staff development of certificated, classified, and administrative personnel (Smith, 2005). The importance of principals hiring well not only impacts the academic achievement of students but also the economic costs of teacher turnover. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003), it costs a school district an average of \$50,000 to recruit, hire, prepare, and lose a teacher. Therefore, when principals make the best match in hiring teachers for their schools, the teacher turnover rate tends to decline, preventing the loss of financial and professional development investment and providing continuity and stability for students, staff, and parents.

The literature documents "interview bias;" some of the values and beliefs that interviewers bring to the interview are helpful in identifying high-quality teachers but interviewers need to be aware of possible bias inherent in the interviewing process (Seyfarth, 2005, p. 55). Therefore, in their role as human resources managers, principals need to be aware of the following possible reactions that can bias their judgment of the applicant during an interview:

- *Contrast effect* comparing the applicant with a previously interviewed individual (Webster, 1982)
- *Halo effect* of reacting positively to an applicant, attaching disproportionate weight to positive data and discounting negative information (Webster, 1982);
- *Negative information* of attaching disproportionate weight to negative information resulting in elimination of promising applicants on the basis of fairly inconsequential information (Rowe, 1989)

- *Confirmation bias* of attaching greater weight on information obtained early in the interview and spending the rest of the interview looking to confirm their earlier judgment (Razik & Swanson, 2001; Rowe, 1989);
- *Social merit* of being attracted to applicants who are physically attractive (Seyfarth, 2005)
- *Similarity attraction* giving subtle advantages to people most similar to the interviewer (Tallerico, 2000; Webb & Norton, 2003).

Teacher Selection Process

Researchers have described the teacher selection process from different perspectives. Wise, Darling-Hammond, and Berry (1987) categorized data used in the hiring process as low-, medium-, and high-cost data. The early stages of the hiring process use low-cost data such as transcripts, resumes, and application forms. The next stage involves medium-cost data such as reference reviews, telephone contacts, teacher tests, and formal interviews. High-cost data, such as teacher observation, are highly reliable but may be cost-prohibitive because most principals may not have the time to engage in this practice.

Peterson (2002) presents a three-step hiring process. The first step is a paper screening of resume and credentials. The second step involves interviewing the candidates and checking references which leads to the third step of selection and hiring.

Mason and Schroeder (2010) describe the hiring process as the "reduction of uncertainty." They conceptualize a direct relationship between the size of the candidate pool and the degree of uncertainty to hire—that is, the larger the pool, the greater degree of uncertainty about the candidates. Their description of the hiring process starts with a paper screening, review of recommendation letters, and calling colleagues or references to reduce the candidate pool. The next step is the formal face-to-face interview which is

followed by more in-depth reference checks and follow-up interviews. In the final step of the hiring process, uncertainty is eliminated and a hiring decision is made resulting in an official offer of employment to a candidate.

According to Seyfarth (2005), teacher applicants are interviewed at least twice in the hiring process before a selection is made. A screening interview with a human resources specialist assessing the applicant's personal and professional qualities is often followed by a selection interview with principals and teachers to see if the applicant possesses the skills and experience to perform the essential functions of the job and personal qualities needed for a good fit.

However, current research suggests that principals can transform the selection process into a more thoughtful analysis of the applicants' beliefs, attitudes, and professional practices by utilizing hiring practices such as having the applicant observe a classroom and analyze school data and student work by asking them, "What did you notice?" (Reeves, 2007). The teacher selection process used by Teach for America and The New Teacher Project include applicants teaching a demonstration lesson, taking part in a group problem-solving activity, and writing sample in addition to the traditional interview.

According to Seyfarth (2005), the selection process aims to ensure that applicants possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their jobs effectively, make informed decisions about whether to accept an offer of employment and make a commitment to the organization, and commit the organization to provide the necessary support for new hires to succeed. Seyfarth identifies the importance of taking into consideration the *job model*, *state/federal statutes*, *mission statements*, and *research* that leads to *job-specific* and *nonjob-specific functions*. The weighing of the *job-specific* and *nonjob-specific functions* leads to the formation of a *selection criteria*. *Information from applicants* obtained through the hiring process is compared to the *selection criteria*. If there is a *match* or good fit, then the decision is to *hire*. If there is not a good match

between the *selection criteria* and *information from applicants*, then the decision is not to hire or *reject* the candidate for the position.

Guiding Conceptual Framework

For the purpose of this qualitative study on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria, Seyfarth's *Model of the Selection Process* (Figure 2) is used as a guiding conceptual framework to support this investigation. According to Seyfarth, the *job model* describes the working conditions and results that a jobholder is expected to accomplish. This information is available in the job description for the middle school teacher. *State/federal statutes* describe mandatory preparation and licensing requirements for personnel, such as teacher certification and licensure, which is also in the job description. *Mission statements* for consideration in forming job functions are at the district and school level. For example, the mission statement for the school district in this study, *To provide a high-quality, world-class education that ensures success for every student through excellence in teaching and learning*, is supported by the mission statement for middle schools (NMSA, 2010). *To provide an education for young adolescents that is developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable*. Seyfarth describes the *research* component of his model as the school characteristics and teacher attitudes and behaviors associated with increased student learning.

Model of the Selection Process
 (John T. Seyfarth, Human Resources Management for Effective Schools, 2005)

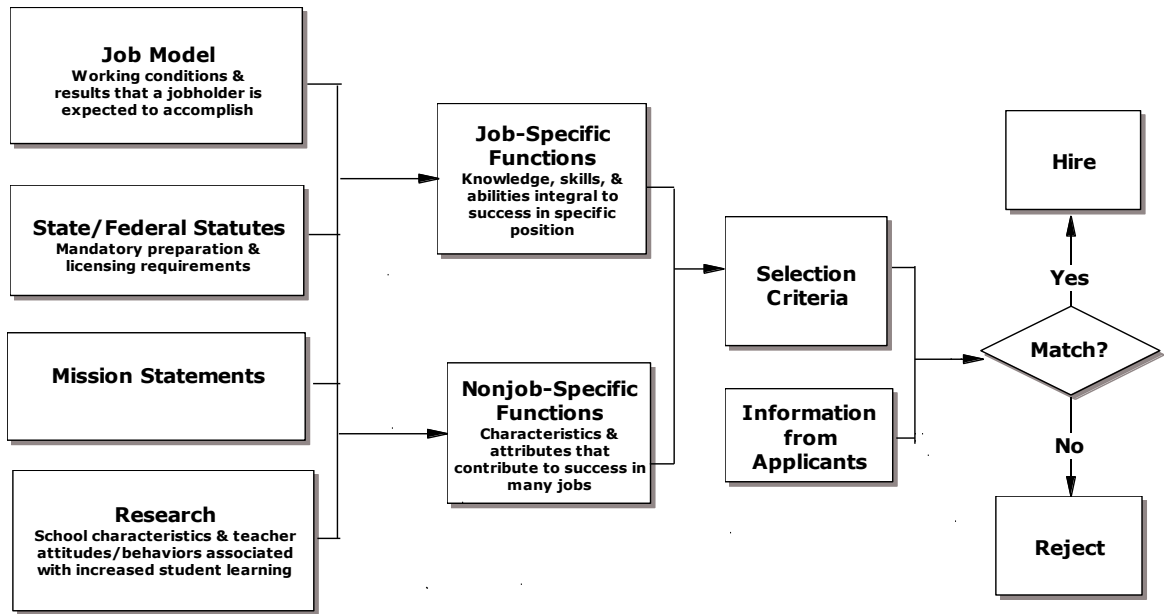


Figure 2. Seyfarth's Model of the Selection Process

These four components of his model, job model, state/federal statutes, mission statements, and research contribute to the identification of job-specific and nonjob-specific functions. Job-specific functions are the knowledge, skills and abilities integral to success in a specific position. For example, teachers are hired to help students acquire knowledge, skill, and attitudes of respect for self and others (Seyfarth, 2005, p. 39). However, the expectations for teachers have been raised and are reflected in the selection process. Teachers are now expected to raise test scores for all students and help students construct meaning rather than memorize content. They are expected to use technology and become more of a facilitator of student learning through project and student-centered learning approaches supporting the 21st Century Learning Environment with 1:1 computing using eTexts and global online blended learning (Ash & McClatchy, 2011; Jia, Chen, Ding & Ruan, 2011; Silvernail, 2011; Zhang & Quintana, 2011).

Nonjob-specific functions are the characteristics and attributes that contribute to success in many jobs such as good oral and written communication, regular attendance on the job, positive attitude, able to work well with others, and the soft attributes identified by researchers. Considering the *job-specific* and *nonjob-specific functions* of the teacher position, principals create their teacher *selection criteria* to use in their hiring process.

By assessing the indicators in the *selection criteria* with the *information from applicants* through a review of the applicants' resume, transcripts, references, and interview results, the employer rates the applicants for the position and hires the teacher whose qualifications *match* the selection criteria. For the purpose of this research study, focus will be on principals' perceptions of important teacher *job-specific and nonjob-specific functions* in the development of their *selection criteria* for hiring effective middle school teachers.

Summary

The review of the literature in this chapter supports the importance of training, recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers who choose specifically to work with the middle-level learner and provide them with *an education that will enhance their healthy growth as lifelong learners, ethical and democratic citizens, and increasingly competent, self-sufficient individuals who are optimistic about the future and prepared to succeed in our ever-changing world* (NMSA, 2010, p. 3). The results of this investigation on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria will add to the body of knowledge on what to look for in hiring effective middle school teachers. Chapter 3 will describe the design and methodology of this qualitative research study.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to answer the research questions: What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers? How do the unique characteristics of schools influence principals' teacher selection criteria? What process do principals use to select teachers using their criteria for selection? What facilitates principals' ability to select teachers who meet their selection criteria?

Seyfarth's (2005) Model of the Selection Process provided a guiding conceptual framework to limit this investigation bounded by time, place, and phenomena to be studied. This chapter presents an overview of the design and methodology, describing the case approach and context, the operationalization of the guiding conceptual framework, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, and standards for validation.

Case Approach and Context

Rationale for Case Study Approach

According to Yin (2003, p. 13-14), a case study is an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context where boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident and the situation has more variables of interest than data points. Since this research focused on the contemporary phenomenon of middle school principals' criteria for selecting teachers in a real-life context of middle schools impacted by various rates of teacher turnover, student mobility, and diverse student populations, and where the boundaries between the principals' teacher selection criteria and the school context are not clearly evident, the case study approach provided methodological congruence between the research problem, question, and method (Richards & Morse, 2007). Furthermore, this study described salient teacher

characteristics deemed important by principals in their hiring decisions, which align with the central tendency among case studies to illuminate the process of decision making, focusing on why, how, and with what results (Schramm, 1971; Yin, 2003). An external auditor (S. Raber, personal communication, August 12, 2009) who has worked with Yin on research studies concurred, stating that the case study methodology is most appropriate for this investigation when attempting to answer questions about decision-making processes such as why principals use certain criteria in selecting teachers. Therefore, since this study sought to: (1) understand the characteristics that middle school principals look for in hiring teachers; (2) examine the influence of school context on principals' teacher selection criteria; and (3) describe a set of criteria that principals use for teacher selection to meet the specific needs of their schools, a descriptive, multiple-case study approach was appropriate for this investigation.

Rationale for Multiple Case Study Design

Creswell (2007) defined the multiple case study as a collective case study where the inquirer purposively selects multiple cases to illustrate one issue or concern to maximize different perspectives on the phenomenon studied. Concurring with Creswell, Stake (2006) indicated that the single case of interest in multicase study research belongs to a particular collection of cases categorically bounded by a common characteristic or condition. Miles and Huberman (1994) also stressed the importance of purposive sampling for maximum variation, searching deliberately for extreme cases to increase confidence in conclusions. Furthermore, Yin (2003, p. 47) considers multiple cases as multiple experiments following a replication logic where each case must be carefully selected so that it either predicts similar results (a literal replication) or predicts contrasting results for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication).

In this investigation, the six multiple cases with middle school principals at different sites were purposively selected to examine their teacher selection criteria. Three

of these cases were categorically bound by interviewing principals in middle schools with the highest teacher turnover rates in the district and three cases were interviews with principals in middle schools with the lowest teacher turnover rates. More details on the purposive sampling for maximum variation are presented later in the Sample Selection section of this chapter.

The researcher studied what is similar and different about these cases in order to understand the principals' teacher selection criteria for their schools. To better understand this phenomenon of interest in the study, Stake (2006, pp. 10-11) suggests looking at the topical concern, foreshadowed problems, issue-related observations, patterns of data, and reformulation of issues as findings or assertions. In terms of this study, the concern is that we do not know what teacher characteristics middle school principals in this large suburban school district look for in their selection process. The foreshadowed problem is that central office human resources (HR) staffing specialists recruit and build teacher candidate pools in this large suburban school district. Principals must select their teachers from these teacher candidate pools created by the HR staffing specialist. The issue is that some principals have expressed that they cannot find teacher candidates in these pools who meet the staffing needs of their particular schools. Since HR staffing specialists do not know principals' teacher selection criteria, they may not be able to build teacher candidate pools to meet the specific needs of some middle school principals. After analysis of the data collected in this study, the multicase assertion may be that HR staffing specialists can be informed of middle school principals' teacher selection criteria so that staffing specialists can align their selection criteria with the principals' look-fors in hiring teachers to ensure that teacher candidate pools will have candidates who meet the staffing needs of middle schools.

Since six multiple cases were purposively selected to illustrate and maximize different perspectives on principals' teacher selection criteria to examine the situationality of these individual cases to better understand the phenomenon, a multiple case study

design was warranted. An external auditor (S. Raber, personal communication, August 12, 2009) supported the rationale for using a cross-case analysis that incorporates other interview questions, such as research question 3, to help explain why some principals appear to weigh certain selection criteria over other teacher characteristics in hiring teachers. Multiple-site research requires more prestructuring than is appropriate for most single-site studies (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and may require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single research investigator (Yin, 2003). However, this study was doable since the student investigator had personal experience with the research topic and, as the director of staffing in the school district, had the resources and time to implement the study because the results had implications for the work in the district. As a result, a multiple-case design, as compared to a single-case design, was most appropriate for this investigation resulting in a more robust study and providing more compelling evidence to support conclusions (Herriott & Firestone, 1983).

Insider Experience and Implications

The student investigator's experience as an insider in the school district, serving as a director of school performance supervising principals and director of recruitment and staffing working with principals to staff their schools, presented potential advantages and disadvantages for this study. An important advantage was the ability to gain access to the research participants (i.e., middle school principals) and demographic data of the schools in the individual case studies. Besides having access, the student investigator already had established positive working relationships and credibility with many of the research participants. As a result, rapport was already established and principals readily answered the research questions. For example, principals were quick to disclose that sometimes school characteristics and their inability to attract desirable candidates prevent them from hiring teachers who are the best match for their schools because of the limited number of teachers who are willing to work at their schools. However, according to Seidman (1998),

sometimes it is possible to have too much rapport with research participants, which may impede the engagement of critical reflection on the research topic. Also because of the student investigator's supervisory roles in the district, research participants who did not have an established relationship with the student investigator may have been more reticent in their responses. To address these concerns, the student investigator accessed other middle school principals and central office administrators who were not part of the purposeful sample of research participants who served as "critical friends" to provide feedback on the research that strengthened the findings and conclusions of this investigation.

As an insider, the student researcher also needed to be aware that her presence and the interview situation is part of the social world he or she studies, a phenomenon called "reflexivity" (Schram, 2003). Therefore, it was important to take into consideration how the interviewer and situation might be influencing what the principals said and how this would affect the validity of the inferences drawn from the interview. As a result, the student investigator needed to be open and nonjudgmental in capturing what principals shared as their important criteria for selecting teachers even if their criteria for selection were philosophically different. For example, if a principal at a hard-to-staff school wanted to fill the teacher vacancy with a warm body to ensure that he or she opened school fully staffed, the student researcher needed to respect his or her opinion, try to understand his or her perspective, and get beyond philosophical differences by not engaging in a debate with the principal.

Operationalization of the Guiding Conceptual Framework

This multiple-case research study sought to examine and describe middle school principals' teacher selection criteria in a large suburban school district. NVivo 8 qualitative data analysis software was used to set up the research project, help construct arguments from the literature review, make data records, connect ideas, and make sense

of the data (Bazeley, 2007; Richards, 2005). To learn from the data, search for emerging themes and conduct a cross-case analysis, qualitative data were collected and analyzed from in-depth interviews with six middle school principals. Detailed recordkeeping and an audit trail helped to establish validity and reliability.

To limit the investigation of this research, John Seyfarth's Model of the Selection Process (2005, Figure 1) provided the guiding conceptual framework that supports this study on the teacher selection process in this large suburban school district. Seyfarth identified the importance of the *Job Model* or job description, *State/Federal Statutes*, *Mission Statements*, and *Research* that impact *Job-Specific* and *Non-Job Specific Functions* of the job which influence the *Selection Criteria*. Based on information received from the applicant during an interview, the interviewer decides if the applicant is a good match for the job. If it is a good match, the applicant is hired. If it is not a good match, the applicant is rejected.

In this research study, the *Job Model* is the job description for a middle school teacher. As part of the middle school reform in this school district, a job description was created for the middle school teacher, replacing a generic job description for all teachers in the district. The *Mission Statements* are the district's and school's purpose of improving academic achievement for all students to ensure that all students are college- or career-ready upon graduation. More specifically, the mission statement of the middle school reform movement as identified by the National Middle School Association (NMSA, 2010) is to provide an education for young adolescents that is developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable. NMSA believes that these four essential attributes of successful middle level education can be realized and achieved best through 16 characteristics grouped into three categories—Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Leadership and Organization; Culture and Community. The *State/Federal Statutes* are the mandatory preparation and licensing requirements for a middle school

teacher including the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) mandate under the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

NCLB, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), defines a "highly qualified" teacher to be one who "has obtained" full state certification (including alternative routes) or successful passage of the state teacher licensing examination. However, a 2002 Department of Education regulation expanded "highly qualified" to include a person pursuing an alternative route to a certification program who functions as a teacher for three years or less and demonstrates satisfactory progress toward full state certification. This regulation was challenged by a group of parents in California because a disproportionate number of "interns" were teaching in public schools serving minority and low-income students. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the ninth circuit held the regulation was invalid because "demonstrates satisfactory progress toward" full certification does not fulfill NCLB's clear intent that a teacher "has obtained" full certification. However, in December 2010, a "note" was added to an appropriations bill amending NCLB to say that a HQT includes a teacher who meets the requirements in the Department of Education regulation and this provision is effective through the end of the 2012-2013 academic year (Trainor, 2011). President Barack Obama's March 2010 *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the ESEA* moves the focus from "highly qualified" to "highly effective" teachers, asking states to define "effective" and "highly effective" teachers based in significant part on student growth and other measures such as classroom observations of practice. However, as states transition to using these measures of effectiveness, the current law relating to HQTs will be maintained but with additional flexibility (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

A major focus of this investigation was on Seyfarth's research category on school characteristics and teacher attitudes/behaviors associated with increased student learning—characteristics of effective middle school teachers. The school context characteristics examined in this study were: teacher turnover rates, student mobility,

percentage of students receiving free and reduced meals (FARMS), in special education and ESOL classes, staff diversity needs (gender, race, new vs. experienced teachers), special program needs, leadership needs (e.g., athletic coaches, team leaders, department chairs, extracurricular sponsors), and principal's area of certification and experience that might influence the characteristics they look for in hiring teachers. Data analysis of the principals' responses focused on Seyfarth's Job-Specific and Non-Job Specific Functions as they related to the Job Model and the characteristics of the school. The results of this study supported the importance of job-specific and non-job specific functions in Seyfarth's model. However, the findings did not support the importance of school characteristics since all six principals cited similar teacher selection criteria regardless of their school context. Yin's (2003) replication approach to multiple-case study design was used to operationalize this investigation to examine and analyze the data collected from six interviews with middle school principals on their criteria for teacher selection.

Sample Selection

Qualitative researchers work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth, and the sample selection tends to be purposive (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Understanding the critical phenomena depends on choosing the cases well (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Stake (2006, p. 22-23) identifies three main criteria for selecting cases: Is the case relevant to the phenomenon studied? Do the cases provide diversity across contexts? Do the cases provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts? He suggests that the benefits of multiple case studies will be limited if fewer than four cases are chosen or more than ten. Yin (2003, p. 51) agrees with Miles and Huberman and Stake regarding small sample size only when external conditions are not thought to produce much variation in the phenomenon being studied so a smaller number of theoretical replications is needed. However, when it is uncertain whether external conditions will produce different case study results, Yin recommends

that these relevant conditions be articulated more explicitly at the outset of the study and a larger number of cases included.

Since it was not certain if the school context or characteristics of the school influenced middle school principals' criteria to hire a teacher, a purposive sample collection of six individual cases was designated to illustrate and maximize different perspectives on the phenomenon of principals' teacher selection criteria for this multiple case study. Six middle school principals were purposively selected from schools based on average teacher turnover data for four years, 2004-2007. Three cases were interviews with principals at middle schools with high teacher turnover rates (32%; 36%; 37%) and three cases were interviews with principals at middle schools with low teacher turnover rates (11%; 14%; 16%). These teacher turnover rates by school include within-district movers (different school in the same district), cross-district movers (different school in a different district), and leavers (left teaching profession). In comparison, the teacher turnover rate in the school district in 2007 was 7.7% (MCPS, 2010) included only cross-district movers and leavers. The state teacher turnover rate of 6% included teachers who left teaching positions in Maryland (MSDE, 2010). The national teacher turnover rate has risen from 15.7% in 2005 to 16.8% in 2011. Kain (2011) identifies "teacher dropouts" who leave the teaching profession. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2003) reports that approximately a third of America's new teachers leave the profession during their first three years of teaching and almost 50% leave during the first five years. The teacher turnover rates of the three highly-impacted middle schools in this study are consistent with the NCTAF analysis of Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) from the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) citing teacher turnover rates almost a third higher in low-income urban school districts.

Data Collection

Creswell (2007, p. 118) defined data collection as interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions. He identified the following activities for data collection in a qualitative study: Locating a site of an individual to study, gaining access and making rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data in preparation for analysis. His first three activities have been described in this chapter. The remaining activities of collecting data, recording information, storing data, and resolving field issues are discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter.

Using NVivo 8 qualitative analysis computer software, data collection was started at the beginning of this project by creating proxy documents summarizing and identifying key themes across the literature in the literature review (Gregorio, 2000). In the past, there was a belief among qualitative researchers that it was better to begin data collection before researching the existing literature so not to prejudice emerging understanding from participants in the field. However, Bazeley (2007) suggests that there has been a shift back to viewing the existing literature as a source of stimulation or sensitization to the phenomenon being studied. She also indicates that qualitative data is *made* instead of being *collected* because to collect data implies that the data preexist, which is contrary to making data which is a collaborative ongoing process interactively negotiated by researcher and participant.

Since the student investigator knew enough about the phenomenon to develop questions in advance of interviewing, but not enough to be able to anticipate the answers (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 110-114), the technique that was used to make qualitative data in this study was to conduct *semistructured* interviews using questions developed in advance. In an effort to investigate principals' teacher selection criteria, principals were asked the following interview questions:

1. What is your background, training, and experience in middle schools?

2. Think about three teachers that you have hired whom you consider as highly effective middle school teachers.
What knowledge, skills, and abilities (job-specific functions) did these teachers possess?
What characteristics and attributes (nonjob-specific functions) contributed to their success as middle school teachers?
3. What are the unique characteristics of your school which influence your teacher selection criteria?
4. What process do you use to select your teachers? Do you have interview questions?
5. What facilitates your ability to select teachers who meet these criteria?

During these one-on-one interviews, the student investigator actively listened, took notes, tape recorded the interview after obtaining the participant's permission, and probed for clarification as needed. After the interviews, the tape-recorded sessions were transcribed to prepare for data storage, coding, and analysis using NVivo 8. Since the data was stored on computer files, back-up copies of the files were kept in an external hard drive to ensure the safety of the research.

Since data making and analysis are simultaneous (Richards, 2005), after conducting and working up from the data for each individual case study, individual case reports were written. As each individual case study was completed, cross-case conclusions were drawn. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations were developed for practice and policy implications and the study was concluded by a written cross-case report.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis of Each Case

Creswell (2007, p. 156-157) describes data analysis and representation through the steps of data managing, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting, and representing and visualizing the data. In this study, the student investigator created and organized data files, read through the text of the transcriptions of the interviews, made margin notes, and formed initial codes, describing each case and its context. Using categorical aggregation and establishing patterns of categories, using direct interpretation and developing naturalistic generalizations, findings were presented in narrative form augmented by tables and figures. The data analysis for each case began after each principal interview. The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and interviewer notes were used to cross-check and confirm the accuracy of the tape-recorded transcriptions.

To make sense of the data collected, NVivo 8 qualitative analysis software was used to do qualitative coding to achieve categorization, conceptualization, and interpretation to arrive at findings and conclusions (Richards & Morse, 2007). Ideas were coded or linked to move up from the data to more abstract ideas and categories using three kinds of coding—descriptive, topic, and analytic coding. Descriptive coding was used to store and access factual information or attributes about the participant, setting, or context of each individual case to investigate patterns, explanations, and theories. For example, in this study, descriptive coding was used for each individual case study to store attributes about the principal, student and teacher turnover data for the school, and salient characteristics of the context in the school. Topic coding was used to identify all material on a given topic and combined codes in searches to look for patterns. Coding up from the data can lead to analysis by creating categories, reflect on where it is situated among other ideas, and reflect on the data coded by similar topics and how it fits with the new idea. For example, all the individual case studies of schools categorically bounded by

high teacher turnover rates were coded and compared to an analysis of the teacher selection criteria of principals from schools with low teacher turnover rates. As the categories increased, topic coding became more analytic and the analytic coding helped to facilitate interpretation and develop new themes running through the data, categories or concepts.

The processes of categorization and conceptualization were used to identify patterns, explore ideas, and use information from existing literature to inform interpretation and explanation to deepen the understanding of principals' teacher selection criteria. NVivo 8 was also used to do cross-case analysis to provide an interpretation of the phenomenon across the cases.

Cross Case Analysis

According to Stake (2006, p. 47), cross-case analysis focuses on reading [individual] case reports and applying their findings of situated experience to the research phenomenon—in this case, What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers? Researchers suggest different strategies for cross-case analysis. Yin's (2003) replication strategy advocated using a theoretical framework to study one case in depth and then explore other cases to see if the patterns exist. Denzin (1989) used multiple exemplars where multiple cases are collected and inspected for essential elements or components. Other researchers form types or families for cross-case comparison to inspect and group cases according to common patterns or configurations (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). Conducting a cross-case analysis among the six principal interviews, the student researcher triangulated the data from the interviews, school demographic reports, and research to compare and contrast findings across cases in the study. The findings of this study were compared and contrasted to the results from previous middle school reform focus groups of middle school principals and the knowledge, skills, and content expertise they deemed as important in hiring highly

effective middle school teachers. Explorations with NVivo 8 qualitative analysis software enabled the student investigator to document ideas, examine features and relationships using visual models, and analyze all relevant data collected from the principal interviews.

Standards of Validation

To address validity threats and increase the credibility of conclusions, many researchers have provided strategies for testing the validity of (not verifying) conclusions in qualitative studies. Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 262-263) presented the following 13 tactics for confirming findings to check the basic quality of the data, examine exceptions to early patterns, and take a skeptical approach to emerging explanations. As this study unfolded, the appropriateness of using these tactics for validation was considered:

- Assess data quality through (1) checking for representativeness and (2) checking for researcher effects on the case and case effects on the researcher; (3) triangulating across data sources, and (4) weighing the evidence to determine which kinds of data are more trustworthy
- Look at "unpatterns" to test conclusions about a "pattern" by saying what it is not like by: (5) checking the meaning of outliers; (6) using extreme cases; (7) following up surprises; and (8) looking for negative evidence.
- Test explanations by: (9) making if-then tests; (10) ruling out spurious relations; (11) replicating a finding through my multiple cases; (12) checking out rival explanations; and (13) getting feedback from informants (i.e., the principals I interviewed).

Concurring with Miles and Huberman on the importance of triangulation, Stake (2006) stressed that within cases, each finding should have at least three or more confirmations that key meanings have been considered, and that with multiple cases,

findings need to be examined to see if emerging ideas are consistent with what is already known about the case and the phenomenon being studied. He further suggested that triangulation may go afield by checking with people who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon. Supporting the use of different kinds of triangulation, Denzin (1989) suggested the use of multiple observers of the phenomenon studied from different perspectives, more than one research method (e.g., document review and interview), and checking how total description warrants generalization (i.e., do conclusions generalize across times of day/year, to other places, to individuals, to other groups, to a population?).

Creswell (2007, pp. 207-209) suggested that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of the following eight validation strategies indicating that triangulating among different data sources, writing detailed and thick descriptions, and taking the entire written narrative back to participants in member checking are easy, most popular, and cost-effective procedures as compared to peer and external audits which are more time-consuming and cost-prohibitive:

1. prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field (i.e., building trust with participants, learning the culture, checking for information);
2. triangulation (i.e., use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence to support a theme or perspective);
3. peer review or debriefing for an external check of the research process;
4. negative case analysis to refine working hypotheses as the inquiry advances;
5. clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study where researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that may influence interpretation and approach to the study;

6. member checking to solicit participants' views of the credibility of findings and interpretations by showing the principals the transcriptions of their interviews;
7. rich, thick descriptions to allow the transferring of information to other settings because of similar characteristics; and
8. external audits to have someone who is not connected to my study to assess if my findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data.

In this study, many of the validation strategies presented by the experienced qualitative researchers were implemented. Using a multiple case study approach, extreme cases were purposively selected by interviewing three principals from middle schools with high teacher turnover and three principals from middle schools with low teacher turnover. Possible researcher bias was clarified through reflection and writing memos by the student investigator on experiential knowledge and identity as it related to the phenomenon being studied (i.e., middle school principals' teacher selection criteria). The total description of the phenomenon was examined to see if the conclusions could be generalized across cases. Participants reviewed written transcriptions of their interviews for member checking to ensure that the interviews captured their true meaning. The student investigator went afield seeking peer reviews with colleagues and former middle school principals to learn what they saw might be wrong with the data analysis, findings, and conclusions. Most importantly, the data were triangulated with information gleaned from the literature and feedback from peer reviews and critical friends to ensure that there was congruency between the data, findings, interpretations, and conclusions. Furthermore, a comparison of findings from the six middle school principals' interviews in this study was triangulated with data from the two middle school principal focus groups and three interviews with middle school principals from a previous district middle school reform effort.

To specifically assess the validity of the researcher's case study approach, she used the following criteria checklists for evaluating a good case study: Creswell (2007, p. 219) suggested:

- Is there a clear identification of the "case" or "cases" in the study?
- Is the "case" (or are the cases) used to understand a research issue or used because the "case" has (or "cases" have) intrinsic merit?
- Is there a clear description of the "case"?
- Are themes identified for the "case"?
- Are assertions or generalizations made from the "case" analysis?
- Is the researcher reflexive or self-disclosing about his or her position in the study?

Stake (1995, p. 131) further asked:

- Is the report easy to read?
- Does it fit together, each sentence contributing to the whole?
- Does the report have a conceptual structure (i.e., theme or issues)?
- Are its issues developed in a serious and scholarly way?
- Is the case adequately defined?
- Is there a sense of story to the presentation?
- Is the reader provided some vicarious experience?
- Have quotations been used effectively?
- Are headings, figures, artifacts, appendixes, and indexes used effectively?
- Was it edited well, then again with a last-minute polish?
- Has the writer made sound assertions, neither over- nor under- interpreting?
- Has adequate attention been paid to various contexts?
- Were sufficient raw data presented?

- Were data sources well chosen and in sufficient number?
- Do observations and interpretations appear to have been triangulated?
- Is the role and point of view of the researcher nicely apparent?
- Is the nature of the intended audience apparent?
- Is empathy shown for all sides?
- Are personal intentions examined?
- Does it appear that individuals were put at risk?

To further increase confidence in the conclusions resulting in a more robust study, a multiple case study design with purposive sampling for maximum variation was used along with an experienced external auditor who conducted a critical review of the data analysis and methodology

Ethical Issues

To address ethical issues that pervade all qualitative research (Christians, 2000; Soltis, 1990), the following four notions advocated by Shank (2002, p. 98-99) were built into this research study—*do no harm, be open, be honest, and be careful*. Since informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical conduct in qualitative studies, a consent form was used to ensure that permission was granted from the participants to conduct the interview and that the interviewees were informed of why the research was being conducted, the benefits of the research, what they would be asked to do, what risks were involved, and how their confidentiality would be protected. To ensure that participants would not be hurt in any way from this research, all clues to the interviewees' identification were removed in transcripts and coding notes. Interviewees were allowed to review the transcripts of their interviews during member-checking for validity to ensure that the essence of their words and thoughts was accurately captured. The student investigator was honest in answering their questions about the research and did not use material without permission. The student investigator needed to be honest with herself to check

against researcher bias, especially since she was considered an insider in this study. The work throughout this study was carefully documented so that others can follow the audit trail or working record to trace any claims or conclusions made to the data in this study.

To assure the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects, the student investigator received approval to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland College Park and from the deputy superintendent and department of shared accountability of the school district in which the study was conducted.

Summary

In summary, this descriptive qualitative study used the multiple-case study design to explore and describe middle school principals' teacher selection criteria seeking to answer the research questions, *What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers? How do the unique characteristics of schools influence principals' teacher selection criteria? What processes do principals use to select teachers using their criteria for selection? What facilitates principals' ability to select teachers who meet their selection criteria?* In an effort to answer the research questions, six middle school principals were interviewed. Using purposive sampling, three principals were selected from middle schools with high teacher turnover rates and three were selected from middle schools with low teacher turnover rates.

The student investigator's experience and knowledge with the research topic along with her insider researcher status made this a doable study to implement even though she needed to be aware of advantages and disadvantages of being an insider. John Seyfarth's Model of the Selection Process (2005, Figure 1) provided the guiding conceptual framework that supports this study on the middle school principals' teacher selection process in this large suburban school district.

NVivo 8 qualitative analysis software was used to collect, code, and analyze data for each individual case study and draw cross-case conclusions. Emergent patterns were identified through the data analysis along with themes which were compared and contrasted with the existing literature and results from previous focus groups of middle school principals' perceptions of highly effective teachers.

As a result of this study, salient teacher characteristics that middle school principals perceived as important in hiring a teacher to improve student learning were identified. The importance of conducting this research was to gain a better understanding of the criteria that principals use for teacher selection and to add to the body of knowledge in the literature. The results of this study may have implications for research, practice and policy. It may contribute to the research literature on principals' hiring practices, enable human resources specialists to build teacher candidate pools aligned with principals' criteria for teacher selection, and spark interest in reviewing current policy in the Office of Human Resources to consider ways in which principals may have more influence in creating the teacher candidate pools for the school district.

As Jennifer Rice (2003, p. vii) clearly stated, "The evidence indicates that neither an extreme centralized bureaucratization nor a complete deregulation of teacher requirements is a wise approach for improving teacher quality. What holds a great deal more promise is refining the policies and practices employed to build a qualified body of teachers in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools; for disadvantaged, special needs, and advantaged students; and for math, science, languages, English, social studies and the arts." The findings from this study may be a step toward refining the practices and policies in this school district to build a qualified body of middle school teachers who will meet the needs of early adolescent learners.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative multiple case study on the criteria used by middle school principals to select teachers is based on an analysis of interviews with six middle school principals in a large suburban school district. To maximize variation in perspectives, the six schools were purposively sampled according to teacher turnover rates (i.e., three schools with low rates and three schools with high rates) out of the 38 middle schools in the district. This study investigated middle school principals' teacher selection criteria to answer the research questions:

- What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers?
- How do the unique characteristics of schools influence principals' teacher selection criteria?
- What process do principals use to select teachers using their criteria for selection?
- What facilitates principals' ability to select teachers who meet their selection criteria?

To capture information to address the research questions, principals were asked the following interview questions:

1. What are your background, training, and experience in middle schools?
2. Think about three teachers whom you have hired that you consider as highly effective middle school teachers.

What knowledge, skills, and abilities (job-specific functions) did these teachers possess?

What characteristics and attributes contributed to their success as middle school teachers?

3. What are the unique characteristics of your school which influence your teacher selection criteria?
4. What process do you use to select your teachers? What information do you try to capture from your interview questions?
5. What facilitates your ability to select teachers who meet these criteria?

While Question 2 was designed specifically to identify teacher selection criteria, the other interview questions also elicited job-specific and non-job specific characteristics and attributes that principals deemed as important in their selection of teachers. Question 3 focused on the unique school characteristics (school context) that may influence middle school principals' teacher selection criteria. Question 4 identified the process the principals use to hire teachers and Question 5 examined the factors that facilitated the principals' ability to select teachers using their espoused criteria.

This chapter starts with a description of the large suburban public school district where the study took place followed by a table summarizing the findings. A bifurcated analysis of schools with low and high teacher turnover highlights the findings in terms of school context, principals' training and experience, teacher and school characteristics principals deemed as important in their selection criteria, teacher selection process, and factors facilitating the use of principals' teacher selection criteria. A comparison of the similarities and differences across the case studies is presented at the end of this chapter along with a summary of key themes identified by this sample of middle school principals as important factors in their selection of teachers.

Suburban Public School District Profile

In 2008-2009, this suburban school district employed 22,190 employees, of which 12,067 were teachers serving 139,276 students, making it the 16th largest school system

in the United States. There were 199 schools (130 elementary, 38 middle, 25 high, and 5 special schools and 1 career and technology center) with students from 164 countries speaking 134 languages. The student demographics were 39% White, 23% African American, 22% Hispanic, 15% Asian American, and 0.3% Native American. For 2008-2009, 779 teachers were hired—72% White, 16% African American, 5.9% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 0.1% Native American. Students participating in the Free and Reduced Meals System (FARMS – poverty index) were at 27%, 12% of the students received special education services and 12% participated in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. With an operating budget of \$2.07 billion, this district projected the cost per student at \$14,289.

With 447 National Board Certified teachers, approximately 82% of teachers in this district have a master's degree or equivalent. Teachers receive competitive salaries ranging from \$46,410 to \$101,354 based upon their education and years of experience.

This school district achieved a student graduation rate of 90% with 71 National Merit Scholars and students averaging a combined SAT score above national and state averages. In addition to 33 National Blue Ribbon schools, 23 of its public high schools were recognized by *Newsweek* magazine as the best in America for four years in a row with six high schools ranked among the top 110 in the nation in 2009 for providing rigorous and challenging curriculum.

The mission of the school district is *to provide a high-quality, world class education that ensures success for every student through excellence in teaching and learning* by asking the critical questions: *What do students need to know and be able to do? How will we know they have learned it? What will we do when they haven't? What will we do when they already know it?* (School District's *Annual Report on Our Call to Action*, 2008, p. iii).

Sample Selection

To obtain maximum variation in the sample selection, data were collected from three middle schools with low teacher turnover and three middle schools with high teacher turnover averaged over a four-year period (2004-2007). It needs to be emphasized that teacher turnover rates may be impacted by lower student enrollments resulting in staff reductions or relocation of district programs that may transfer teachers affiliated with the program to another location; thus, turnover is not always a result of teachers wanting to transfer out of a school.

Summary of Findings in Schools

Table 4 below presents a bifurcated overview of data grouping middle schools with low versus high teacher turnover rates. The district's *Schools-at-a-Glance* reports provided the data to describe the context of the schools and the findings from the six individual case reports describe the principals' criteria and process for teacher selection.

Table 4

School Context

	Schools with Low Teacher Turnover Rate			Schools with High Teacher Turnover Rate		
	Middle School A: 11% Middle School B: 14% Middle School C: 16%			Middle School D: 32% Middle School E: 36% Middle School F: 37%		
Mean	13.7%			35.0%		
School Context (2006-07 school data)	MS A	MS B	MS C	MS D	MS E	MS F
Student Enrollment	1,063	1,146	929	738	787	738
Student Attendance %	96.1	97.5	96.7	95.2	95.2	95.6
Poverty (FARMS) %	16.3	4.6	4.4	49.6	44.6	48
Special Ed %	11.6	7.9	11.6	9.9	12.2	13.6
ESOL %	2.4	3.6	3.2	8.8	11.1	10.2
Student Mobility %	9.9	5.0	6.1	21.5	20.4	18
Special Programs*	ED, LAD	LAD	Autism, LAD, LFI, SCB	Spanish Dual Lang, LAD, MYP	Aerospace Tech/Adv Math Magnet, LTL, LAD, SCB, METS	French & Spanish Immersion, LTL, LAD MYP
*Special Programs:						
Emotional Disabilities (ED)			Multidisciplinary Educational Training and Support (METS)			
Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD)			Middle Years Programme (MYP)			
Learning for Independence (LFI)			School/Community-Based (SCB)			
Linkages to Learning (LTL)						
Academic Needs: State Proficiency Tests	Met AYP %	Met AYP %	Met AYP %	Met AYP %	Met AYP %	Not Met AYP %
Math 6	78.5	95.6	91.5	76.7	78.5	64.8
Math 7	76.3	94.8	92.8	65.0	65.2	57.5
Math 8	66.8	92.1	91.2	61.5	51.0	45.5
Reading 6	88.9	97.4	92.9	71.2	79.8	70.2
Reading 7	84.4	96.7	94.4	66.1	70.4	67.9
Reading 8	85.4	92.1	93.0	68.3	64.8	58.8
Staff <4 yrs exper. %	9.1	18.1	21.9	19.7	36.2	33.3
HQ Teachers %	95.3	97.9	91.2	93	93.3	81.1
Non-HQ Teachers %	4.7	2.1	8.8	7.0	6.7	18.9

Table 4 (continued)

School Context

Staff Diversity Needs Teachers(T)/Students(S)	Ts %	Ss %	Ts %	Ss %	Ts %	Ss %	Ts %	Ss %	Ts %	Ss %	Ts %	Ss %
White	99.2	50.1	80.7	54.3	86.3	57.5	55.7	9.9	63.8	16.8	50.7	24.3
African American	3.9	19.2	10.8	4.2	4.1	8.6	29.5	47	21.7	26.4	41.3	30.9
Asian American	0.0	16.2	6.0	35.2	4.1	28	8.2	11.4	5.8	13.2	2.7	7.9
Hispanic	2.6	14.2	2.4	6.3	5.5	5.6	6.6	31.3	8.6	43.2	4.0	36.9
American Indian	1.3	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.4	1.3	0.1
Building constructed	2004		1971		1967		1966		1963		1934	
Renovation	--		--		1989		1990		--		1999	

Table 5

Principals' Training and Experience (Q1)

Principals' Training & Experience (Q1)	MS A	MS B	MS C	MS D	MS E	MS F
Certification	Math, PE, Admin	Industrial Arts, Admin	Elem Ed, Admin, Pupil Pers Worker	Biology, Admin	Guidance counselor, Admin	Early childhood, ESOL, Admin
Advanced degrees	<i>BA:</i> PE/ Math <i>MA:</i> Admin	<i>BA:</i> Indust. Arts <i>MA:</i> Indust Arts/Tech Ed <i>PhD:</i> Tech Ed/Admin	<i>BA:</i> Elem Ed <i>MA:</i> Admin <i>Ed.D.:</i> Ed Leadership	<i>BA:</i> Biology <i>MA:</i> Health care <i>Doctorate</i> in progress: Ed, Admin, & Policy	<i>BA:</i> Political <i>Sci</i> <i>MA:</i> Counseling <i>Ed.D:</i> Ed Admin	<i>BA:</i> Elem Ed <i>MA:</i> Curriculum & Instruction
Yrs in education	23 yrs	20 yrs	37 yrs	11 yrs	17 yrs	19 yrs
Yrs in Middle School	22 yrs	16 yrs	19 yrs	10 yrs	6 yrs	9 yrs
Yrs as MS principal	5 yrs	6 yrs	4 yrs	4 yrs	1 yr	3 yrs

Table 6

Teacher Characteristics in Principals' Selection Criteria (Q2)

Teacher Characteristics in Principals' Selection Criteria (Q2) (> 2 principals identify as important)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable of content, pedagogy, adolescent learner characteristics & technology • Able to build relationships • Collaborative; • Committed to student learning • Kid-oriented • Able to scaffold instruction • Flexible • Enthusiastic • Exhibits professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable of content, pedagogy, & teaching/learning in middle school • Able to build relationships • Collaborative • Doing whatever it takes for student success • Use data to assess/monitor student progress • Likes change—how to do things differently
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Table 7

School Characteristics Influencing Principals' Selection Criteria (Q3)

School Characteristics Influencing Principals' Selection Criteria (Q3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff not representative of student diversity • School attracts lot of candidates but difficulty recruiting diverse staff • Combination of new & veteran teachers • Veteran teachers have difficulty with increasing student diversity • Committed staff—community of learners • Flexible scheduling w/different planning periods & use of rooms; • High achieving students, • High parent involvement • Large special ed populations • Small group of students with economic/educational challenges • After-school activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff not representative of student diversity • Committed staff—belief to do whatever it takes for student success, • Use positive reinforcement • High student caseloads • Input from staff valued • Differentiated staff development • High minority student population • High percentage of students from low socioeconomic and single parent families • Students with range of abilities some 2-3 years behind • Minimal support from families and community—wrap-around services from outside agencies • Students don't come with an engaged attitude to learn and don't have background experiences most students have • High mobility rate for students and staff
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Table 8

Teacher Selection Process (Q4)

Teacher Selection Process (Q4) (> 2 principals identify as important)	<i>Panel interviews</i> w/administrators, resource teachers, team leaders, content specialists, and/or staff development specialists	<i>Panel interviews</i> w/administrators, resource teachers, team leaders, content specialists, and/or staff development specialists
	<i>Questions</i> focusing on school vision, pedagogical/content knowledge, behavioral management, enthusiasm & professional growth standards	<i>Questions</i> focusing on school vision, pedagogical/content knowledge, behavioral management, enthusiasm & professional growth standards
	<i>Structured interviews</i> w/ranking of candidates using rating form	

Table 9

Factors Facilitating Use of Principals' Selection Criteria (Q5)

Factors Facilitating Use of Principals' Selection Criteria (Q5)	<i>Selection process:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review applicant file Focus on school vision, performance tasks, candidate's overall presentation at interview Consider panel feedback Provide school tour and make immediate offer to strong candidates 	<i>Office of Human Resources:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up on referrals Implement earlier staffing calendar to increase availability of candidates to interview One point of contact in HR
	<i>Office of Human Resources:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer candidates who are good matches Resolve staffing issues Hold Job Fairs for internal candidates 	<i>Office of Organizational Development:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More staff development on adolescent learner
	<i>Principal's actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call previous supervisors Do not transfer underperforming teachers Attract more minority candidates 	<i>Principals' actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move instructional program in positive direction Use school data on student performance Be truthful about candidates, school dynamics, and challenges Establish good relationships with HR staffer
		<i>Candidates' actions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share DVDs of their classroom performance Share portfolio of thank you notes from community, staff, & students Have a passion/understanding for working with adolescents and rigor as challenging child to progress academically by differentiating instruction
		<i>Institution of Higher Ed:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide understanding of the adolescent learner and not just focus on elem & secondary education

Schools with Low Teacher Turnover

School Context

Overall, the three middle schools identified as MS A, MS B, and MS C in Table 4 with low teacher turnover rates of 11% to 16% ($M=13.7\%$) had similar school characteristics in terms of school context and principals' training and experience. The student enrollments at these schools ranged from 929 to 1,063. The percentage of students on Free and Reduced Meals (poverty index—4.4% to 16.3% [$M=8.4\%$]), in ESOL (2.4% to 3.6% [$M=3.1\%$]), and student mobility (5.0% to 9.9% [$M=7.0\%$]) were relatively low in comparison with the three middle schools with high teacher turnover rates. All three middle schools met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the state proficiency tests with high percentages of students passing the math (66.8 to 95.6% [$M=86.6\%$]) and reading (84.4% to 97.4% [$M=91.7\%$]) state proficiency tests. The percentage of Highly Qualified Teachers, as designated by state standards, assigned to the schools were also high, ranging from 91.2% to 97.9% ($M=94.8\%$) and staff with less than four years of experience were relatively low, ranging from 9.1% to 21.9% ($M=16.4\%$) as compared to the schools with high teacher turnover. The diversity of teachers and students at these schools was predominantly white, ranging from 80.7% to 99.2% ($M=88.7\%$) for teachers and 50.1% to 57.5% ($M=54.0\%$) for students. The special programs at these schools were for special education students that ranged from 7.9% to 11.6% ($M=10.4\%$) of the student population. The overall student attendance was high ranging from 96.1% to 97.5% ($M=96.8\%$).

These school buildings had attractive curb appeal since the newest school was built in 2004 and the oldest building, constructed in 1967, was renovated in 1989. As a result, it could be that teachers were easily recruited and retained in these schools because of the more appealing physical work environment as well as the high academic performance of the students who were not significantly impacted by poverty, high student

mobility, and having English as a second oral language. In addition, having colleagues who are experienced and highly qualified may also be an asset in the recruitment and retention of teachers in these schools.

Principals' Training and Experience

The principals at the schools with low teacher turnover had advanced educational degrees and extensive experience in education. All three principals had masters degrees and two had doctorates. They range from 20 to 37 years of experience in education with 16 to 22 years in middle schools, which may account for their ability to build a school culture to retain teachers in their buildings.

Teacher Characteristics in Principals' Selection Criteria

The principals of these three middle schools identified the importance of job-specific teacher characteristics such as knowledge of content, pedagogy, adolescent learner characteristics, and ability to scaffold instruction and use technology. Nonjob-specific characteristics they deemed as important were the ability to build relationships, be collaborative, kid-oriented, flexible, enthusiastic, professional, and committed to student learning. These principals stressed the importance of having the right attitude—believing that all students can learn, not giving up on students, and being able to build relationships with students to engage them in learning, as well as collaborating with the staff, parents, and community.

School Characteristics Influencing Principals' Selection Criteria

These principals of schools with low teacher turnover indicated that their teacher selection criteria take into consideration school characteristics such as the changing student demographics of their school, high parental involvement, high-performing students, flexible scheduling, and shortage of classrooms. Because of the increasing student diversity, the principals were challenged to increase the diversity of their staff to

reflect the student population. However, since these three middle schools were not located in diverse communities, the principals reported difficulty in recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds because of the long commute and high gas prices. High parent involvement sometimes presents a challenge to new teachers who are targeted for their inexperience by demanding parents in these schools. High-performing students require teachers who are knowledgeable of content and pedagogy and who are not threatened by students who may engage in intellectual debates and challenge what is being taught. Flexible scheduling, where teachers have planning periods at different times of the day during the week, and the possibility of being a "floater" teacher, where a teacher does not have a permanent classroom but rather floats from room to room, also may impact the principals' teacher selection criteria. As a result, these school characteristics required principals to look for teachers who were knowledgeable about content, pedagogy, and adolescent development, and who were experienced, strong in relationship building, flexible, collaborative, and committed to student learning. In addition to these job-specific and nonjob-specific characteristics, the principals were challenged to recruit and hire teachers from diverse backgrounds to reflect the diversity of their student population.

Teacher Selection Process

The teacher selection process used by these principals consisted of structured panel interviews often with standardized rating forms to rank candidates for selection. Interview questions focused on the candidate's knowledge of pedagogy, content knowledge, behavioral management strategies, and enthusiasm for teaching along with their alignment and fit with the school vision and professional growth/teacher evaluation standards.

Factors Facilitating Use of Principals' Selection Criteria

Factors identified by these principals as facilitating the use of their teacher selection criteria involved their selection process, the Office of Human Resources, and actions by principals. In the selection process, they stressed the importance of initially screening the applicant's human resources file consisting of transcripts, test scores, references, evaluations, and staffer interview comments. At the interview, they focused on their school's vision and required candidates to respond to performance tasks and problem-solving scenarios to move the candidate beyond knowledge acquisition to the actual application of that knowledge to achieve student success. Valuing feedback from all panel members, they considered the candidate's overall presentation at the interview as important. They made job offers to strong candidates on the spot to avoid losing them to another school.

The principals appreciated the support they received from the Office of Human Resources when staffers referred candidates who were good matches for their schools and assisted in resolving staffing issues. These principals also commented on how the Human Resources Job Fairs for internal candidates provided them an opportunity to interview many candidates in one evening which saved them time.

These principals stressed the importance of principals calling other principals for recommendations and not transferring underperforming teachers to other schools through the involuntary transfer process. They believed that if principals would evaluate underperforming teachers instead of trying to transfer them out of their building and be honest when called by a colleague regarding the performance of the teacher, it would greatly facilitate principals' ability to use their selection criteria to hire teachers who were best matches for their schools. Furthermore, these principals of schools with low teacher turnover all agreed that if they were able to attract more minority candidates to interview at their schools, it would greatly facilitate their ability to address their need to increase the diversity of their staff to reflect the increasing diversity of their student population.

In summary, these three principals of middle schools with low teacher turnover were veteran educators with much experience in the field of education and working at the middle school level. Their teacher selection criteria focused on not only job-specific characteristics such as knowledge of content, pedagogy, adolescent development, and technology, but they also stressed the importance of nonjob-specific characteristics such as having the right attitude on valuing and building relationships with students, staff, and parents. They look for teachers who are committed to student learning, collaborative, flexible, enthusiastic about the teaching and learning process and the subjects they teach, and professional in their interactions with all stakeholders. Because of the high parental involvement and student performance levels at these schools, these principals often look for experienced teachers who are strong in content knowledge and relationship building not only with students but also with the parents and the community.

Schools with High Teacher Turnover

School Context

The three middle schools with high teacher turnover rates ranging from 32% to 37% ($M=35\%$) are identified in Table 4 as MS D, MS E, and MS F. Even though the student attendance rates (95.2% to 95.6% $M=95.3\%$) and percentages of students in special education classes (9.9% to 13.6% $M=11.9\%$) were not significantly different from the three middle schools with low teacher turnover, there was a difference in terms of the other school characteristics. For example, the student enrollments at these schools with high teacher turnover were much lower ranging from 738 to 787 students; however, the percentage of students on free and reduced-price meals (44.6% to 49.6% $M=47.4\%$), student mobility (18% to 21.5% $M=20.0\%$), and ESOL students (8.8% to 11.1% $M=10.0\%$) were higher than in the schools with low teacher turnover.

Two of these three middle schools (MS D and MS E) met Adequate Yearly Progress on state proficiency exams. The one middle school (MS F) that did not meet AYP had the highest percentage of non-HQ teachers (18.9%) and 33.3% of its staff had less than four years of experience, which may attest to the importance of having a well-trained and experienced teacher in the classroom. Out of all six middle schools in the study, the middle school (MS E) with the highest percentage (36.2%) of staff with less than 4 years of experience had the lowest percentage (51.0%) of students passing the state math proficiency exam, even though this school is an Aerospace Technology and Advanced Math Magnet school. Overall, the percentages of students passing the math (45.5% to 78.5% $M=62.9%$) and reading (64.8% to 79.8% $M=68.6%$) state proficiency tests in these schools with high teacher turnover were lower than the schools with low teacher turnover.

The diversity of the student population at these three middle schools with high teacher turnover was predominantly African American (26.4% to 47% $M=34.8%$) and Hispanic (31.3% to 43.2% $M=37.1%$) compared to the lower percentages of African American (4.2% to 19.2% $M=10.7%$) and Hispanic (5.6% to 14.2% $M=8.7%$) students at the three middle schools with low teacher turnover. In terms of staff diversity, overall, the schools with high teacher turnover had more teachers of color than the schools with low teacher turnover rates. However, all six principals in this study indicated that attracting diverse staff to their schools was a challenge because of their location in nondiverse communities or that there were fewer diverse candidates available, especially Asian American and Hispanic teachers. In terms of special programs, in addition to special education and ESOL programs, the three middle schools with high teacher turnover had magnet programs (i.e., Spanish Dual Language, Aerospace Technology/Advanced Math, and French/Spanish Immersion) to attract high performing students to their schools.

The three schools with high teacher turnover rates are housed in old buildings lacking in attractive curb appeal, which may create a poor first impression of the school

when teacher candidates arrive for interviews. The school that did not make AYP was built in 1934 and even though it was renovated in 1999, this school is located in a side wing of an old vacant high school building with an entrance that was difficult to find. In comparison, the schools with low teacher turnover are housed in newer and more recently renovated buildings which may be more attractive to prospective teacher candidates.

As a result, the context of these schools with high teacher turnover presents many challenges because of their high *educational load*, defined in this school district as the percentage of student enrollment in special education, ESOL, and free and reduced-price meals programs and student mobility. Schools with high educational loads often face greater instructional challenges than schools with low educational loads (e.g., the three middle schools with low teacher turnover rates). Therefore, schools with high educational loads identified as "red zone" schools receive more supplementary resources than schools with low educational loads identified as "green zone" schools in this school district. For example, Title I elementary schools in the district with high educational loads have earlier access to outstanding early contracted candidates than elementary schools with lower educational loads. Implications from the findings of this study may suggest similar preferential staffing treatment for the middle schools with high educational loads that are often faced with high teacher turnover rates—both factors which provide greater instructional challenges for the principals and staff at these schools.

Principals' Training and Experience

In comparison with the principals in the schools with low teacher turnover, the principals at these schools with high teacher turnover have similar levels of education—all three principals have masters degrees and two have doctorates. However, they have less experience in education (11 to 19 years $M=15.7$ years as compared to 20 to 37 years $M=26.7$ years) and in middle schools (6 to 10 years $M=8.3$ years as compared to 16 to 22 years $M=19$ years).

Teacher Characteristics in Principals' Selection Criteria

Job-specific functions deemed as important in these principals' selection criteria focused on the ability to use data to assess and monitor student progress and knowledge of content, pedagogy, and teaching and learning in the middle school. These principals of schools with high teacher turnover also identified the value of nonjob-specific functions such as the ability to build relationships, collaborate with others, adapt to change and do things differently. These principals strongly emphasized the importance of relationship-building and having the core belief to do whatever it takes to reach out to all students for their success.

Despite the differences in school context and principals' training and experience at low and high teacher turnover schools, overall, the six principals in this study agreed upon the importance of job-specific functions such as knowledge of content, pedagogy, and the adolescent learner. They also believed that nonjob-specific attributes such as the ability to build relationships and being collaborative and strongly committed to student learning were just as important. However, principals from high teacher turnover schools talked more about using data to assess and monitor student progress and wanting teachers who liked change and were not afraid of doing things differently.

School Characteristics Influencing Principals' Selection Criteria

In terms of school characteristics that influence their teacher selection criteria, these principals of schools with high teacher turnover identified the high needs of their student population from low socioeconomic and single parent families. They indicated that often students come to school with a range of abilities (some two to three years behind) and minimal support from families and community. The students often do not have an engaged attitude toward learning and lack experiential background associated with their developmental age. Therefore, these principals indicated a need for teachers who believe that parents are doing the best they can for their children and that all children

can learn. They want teachers who do not give up on the students and can think creatively to try whatever it takes to engage students in the teaching and learning processes and who use data to monitor student progress and check for understanding along the way. In essence, these principals want teachers with the right attitude who can be respectful of the students and parents they serve. As one principal stated, "*kids don't care how much we know unless they know how much we care...*" (Principal, MS E Interview, 2008).

Even though principals of the schools with high teacher turnover do their best to recruit and hire staff that is representative of the student diversity, often they have trouble getting candidates to interview at their schools because of the perception that their schools are more challenging because of their high educational load. One principal at a school with high teacher turnover reported how a candidate accepted his job offer only to change his mind later when he was offered a teaching job at a higher performing high school in an affluent community in the district. Two of these principals at schools with high teacher turnover shared that they had to hire teachers who were not the best matches for their schools just to fill the vacancies because they had difficulty attracting candidates to teach at their highly impacted "red zone" schools. However, the three middle schools with low teacher turnover in the less impacted "green zone" also expressed difficulty in increasing the diversity of their staff because of the limited availability of diverse candidates and new teachers of color who did not want the long commute to their schools situated in nondiverse communities.

Teacher Selection Process

The principals of schools with high teacher turnover use the same teacher selection process as the principals of schools with low teacher turnover. All six principals used panel interviews with administrators, resource teachers, team leaders, content specialists, and/or staff development specialists serving on the panels. Interview questions focused on the school vision, pedagogical content knowledge, behavioral

management, enthusiasm for the job, and professional growth standards from the district's evaluation process. However, unlike their colleagues at the low teacher turnover schools, these principals of high teacher turnover schools did not use the structured rating forms to rank the candidates. These principals, representative of minority populations (African American, Asian American, and Hispanic), tended to use a discussion and relaxed interview format, preferring to make the interview process more enjoyable rather than the "pressure-cooker" format, as described by one of the principals, often used in the school district.

Factors Facilitating Use of Principals' Selection Criteria

The three principals of schools with high teacher turnover identified factors relating to the central Offices of Human Resources and Organizational Development, and actions by principals, candidates, and institutions of higher education that can facilitate their ability to use their teacher selection criteria. They stressed the importance of human resources staffers following up on their teacher referrals, having one point of contact in the Office of Human Resources to facilitate communication between their schools and central office, and the earlier staffing calendar which increases the availability of candidates for them to interview before the candidates are hired by neighboring school districts. They indicated that the Office of Organizational Development should provide more staff development on the characteristics of the adolescent learner and institutions of higher education should provide a better understanding of the adolescent learner and not just focus on elementary and secondary education in their teacher training. These principals emphasized the importance of principals and school leadership moving the instructional program in a positive direction, using data to improve student performance, being truthful about past performance of candidates when asked by colleagues, being truthful about the dynamics and challenges in their schools when asked by teacher candidates, and having good relationships with their human resources staffer. All three

principals acknowledged that they are at a disadvantage in terms of trying to recruit and retain the best teachers for their highly impacted schools but they are in search of altruistic teacher candidates who want to be challenged and have an opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child.

In contrast, the principals of schools with low teacher turnover focused on the interview process as a factor facilitating their use of their teacher selection criteria. They stressed the importance of conducting a thorough review of the applicant's file in the Office of Human Resources, asking applicants to respond to performance tasks and problem-solving scenarios during interviews, considering feedback from all panel members, and making on-the-spot job offers to strong candidates. These principals depended on human resources staffers to refer potential candidates and resolve staffing issues. However, all six principals agreed on the need for principals to be more supportive of each other by not transferring an underperforming teacher and by being truthful when a colleague asks about a teacher's performance.

In summary, the principals of schools with high teacher turnover have less experience in education and in middle schools than the principals in the schools with low teacher turnover. The schools with high teacher turnover have higher educational loads, resulting in greater instructional and staffing challenges for principals and staff than do schools with low teacher turnover and educational loads. Overall, the teacher selection criteria and process are similar for all six principals, emphasizing job-specific and nonjob-specific characteristics focusing on knowledge of content, pedagogy and adolescent learner characteristics, being collaborative, and having the ability to build relationships with students and staff. Principals further identified factors involving the central Offices of Human Resources and Organizational Development, institutions of higher education, interview process, and principals' and candidates' actions that would facilitate their ability to use their criteria to select teachers.

Summary of Data Analysis

The information elicited from the interview questions, the Data Management and Analysis Chart (Appendix C) and Template for Coding (Appendix D) are organized into five major categories to guide the data analysis using manual coding and NVivo, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). These categories are: Teacher Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities; Teacher Characteristics and Attributes; School Characteristics Influencing Selection Criteria; Teacher Selection Process; and What Facilitates Teacher Selection Using Criteria. Data analysis models (Appendices E, F, G, H, I) were developed for these five categories to assist in the iterative coding process to describe the major factors that principals identified in their selection of teachers as well as the specific teacher attributes.

Table 10 identifies the salient characteristics that principals cite as important in their teacher selection criteria. As illustrated in the table, all six principals cited a teacher's ability to build relationships, be collaborative and a team player, and knowledge of pedagogy and instructional skills in conveying content knowledge to students as major factors in their teacher selection. Five of the six principals mentioned the importance of content knowledge. The only principal who did not mention content knowledge as a major factor in his selection criteria was a former guidance counselor who did not have teacher certification or experience as a teacher in the district. Four of the principals identified the importance of understanding the dynamics of teaching and learning in the middle school environment and being knowledgeable of the characteristics of adolescent learners. Three principals indicated a teacher's ability to use data to assess and monitor student progress as a major factor in teacher selection—two of these principals were from schools with high teacher turnover and high educational load facing many instructional challenges. Even though most principals in the school district have expressed concerns about new teachers' inability to control student behavior in their classes, only two

principals in this study cited classroom management skills as a major factor in their teacher selection criteria.

Table 10

Teacher Skills and Attributes Cited as Major Factors in Teacher Selection by Middle School Principals in Low Teacher Turnover and High Teacher Turnover Schools

Teacher Skills and Attributes Categories	Low Teacher Turnover			High Teacher Turnover		
	MS A	MS B	MS C	MS D	MS E	MS F
Relationship building	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaborative, team player	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pedagogy/instructional skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Adolescent learner/middle school	✓		✓	✓		✓
Commitment to students' learning	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Use data to monitor student progress	✓				✓	✓
Classroom management		✓			✓	

In summary, the findings of this study identified the most salient factors that middle school principals consider in their teacher selection criteria:

- Nonjob-specific factors such as the ability to build relationships, be collaborative, and demonstrate commitment to student learning by persevering and not giving up on students
- Job-specific factors such as possessing pedagogical/instructional skills, content knowledge, an understanding of the adolescent learner and middle school instruction, ability to use data to monitor student achievement, and classroom management skills.

A discussion on the validation and limitations of this study is presented in the next chapter along with conclusions and implications for future recommendations to address the continuous improvement of human resources policies and practices in school districts.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This chapter includes six sections: *Introduction*, *Summary of the Study*, *Findings of the Study*, *Conclusions*, *Recommendations*, and *Implications for Research*. Issues that led to this investigation are cited in the *Introduction*. The purpose of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and methodology are presented in the *Summary of the Study*. A discussion of the data analysis of the findings is included in the *Findings of the Study* section leading to the *Conclusions* resulting from this investigation. Suggestions for central office, institutions of higher education, principals, and teacher selection panels are found in the *Recommendations*. Suggestions for future research and practice are presented in *Implications for Research* section. This chapter closes with a personal note from the student investigator reflecting on how the findings of this study can support the continuous improvement of the Office of Human Resources in this school district.

Introduction

In this era of accountability, the U.S. Department of Education's *A Blueprint for Reform, the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (2010, p. 3) emphasizes improving teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader. In addition, School Improvement Grants (2010) guarantee states federal funding in exchange for the replacement of principals and up to 50% of the staff in underperforming turnaround schools. Therefore, principals are under pressure to hire teachers who are effective in improving the performance of all students in schools. Furthermore, research suggests that teachers have the greatest impact on raising student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004; Rivers & Sanders, 2002; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The achievement test

scores of students taught by highly effective teachers for three consecutive years were 50 percentile points greater than those of students who had ineffective teachers for three years (Hanushek, 2002). In addition, third-grade students taught by an effective teacher continued to have above-average achievement gains in fourth and fifth grades (Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002; Loeb, 2001). Therefore, the decision to hire a teacher is one of the most important decisions made by principals (Baker & Cooper, 2005; Brady, 2006; DeMitchell, 2007; Seyfarth, 2005; Smith, 2005; Webb & Norton, 2003).

Compounding the selection of effective teachers in middle schools is the cognitive, social, and physical diversity of early adolescent learners and the discrepancy in the literature on highly qualified versus highly effective teachers. There is limited research on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria and their hiring practices which enable middle school principals to make more informed hiring decisions.

In the school district where the research was conducted, principals were required to select teachers from candidate pools established by staffers in the Office of Human Resources. However, the staffers did not know the criteria middle school principals used to select teachers to meet the specific needs of their schools nor whether their criteria for teacher selection were aligned with the middle school principals' criteria.

Summary of Study

Purpose and Problem Statement

This qualitative multiple case study on middle school principals' teacher selection criteria attempted to address the issue of hiring effective middle school teachers who are able to promote teaching and learning and increase student achievement. The purpose of this study was to investigate the criteria used by middle school principals so that the findings will add to the body of knowledge that enables principals to make better hiring

decisions. The results of this multiple case study may also enable human resources staffers in the school district to:

- align their selection criteria to what middle school principals are looking for in hiring teachers for their schools
- build teacher candidate pools more conducive to the hiring needs of the principals
- be able to recommend teacher candidates to middle schools to ensure a "good fit"

Research Questions

An analysis of data presented in Chapter IV focused on answering the following research questions:

1. What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers?
2. How do the unique characteristics of schools influence principals' teacher selection criteria?
3. What process do principals use to select teachers using their criteria for selection?
4. What facilitates principals' ability to select teachers who meet their selection criteria?

Methodology

Six middle school principals from a large suburban school district were purposively sampled from schools with high and low teacher turnover for maximum variation of perspectives in this qualitative multiple case study on their teacher selection criteria. Seyfarth's (2005) Model of the Selection Process provided a conceptual framework that supports this research on middle school principals' teacher selection

criteria. Yin's (2003) multiple case study design was used to operationalize the guiding conceptual framework to collect data on the characteristics that middle school principals look for in their selection of teachers. Collected interview data were analyzed using a manual coding process and NVivo, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), to create data analysis models for five major categories as they appear in Appendices E, F, G, H, I:

1. Teacher Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
2. Teacher Characteristics and Attributes
3. School Characteristics Influencing Selection Criteria
4. Teacher Selection Process
5. Facilitation of Teacher Selection Criteria

Validation

To address validity threats and increase the credibility of the findings in this study, several validation strategies suggested by researchers (Creswell, 2007; Denzin, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2006) were implemented.

- The phenomenon of middle school principals' teacher selection criteria was studied through a multiple case study design using extreme cases with different perspectives (i.e., perspectives of principals from three middle schools with low teacher turnover and three middle schools with high teacher turnover).
- Entire written narratives of interviews were given back to participants for member checking (i.e., principals received copies of the transcripts of their interviews to review and confirm the accuracy of their comments).
- Data from this research study were triangulated and analyzed with data from interviews with veteran middle school principals and a

district Middle School Reform pilot study of middle school principals' responses to the question: *What knowledge, skills and content expertise are needed by middle school teachers to meet the needs of middle school students?*

- An external audit was conducted by an experienced educational researcher, not connected with the study, to assess whether findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data.

External Audit

Using a validation strategy suggested by Creswell (2007), an educational researcher not affiliated with this study conducted a review of the qualitative data analysis and methodology to determine if the data support the general conclusion of the student investigator and the appropriateness of the methodology design. This educational researcher had 30 years of professional practice with qualitative methods, and authored more than 40 performance, evaluation, and research reports and 25 publications and papers for presentation at professional conferences. She has had 20 years of experience conducting research studies and program evaluations for the school district and three years of work experience under Robert K. Yin whose case study methodology was used to operationalize this research study. In addition, she is knowledgeable of the district's Middle School Reform efforts since she had previously completed an evaluation of the district's Middle School Magnet Consortium. Therefore, this educational researcher consultant served as a highly qualified reviewer for the external audit of this study.

The external reviewer used an iterative manual coding process to describe the major categories of factors that principals identified in their selection of teachers as well as the specific teacher attributes cited. Reading through the transcripts, she found that the teacher selection factors identified by this sample of six middle school principals fell into seven broad topical categories (Appendix L):

1. Pedagogy/instructional skills (6 principals; job-specific)
2. Relationships with students (6 principals; nonjob-specific)
3. Character, attitude, values (6 principals; nonjob-specific)
4. Content knowledge (5 principals; job-specific)
5. Relationships among teachers (4 principals; nonjob-specific)
6. Relationships with parents/community (3 principals; nonjob-specific)
7. Classroom management skills (2 principals; job-specific)

The three categories—content knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management—align with job-specific factors represented in the first part of Question 2 (*What knowledge, skills, and abilities did these teachers possess?*). The last four categories—relationships with students, teachers, and parents/community and character, attitude, and values—correspond to nonjob-specific factors represented in the second part of Question 2 (*What characteristics and attributes contributed to their success as middle school teachers?*)

There was overlap in the job-specific and nonjob-specific factors, notably in the areas of pedagogy and relationships with students. It was difficult to separate the pedagogical skill of engaging students in content with the relationship skill of connecting with students. In addition, it was difficult to differentiate if a teacher's understanding of the adolescent learner was part of content knowledge or related more to the teacher's ability to build relationships with students. Therefore, since principals did not always separate the job-specific factors (knowledge, skills and abilities) from the nonjob-specific factors (characteristics and attributes) in their responses, the external reviewer combined the principals' responses to the two parts of Question 2. As a result, the reviewer's coding did not correspond exactly to the manual and NVivo coding of the student investigator as displayed in her visual models of *Teacher Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities* and *Teacher Characteristics and Attributes*. Even though the scope of the external audit did not include calculating inter-coder reliability, the external reviewer noted that these

discrepancies in the detailed coding did not change her overall finding that content knowledge, pedagogy, and ability to connect with students are all-important teacher selection factors for middle school principals.

Findings of the Study

Discussion

An analysis of the responses of the six principals in this study revealed that the salient factors in their teacher selection criteria as noted in Table 10 (p. 95) are consistent with teacher characteristics identified as important by 12 middle school principals in a 2005 middle school reform pilot study and interviews with three veteran middle school principals in the school district. This triangulation of data supports the importance of job-specific and nonjob-specific factors in the teacher selection criteria used by middle school principals as identified in Seyfarth's Model of the Selection Process.

The findings of the 2005 middle school reform pilot study as noted in Table 1 (p. 27) identified the importance of job-specific and nonjob-specific factors. Job-specific factors included content knowledge/curriculum expertise, knowledge of adolescent development/age-appropriate adolescent behaviors, knowledge about differentiated learning and skills to differentiate instruction, ability to use diagnostic, formative, and summative data to monitor and increase student achievement and manage classroom behaviors. Nonjob-specific factors included the ability to be a collaborative team player, build relationships with students, teachers, and parents, believe that all students can learn, and persevere in not giving up on students. Furthermore, these principals stressed the importance of middle school teachers having effective organizational, communication and technology skills, a sense of humor, and organizational agility/flexibility; being able to teach reading, writing, and math through content areas; and being self-reflective and life-long learners (Appendix K).

Data from interviews conducted with three veteran middle school principals in the district also support the most salient teacher characteristics identified by the six middle school principals in this study. Table 11 presents the teacher characteristics that the three veteran principals (identified as Principals G, H, and I) deemed as important in their selection of middle school teachers.

Table 11

Veteran Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Factors (2006)

Principal G
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Likes to work with all types of students• <i>Don't give up—you can do it and I am going to help you</i> attitude• Likes children• Likes to collaborate with their peers• Finds different ways of motivating students—inviting students into the content• Personalizes their instruction• Highly knowledgeable of their content area• Demonstrates a respect for themselves, their students, parents, and staff• Makes you want to be with them• Has a sense of humor and always on the go—constant motion• Is creative• Responds to challenges• Has high expectations for students• Involves students with a lot of experiential activities• Builds relationships with children and adults• Able to handle a disruptive student using resources (i.e., when would they bring in a colleague, a parent, the counselor or the administration)• Is flexible

Table 11 (continued)

Veteran Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Factors (2006)

Principal H

- Makes sure that the children are academically successful at whatever cost
- Makes sure that the emotional component is deal with as well
- Has some plan that will not allow their students to fail—they will be successful no matter what
- Doesn't see improvement as negative...sees it as a positive...an opportunity to grow; constantly asks for training, professional development, to go to workshops; comes back to the school and in-services the staff
- Sees the big picture...makes sure that all the teachers in the school are doing some of the same things because it takes everyone working together for the school for all the children to be successful.
- Helps everyone else so they can make sure that kids are successful
- Works on committees...volunteers to support the school in any way that they can
- Is creative...creative thinkers
- Uses data a lot to direct their instruction
- Has initiative...whether it's their responsibility or not, they will take the initiative to get things done
- Constantly involves parents...connecting on a regular basis
- Sees kids outside of the classroom...involved with extracurricular activities; sponsors activities or sees the kids in the kids' activities so will be able to talk to students about something they do other than just academics
- Reaches out to minority kids
- Looks at the data
- Gives feedback and likes to get feedback; learning from someone else
- Strives on having good relationships with their kids; sees that the key to the successes of their children is to have good relationships with them
- Understands the culture of the other kids; sensitive to student's ethnic holidays
- Advocates for special education students who need accommodations
- Sometimes takes on too much
- Exceeds evaluation standards because of all the things they do; standard 6 and professionalism: involved in helping the school set goals, vision, and mission; big picture people
- Has an answer to problems presented; it's not what are *you* going to do about it, it's what are *we* going to do about it
- Definitely knows his/her subject area
- Knows instruction...structured in such a way that students don't have time to misbehave
- Knows about middle school/early adolescent development
- Is enthusiastic
- Is a team player

Table 11 (continued)

Veteran Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Factors (2006)

Principal I
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has a concentration in their subject area• Has special coursework or training in the middle school child• Able to transition children from elementary expectations to middle school rigor; parents need just as much transitioning help• Able to do an inordinate amount of communicating with parents on a regular basis• Able to team with colleagues to plan for students• Has a passion for this age level child• Understands the power s/he possesses in everything s/he says to students• Addresses the child's self-esteem• Helps child transition from concrete to become more abstract thinking• Works on character issues• Holds students to high expectations• Assesses students' progress daily; ability to analyze data to drive instruction• Provides extra support for those who struggle• Lets students know that s/he will never give up on them• Validates the emotions and issues with which students deal• Has an expertise in their subject area• Able to address the multiple ways in which a child learns• Uses differentiation as part of their daily lesson planning• Is a team player and shares with teammates• Helps students to learn from the mistakes that they make• Helps students begin to focus on future goals• Helps students become self-advocates and independent learners• Helps students with their decision-making• Understands children's growth, learning, emotional and social issues

All three veteran middle school principals concurred with the six middle school principals in the current study that the teacher skills and attributes in the following categories were important factors to consider in middle school teachers: relationship building, collaborative/team player, pedagogy/instructional skills, content knowledge, and commitment to student learning. Two of the three middle school principals identified knowledge of adolescent learner characteristics, classroom management, and the ability to use data to monitor student progress as important.

A *Comparison of Teacher Selection Factors* of these three veteran middle school principals along with the six middle school principals in the study is presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Comparison of Teacher Selection Factors of Nine Middle School Principals

Teacher Skills and Attribute Categories	Principals Citing Attribute as Major Factor in Teacher Selection								
	MS A	MS B	MS C	MS D	MS E	MS F	MS G	MS H	MS I
Relationship building	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaborative, team player	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pedagogy/ instructional skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Adolescent learner/ middle school	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Commitment to students' learning	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Use data to monitor student progress	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓
Classroom management		✓			✓		✓	✓	

Even though the scope of the external audit did not include calculating inter-coder reliability, the external reviewer noted that these discrepancies in the detailed coding did not change her overall finding that content knowledge, pedagogy, and ability to connect

with students are all-important teacher selection factors for middle school principals. Therefore, this external review supported the general conclusion of the student investigator that the nonjob-specific teacher qualities, personal traits and dispositions such as the ability to build relationships and relate to adolescents are just as important as the job-specific factors such as content knowledge and instructional skills in middle school principals' teacher selection criteria. The external reviewer further linked the principals' responses to the district's professional standards for teachers.

The school district in this study has developed a Professional Growth System (PGS) that includes six standards that form the basis for evaluation and professional development for all instructional staff in the system. Even though only one principal in the study explicitly mentioned consideration of these performance standards in his response, the standards were evident in many of the selection factors cited by this sample of principals. The six PGS standards and the frequency with which they were included as selection factors among these principals are listed in following Table 13.

Table 13

*Relationship Between District Teacher Performance Standards and Teacher Selection**Factors Cited by Principals*

Professional Growth System Standard in Brief	Full Standard: Teachers....	Factor Code Appendix L	Number of Principals Who Mentioned
I. Commitment to student learning	...are committed to students and their learning.	4.5	4 out of 6
II. Content knowledge & pedagogy	...know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students	1.1 & 2.1	6 out of 6
III. Classroom management	...are responsible for establishing and managing a positive learning environment.	3.1	2 out of 6
IV. Data to inform instruction	...continually assess student progress, analyze results, and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.	2.6	4 out of 6
V. Professional development	...are committed to continuous improvement and professional development	7.4	4 out of 6
VI. Professionalism	...exhibit a high degree of professionalism	7.1	3 out of 6

Based on a topical coding of the interview transcripts by the student investigator and the external reviewer, it is evident that principals value a teacher's ability to build relationships along with content knowledge and pedagogical skills. It appears that principals take a teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical skills (Standard 2) as a non-negotiable starting point and are looking for teachers who can also relate well to their students (Standard 1 and 3) and engage them in this content. In addition, they seek teachers who can work well with other teachers and possess personal values that are specifically conducive to effective teaching such as a commitment to professional growth and professionalism (Standards 5 and 6).

Summary of Findings for the Research Questions

Finding #1: Middle school principals' teacher selection criteria include both job-specific and nonjob-specific factors. Job-specific teacher characteristics include knowledge of content, pedagogy, and adolescent learner characteristics and the ability to scaffold instruction and use data. Nonjob-specific teacher characteristics include the ability to build relationships, be collaborative, kid-oriented, flexible, enthusiastic, professional, and committed to student learning.

Finding #2: A cross-case comparison between the six individual case studies revealed that the unique characteristics of the school did not generally appear to influence the principals' teacher selection criteria. The six principals in this study agreed on the importance of non-job specific skills such as relationship building, being collaborative and a team player and job-specific skills such as knowledge of pedagogy and instructional skills to convey the knowledge to middle school students. This was present regardless of whether the school was impacted by high or low teacher turnover and student mobility and the number of students receiving free and reduced-price meals, special education, or ESOL services. The external reviewer also found that the factors used to select teachers were very similar across all six sample schools regardless of their low and high staff turnover rates.

Finding #3: Principals in this study selected teachers through the process of an interview panel consisting of administrators, resource teachers, team leaders, content specialists, and/or staff development specialists. However, the three principals at schools with high teacher turnover rates who came from diverse backgrounds (African American, Asian American, and Hispanic) reported using a discussion and more relaxed interview format in lieu of a structured rating form used by the principals at low teacher turnover schools.

Finding #4: To facilitate their ability to use their teacher selection criteria to obtain the best hiring matches for their schools, the middle school principals identified

ways that central offices, Institutions of Higher Education, their principal colleagues, and panel members could support their endeavor:

- Office of Human Resources should continue to follow up on principals' teacher referrals, do the initial screening of applicants, build pools of qualified candidates, and refer candidates who are available and good matches for their schools as vacancies occur. Human Resource's one point of contact (a staffer assigned to each school) can help to facilitate communication between the Office of Human Resources and principals. The early staffing calendar increases a school's chances of hiring new candidates before they are selected by other school districts. To provide principals and their staff an opportunity to interview many candidates in one evening, the principals suggested that the Office of Human Resources continue holding the Human Resources Job Fairs for internal candidates.
- Office of Organizational Development should provide more staff development and training on the adolescent learner focusing on strategies that will address adolescent behavior and engage students in learning.
- Central offices (i.e., human resources and staff development) can collaborate and offer workshops for principals on human capital management with topics on how to recruit, select, and retain teachers to ensure that they have the necessary skills and attitude to be a successful middle school teacher.
- Institutions of higher education should provide more training on adolescent development and middle school instruction and not just focus on elementary and high schools in their teacher training programs. There should be consideration in offering a program that

leads to middle school certification with emphasis in a content area and field experiences in the middle school setting.

- Principal colleagues need to be truthful when asked about former employees who may have been underperforming and not use the involuntary transfer process to reassign underperforming teachers.
- Interview panel members need to provide performance tasks and problem-solving scenarios to teacher candidates at interviews to capture their job-specific and nonjob-specific characteristics, and provide the principal with honest feedback for hiring consideration.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this investigation, the following recommendations are offered in an effort to support middle school principals in using their espoused criteria for teacher selection to obtain the best hiring matches for their schools.

Recommendation #1: Middle school principals should:

1. share their Teacher Selection Criteria and unique school staffing needs with their Human Resources staffer;
2. develop a relationship with their Human Resources staffer to be intricately involved in the teacher selection process; and
3. share with their colleagues and Human Resources staffers the performance tasks and problem-solving scenarios they use to capture job-specific and nonjob-specific characteristics of teacher applicants during interviews.

Recommendation #2: Human resources staffers should:

1. increase their knowledge of the middle school principals' teacher selection criteria and the middle school staffing needs;
2. establish a strong relationship with principals and school communities;

3. establish guidelines to clarify and monitor the interview process at schools; and
4. provide assessment instruments to capture job-specific and nonjob-specific characteristics.

Furthermore, Human Resources staffers should be:

1. assigned to a group of schools in order to facilitate their communication with principals, and
2. can increase their knowledge of the staffing needs of the middle schools by visiting the schools and meeting with the administration, staff, and students to learn the unique school characteristics that may influence their teacher selection criteria.

Recommendation #3: Principals and Human Resources staffers need to build relationships with Institutions of Higher Education and identify the kind of graduates that the school district needs to meet middle school hiring needs. Institutions of Higher Education should offer training programs for school Human Resource personnel, and a Human Resources component in Principal and Leadership Development Programs.

Implications

For Research

The qualitative data that emerged in this investigative study indicated that the factors used by the middle school principals to select teachers are very similar across all six cases. However, is it possible that High Teacher Turnover schools do not really have a selection process since they may have difficulty attracting highly effective teachers to work at their schools? Could it be that the process they use needs to be more of an attraction process versus selection? It would be interesting to see if principals of High Teacher Turnover Schools should be looking for teachers with greater strength of

knowledge and instructional skills and how successful they are in attracting such teacher candidates. Therefore, a future study can further investigate and compare the actual processes used by middle schools with high and low teacher turnover to see if they differ in terms of a selection versus an attraction process.

An extension of this study can incorporate information from multiple sources or perspectives and include quantitative data to see if the principals are actually using their espoused teacher selection criteria in the hiring process. For example, all six principals in this study indicated that they conduct panel interviews and use feedback from administrators, resource teachers, team leaders, content specialists, and/or staff development specialists serving on the panel to make hiring decisions. Therefore, in addition to interviewing the principal, a future researcher can gather information from other staff involved in the interview or decision-making process for comparison purposes. In addition, documentation of the school's most recent hires can be collected, including candidate resumes, interview questions, notes, or ratings, and written observations/evaluations to see if the information supports the principals' hiring decision.

Since interview Question 2 asked principals to identify job-specific and nonjob-specific factors in their teacher selection criteria, the student investigator and external reviewer were unable to determine the relative importance of these factors in hiring teachers. A suggestion for future research is to present these two parts—job-specific and nonjob-specific factors—as separate interview questions and weigh the relative importance of these two factors in selecting teachers.

Furthermore, a more robust case study would go beyond identifying the teacher characteristics that principals deem as important to investigating whether the principals are actually using their espoused criteria for selection and the impact of their hiring decisions on the longevity and effectiveness of the teachers they selected using their criteria. Personnel records can identify the retention of new hires in a school and the reported reasons for leaving the school or the profession.

Finally, to generalize the findings from this study to other populations, the interview questions may be sent to a larger diverse sample of middle school principals in the form of a questionnaire to further investigate if unique school characteristics (i.e., high or low teacher turnover, urban versus rural) impacts their teacher selection criteria.

For Practice

The traditional approach to teacher selection focuses on hiring for content knowledge and skills. However, implications from this study suggest that hiring for attitude, disposition, and other nonjob-specific characteristics may be just as important and should have equal consideration in the teacher selection.

Currently, the staffers in the Office of Human Resources in this school district recruit and interview external applicants to build applicant pools for principals to consider in filling their vacancies. In essence, the human resources staffers are "gate keepers" of external candidates since the staffers are responsible for ensuring that candidates referred to principals are certified to teach in their content area and are highly qualified for the Title I schools in the district. The policy in this school district is that the principals can interview prospective candidates, make the hiring decisions for their school, and then send staffing recommendations to the Office of Human Resources recommending that the teacher they selected be hired into the school district and assigned to their school. However, the Office of Human Resources retains authority to make the final decision about who is hired into the district.

The current interview protocol used by human resources staffers focuses on job-specific characteristics such as knowledge of content and middle school instruction as evidenced by university degrees and transcripts. Evidence of classroom management and pedagogical/instructional skills and the use of data are often gleaned from questions and scenarios presented at the interview along with a review of references and evaluations from former supervisors. The candidate's disposition and nonjob-specific characteristics

such as their ability to build relationships, be collaborative, be a team player, and committed to student learning can only be obtained from references or inferred through interview responses or portfolios. Since principals indicated that these nonjob-specific factors are also important in their teacher selection criteria, it is suggested that the Office of Human Resources revise the system's teacher selection protocol to capture the candidates' attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions.

Based on the findings from this study and other sources, the school district is working on a *Hiring for Excellence Project* to develop a standardized rubric to score applicants on the following competencies: achievement/leadership, perseverance/commitment to students, critical thinking, organizational ability, influencing/motivating, respect for low-income communities, and fit for the school district. These competencies are adapted from the *Teach For America's* selection model. Evaluators will be trained to ensure consistent application of the rubric to hire teachers with the right attitude to engage all students in the teaching and learning process.

To support highly impacted middle schools with high educational loads and teacher turnover—both factors which provide greater instructional challenges for the principals and staff at these schools—the Office of Human Resources may consider preferential staffing treatment such as the one that is currently being provided to elementary principals in Title I schools in the district who have early access to early-contracted highly-qualified candidates.

Next Steps for the School District

Based on information from this research and other sources, the school district in this study is exploring an alternative route to teacher certification particularly in the area of math instruction. With a proposed *Hiring for Excellence Project*, a pilot group of non-teacher trained candidates who score high in the competencies of achievement/leadership, perseverance/commitment to students, critical thinking, organizational ability, ability to

influence/motivate, respect for low-income communities, and fit for the school district will be provided a six- to eight-week training program during the spring and summer. Upon completion of the training, they will be hired as alternatively certified math teachers in the fall.

As a result of the project, this school district is working with their state department of education to create an alternative certification to teaching math in the middle school to supplement the one college institution in the state that has a middle school certification program and another major university in the state that is developing a middle school teacher training program. Therefore, the school district and local institutions of higher education are responding to the middle school principals' call to action of preparing more middle school teachers to make curriculum relevant and instruction engaging for adolescent learners.

Supporting the importance of nonjob-specific teacher characteristics identified in this study, Harvard University's professor Ron Ferguson's *The Tripod Project* (2009) stresses the importance of content, pedagogy, and relationships which he describes as the three "legs" of the instructional tripod necessary to raise academic achievement for all students while narrowing achievement gaps between racial and ethnic groups. According to Dr. Ferguson, *teachers need to understand what they are teaching (content knowledge), multiple effective ways of communicating the material to students (pedagogy), and to relate to students (relationships) in ways that motivate and enable them.*

In closing, Erika Daniels, an experienced middle school teacher and professor of the California State University's middle school credential program, appears to support the findings of this study as she emphasizes the importance of the relationship building and commitment to student learning in addition to content knowledge and pedagogy.

"Adolescents are ready to work and achieve when they know that people care about them, and what they're learning matters, and that they possess the skills necessary to meet a

given challenge. Effective middle school teachers are passionate about the learning of these young adolescents, and they recognize that if they do not meet their students' social and emotional needs, they will waste their content-area expertise. Students simply will not achieve academically when their affective needs go unaddressed" (Daniels, 2005, p. 52).

Personal Reflection on This Study

The student investigator's interest in this topic stems from her years of experience as a human resources staffer, Director of Human Resources, Director of School Performance, and co-chair of the school district's Human Resources Project Team of the Middle School Reform Initiative. This research study provided an opportunity to examine the relationship between principals and Human Resources staffers, principals' hiring practices, and current trends and issues impacting principals and teachers in educating young adolescents. Conducting this investigation provided the researcher insight into the criteria that middle school principals use in their selection of teachers to meet the needs of their students. It also increased the researcher's knowledge of middle school issues and the essential attributes and characteristics of successful middle level educators (NMSA, 2010) which is important in teacher selection and is crucial in transitioning students to high school. With increased accountability and higher expectations on student performance, central office staff and institutions of higher education need to support middle school principals and teachers to ensure that every young adolescent not only achieves academic success but also becomes a healthy, productive, and ethical adult who is a positive, contributing member of society.

Appendix A
Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	<i>A Case Study Analysis of Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Criteria</i>
Why is this research being done?	<i>This is a research project being conducted by Jane Lai Woodburn at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a middle school principal. The purpose of this research project is to find out what characteristics middle school principals look for in hiring teachers so that we will be able to describe middle school principals' teacher selection criteria to assist Human Resources staffing specialists in creating pools of applicants that meet the staffing needs of middle schools.</i>
What will I be asked to do?	<p><i>The procedures involve your volunteering to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Participate in a tape-recorded interview at your school of no more than 1.5 hours by answering the following interview questions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What is your background, training, and experience in middle schools?</i> ➤ <i>Think about three teachers that you have hired whom you consider as highly effective middle school teachers.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What knowledge, skills, and abilities did these teachers possess?</i> ○ <i>What characteristics and attributes contributed to their success as middle school teachers?</i> ➤ <i>What are the unique characteristics of your school which influence your teacher selection criteria?</i> ➤ <i>What process do you use to select your teachers? Do you have interview questions?</i> ➤ <i>What facilitates your ability to select teachers who meet these criteria?</i> • <i>Review, comment on, and approve the verbatim typed transcription of your interview consisting of about 1 hour at your convenience to ensure that your true meaning was captured.</i>
What about confidentiality?	<p><i>We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all materials will be kept in locked filing cabinets and password-protected computer files.</i></p> <p><i>Identification codes will be used on all data forms to protect your identity: (1) your name will not be included on the collected data; (2) a code will be placed on the collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your data to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key.</i></p>

Project Title	<i>A Case Study Analysis of Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Criteria</i>
What about Confidentiality? (Continued)	<p><i>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</i></p> <p><u><i>Audiotaped Recordings</i></u> <i>This research project involves making audiotapes of the interviews to produce a verbatim text of the interview allowing for greater authenticity of the information gathering process. These audiotapes and verbatim typed transcripts will be reviewed and checked by you as previously stated.</i></p> <p><i>The audiotapes of the interviews will be used only for this research project. No one beyond the principal investigator, Dr. Hanne Mawhinney, and the student investigator, Jane Lai Woodburn, will have access to the tapes or the verbatim transcripts. The audiotapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet along with the other data.</i></p>
What are the risks of this research?	<i>There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.</i>
What are the benefits of this research?	<i>This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about middle principals' teacher selection criteria so that Human Resources Staffing Specialists can align their teacher selection criteria with your criteria for selection and build teacher applicant pools to meet the staffing needs of your school. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the characteristics that middle school principals look for in hiring teachers effective in increasing student performance. As a result, staff members who hire middle school personnel may be able to better match potential candidates to the needs of their middle school students.</i>

Project Title	<i>A Case Study Analysis of Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Criteria</i>
Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?	<i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i>
What if I have questions?	<p><i>This research is being conducted by Dr. Hanne B. Mawhinney, associate professor, Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Mawhinney at 2201 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland College Park, MD 20742, 301-405-4546, hmawhinn@wam.umd.edu</i></p> <p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678</i></p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	<i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.</i>
Audiotaping	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study</p>

Signature and Date	NAME OF SUBJECT	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

Note: From University of Maryland College Park IRB Application and Instructions rev. 01/31/07.

Retrieved May 17, 2008 from <http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB>

Appendix B

Individual Case Reports on Case Studies
Of Six Middle Schools

The following six individual case reports for each of the middle schools under investigation describe the school's characteristics and demographics (2006-2007 school year data), principal's background and teacher selection criteria/process, and factors impacting the school's ability to select teachers using criteria.

Middle Schools with Low Teacher Turnover

Middle School A

School Context

This middle school built in 2004 has the lowest average teacher turnover rate of 11.39 percent in the school district. It is situated upcounty in a quiet community of new homes and has a student enrollment of 1,063. The school has an experienced staff with 41.6 percent of staff members with more than 15 years of experience, 49.4 percent of staff members with between 5-15 years of experience, and only 9.1 percent of staff members with less than 5 years of experience. As a result, 95.3 percent of the classes in this middle school are taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) as defined by federal and state standards and 4.7 percent of the classes are taught by non-Highly Qualified Teachers. The professional staff diversity of this school is 92.2 percent White, 3.9 percent African American, 2.6 percent Hispanic, 1.3 percent American Indian, and 0.0 percent Asian American as compared to the student demographics of 50.1 percent White, 19.2 percent African American, 14.2 percent Hispanic, 0.3 percent American Indian, and 16.2 percent Asian American. The school has a 9.9 percent student mobility rate and 4.7 percent suspension rate and only 2.4 percent of the students are enrolled in ESOL classes, 11.6 percent of the students receive special education services, and 16.3 percent of the

students participate in FARMS. The school has special programs for Emotional Disabilities (ED) and Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD). In terms of the state school assessments for adequate yearly progress (AYP), this school met proficiency and participation rates for math and reading in all grades: Math 6 (78.5%), Math 7 (76.3%), Math 8 (66.8%), Reading 6 (88.9%), Reading 7 (84.4%) and Reading 8 (85.4%).

Compared to other schools in the district, this middle school would not be considered as a highly impacted school. However, the teacher and student demographics illustrate a challenge for the principal to increase the diversity of his staff to reflect the student diversity at the school.

The principal acknowledged the need to increase the diversity of his staff because his student population is becoming more diverse and some of his veteran teachers who have been there the longest have greater difficulty with the increasing diverse student population than teachers new to the school. Though his school attracts a large number of non-diverse teachers, he has difficulty attracting and hiring teachers of color because his school is so far north in the district that minority teachers who tend to live down county do not want to drive the distance to teach at his school.

The principal described the culture of the school as a *family atmosphere—we're going to take care of you, we're going to get the things that you need; and in return, you're going to give the kids what they need. We're very family-friendly, that's a priority.* His staff, committed to their students, put in long hours by coming in early and leaving late. His school is growing and changing not only in terms of the student body but also in terms of different structures in the building such as a flexible schedule and more portable classrooms. Their flexible scheduling has students scheduled for seven periods but they

only go to five classes a day for about 65 minutes. Since the classes rotate everyday, teachers have different periods for planning throughout the week. Also, teachers may be teaching in a classroom in the building or in a portable classroom or as a "floater" using different classrooms throughout the day. As a result, these unique school characteristics influence the principal's teacher selection criteria by emphasizing a need for teachers who are flexible, committed to the learning of all students, and able to build relationships with students and staff.

Principal's Background, Training, and Experience

The principal at this middle school is one of the most experienced middle school principals in the district. A white male, who has 23.6 years of experience in education with 22 of those years in the middle schools, he is certified in math, Physical Education, and Administration. He started in the school district as a math teacher and then moved on to teaching Physical Education for 14 years. Afterwards, he became an assistant principal for five years—all in middle school, with an exception of about three months at a high school, before becoming a middle school principal at his current location for the past five years.

Principal's Teacher Selection Criteria

This principal's teacher selection criteria was based upon characteristics, attributes, knowledge, skills, and abilities which he identified as important in a teacher that he hires for his school. In terms of teacher characteristics and attributes, he looks for teachers who are kid-centered, relationship-focused with students and staff, flexible, likes change, able to engage students, and want to teach in middle school (not using it as a stepping stone to high school). In terms of teacher knowledge, skills, and abilities, he

looks for teachers who are knowledgeable of subject area content and characteristics of the adolescent learner. Teachers who understand that rigor should be focused on instruction (e.g., challenging each student at his or her level) and not structures (e.g., bringing high school courses to middle school). Teachers who are skillful in assessing and monitoring student progress, scaffolding instruction to provide rigorous instruction, using technology to motivate student learning, and facilitating differentiated learning so that students have choices and can learn from each other. In summary, this principal emphasized that the three most important criteria for selecting teachers who are effective at his school are that they *understand adolescent learners and how they learn, understand their subject, and understand how to create relationships.*

School's Teacher Selection Process

According to the principal, the teacher selection process at the school consists of a panel of administrators and teachers who use various interview questions and scenarios to find a good match between the applicant and the school. To ensure a "good fit" with the school's leadership team and staff, interview questions are asked from different angles or perspectives often relating to the school's focus for the year (e.g., on rigorous instruction or technology). Scenarios focus on how the applicant may engage with kids in teaching and learning and behavioral management. Even though there are structured questions, the format of the panel interview is an informal discussion in effort to put the applicant at ease. The principal stressed that they do not use interview rating scales but instead just have a conversation with the applicant because *you get more from a conversation than you do rating a 1 to 5 scale on somebody because it's so formal, people get nervous.*

At the district-wide Teacher Transfer Job Fair for internal candidates, the principal shared that they do quick 15-minute interviews to get background information on candidates. Then they select three to five candidates to invite back to the school for a second interview to discuss specifics. The principal indicated that he likes to take his time to decide on a teacher selection to ensure a good match for his school. Because he often has a large pool of teacher applicants to choose from, this principal has the luxury of taking his time to make his teacher selections. However, he shared that because he does take his time going back and forth with a candidate, he has lost some teachers who are anxious to get school assignments to other schools.

Factors Facilitating Teacher Selection Using Criteria

The principal shared that because his school is a new facility, it attracts a lot of teachers who want to work there. They had more than 80 teacher applicants at the Job Fair; however, very few were minority candidates. The principal indicated that if he could just get minority teachers to talk with him and come visit his school, he would be able to find good matches for his school. What would facilitate his ability to hire teachers of color would be to have his surrounding community become more diverse as teachers of color start moving upcounty to live. Another factor that has resulted in the increased quality of his teacher candidate pool which facilitates his ability to use his teacher selection criteria is that the middle school principals in the district all agreed not to "pass the trash" but rather evaluate underperforming teachers instead of transferring them to their colleagues' schools.

The principal suggested that the Office of Human Resources (OHR) provide more guidance to first- and second-year teachers, who have been surpluses, as to which schools

may be a good match for them since they may not know the county schools very well. This support could result in OHR referring teachers who would be a good match for this middle school and help address the school's need for more teachers of color to reflect the diversity of the student population. Also, OHR should continue to post the involuntary transfer list early so that principals can select teachers off of the list to consider before OHR make the teacher placements. This process gives principals an opportunity to interview involuntary transfers and select teachers that are good fits for their schools. Furthermore, this principal indicated that with the large number of teachers in our school district, he is *not sure there is an easy way other than the Job Fair* to facilitate his ability to select teachers using his criteria for selection.

Summary

This middle school with an experienced principal and staff in a new upcounty community is growing in student enrollment and diversity. Even though the school is able to attract a high number of teacher applicants, few are teachers of color. Besides looking to increase the diversity of his staff, this principal's teacher selection criteria focus on teachers who want to teach early adolescents and are kid-centered, relationship-focused, flexible, able to engage students, knowledgeable of subject content, adolescent learner characteristics and rigorous instruction, and skillful in assessing and monitoring student progress, scaffolding instruction, using technology, and facilitating differentiated learning. His three most important criteria for selecting teachers who are successful at his school are that they understand adolescent learners, their subject, and how to create relationships.

In addition, this principal brought up two important issues in the middle schools, described by Maxwell (2005) as epic categories that warrant further investigation. The first is the phenomenon in this school district of an established hierarchy of school administration starting with elementary, then middle, then high school—where in order to be a high school principal, an administrator would need to have experience as a middle school principal. As a result, many middle school principal move on to become high school principals so that there is never continuity within a middle school to get the school where they need to be. This principal shared that he is in his fifth year as a principal in this middle school and is one of the longer tenures among middle school principals in the district. He strongly believes that if administrators want to be high school principals, they should just apply to be high school principals and not use the middle school principal ship as a stepping stone to a high school principal ship—*moving from middle to high for pay increase or if they're moving because they think it's more prestigious, they're doing it for the wrong reasons.*

The second important middle school issue this principal highlighted was that the Middle School Reform in the school district which he feels focuses on structures such as bringing high school courses down to the middle school level and block scheduling and not on instruction. He emphasized that Middle School Reform should focus on *how we teach kids in the middle school and get them to think so that when they get to high school, they can take whatever situation and think through it and apply those thinking skills.* He also expressed concern about the literacy coach and math content coach positions in the Middle Reform schools because *we are taking outstanding teachers out of the classroom and giving them nonteaching positions.* Also some schools are using these positions as

staff development teachers who are *looking for more time from the staff who has little time to finish what they're asked to do now*. He believed that school districts apply a high school or an elementary model to middle schools because *nobody has really formed what a middle school model is* and that even a lot of middle school principals do not truly understand the concept of a middle school model.

Middle School B

School Context

This middle school built in 1971 has the second lowest average teacher turnover rate of 14.33 percent in the school district. It is situated in an affluent suburban community near the center of the school district and has a student enrollment of 1,146. The school has an experienced staff consisting of 36.1 percent of staff members with more than 15 years of experience, 45.8 percent of staff members with between 5-15 years of experience, and 18.1 percent of staff members with less than 5 years of experience. As a result, 97.9 percent of the classes in this middle school are taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) as defined by federal and state standards and 2.1 percent of the classes are taught by non-Highly Qualified Teachers who are not certified in the core academic subject they are assigned to teach. The professional staff diversity of this school is 80.7 percent White, 10.8 percent African American, 6.0 percent Asian American, 2.4 percent Hispanic and 0.0 percent American Indian as compared to the student demographics of 54.3 percent White, 4.2 percent African American, 35.2 percent Asian American, 6.3 percent Hispanic, and 0.1 American Indian. The school has a 5 percent student mobility rate and 2.8 percent suspension rate with 3.6 percent of the students enrolled in ESOL classes, 7.9 percent of the students receiving special education services, and 4.6 percent

of the students participating in FARMS. The school has a special program for Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD). In terms of the state school assessments for adequate yearly progress (AYP), this school met proficiency and participation rates for math and reading in all grades: Math 6 (95.6%), Math 7 (94.8%), Math 8 (92.1%), Reading 6 (97.4%), Reading 7 (96.7%) and Reading 8 (92.1%).

Based upon the school's low percentage of African American and Hispanic students, the principal shared that most people might think his school is not diverse in terms of the student body. But he begged to differ stressing the diversity of ethnic backgrounds with the many different languages that are spoken at his school among the large Asian American population and the diverse socioeconomic status of the students. Since this middle school feeds into one of the top performing high schools in the district and has a very involved and demanding parent community that expects student results, the school has a lot of after-school activities and promotes on their website that this *is a place where staff and students excel, and parents and community care.*

Because of the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity that the students bring to the school, this principal's teacher selection criteria focuses on a need for teachers who are *flexible in dealing with various types of students—willing to allow students to share their background and their experiences in the teaching and learning process.* To support the many after-school activities, he looks for teachers who are interested in serving as activity or club sponsors.

Principal's Background, Training, and Experience

This African American male principal has 20 years of experience in education and 17 of those years were in the middle schools. He is certified in Industrial Arts and

Administration. After teaching six years as an industrial arts/technology education teacher in Greensboro, North Carolina, this principal brought best practices from another school district. Transferring into the school district in this study, he has taught technology education for three years and then served seven years as an administrator—five years as an assistant principal at a high school and a high school of technology and the past two years as principal of this middle school.

In terms of training, this principal has a masters of Science degree in industrial art/technology education and a doctorate of philosophy degree in technology education/public school administration and supervision. He has taught at Bowie State University as an adjunct professor teaching courses on pedagogy and administration and helped to write the technology education curriculum for middle and high schools for the school district in this investigation. In addition, he has been involved with mentoring programs for middle school kids.

Principal's Teacher Selection Criteria

This principal identified specific knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics, and attributes that are necessary for teachers to be successful at his school. He emphasized the importance of the teacher having the content knowledge to teach his or her assigned subjects; the ability to convey that information to students by engaging students and valuing what they bring to the teaching and learning process; and the skills to communicate with others, handle conflict with students and staff, and get along with people. He placed a lot of emphasis on the characteristics and attributes looking for teachers who are kid-oriented, honest, professional, confident, flexible especially in dealing with students from different ethnic backgrounds, enthusiastic about the job

because that enthusiasm is infectious with both students and staff, and team players who can work with a group and are respectful of others. In summary, this principal highlighted the three most important look furs in his teacher selection criteria—that they know the content and can convey the information to students; express enthusiasm about the job; and can deal with conflict and get along with people.

School's Teacher Selection Process

The principal indicated that he uses panel interviews with structured questions and an evaluation form rating candidates on a scale of 4 to 0 allowing comments for each question. There are five to seven questions in the panel interview—some examples are: *Solve the math problem and explain how you would teach to students (content knowledge and ability); Why should you be selected for this position? (enthusiasm); Explain a situation whereby you had a conflict with a colleague and how was it resolved (conflict resolution); What are some experiences you have had with youth? (willingness to sponsor a club or activity); Select a great lesson, describe the structure of the lesson and explain why this lesson was successful (ability to teach); Use our school vision, Experience excellence—what does that mean to you or how could you contribute to this vision?* (rigor). Candidates receive an overall ranking from the panel which is made up of administrators and staff members. To make the hiring selection, the principal takes the panel's rankings under consideration but also considers the needs of the school and whether he perceives the candidate as being student-centered (by the number of times the candidate mentions students during the interview). He provided an example of when he needed a special education teacher with a strong background in math because that was an area that needed improvement evidenced by the low MSA disaggregated proficiency

rates for special education in grades 6 (75%), grade 7 (72%), and grade 8 (68.2%). The candidate who won the interview hated math so the principal knew that would not be a good fit for the school at this time. Instead, he hired the third choice in terms of the interview process but this candidate had a strong background in math and loved teaching the subject.

This principal also used other ways to assess his teacher applicants. He reviews applicants' personnel files to look at their GPAs and see if there was progress from the first two years to the last two years of college. For example, if they were getting Bs and Cs in math *but in their junior and senior years, they're earning A's, then I consider that person a strong candidate—that would tell me about their content knowledge.* In addition to a file review, the principal used performance task type interview questions to assess content knowledge which is critical to his teacher selection criteria because he firmly believes that *a person can't teach what they don't know.*

Factors Facilitating Teacher Selection Using Criteria

This principal identified many factors which facilitated his ability to hire teachers using his teacher selection criteria. Requiring teacher applicants to do performance tasks during the interview process enabled him to see if applicants knew the content as well as how to deliver the information to students. Reviewing the applicants' personnel files and their college transcripts provided insight in terms of their content knowledge. Reviewing applicants' resumes provided information on an applicant's education and experience—particularly experience with kids outside of the classroom. Calling references provided insights from supervisors on the applicants' performance on previous jobs. Considering feedback from interview panel members and the applicants' overall presentations at the

interviews provided information regarding their professionalism and confidence. Finally, this principal uses his school vision statement to find out how candidates can contribute to the school vision, mission, and community.

Summary

This principal's teacher selection criteria focus on the hiring of teachers who have the content knowledge, and effective communication, conflict resolution and human relations skills. He looks for teachers who are kid-oriented, honest, professional, confident, flexible, enthusiastic, team players, and are able to engage and convey information to their students. He views his school as being very diverse since there is diversity in terms of socioeconomic status among the student population and language and ethnicity among the large percentage of Asian American students in his school. He is looking for teachers who value diversity and the students' unique background and experiences in the teaching and learning process. His three most important criteria for selecting effective teachers for his school are that they know the content and how to convey the information to students, are enthusiastic, and can resolve conflict and get along with people.

Middle School C

School Context

This middle school built in 1967 and renovated in 1989 has the third lowest average teacher turnover rate of 15.55 percent in the school district. It is situated in an affluent community in the center of the school district and has a student enrollment of 929. The school has an experienced staff with 41.1 percent of staff members with more than 15 years of experience, 37 percent of staff members with between 5-15 years of

experience, and 21.9 percent of staff members with less than 5 years of experience. As a result, 91.2 percent of the classes in this middle school are taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) as defined by federal and state standards and 8.8 percent of the classes are taught by non-Highly Qualified Teachers. The professional staff diversity of this school is 86.3 percent White, 5.5 percent Hispanic, 4.1 percent African American, 4.1 percent Asian American, and 0.0 percent American Indian and as compared to the student demographics of 57.5 percent White, 5.6 percent Hispanic, 8.6 percent African American, 28 percent Asian American, and 0.3 percent American Indian. The school has a 6.1 percent student mobility rate and 2.2 percent suspension rate with 3.2 percent of the students enrolled in ESOL classes, 11.6% of the students receiving special education services, and 4.4 percent of the students participating in FARMS. The school has special programs for Autism, Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD), Learning for Independence (LFI), and School/Community-Based (SCB). In terms of the state school assessments for adequate yearly progress (AYP), this school met proficiency and participation rates for math and reading in all grades: Math 6 (91.5%), Math 7 (92.8%), Math 8 (91.2%), Reading 6 (92.9%), Reading 7 (94.4%) and Reading 8 (93%).

This principal shared that the unique school characteristics which influence her teacher selection criteria are the strong parent involvement, large number of students who are high achievers, large special education population, small group of students from a community who tend to have educational and economic challenges, and a combination of veteran and new teachers creating a community of learners. Addressing these characteristics of her school, the principal indicated that they are able to successfully program for their students by using different strategies and programs to meet student

needs in order to provide rigorous instruction for all students. However, she believes that they still have room for growth to continuing to look for different ways to scaffold instruction to meet the needs of their students and to ultimately close the gap in achievement among the student racial groups. This principal stresses that the *ultimate for a school is a combination of veteran teachers and brand new teachers* because *younger teachers have the cutting edge, fresh perspective and veterans have the knowledge and experience*. As a result, *you end up with an effective staff because both groups learn from each other*. She instills equity among staff as part of her school culture and climate—that there is no favoritism among staff members so that it does not appear that all the opportunities are going to the new staff or to veterans. As a result, she has created a climate where everyone is constantly learning including the principal. She shared that basically their parents work with the school to ensure that the needs of their children are met—especially since her middle school feeds into one of the top performing high schools in the district. However, there is a small group of parents who may be perceived as going "overboard" in terms of their expectations which creates challenges in her school that are more parent-oriented than student-oriented—especially since her school have many students who are high achievers and independent learners.

Principal's Background, Training, and Experience

This African American female principal has 37.7 years in education with 19 of those years in the middle school. After three years of teaching middle school, she went to teach elementary school and then returned to the middle school as an assistant principal and became principal of her current middle school for the past four years. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in administration and

supervision, and her doctoral degree in educational leadership. She is certified in the areas of elementary education, pupil personnel worker, and administration.

Principal's Teacher Selection Criteria

This principal based her teacher selection criteria on the following knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics, and attributes that she believes is crucial for teachers to possess in order to be effective in her school. Most importantly, teachers need to be extremely competent in their curricular area and able to impart that curriculum to students because the instructional program is the most important aspect of the school. Teachers also need to be knowledgeable of the characteristics of middle school students and have the ability to relate to middle schoolers and work with students on an individual basis or in small groups. Because her school has Promethium Boards and a lot of her students are technology savvy, to be an effective teacher at her school, the teacher also needs to have up-to-date technology skills.

In terms of characteristics and attributes, teachers who work at her school need to be committed and go beyond what is expected of them—willing to give up their own time before and after school and during lunch to work with students, serve as mentors to students viewing them as individuals, and assist with extracurricular and after-school activities. This principal stresses that relationship building is key—that teachers need to love the child and have the potential to understand the dynamics of teaching and learning at the middle school level and accept accountability for students' learning. The teachers need to be willing to work collaboratively with colleagues and continue with their own professional growth. Because of the active involvement of parents at her school, the principal indicates that teachers at her school need to be parent-oriented—able to speak,

dress and interact with students in a professional manner. In summary, this principal stressed the importance of teachers knowing their curriculum and how to teach the curriculum to middle school students using technology and build relationships to promote student learning.

School's Teacher Selection Process

The principal indicated that she uses a structured panel interview process with panel members consisting of at least one administrator, the department chairperson, and other teachers who might work with the new staff member. Structured questions specific to the subject are used but follow-up questions may be asked based upon the candidate's responses. The interview questions are taped down on the table in front of the candidate so that if the candidate is a visual learner, she or he can look at them, and taping the questions to the table prevents the candidate from walking off with the interview questions. The candidate is given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview and the principal informs the candidate as to when the decision will be made.

Factors Facilitating Teacher Selection Using Criteria

The principal identified factors at her school and in the Office of Human Resources (OHR) that could facilitate her ability to hire effective teachers using her teacher selection criteria. Regarding school-based factors, the principal shared a practice that if they were impressed by a candidate during the interview, a panel member takes the person on a tour of the school while the remaining panel members discuss the candidate and make the decision of whether or not to offer the position to the candidate upon his or her return from the tour of the school. This practice helps the school from losing a desirable candidate to another school since the job offer is made before the candidate

leaves the interview. In terms of the Office of Human Resources, the principal indicated that the following OHR practices have supported her hiring excellent candidates using her selection criteria and hopes that the support will continue: *OHR staffers are very knowledgeable of potential candidates and what will work for particular schools; staffers assist schools through the selection process by letting us know who is eligible to be hired, suggesting candidates, helping us resolve staffing situations in an amicable way so it's a win-win for all.* This principal shared that her previous school had totally different characteristics than her current school. She gave an example of how her OHR staffer provided her consistency with the same selection process and that her staffer's knowledge of the different characteristics both schools (one being more student-oriented while the other was more parent-oriented) helped the principal to her staff accordingly.

Summary

This middle school principal's teacher selection criteria focus on the need for teachers to be knowledgeable of curriculum, early adolescent development and technology skills; able to build relationships and impart knowledge to middle school students—committed to and holding themselves accountable for students' learning; able to present themselves in a professional manner, work collaboratively with colleagues and parents, and continue their own professional growth. Because this middle school has more challenges that are parent-oriented, an important criterion for the principal to consider when selecting teachers is finding teachers who *work collaboratively and are willing to step outside of their own little world because everything is much more open and public—everyone is accountable and the accountability piece can be made easier by collaborating with colleagues and parents.*

Furthermore, this principal emphasized that to be a successful teacher in the middle schools, teachers *really have to love that age. It's a combination of loving and understanding and professionalism and being able to always desire that increase in student achievement and social development.*

Middle Schools with High Teacher Turnover

Middle School D

School Context

Built in 1966 and renovated in 1990, this middle school located down county is currently going through another renovation in 2009 with the students and staff situated in a holding school for the 2008-09 school year. This middle school has the third highest average teacher turnover rate of 31.89 percent in the school district and has a student enrollment of 738. The school has an experienced staff with 23 percent of staff members with more than 15 years of experience, 57.4 percent of staff members with between 5-15 years of experience, and 19.7 percent of staff members with less than 5 years of experience. As a result, 93 percent of the classes in this middle school are taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) as defined by federal and state standards and 7 percent of the classes are taught by non-Highly Qualified Teachers. The professional staff diversity of this school is 55.7 percent White, 29.5 percent African American, 8.2 percent Asian American, 6.6 percent Hispanic, and 0.0 percent American Indian and as compared to the student demographics of 9.9 percent White, 47 percent African American, 11.4 percent Asian American, 31.3 percent Hispanic, and 0.4 percent American Indian. The school has a 21.5 percent student mobility rate and 18.6 percent suspension rate with 8.8 percent of the students enrolled in ESOL classes, 9.9 percent of the students receiving

special education services, and 49.6 percent of the students participating in FARMS. The school has special programs for Spanish Dual Language, Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD), and Middle Years Programme. In terms of the state school assessments for adequate yearly progress (AYP), this school met proficiency and participation rates for math and reading in all grades: Math 6 (76.7%), Math 7 (65%), Math 8 (61.5%), Reading 6 (71.2%), Reading 7 (66.1%) and Reading 8 (68.3%).

Principal's Background, Training, and Experience

This African-American male principal, certified in Biology, grades 7-12 and Administrator I, has been in education for 11 years. He indicated that he had started as a 20-year-old middle school math, reading, and science teacher. After teaching for three years, he left the field of education to pursue a master's degree in health care. After three years of working in the field of health care, he realized that he *missed the kids* and returned to the classroom teaching high school biology and physics. Then he advanced into the field of administration where he served as a middle school assistant principal before moving into his current middle school principalship where he is completing his fifth year. Currently, he is conducting research on the behaviors of middle school principals that promote student achievement for his quantitative doctoral study.

Principal's Teacher Selection Criteria

The teacher selection criteria used by the principal focuses on the following knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics, and attributes. This principal looks for teachers who have a good understanding of the population of students in his school—understanding the cultural differences, where the kids are coming from, but still have high expectations for their success. Teachers need to be knowledgeable of adolescent

child development recognizing that emotionally, middle school students are looking for ways to build self-esteem through peer acceptance, and try to jockey for position which may result in bullying, a national middle school behavioral issue. Teachers need to be knowledgeable of the content and how to get that content across to students.

In terms of characteristics and attributes, teachers need to be flexible—able to adapt in the middle school environment as they deal with the fluctuating mood changes of early adolescents. Teachers need to be resourceful and persevere in building relationships as they examine different ways to reach students and parents and collaborating with their colleagues to motivate and inspire students to reach for success. In summary, this principal emphasized the importance for teachers to be knowledgeable of content and adolescent development and be able to motivate students and teach the content, be resourceful, and build collaborative relations with students, colleagues, and parents.

School's Teacher Selection Process

The principal shared that their interview questions are framed by the standards in the district's teacher's professional growth system (i.e., being committed to students and their learning; how do we assess students; knowledge of content area; professionalism; professional development) and consists of actual scenarios related to their school. These questions are reviewed yearly and vetted through the school's leadership team (which includes a student member) and parent community. Teacher candidates meet with a panel of resource teachers, principal, and assistant principals. If the interview panel is "high on a candidate", the principal meets with the candidate again one-on-one to sell the strengths of the school to try and get the candidate to accept the offer of employment. The principal shared that he needed to take this extra step to personally connect with some

candidates because there is a negative perception of his school that he needs to overcome. Incoming teachers look at his school's data and student demographics and often choose to go to a school that is less impacted. The principal indicated that they have been challenged in the past with having to choose between teachers who were not as competent. As a result, he felt that his students were not receiving the best teachers that the county had to offer and had to combat the negative perception of his school by inviting candidates to meet with him to build relationships and promote the strength of the diversity and other positive aspects of working at his school.

Factors Facilitating Teacher Selection Using Criteria

The principal identified having a good relationship with staffers in Human Resources as very important in facilitating his teacher selection since they send him candidates to consider for vacancies; therefore, he *tells his story* to the staffers to ensure that they understand the dynamics at his school. *When people understand what we need and who we need, that has been a great help in helping us attract people to our school.* Another important factor in attracting and hiring teachers is *making sure that our instructional program is moving in a positive direction as it relates to the achievement of kids*. The principal relies on his school's data which shows improvement on student achievement on high stakes assessments. The staff development support provided at the school and district levels also help in attracting and hiring new teachers. The principal indicated that he has to take a different spin to attract teachers to his school because he *needs to be real with them about the challenges that exist* (e.g., kids don't get a lot of support at home, don't necessarily come with an engaged attitude to learn). As a result, he

searches for teachers who want the challenge of *motivating and inspiring students who may not normally be motivated or inspired*.

Summary

This principal's teacher selection criteria focused on content knowledge and ability to teach the content; knowledge of the characteristics of the adolescent learner and cultural differences and the ability to adapt instruction; being a collaborative team player, able to build relationships, and motivate students; and have high expectations for student success and resourceful in finding different ways to achieve that success for all students. According to the principal, this school is viewed as highly impacted based on student demographics and school data which create a challenge for him to attract and hire the best teachers. In addition, as the content and curriculum become more rigorous and in depth for middle schools in this school district, this principal stated that furthermore, it is more challenging to find a teacher who is competent in teaching higher level secondary courses such as geometry or algebra 2 and have a good understanding of the adolescent child in middle school. As a result, this principal feels that he has to try harder and oftentimes meets with candidates personally to persuade them to work at his school.

This principal also pointed out the importance of the counseling services offered in middle schools because of the emotional and social issues of early adolescents. He shared that his counselor allocation had been reduced so he had to start looking for creative ways to provide more wrap-around services through organizations outside of the school district.

Middle School E

School Context

This middle school built in 1963 has the second highest average teacher turnover rate of 36.08 percent in the school district. It is situated down county and has a student enrollment of 787. In terms of experience, 31.9 percent of staff members have more than 15 years of experience, 31.9 percent of staff members have between 5-15 years of experience, and 36.2 percent of staff members have less than 5 years of experience. As a result of teachers being certified in the core academic subjects they are assigned to teach, 93.3 percent of the classes in this middle school are taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) as defined by federal and state standards and 6.7 percent of the classes are taught by non-Highly Qualified Teachers. The professional staff diversity of this school is 63.8 percent White, 21.7 percent African American, 8.7 percent Hispanic, 5.8 percent Asian American, and 0.0 percent American Indian as compared to the student demographics of 16.8 percent White, 26.4 percent African American, 43.2 percent Hispanic, 13.2 percent Asian American, and 0.4 percent American Indian. The school has a 20.4 percent student mobility rate and 9.3 percent suspension rate with 11.1 percent of the students enrolled in ESOL classes, 12.2 percent of the students receiving special education services, and 44.6 percent of the students participating in FARMS. The school serves as a Magnet School for Aerospace Technology and Advanced Mathematics and has additional programs for Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD), School/Community-Based (SCB), Multidisciplinary Educational Training and Support (METS), and Linkages to Learning. In terms of the state school assessments for adequate yearly progress (AYP), this school met proficiency and participation rates for math and reading in all grades: Math 6 (78.5%), Math 7 (65.2%), Math 8 (51%), Reading 6 (79.8%), Reading 7 (70.4%) and Reading 8 (64.8%).

Principal's Background, Training, and Experience

This Asian American male principal has 17 years of experience in education. He was a middle school guidance counselor for seven years, became a high school assistant principal and then returned to middle school as a principal where he is completing his first year. Before going into administration, he taught sixth, seventh, and eighth graders ESOL in Taiwan. He has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Psychology and Marketing, a Master's degree in counseling, and a Doctorate of Education in Education Administration. He is certified as a guidance counselor, pre-K-grade 12 and Administrator I and II, PreK-grade 12. He indicated that his training on *Skillful Teacher* and *Observing and Analyzing Teaching* (Jon Saphier & Robert Gower) has been critical in terms of his experience in supervising teachers. When he was a high school assistant principal, he had the largest case load for doing observations and evaluations which gave him a lot of experience in knowing what to look for in effective teachers.

Principal's Teacher Selection Criteria

The teacher selection criteria used by this principal focus on the following knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics and attributes. This principal stressed the importance of the ability to build relationships with students and possess a repertoire of strong classroom management skills to establish control and a positive learning environment. They need to have pedagogical knowledge and instructional skills to teach lessons with clarity and check students for understanding along the way using data to assess and monitor student progress. The teacher needs to demonstrate the ability to take constructive feedback for their own professional growth.

In terms of teacher characteristics and attributes, teachers need to show a commitment to students' learning and have a *hunger to make a difference in kids' lives*. They have to be humble and not come to the interview *with the attitude like they own the world and that they know everything because the pedagogy is something you don't learn overnight*. They need to be collaborative team players with strong interpersonal skills and relationship-focused able to connect with students, parents, and their colleagues. This principal looks for life-long learners who *walks the talk*, serves as a role model for students, and does volunteer work outside of school which demonstrates that their *heart* is in the right place. According to this principal, *the heart piece can open up so many doors*. In summary, this principal emphasized the importance of knowledge of pedagogy and instructional skills, classroom management, relationship building, use of data to monitor student achievement, openness to constructive feedback, commitment to student learning and one's own learning, collaboration, team work, and volunteerism in his teacher candidates.

School's Teacher Selection Process

This principal views the selection process as an art and *one of the most important things we do is to hire good people*. He has a *slew of people who interview* who investigate candidates and call references. Even though he uses a panel interview process with specific interview questions, he emphasized the importance of not making it a *drilling session or pressure cooker* experience for the candidate. During the interview, they joke around, laugh, and have fun to present to the candidates the culture and feeling of their school and community. He believes that he can *catch a lot of flies with honey* and gives candidates *as much feel as possible so there are no surprises when they come*

in here. He believes that a good interviewee changes the landscape and culture of the interview from them wanting us to we wanting them and that skill is huge!

Factors Facilitating Teacher Selection Using Criteria

Having good candidates to interview and not receiving placements were the two most important factors that facilitate the teacher selection process for this principal. Right before this interview with the principal, he found out that he has received an involuntary placement at his school. The principal indicated that nothing is worse than a placement because he does *not know the person, have not talked to them, and will be furious if that teacher placed her breaks up the chemistry* of the school staff. He suggested that principals have an opportunity to meet the placements and talk to them before the assignment is made.

According to this principal, many people interview well but not do the job well. Therefore, he likes to see videotapes of teachers in action in the classroom and if a teacher candidate brought a tape or disc of his/her performance in the classroom to the interview, that would greatly facilitate his and his staff's ability to select teachers using their established criteria. Also, a candidate's portfolio of thank you notes from the community, supervisors, and other stakeholders *speaks volumes* of what people are saying about the candidate.

This principal further indicated that Human Resources needs more people to answer the phones and do a better job of taking care of paperwork because when he applied to the school district in 1990, another neighboring school district called him for an interview right away while our current school district kept losing his transcript. As a result, he started his teaching career at the neighboring school district. However, this

principal indicated that things are much better now and he loves working with Human Resources to recruit more Asian Americans into the district.

Summary

This middle school's teacher selection criteria focused on job-related factors such as knowledge of pedagogy and instructional skills, classroom management, and ability to use data to monitor student progress. He emphasized the importance on nonjob-specific skills such as relationship building, collaborative/team player, and commitment to student learning. With his background and experience in counseling, relationship building was mentioned several times throughout the interview and a major factor in his teacher selection criteria. Since this principal received an involuntary staffing placement from Human Resources right before this interview, he cited having good candidates to interview and not receiving placements from the Office of Human Resources (HR) as the two most important factors that facilitates his ability to use his selection criteria to hire teachers. He also stated that HR needed more staff to answer the phones and improve on managing documents referring to when HR kept losing his transcripts when he applied in 1990. Even though this principal had a negative experience with the Office of Human Resources when he applied to the district and was not called for an interview before being selected by a neighboring school district, he indicated that he has a good relationship with HR now because staffers follow up with his Asian recruits. He was the only principal who did not directly mention content knowledge as an important selection factor. Building relationships was most important not only in the teachers he hires but also in his teacher selection process where uses jokes and laughter to engage interviewees in a relaxed setting versus a drilling or pressure-cooker experience.

Middle School F

School Context

This middle school built in 1934 and partially renovated in 1999 has the highest average teacher turnover rate of 36.88 percent in the school district has a student enrollment of 738. The school is situated down county in a busy city intersection occupying a wing of a vacant high school building with the entrance to the middle school located on the side of the building. The school staff has 24 percent of staff members with more than 15 years of experience, 42.7 percent of staff members with between 5-15 years of experience, and 33.3 percent of staff members with less than 5 years of experience. As a result, 81.1 percent of the classes in this middle school are taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) as defined by federal and state standards and 18.9 percent of the classes are taught by non-Highly Qualified Teachers. The professional staff diversity of this school is 50.7 percent White, 41.3 percent African American, 4 percent Hispanic, 2.7 percent Asian American, and 1.3 percent American Indian as compared to the student demographics of 24.3 percent White, 30.9 percent African American, 36.9 percent Hispanic, 7.9 percent Asian American, and 0.1 percent American Indian. The school has a 18 percent student mobility rate and 7.5 percent suspension rate with 10.2 percent of the students enrolled in ESOL classes, 13.6 percent of the students receiving special education services, and 48 percent of the students participating in FARMS. The school has special programs for Partial French Immersion/Spanish Immersion, Learning and Academic Disabilities (LAD), Middle Years Programme, and Linkages to Learning. In terms of the state school assessments for adequate yearly progress (AYP), this school did not meet proficiency in Math and Reading for African American students (Math 6 –

47.8%; Math 7 – 36.5%; Math 8 – 30.3%; Reading 6 – 58.2%; Reading 7 – 64%; Reading 8 – 45.5%) and FARMS students (Math 6 – 54.1%; Math 7 – 39.1%; Math 8 – 29.1%; Reading 6 – 61.4%; Reading 7 – 49.5%; Reading 8 – 42.3%). The reported state proficiency rates for all students at the school: Math 6 (64.8%), Math 7 (57.5%), Math 8 (45.5%), Reading 6 (70.2%), Reading 7 (67.9%) and Reading 8 (58.8%).

Principal's Background, Training, and Experience

This Hispanic female principal has nineteen years of experience in education which includes 10 years working in middle schools. She is certified in early childhood education (nursery school-grade 3), ESOL (kindergarten-grade 12), and Administration I and II (grades 1-8). She started as an early childhood teacher in elementary school working in the Head Start program and after receiving her master's degree in bilingual, ESOL, multi-cultural education, she became an ESOL teacher working with all different grade levels in the elementary school. She eventually transferred to a middle school as an ESOL teacher and after a few years, she became an assistant principal at the middle school. Even though she indicated that she and many other middle school principals have no specific training in middle schools, she really enjoys working with the early adolescents and is in her fourth year as a middle school principal.

Principal's Teacher Selection Criteria

This middle school principal's teacher selection criteria focused on job-specific factors such as knowledge of content, pedagogy/instructional skills, adolescent learner characteristics, and using data to monitor student progress. In terms on nonjob-specific factors, she stressed the importance of relationship building, collaborative/team player, and commitment to student learning. She indicated that she looks for teachers who know

how to plan effective lessons that engages students, differentiates instruction for students with solid beginnings, middles, and ends. The teachers should be able to use data to monitor student's progress, be open to new ways of doing things, and reflect constantly on their own practice. Of utmost importance is the teacher's ability to build personal relationships with the students and staff to build a positive school climate.

School's Teacher Selection Process

This principal uses a variety of ways to selection teachers. For a leadership role, she uses a more formal forum with structured questions and an interview panel leading to a group decision on the teacher selection. For hiring a teacher, usually the principal and the content specialist conduct an informal interview and make the hiring decision since this principal indicated that it is difficult to get staff together for an interview panel in the summer months. However, ideally, she prefers to also use panels to hire teachers because it is important for the staff to have input in the teacher selection process.

Factors Facilitating Teacher Selection Using Criteria

A major factor that would facilitate this principal's ability to hire teachers using her criteria for selection is to have more candidates to interview. She knows that since her school is highly impacted and is considered a "red zone" or high educational load school that she may not be able to attract as many applicants as a "green zone" school with a low educational load. As a result, she is concerned about not hiring a good (but not great) teacher because she runs the risk of beginning the school year with a long term substitute teachers if she is unable to attract a great teacher. Other factors that would facilitate her ability to use her teacher selection criteria are the timing when the vacancies occur and availability of candidates for those positions; having candidates with a better

understanding of middle schools, adolescent learners, and a passion for working with middle school students. Also having a pool of candidates who have a better concept of rigor not referring to higher level classes for gifted students but rather how to differentiate instruction to take students from where they are and stretch their learning for academic growth. She indicated that how we have structured the Office of Human Resources with the one point of contact for principals has made a positive difference in her ability to hire teachers according to her criteria. She is very pleased with the efficient and responsive service that she gets from the Human Resources staffer assigned to her school.

Summary

This middle school principal cited the importance of both job-specific and nonjob-specific factors in her teacher selection criteria. Her job-specific factors included knowledge of content, pedagogy/instructional skills, adolescent learner characteristics, and using data to monitor student progress. Nonjob-specific factors included relationship building, collaborative/team player, and commitment to student learning. She stressed the need for strong, reflective teachers who use data to drive student achievement so that her school can get out of corrective action (not meeting state high assessment standards). With the highest average teacher turnover rate in the district and previous lack of stability in the leadership, this principal is focused on building a strong professional development program to provide staff as much differentiated support as possible to recruit and retain teachers. She runs her school using Baldrige principles of including all stakeholders gathering and using much input from teachers to ensure that their needs are being met. Her teacher selection process consists of formal panel interviews and informal interviews.

To facilitate her ability to use her selection criteria, she emphasized the need to have more candidates who want to come and interview at her school and also having a more qualified group of candidates who are knowledgeable of adolescent development and teaching in the middle school. She indicated that *universities focus on either elementary or secondary education and there is not a real solid understanding of that adolescent learner which is critical to improving student achievement in middle schools.*

Overall Summary of Six Case Studies

The six middle school principals interviewed in this qualitative research study on *Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Criteria* cited not only job-specific factors but also nonjob-specific factors as important characteristics in their teacher selection criteria. All six principals cited relationship building and collaborative, team player (nonjob-specific) and knowledge of pedagogy and instructional skills (job-specific) as major factors in their hiring of teachers. Five of the six principals cited content knowledge (job-specific) as a major factor in their teacher selection criteria. Four of the six principals cited knowledge of adolescent learner/middle school (job-specific) and commitment to student learner (nonjob-specific) as major factors while two of the six principals cited classroom management and use of data to monitor student progress (job-specific) as important skills for their selection of middle school principals.

Since the teacher skills and attributes cited as important in the principals' teacher selection criteria are similar regardless of whether their schools had high or low average teacher turnover or educational load, the results of these multiple-case studies do not support the theoretical proposition that school context influences a middle school principal's teacher selection criteria.

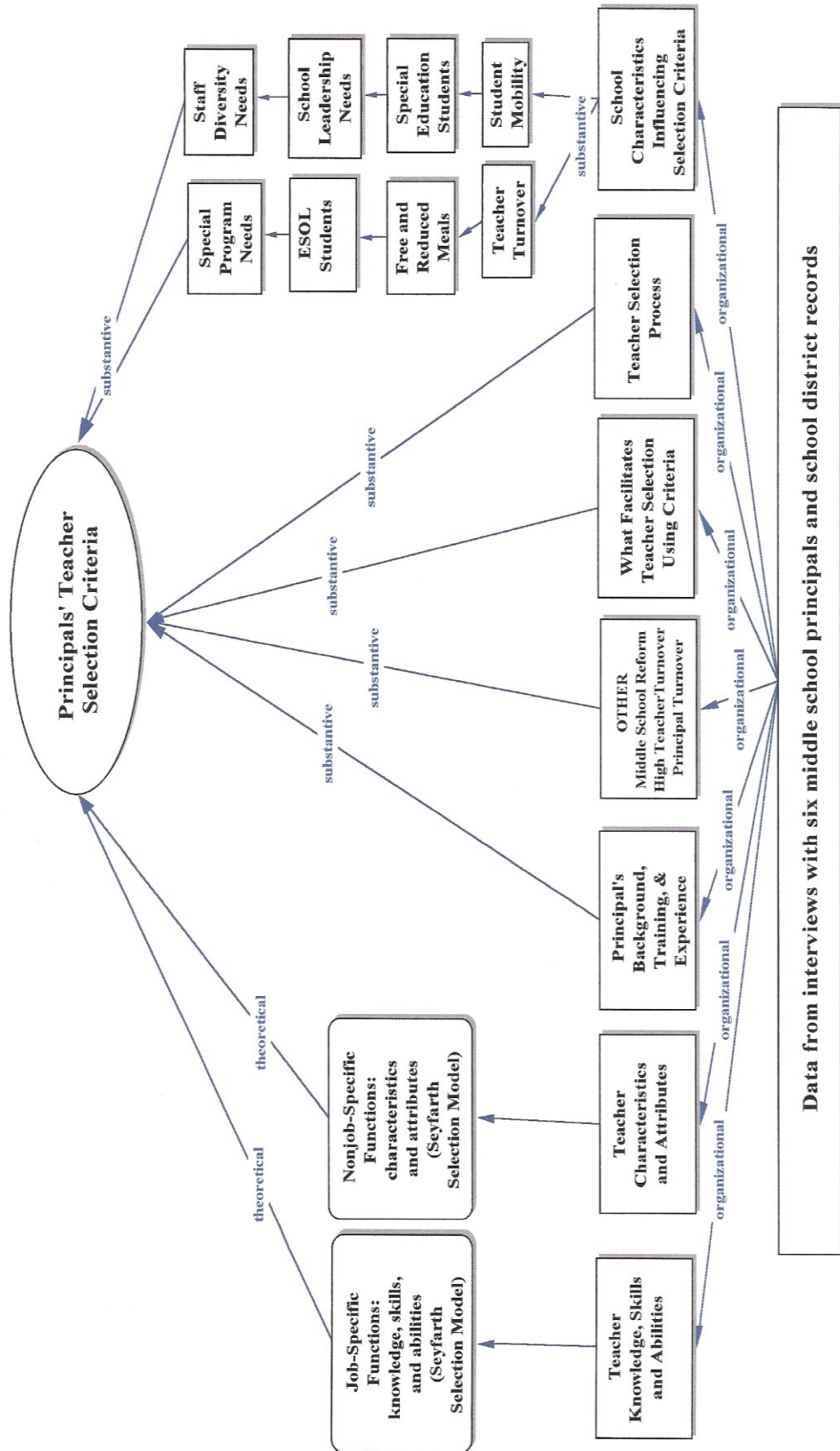
*Teacher Skills and Attributes Cited as Major Factors in Teacher Selection by
Middle School Principals*

Teacher Skills and Attribute Categories	Principals Citing Attribute as Major Factor in Teacher Selection					
	MS A	MS B	MS C	MS D	MS E	MS F
Relationship building	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaborative, team player	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pedagogy/instructional skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Adolescent learner/middle school	✓		✓	✓		✓
Commitment to students' learning	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Use data to monitor student progress	✓				✓	✓
Classroom management		✓			✓	

Appendix C

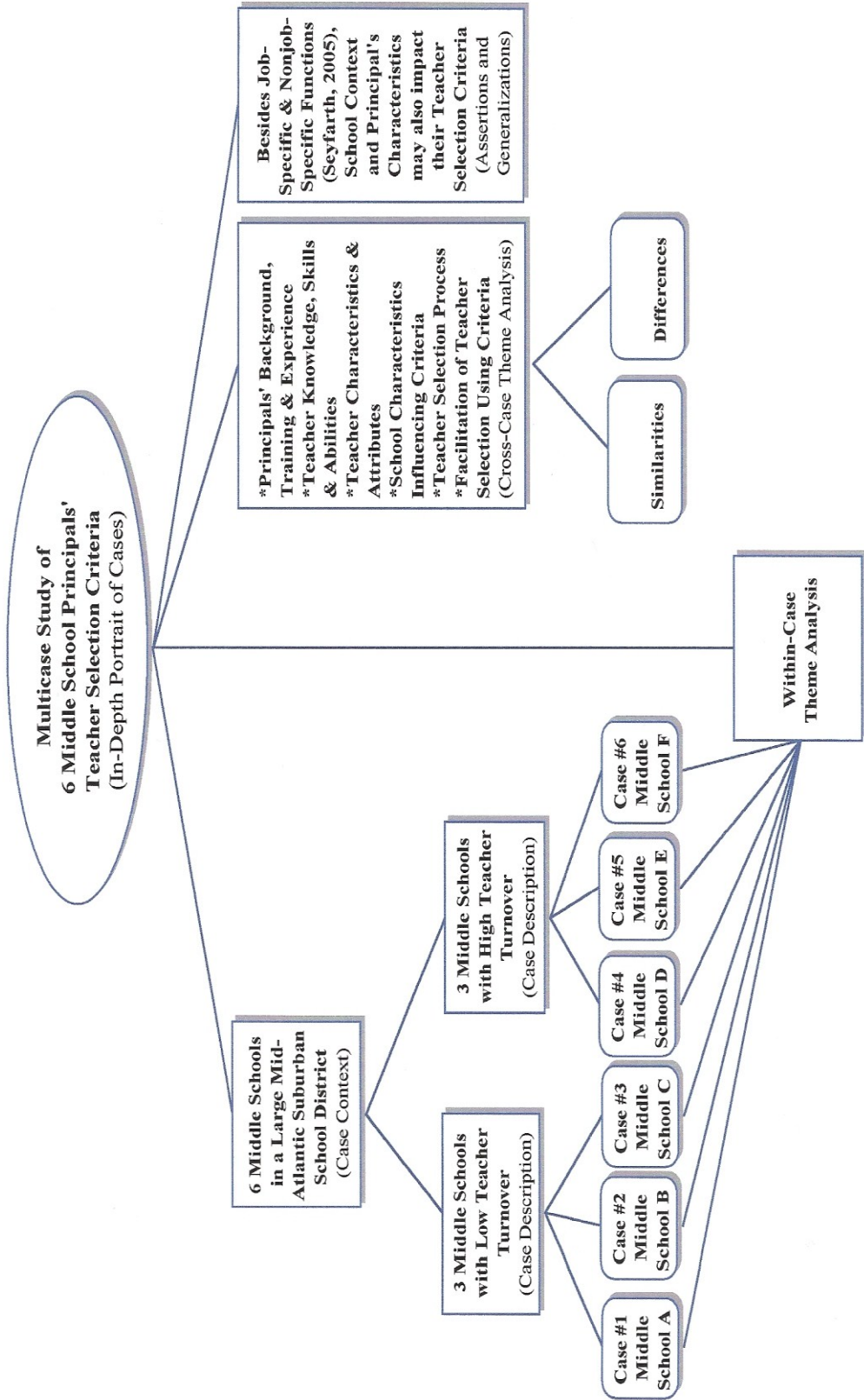
Data Management and Analysis Chart

DATA MANAGEMENT & ANALYSIS CHART
 A Case Study Analysis of Middle School Principals' Teacher Selection Criteria



Appendix D
Template for Coding

**TEMPLATE FOR CODING
A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' TEACHER SELECTION CRITERIA**



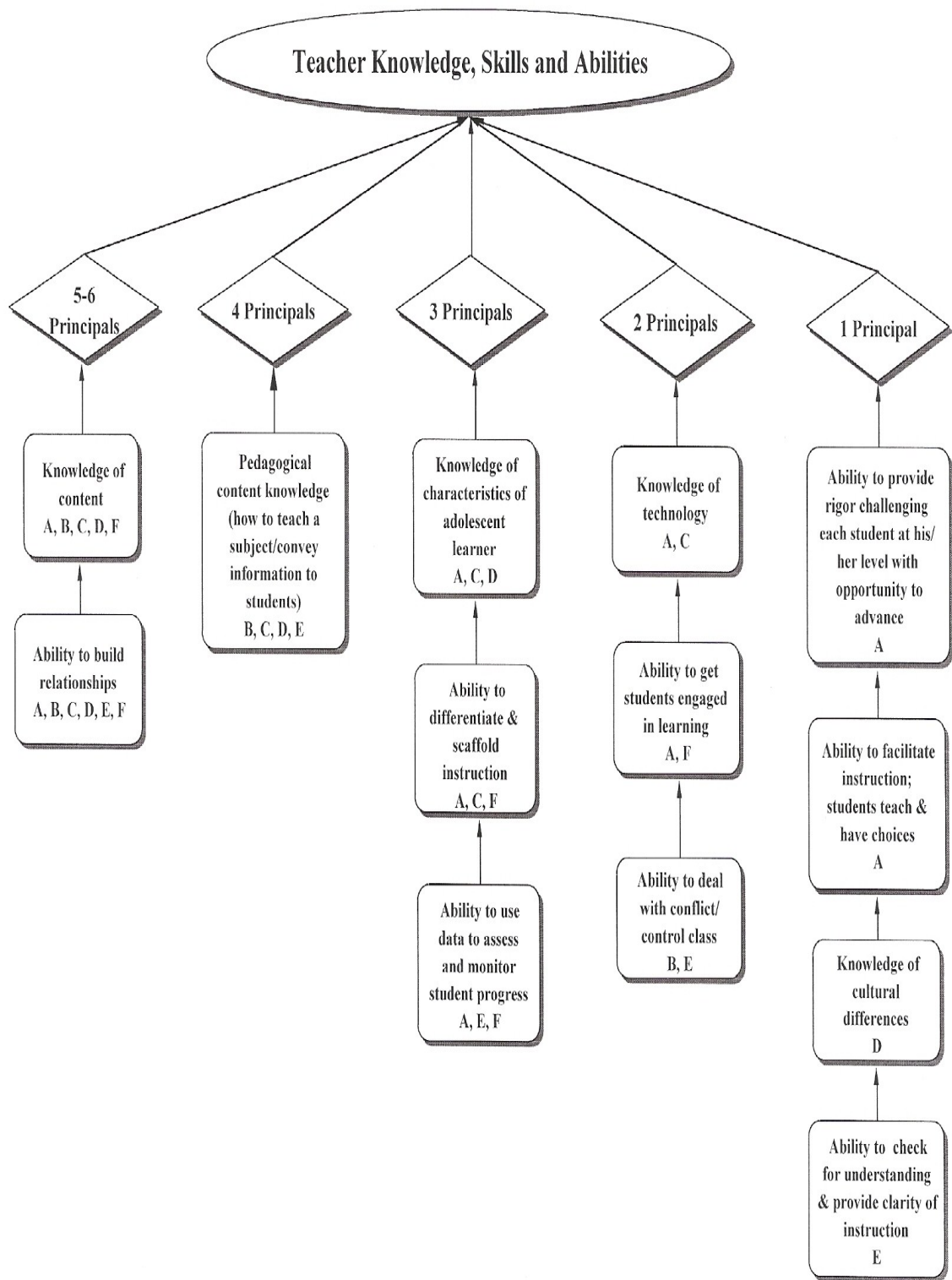
Appendix E

Data Analysis Model: Teacher Characteristics and Attributes



Appendix F

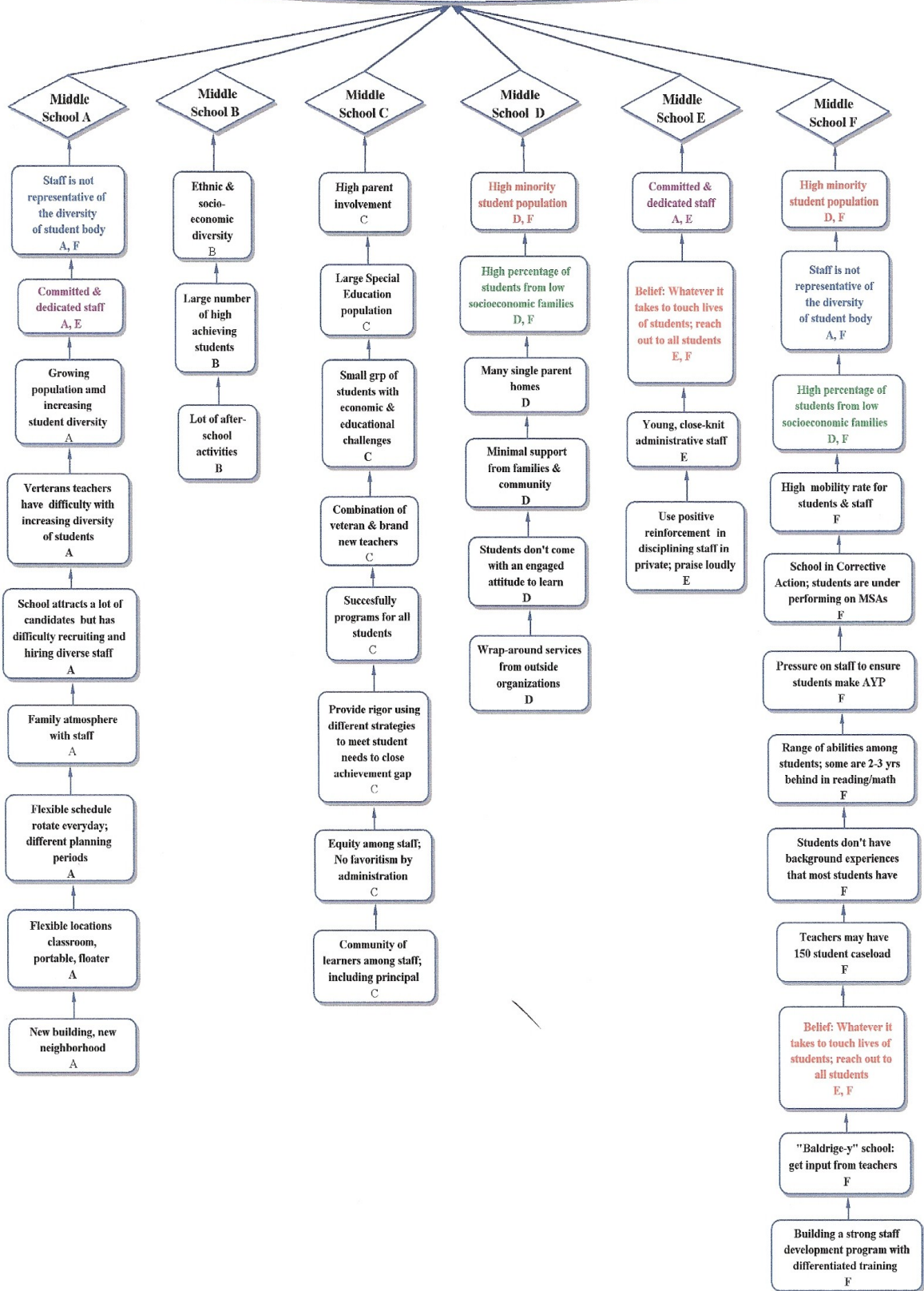
Data Analysis Model: Teacher Knowledge, Skills and Abilities



Appendix G

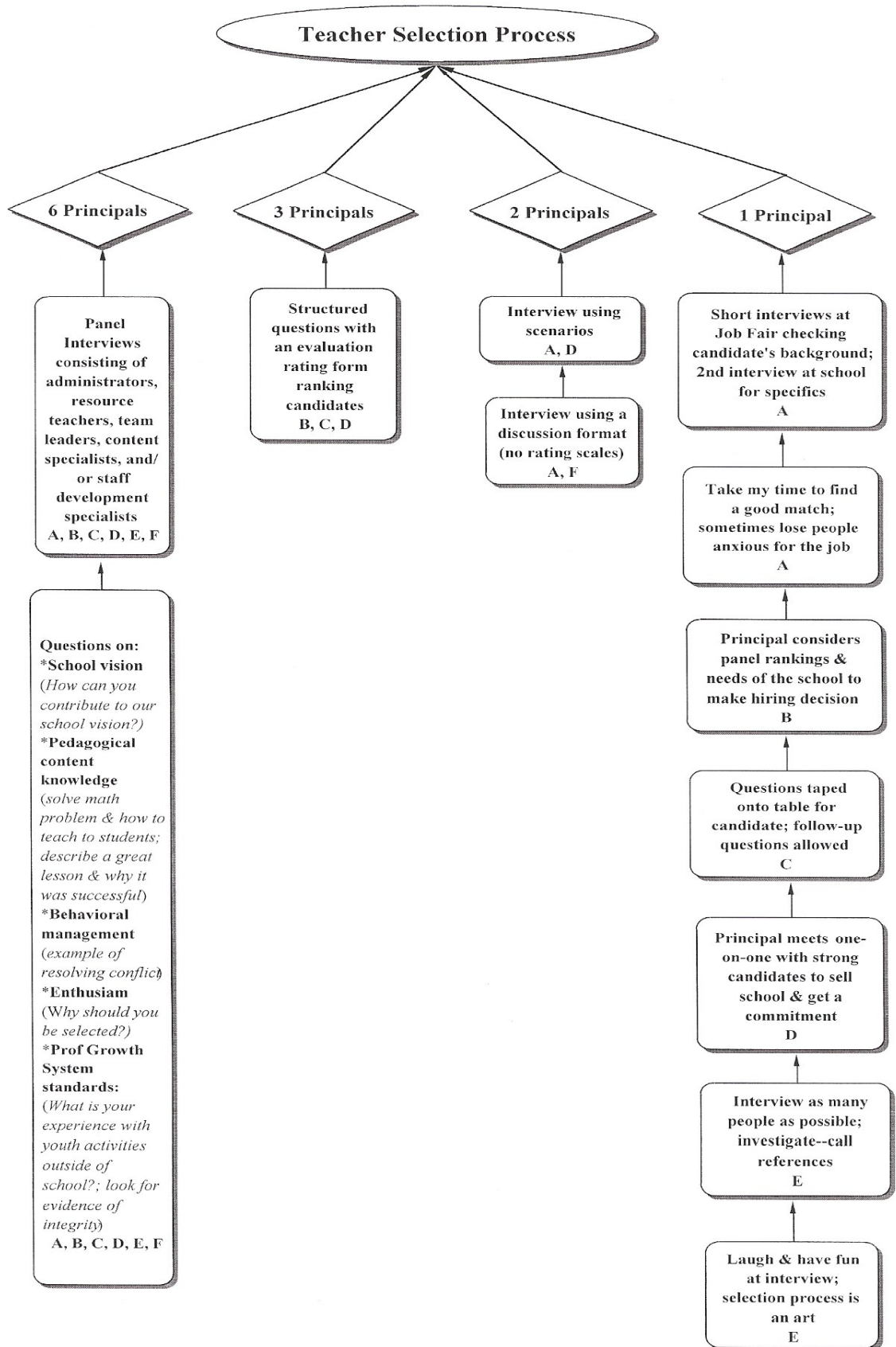
Data Analysis Model: School Characteristics Influencing Selection Criteria

School Characteristics Influencing Selection Criteria



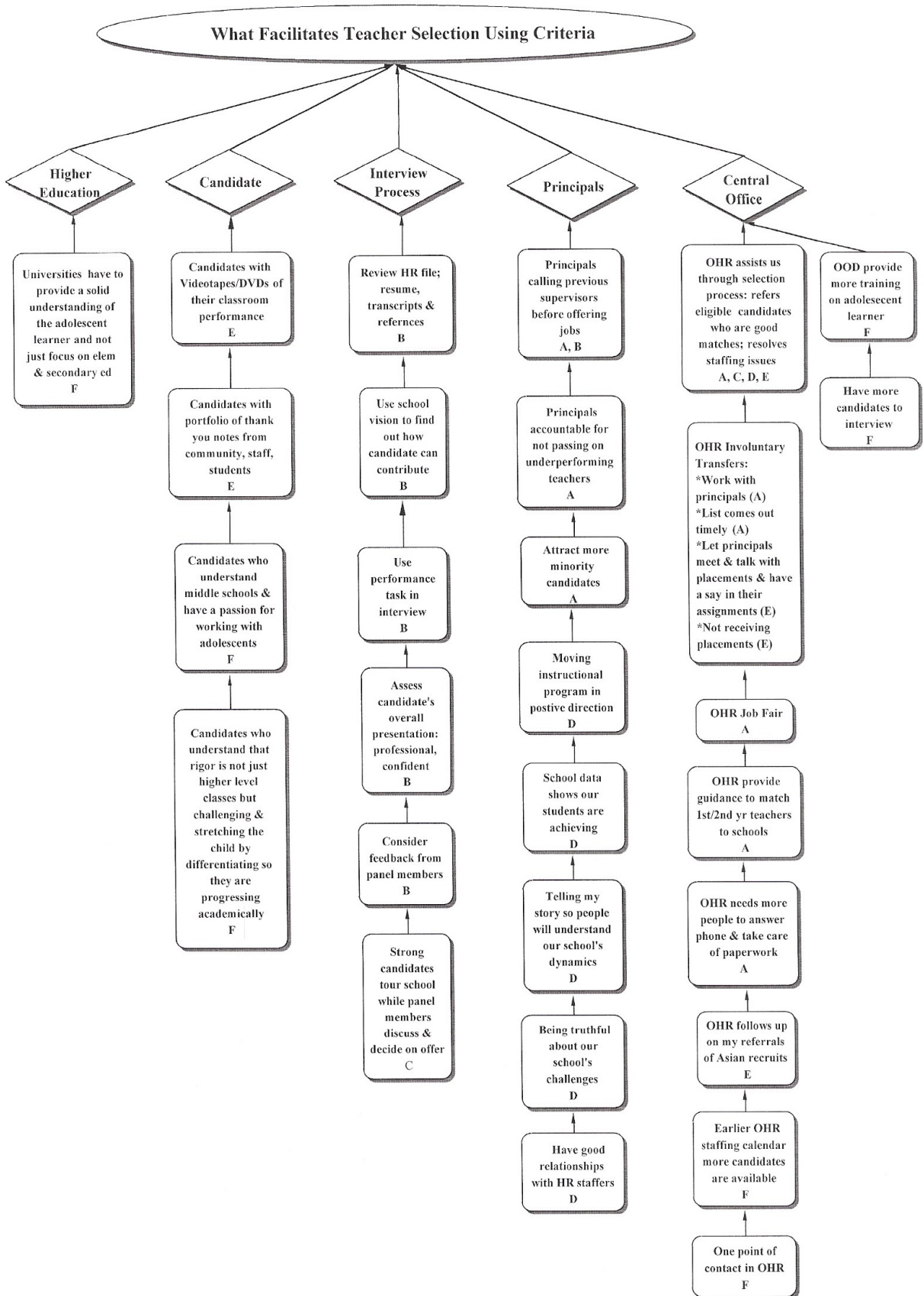
Appendix H

Data Analysis Model: Teacher Selection Process



Appendix I

Data Analysis Model: What Facilitates Teacher Selection Using Criteria



Appendix J

Interviews with Experienced Former Middle School Principals

INTERVIEW WITH VETERAN MS PRINCIPAL I
Principal, Middle School I
June 2006

[Since the principal was unable to make the interview, she sent her responses to the following questions.]

What knowledge, skills, and content expertise are required of middle school teachers to meet the unique needs of middle school students?

I have to begin with saying that, after spending the majority of my career in high school, and only 7 years in middle school and 2 in junior high, I truly believe that this time in a young person's life is absolutely critical in their deciding whether they will make good choices in their best interest or be apathetic to their education. Children at this age positively need to taste success, learn self-confidence, build their self-esteem, build their character and know that those around them care about them. They are literally at a fork in the road which will be determined as they enter high school, with all its temptations and issues. It takes a self-confident, self-advocating independent learner to resist the bad choices and focus on their future. Therefore, no matter what else is determined as part of this "reform" effort, these facts must be a guide. To ignore these would be disastrous.

It is my opinion that it takes such a special type of individual to teach in the middle school. The masters that I have worked with all have a concentration in their subject area. I think that the time is long over where you can hope to be a generalist, even in elementary. They should have special course work or training in the middle school child. I have found no harder workers than those involved in the middle school. There are some problems inherent in this theory as it now stands.

- 1) The middle schools are not staffed as middle schools. The formula is based on the high school model. Therefore, schools are forced to have teachers teaching out of their content are just to make the numbers crunch and to preserve the invaluable team concept.
- 2) Most teachers who come to middle school with a subject are concentration end up going on to the high school, believing that that is what is the ideal situation.
- 3) Those who want to remain in the middle school but do not have a subject area concentration find it nearly impossible to squeeze in course work through the normal channels. Elementary teachers teaching middle school courses should also have to have a subject are concentration i.e. Math A or B.
- 4) Those in high school who decide to come to middle school have to be trained to "tone it down." This can be done on a school level.
- 5) MS teachers need to be able to transition children from elementary expectations to middle school rigor. The parents need just as much transitioning help.
- 6) Teachers must be ready to do an inordinate amount of communicating with parents on a regular basis.

How would you define the roles and responsibilities, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of middle school teachers that align with middle school reform?

I probably have answered that already. The team concept is essential during this age. This provides children with that needed support as it provides the teachers with opportunities for common planning time. I don't see those two points included anywhere but they are huge. My ideal middle school teacher would have a passion for this age level child, understand the power he possesses in everything that he says to his students, address the child's self-esteem, help transition them from concrete to more abstract thinkers, work on character issues, hold students to high expectations, assess their progress daily, provide extra support for those that struggle, let students know that he will never give up on them, validate the emotions and issues which they deal with, have an expertise in their subject area, be able to address the multiple ways in which a child learns, use differentiation as part of their daily lesson planning, be a team player and share with their team mates, be willing to help students learn from the mistakes that they make, help them begin to focus on future goals, help them become self-advocates and independent learners, and help them with their decision-making.

What are ways to recruit and attract highly qualified teachers specifically to middle school given the targeted middle schools' high poverty/FARMS, LEP, and special education populations?

I honestly think there needs to be some array of incentives. Right now, team leaders receive nothing for their efforts. Often RTs are team leaders as well, receiving nothing for those two roles. Often, schools have to cross team students to make their schedules work since they are not staffed for teams. As the AMO rises each year, these high ed load schools, especially, will become less desirable than they are right now. I hate to say that salary incentives would be one way to attract teachers. I was able to convince several well-qualified teachers to give middle school a shot when they really wanted high school. They never left, once they got there. With each year that goes by, and with the increasing amount of pressures put on the middle level, there will be more and more flight from all of the middle schools. In this county, middle schools are the black sheep, for whatever reason. They are never mentioned or praised. Talk to any middle school principal and let them share about that. This just increases the urge to flee. Something better be changed in that regard right away or anything else that is proposed will simply exacerbate an already serious issue.

After reviewing the pathway to middle school principalship, what recommendations would you make for improvement?

The current path seems sufficient. However, the middle school principalship has also been seen as only a training ground for high school. I also felt that way, since it was supported by this county in everything that was said or done. However, I so valued my experience in the high school as preparation for the middle school principalship. I would rather see folks take that path than to go from being an elementary principal to a middle school principal.

If there is to be further training, I would highly suggest that it be on understanding the children's growth, learning, emotional and social issues that impact them during these

three years. The fact that each of the three grade levels is unique unto themselves is a revelation in itself.

Of course, ongoing staff development training is extremely important to support the middle school principals. Helping them understand the elements of the middle school concept, the art of being an instructional leader, the impact on the success of a school from the scheduling of courses, the value of a strong partnership with the family, the importance of setting high expectations for all stakeholders and the ability to analyze data in order to drive instruction.

INTERVIEW WITH VETERAN MS PRINCIPAL G
Principal, Middle School G
June 2006

Interviewer

Can you identify 5 teachers who you think are highly qualified at your school?

Principal

Teacher 1 who teaches English. She came out of the PROMAT Program. She's also this year, for the first year, was the team leader. Last year, she served as the team leader and I see her as a highly proficient teacher—highly qualified.

Another teacher I think is highly qualified is *Teacher 2* who teaches English 8 and civil rights.

Another teacher I think is highly qualified is *Teacher 3* who is a foreign language teacher who also teaches ESOL. She teaches Spanish and last year she taught ESOL Science. This year she will be teaching only Spanish and she is the Foreign Language ESOL Resource Teacher.

Another teacher I think is highly qualified is *Teacher 4* who is a math teacher. She is the math Resource Teacher and she teaches Math C for 8th grade.

And my 5th teacher I believe is highly qualified is *Teacher 5* who taught 6th grade math A and math B. He resigned from the school system because he moved this spring.

Interviewer

Can you describe the characteristics of these teachers which make them highly qualified in your opinion?

Principal

They all share the characteristic of really liking to work with all types of students.

They have a *don't give up—you can do it and I am going to help you* attitude.

It's evident that they like children.

They like to collaborate with their peers.

They find different ways of motivating students—inviting students into the content.

They personalize their instruction—whether it's math, civil rights, English, foreign language.

They're highly knowledgeable of their content area.

They demonstrate a respect for themselves, their students, parents, and staff.

They just make you want to be with them.

They have a sense of humor and they're always on the go—constant motion.

They're creative.

They respond to challenges. I can give you a couple of examples if you want. For example, when I shared that we did not make AYP in math, special ed,...the math Resource Teacher immediately came to me and said, *We need to co-teach*. Her first question...first comment was, *We need to co-teach*. Her second question was, *Are your special ed teachers certified in math?* When I said yes, she said, *We'll make good partners then*. Immediately, she went to the Learning Center Coordinator after talking with me and said, *How can we make this happen?*

Another teacher brought in this big ball that became his chair...and he would sit on this chair...on this ball, talk to the kids, get up, walk around the class,...when he put a problem on the board, he would always encourage the kids to look there if it weren't there and he would use concrete examples from the kids' lives. He would put them out on the board so they could see it.

Another teacher, for a chapter in The Giver, came in sitting on a stool in the classroom. She had on a white lab coat and two baby dolls in her hand....and the kids came in...she picked up a syringe and she said which one are we going to have live? Because the chapter the kids are going to read had as a part of it that one baby would be allowed to live and one would not be. She came and she shared this with me and she said, *They'll never forget that chapter*.

Another teacher involves her students with a lot of experiential activities. They all have high expectations. For example, every year, her English students have to memorize a poem. The memorize a poem that has a real core value meaning and they analyze it and they write their own reflection on it and how they see themselves and it always has to do with something that is germane to their lives. And so when I went into the classroom, she said, okay, it's time to recite the poem and remember, we're going to go out to the courtyard next week and we're going to videotape your reciting the poem. I looked and all of a sudden, I see some kids were standing on chairs and some kids were standing in the aisle...and everyone was standing. I asked her later, *Why were they standing on chairs?* And she said, well, because one student said, *My posture is better when I stand on a chair* so several students said, *Oh, well, I need to do that too*.

Another teacher also brings into her classes the cultural aspect. It's part of the curriculum but she brings it in from personal experience and ties instruction especially for the 6th grade students that she had last year...to 6th grade level of the world...knowledge of the world. And for ESOL Science, she focuses on the vocabulary. She has 30-35 kids in the

class and they're attentive following what she has to say in English as she builds their vocabulary base.

These are just some examples. They tie things to the kids' personal lives in the world in which they live.

Interviewer

How would you go about assessing these characteristics in an interview?

Principal

When someone talks about why he or she wants to come to Middle School G they talk about liking kids...that this is an age group that they believe they can make a difference with. Two of my standard questions are: One, how would your students describe you? Three adjectives that your students would use to describe you. And that tends to throw them for a loop...and the other question I ask, three adjectives your supervising administrator or principal would use to characterize you. And it's not so much how they respond as it is,...um, I'm sorry, it's not so much what they say but how they respond to that.

Today, I was interviewing for ESOL teachers and two of the teachers I interviewed, when I asked that question just lit right up when they talked about the kids...three of the adjectives they would use to describe you. You could see the animation and their expressions. Everyone uses the same adjectives.

Sometimes I ask, *Do you like children? What do you think about working with kids who are 10-15?* One of the things we did when we interviewed at the Job Fair was we used a quotation by Vince Lombardi and I don't have that quotation on the tip of my tongue but we asked the people we interviewed to respond to that quotation and the essence of the quotation had to do with building relationships with adults and with children...and that will make the difference between winning and losing.

We talk about we have 90 minute block periods as well as 50 minute periods. How people respond to *If I were observing from the beginning of the class to the end of the class for the 90 minute period, what would I see and what would I hear?*...and take note of what kind of activities they do and how engaged they would get the students...what kind of momentum would they maintain in the class.

I would also ask about if you have a disruptive student, how would you handle the situation and listen in terms of whether you're dealing with the disruptive activity or the students. Listening to where they would bring in a colleague, a parent, the counselor, the administration. For example, today when I asked that question, one teacher's response was I would talk with the student, put the student in the hall, and then I would push the button to get the administrator.

I'm always looking for relationship building or high expectations. And that's another thing in terms of what you would see in the classroom. What kind of expectations they illustrate for the students?

I think flexibility is important.

And I think it is also important in interviewing to be aware that some people may be nervous so their nonverbals may not be representing them as well as their talents are.

INTERVIEW WITH VETERAN MS PRINCIPAL H
Principal, Middle School H
June 2006

Veteran principal with 35 years of experience in education (5 HS; 3 MS)

Interviewer

This interview will be for a study on highly qualified teachers in the middle school. Can you identify 5 teachers that you would consider highly qualified that work in your school?

Principal

Teacher 1, reading and language arts/English; *Teacher 2*, social studies; *Teacher 3*, science; *Teacher 4*, math; and *Teacher 5*, Spanish.

Interviewer

When you think of these teachers, what characteristics make them highly qualified in your mind?

Principal

Of these five teachers, the first thing that stands out in my mind is that every one of them makes sure that the children are academically successful...and they also make sure that the emotional component is dealt with as well. When I think about the academic piece with these teachers, they have some plan...I'm not sure they're all alike but the bottom line is they will not allow their students to fail...they will not allow their students to fail. They will be successful no matter what they come to Middle School H with or what level they're working on, they will be successful. They won't have it any other way. That is the number one characteristic that they all have in common.

Another characteristic that they all have in common is...oh, you said five but there is also another guy I should've named which is *Teacher 6*. He teaches social studies.

Another characteristic that they all have in common is training. Professional development I guess that's what it's called. They will come to me on a regular basis asking for time to plan...asking for time to go to workshops. They just want to make sure they're prepared to teach the children. They are not ashamed to say I don't understand something. They are not ashamed to say, you know, this is an area where I need to grow. They don't see improvement as a negative...they see it as a positive. They see it as an opportunity to grow. They're constantly asking to go to workshops and coming back, they come back to into school and in-service the staff.

I guess the next characteristic would be seeing the big picture in the sense of knowing that what they are doing and learning...they need to make sure that all the teachers in the school are doing some of the same things. Because it takes everyone working together for the school for all the children to be successful. They are not just about me, myself, and I.

They're also about how do I help everyone else so they can make sure that kids are successful.

They work on committees. They volunteer to work on committees. They volunteer to support the school in any way that they possibly can. It doesn't mean that they work more hours than other people...but in some cases, they do. They do whatever they need to do to make the children successful.

Another thing that I find which these teachers all have in common is that they're creative. Creative thinkers. They do that by coming in and somebody will say, *I got this great idea...what do you think?* and it's an idea of something we do that will help kids. Sometimes it will be something that we do to help teachers. We're having a real problem in social studies with teachers differentiating instruction...especially with inclusion meeting the needs of all the teachers. So these teachers came to me with this really neat idea...and the idea was how do you use you own strength and your own skills to couple with another teacher who has different strengths and skills...to plan together...plan lessons together and do grouping and regrouping. So that for this particular activity, I'm going to be the teacher that's going to teach all of the highly gifted kids and the other teacher is going to teach all the kids who are not at that level. Then we rotate. But you have to plan for that. It goes back to that characteristic that I told you about...they don't mind having an opportunity to do professional development. So professional development then is tied to the root idea of being creative with ideas to change...what can we do that is different? They're not stuck in this pattern but we did it this way.

Another thing that these teachers have in common is that they use data a lot to direct their instruction. A teacher said to me, *I have 8 students with interims...oh my goodness.* So they do histograms...they do all kinds of data, they do plus/deltas, they do surveys...they use a lot of data and they take the data to help them with their instruction because they really want to meet the needs of kids.

I'm still thinking about characteristics of what makes a good teacher. They have initiative. What I mean by that is that you don't have to tell them everything to do. They're going to do it. They're going to do the things that they know should be done. Whether it's their responsibility or not, they will take the initiative to get things done... for kids but also for the school. Kids are number one. *I have 150 students but what else can I do to help the school?* They look beyond just their needs.

Another characteristic of these teachers are they are teachers who constantly involve parents either through emails, phone calls, and conferences to keep parents in the loop connecting on a regular basis.

You know, another thing that they do...they like to see kids outside of the classroom. And every one of those teachers that I'm thinking about right now has some kind of extracurricular activity that they work with kids on. That way, they're seeing kids in another light...not just in the classroom. In a lot of cases, if they are not sponsoring an activity, they'll go see the kids in the kid's activity. So I may not be the softball sponsor

but if my student is on the softball team, I'm going to see my student. They talk to them about something they do other than just academics.

Another thing every one of these teachers do...it's amazing now that I'm thinking about it...they all reach out to minority kids. They make sure...they look at the data. They say to me, *I only have X number of students in my math class...is it okay if I mentor these kids? I put them in my class...they don't meet the criteria but I'm willing to mentor them to make sure that they are successful.* They all reach out to minority kids. It's not just minority kids they reach out to...they also reach but to majority kids who they could move over too. They don't leave out any kids. When they start looking at kids to move over into the Honors program, they definitely focus on minority kids but they also include majority kids as well. They all do that.

These teachers also do something else I look at...I'm not sure it's called peer reflection because I'm not sure it's always peer reflecting but it's definitely giving each other feedback. You know, they like to get feedback. When there is a Walk-Through, they always want to be part of the Walk-Through...they welcome that. Learning from others...it's not just a reflection, it's learning from someone else.

I just can't help it focusing on those teachers just thinking about the things that they do. I mentioned already that they make sure that their kids are successful at whatever cost. The cost may sometimes be creating their own after school study hall. One of those teachers does a Breakfast Club and talked the parents into bringing the kids to school in the morning for 6-8 weeks every quarter to get the kids caught up in reading.

Relationships. They strive on having good relationships with their kids. In every case, if they have to give a kid a consequence, they make sure that the kids understand that the consequence is for the behavior. So they come back and work with the kids to make sure that they understand that it's not about us, it's about behavior...we still need to work together. So they work on that relationship...they see that as a real key to the success of their children to have good relationships with them.

They also know that having that relationship...they talk about being able to understand the culture of the other kids. Ramadan is a good example. You got to make sure these kids are taken care of at their lunch time so ideally they don't go to the cafeteria. You work on a plan so they can go to the media center...so that they are not around the food because sometimes it's harder for kids than it is for adults to be with kids. Or we want to make sure that the teachers know that if it's a Jewish holiday, it's the kids' right to be able to make up that work. They are going to advocate for those special ed students who need accommodations. We have quite a few teachers, believe it or not, who feel we shouldn't give the kids the accommodations. It's amazing. But they shouldn't be able to do this or whatever. But with these teachers, you find the child has a right to the accommodations in the IEP. We don't have a right to deny them that...whether it's a 504 or IEP, it doesn't matter. They look for all those things to make sure that the kids are successful.

Another quality that these teachers have is sometimes they take on too much. So as an administrator, you have to really work closely with them to make sure that they don't take on too much and burn out. Because these are the teachers in the building will burn out while other teachers in the building are happy-go-lucky and kids are not being successful and they don't really care. And some of those people I'm talking about are teachers designated as highly qualified but for interim reports, you might have half of the kids fail...because they teach their subject the way they know it...not necessarily the way it needs to be taught to all kids so they don't burn out.

And these are also the teachers, that when I do their evaluations, I can write forever and ever because their portfolios have so many things in it that they have done as well as what I see in the classroom. So when I look at the standards, they don't just meet the standards, they exceed the standards because of all the things they do. They don't always know what the standards are but I have a portfolio that helps them identify the standards. It's not just the academic standards but it's also standard 6 and professionalism. We have a lot of people involved in the school improvement plan...involved in helping the school set goals, vision, and mission. They're going to be involved in those things because they're the people who see it as a whole...the big picture people.

Also, these people I see when they complain, they're going to have an answer. Complaining for them is not like complaining for someone else. Complaining for them is something is not working...what do we do about it? So they're going to brainstorm answers. How can we fix this? It's not what are *you* going to do about it, it's what are *we* going to do about it. It really opens to their concerns. One of the teachers that I listed there, she really will complain. And then the next day, it was almost like she didn't complain about what she had complained about because it had been done...done well and she had moved on with a smile on her face. Maybe she just needed to vent.

Um. (*Silence*) I don't know. (*Silence*) I can't think of anymore right now.

Interviewer

That's fine. That's great. You've named a lot of characteristics. When you're doing interviews, how would you go about assessing the characteristics you have just described?

Principal

One of the things that I didn't mention that I should mention is that they definitely know their subject and I think that is one reason why they are comfortable with the staff development piece...because they do not have to learn their subjects.

The first thing in interviewing...you have to be able to ask the right questions. And in addition to asking the right questions, you have to use scenarios because sometimes people are very good at answering the questions...they're sharp at answering the questions...but then when you hire them, they are not able to produce. They know what to say but it don't always show in their work afterwards. So what I try to do is to look beyond just what they are saying sometimes.

But I also look at how enthusiastic they are. When they start talking about some of the things they have done or want to do, there is a difference in how they answer you. You know, some people are really...you can really see that this person is about children. So I look for people who talk about making sure children that they work with are successful.

I look for...ask for answers dealing with...working with parents.

I look for answers in dealing with what do *they* do with kids who are not successful. What do *you* do when they are not successful? And they tell me the same old thing about, you know, *kids they need to come to me...* When I ask the question, *what do you do?...* a lot of teachers will answer, *This is what I need for the children to do, ...they need to come in to see me....they need to do that.* But I'm not looking for that...I'm looking for what is it *the teacher* is going to do. What are *you* going to do? What kinds of things are you going to do? That is very, very important to me.

It's also important to me for them to...when we talk about them...when I hear things like *Do you have inclusion classes in this school? I like working with the different levels in my class because, you know, it gives all kids an opportunity.* That is really key to me over, *Do you have your classes all homogenously grouped?* I make sure I listen because sometimes people have only worked with homogenously grouped kids but that doesn't mean that they are not good at working with heterogeneously grouped kids. You have to listen to how they talk about it by listening to that point as well.

I put questions in...I try to put questions in that will help me see how a teacher is going to respond. Like for instance, one of my questions always to have the teacher walk me through a period. If I came into your classroom, your heterogeneous class...you have inclusion kids...you walk me through what happens in your room. And I tell them to give me a day when you're not introducing the unit. I want a day afterwards. I want to know the activities that the kids are going to be involved in. I'm listening from...I'm going to be standing by the door when they walk in to all the way through to my summary at the end. How are you going to assess the kids? So I'm looking for that whole piece and that one day help a lot.

I also have a question in there that I ask to help me get a feel for whether they can see the big picture. I ask the question dealing specifically with *What do you see as the components or characteristics of an excellent middle school?* What kind of things go on in an excellent middle school?...not just in your classroom but in a school that will make that school better than or stand out over another school in the district? And that way, when I ask a question like that I'm looking for answers...I'm looking for people to talk about the big picture...how they are involved in the school or what they can see they could do.

I also ask a question dealing with their philosophy on classroom management and who are the people they involve in helping them with the management of their class. Who do

you involve? What do you do when you don't have behavioral problems in your classes? And if you do, what do you do about it?

So the first part, I'm looking to hear about the instructional piece. I'm hoping to hear about *My instruction is at a level of providing opportunities for children to work so that they won't have time to misbehave*. It's structured in such a way that they don't have time to misbehave. And the second part is because they are middle school kids, we know that they do sometimes misbehave. What do you do? So for those people who say, I send them to the office or I follow the school policy...I don't want to hear I follow the school policy. I want to hear what that teacher is going to do. So I put that in.

I want to hear how they involve the parents. *How do you involve the parents in your child's education?* I try to frame that question around partnership. *Who do you partner with and how do you use a partner that you work with?*

I'm also looking to hear about the teammates. *How do I use my teammates?* It could be if we're next door to each other, I might need to, you know, send a kid over to your classroom for a few minutes until they can get resolved...or so they can just quiet down and then go back....antiseptic bounce, I think it's called. I'm looking for something...that these are the things I put in place and not I waste his time by sending him out. So I try to do that. Then I try to give as many scenarios as I can in the interview to get to the point that I want to get to. I try to do that.

Interviewer

Great. Thank you.

Appendix K

The Middle School Reform, Human Resources Project Team Final Report

**THE MIDDLE SCHOOL REFORM
HUMAN RESOURCES PROJECT TEAM
FINAL REPORT**

SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present to the Middle School Reform Steering Committee the work of the Human Resources (HR) Project Team. In October 2005, the HR Project Team was convened to examine issues and develop recommendations related to the staffing of middle schools. The HR Project Team was organized into the following four workgroups. Project Team members selected the workgroup they wanted to work on based upon their interest in the assigned tasks. Each workgroup set up their own schedule of meetings to work on their assigned tasks. All four workgroups of the HR Project Team met together four times (11/18/05, 12/1/05, 2/9/06, 3/21/06) to share their work and provide feedback to other workgroups. In between the HR Project Team meetings, members shared information via emails which increased the efficiency of addressing the assigned tasks and reduced the number of meetings which needed to be scheduled which was a challenge because of the busy schedules of members.

Workgroup 1: (Meeting dates: 11/28/05; 1/20/06; 2/16/06; 3/1/06; 4/11/06)

- Task 1: Examine current MSDE certification requirements for middle school teachers and principals and determine the adequacy of current requirements.
- Task 2: Review the audit of current certification/highly qualified status of middle school staff and make recommendations to address identified issues.

Workgroup 2: (Meeting dates: 11/8/05; 11/28/05; 1/9/06; 2/6/06; 3/1/06; 4/11/06)

- Task 3: Define the knowledge, skills, and content expertise of middle school teachers required to meet the unique needs of middle school students.
- Task 4: Review job descriptions for middle school teachers and instructional support staff, and make recommendations which define the roles and responsibilities, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that align with middle school reform.

Workgroup 3: (Meeting dates: 12/12/05; 1/6/06; 1/19/06)

- Task 5: Examine and report ways to recruit and attract highly qualified teachers specifically to middle schools (with priority given to targeted middle schools, high poverty/Free and Reduced-priced Meals Systems, Limited English Proficiency, special education, etc.)

Workgroup 4: (11/10/05; 1/4/06; 2/7/06; 3/14/06)

- Task 6: Review the pathway to the middle school principalship and make recommendations for improvement as needed.

Stakeholder input was obtained from three focus groups of middle school principals and surveys conducted with middle school staff and students. Two focus groups of middle school principals provided input on defining the knowledge, skills, and content expertise needed by middle school teachers to meet the needs of middle school students. A third focus group of five middle school principals and one middle school assistant principal provided input on the internship concept for the Aspiring Secondary Principals (ASP) 3 year program. Survey results on defining the knowledge, skills, and content expertise of effective middle school teachers were obtained from middle school principals, staff and students and a focus group of 9th graders at two high schools.

Tasks and Recommendations

Task 1: Examine current state certification requirements for middle school teachers and principals and determine the adequacy of current requirements.

- Consensus that the new state certification for middle school teachers and principals requirements is acceptable as written.
- Financial and tutorial support to pass PRAXIS content tests be provided to teachers
- Work with universities and colleges to form partnerships to focus on middle school certification
- Investigate creating incentives to retain middle school principals

Task 2: Review the audit of current certification/highly qualified status of middle school staff and make recommendations to address identified issues.

- Create job description for math content coach and math specialists, defining specific responsibilities for each
- Roles and responsibilities for Resource Teacher (RT) and Interdisciplinary Resource Teacher (IRT) positions as well as other resources provided to middle schools need to be reviewed and determined how to incorporate content support for math and literacy
- Recommend that state department of education develop math specialist certification
- Provide course work/professional development to increase the content expertise of middle school teachers

Task 3: Define the knowledge, skills, and content expertise of middle school teachers required to meet the unique needs of middle school students.

- Differentiate the job description for classroom teacher by levels (elementary, middle, and high schools)
- Create a new *MS Classroom Teacher Class (Job) Description* incorporating the knowledge, content expertise, skills, and disposition identified by stakeholder groups and in the research literature emphasizing:
 - Knowledge of content, adolescent child development and appropriate behavioral management strategies

- Non-measurable qualities/dispositions such as believing that all children can learn, being enthusiastic and likes children, being persistent and does not give up on children who have difficulty learning concepts
- Ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students
- Ability to be able to use data for instructional decision-making
- Ability to be flexible and self-reflective about own practice
- Ability to model inclusive, collaborative, democratic, and team-oriented approached to teaching and learning
- Share the draft of the new *Middle School Classroom Teacher Class (Job) Description* to stakeholders for feedback leading to its approval and adoption for use in interviewing and hiring highly qualified teachers for the middle schools.
- Provide on-going staff development to meet the needs of middle school teachers in terms of developing their knowledge, skills, and content expertise to meet the needs of their students.

Task 4: Review job descriptions for middle school teachers and instructional support staff, and make recommendations which define the roles and responsibilities, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that align with middle school reform.

- Draft a new *Class (Job) Description for MS Classroom Teacher*
- Revise *Class (Job)Description for the Paraeducator*

Task 5: Examine and report ways to recruit and attract highly qualified teachers specifically to middle schools (with priority given to targeted middle schools, high poverty/Free and Reduced-priced Meals Systems, Limited English Proficiency, special education, etc.)

- Negotiate with unions and stakeholder groups to allow highly impacted priority middle schools to have early access to open contracts in effort to obtain more highly qualified staff
- Offer training to middle school principals on how to "woo" candidates sent to them from OHR for interviewing so that they can better advocate for their schools and attract the best qualified candidates
- Encourage colleges/universities to place student teachers in impacted middle schools
- Provide incentives to prospective middle school teachers:
 - Stipend for committing to high poverty schools
 - Explore student loan forgiveness or reduction
 - Cover relocation expenses
 - Engage business community in recruitment efforts such as offering discounts in housing costs, utilities, rental fees, transportation, shopping, entertainment, gas, etc.
- Recruit aggressively, using monetary incentives such as signing bonuses, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs in exchange for a commitment for a specified period of time.
- Utilize the Gallup Teacher Insight Online Assessment to identify strong middle school teacher candidates.

- Implement early recruitment strategies such as high school teaching career academies and the teacher cadet program to encourage students to make a long-term commitment to teaching.
- Expand options for alternative teaching pathways and recruit local military personnel for teaching in the school district.
- Develop university partnerships for teacher induction programs that include pre-service training focusing on middle schools.
- Require new teachers to participate in New Educator Orientation (NEO) and expand the program to include ongoing opportunities for professional development during the first two years of employment, prior to granting tenure.

Task 6: Review the pathway to the middle school principalship and make recommendations for improvement as needed.

- Continue to follow school district's Leadership Development Continuum
- Continue consulting principal program for new middle school principals of several months during ASP3 cohort year
- Adopt an internship program, similar to the elementary intern program where the ASP3 will experience "running" the school while the principal is out of the building. The intern will supervise and administer the school for a period of 6 to 9 weeks. The intern will have an administrative team that will support his/her efforts.

FINAL REPORT

Task 1: Examine the state department of education's Middle School Certification for Middle School Teachers and Principal Certification for Middle School Principals

After reviewing the new state department of education requirements for middle school 4-9 certification and the requirements for principals, the sub-committee determined that they are acceptable as written. This decision was made after reviewing research for several sources including the Maryland Middle Learning Years Task Force and the state Middle School Certification Committee.

The new middle school teacher requirements specify that only middle school subject-specific (English, math, science and social studies) teacher education programs will be accepted by MSDE for middle school certification, along with passing scores on PRAXIS I and PRAXIS II middle school content specific tests. Therefore, Maryland colleges need to establish Maryland Approved Programs for specific middle school subject areas. In addition, organizations such as Troops to Teachers should be considered for these programs.

Current secondary content certified teachers with standard or advanced professional certification and elementary/middle school certified teachers will be allowed to remain in middle school assignments; however, they must comply with No Child Left Behind highly qualified designations.

The middle school certification is in alignment with the IEB Policy, except for the grade bands. Because some state school systems have junior high schools and some have middle schools covering grades 5-8, the state certification covers grades 4-9. The committee also recommended a few changes in the IEB terminology, with a focus on specificity to the "adolescent" learner.

The current Administrator II (principal) requirements are also considered acceptable. However the committee feels that further consideration should be given to creating incentives to retain middle school principals, since many transfer to high school principals because of the higher salary step.

Budget implications include funding for additional teachers and additional human resources specialist to staff middle schools. In addition, funding would be required to offer financial support for teacher tests and for the incentives to retain middle school principals.

Task 2: Review the audit/report of current certification for middle school teachers.

The school district's middle school math, science, reading, English and social studies data were collected through the Office of Human Resources and the Employee Retiree Service Center. Because middle school staff teaching core academic subjects must comply only with the NCLB highly qualified requirements for certification through content expertise or testing, this data was thoroughly reviewed.

Almost all teachers currently working in middle schools are under the old certification requirements where either elementary grades 1-6 or middle school certified teachers or secondary teachers could be selected to teach in middle school. Since it was difficult to find enough staff to hire only teachers with secondary "subject specific" certification, approximately 50% of the middle schools are staffed with teachers who have "elementary grades 1-6 and middle school" certification without specific expertise in a single field.

Of the five subjects areas reviewed, an average of 37% (ranging from 27% to 50%) of the educators teaching middle school are certified in elementary education 1-6 and middle school. In addition, an average of 17% (ranging from 11% to 23%) of the teachers are teaching in out-of-field assignments. This means that only an average of 46% are certified in the specific content area they are teaching.

Based on this data, the sub-committee recommends the following:

- Create and allocate positions for math coaches to increase teacher expertise in this subject area.
- Increase the number of teachers certified in middle school or secondary core academic subjects.
- Strongly recommend that high school courses taught in middle school should be taught by secondary content certified teachers

- Increase the number of inclusion/co-teaching models with special education/regular education teachers
- Provide/require additional teacher training in content, pedagogy, and the unique characteristics of early adolescent learners, particularly for teachers with elementary or secondary certification.
- Provide differentiated instruction for middle school students to meet the diverse needs of middle school populations.

Major concerns and discussion points are as follows:

- Since a significant number of elementary, special education and ESOL teachers are teaching core academic subjects (other than English/reading), should we require MS test or additional content course work in the subject area they are teaching?
- Because special education is already a shortage area, will additional requirements for these teachers impact retention?
- How do we increase the number of certified and HQ middle school content teachers?
- How do we insure that teachers teaching HS courses in middle school are secondary subject certified?
- Since the HOUSSE rubric for special educators requires only 9 content credits for those teaching a core academic subject, should we require additional content course work?
- As of fall 2005, the school district had 14 math vacancies and 22 full time/5.2 part time special education vacancies. Since we already have a significant amount of math vacancies, requiring math certification for middle school may be problematic.
- Should the role of the resource teacher and the IRT be restructured? Should they be two distinct and separate positions?
- Which special education models are effective in promoting student achievement?
 - Inclusion models have shown to be successful; however, this would require increased staffing in the shortage areas that already exist.
 - Are we appropriately prioritizing? For example, should technology-integrated initiatives be a higher priority than raising scores for special education students?
 - Is there a limit on the number of special education students in an inclusion setting?
- Should specific professional development offered through the district be similar to the model used for math content connections and reading initiatives?

Budget implications include the cost of professional development initiatives to meet the needs of middle school staff and the additional cost for staffing math content coaches.

Task 3: Define the knowledge, skills, and content expertise of middle school teachers required to meet the unique needs of middle school students.

According to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, a "highly qualified teacher" is a teacher with full certification, a bachelor's degree, and demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching skills (*NCLB, A Desktop Reference*, 2002, p. 57). In the state of Maryland, a "highly qualified teacher" is one who teaches a core academic subject and meets one of the following conditions:

- Holds an Advanced Professional Certificate (APC) **OR**
- Holds a Standard Professional Certificate (SPC) and has passed all applicable Praxis examination requirements **OR**
- Holds a Standard Professional Certificate (SPC) and has specific content expertise (30 college credits) or academic major in the subject area **OR**
- Holds a Standard Professional Certificate (SPC) and meets required point count under the Highly Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation (HOUSSE)

AND

- Is teaching in the field of certification endorsement

Therefore, the definition of "highly qualified" (HQ) is minimal at best since it focuses on teachers' content knowledge and not their ability to meet performance standards. So what does "highly qualified" really mean in terms of hiring teachers who can meet the unique needs of middle school students to ensure their academic success? The rationale for this *Task 3 to define the knowledge, skills, and content expertise of middle school teachers required to meet the needs of middle school students* is that this information will help us to better define what is a "highly qualified" middle school teacher and identify "look fors" in the interviewing and hiring process of HQ teachers.

As a result of analyzing the data collected from two middle school principal focus groups and surveys from middle school staff and students along with research findings, the following recommendations were made:

- Differentiate the job description for classroom teacher by levels (elementary, middle, and high schools).
- Draft a new *Middle School Classroom Teacher Class (Job) Description* incorporating the knowledge, content expertise, skills, and disposition identified by stakeholder groups and in the research literature emphasizing:
 - Knowledge of content, adolescent child development and appropriate behavioral management strategies
 - Non-measurable qualities/dispositions such as believing that all children can learn, being enthusiastic and likes children, being persistent and does not give up on children who have difficulty learning concepts
 - Ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students
 - Ability to be able to use data for instructional decision-making
 - Ability to be flexible and self-reflective about own practice
 - Ability to model inclusive, collaborative, democratic, and team-oriented approached to teaching and learning
- Share the draft of the new *Middle School Classroom Teacher Class (Job) Description* to stakeholders for feedback leading to its approval and adoption for use in interviewing and hiring highly qualified teachers for the middle schools.

- Provide on-going staff development to meet the needs of middle school teachers in terms of developing their knowledge, skills, and content expertise to meet the needs of their students.

The summary of feedback from the two focus groups of middle school principals (P) and the survey results of middle school teachers (T) and students (S) in grades 6-9 identified the following knowledge, skills, and content expertise needed by middle school teachers to meet the need of their students. An important dimension beyond the knowledge, skills, and content expertise that was identified by these stakeholder groups as being important in a highly qualified middle school teacher was the concept of non-measurable qualities or disposition of the teacher (e.g., belief that all students can learn, does not give up on students, sense of humor).

Knowledge/Content Expertise

- Content knowledge/curriculum expertise – in-depth background knowledge of subjects taught; have content area certification (P) (T) (S)
- Content area teachers – able to teach reading, writing, & math across the content areas (P) (T)
- Math teachers – need to know HS math through Algebra II...maybe even through pre-calculus (P)
- Science content expertise (MSA in science is coming) (P)
- Interdisciplinary instruction & making connections across content areas (P)
- Adolescent development – knowledge of age appropriate adolescent behaviors so appropriate consequences can be selected (P) (T)
- Knowledge of skill differentiation (P) (T) (S)
- Technology savvy (P) (S)
- Knowledge of assessment and how to monitor student progress (P) (T)
- Provides real world connections (S)

Skills/Qualities:

- Classroom management; "with-it-ness" (P) (T)
- Skillful in using diagnostic, formative, and summative data collection/analysis to increase student achievement (P)
- Ability to deliver instruction employing a variety of grouping and instructional strategies for different learning styles and diverse learners; commitment to teach to multiple intelligences; being able to differentiate instruction for on-level and GT students within heterogeneous classrooms (P) (T) (S)
- Ability to communicate with teachers/parents (P)
- Ability to build relationships with students, teachers, and parents (P) (T) (S)
- Ability to be a team player; consults with peers (P) (T)
- Ability to be self-reflective about their practice (P)
- Ability to build student's character & self-confidence to be a self-advocating, independent learner (P)
- Belief that all students can learn and does not give up on students (P) (T) (S)
- Sense of humor (P) (T)

- Experience with young adolescent learners (P)
- Able to give clear concise directions—speaks clearly and slowly (S)
- Use examples to build clarity/understanding (S)
- Ability to assign due dates early (S)
- Ability to read books together with students (S)
- Ability to reteach (S)
- Know how to interact with MS children
- Able to be encouraging, inspirational, supportive
- Time management

Findings from a review of the literature support the feedback from the stakeholder groups. Daniels (2005) interviewed Hispanic, white, and Asian American students in two different middle schools and reported the following findings on what makes an effective middle school teacher and understanding early adolescent development.

- *Effective middle school teachers are passionate about the learning of these young adolescents, ...recognize that if they do not meet their students' social and emotional needs, they will waste their content expertise.*
- *Teachers must acknowledge the demands of real life...help adolescents learn to balance multiple commitments and responsibilities while also showing them how to preserve part of each day for their own activities.*
- *Teachers can address issue of stress by teaching students specific coping skills...model how to enter assignments and tasks in planners or calendars, demonstrate how to organize time to accomplish required work, brainstorm with students activities that provide healthy breaks from the stress of homework and family responsibilities.*
- *By providing examples of perseverance and determination, effective teachers demonstrate that people can master stress and frustration and that success is possible.*
- *When teachers expect their students to do really well, students are much more likely to participate in class.*
- *Conveying high expectations to students means using multiple assessments to identify specific learning needs, providing support and scaffolding on the basis of those needs, and allowing students to select multiple paths to the same outcomes.*
- *By being honest with students when they fall short of expected achievement and providing feedback about subsequent steps, teachers convey the expectation that every student can achieve.*

Understanding early adolescent development:

- *The level of stress...increases on transition into middle school because of the heavier homework load, social pressures of meeting new people, and hormonal changes.*
- *Young adolescents are transitioning from the egocentrism of childhood to a group-centered way of thinking [Perlstein, L. (2003). *Not much just chillin: The hidden lives of middle schoolers*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.]*
- *Adolescents want to feel as though they are a welcome part of the group....want to be unique and carve out their own place in the world.*

- *Their honesty, their belief that they are invincible, and their desire to make a difference in the world are all characteristics that separate middle school adolescents from other age groups.*
- *Their social emotional needs...are remarkably similar across ethnic and socioeconomic lines.*
- *Developing and sustaining new and long-term friendships are crucial activities. In addition to reducing loneliness, "talking about stuff" with friends makes it easier to cope with pressure from peers, worries over homework, and concerns about family. (Implications: teachers let friends sit next to one another in class and teach them to make appropriate behavioral choices after being given this freedom, we address not only valuable life skills but also students' social needs.)*
- *Expending extra effort to understand students' social and emotional needs will encourage them to respond with extra effort in the cognitive and academic realms.*
- *Young adolescents are not looking...for easy teachers who let them slide by with minimal effort. Instead, the students want teachers who care about student learning, hold high expectations for all students, and provide the necessary support.*

If students experience the classroom as a caring, supportive place where there is a sense of belonging and everyone is valued and respected, they will tend to participate more fully in the process of learning.

[Lumsden, L. (1994). Student motivation to learn. ERIC Digest No. ED-99-CO-0011. Available: www.eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest092.html]

The following findings on early adolescent development from the research of the National Middle School Association (2003) support the importance of the knowledge, content expertise, skills, and disposition of middle school teachers identified by our stakeholder groups.

- *Important to recognize that the areas of development of early adolescents—intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral are intertwined...that achieving academic success is highly dependent upon their developmental needs also being met.*
- *Most middle level students require ongoing, concrete, experiential learning in order to develop intellectually.*
- *Successful schools for young adolescents are characterized by a culture that includes:*
 - *Educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so*
 - *Courageous, collaborative leadership*
 - *A shared vision that guides decisions*
 - *An inviting, supportive, and safe environment*
 - *High expectations for every member of the learning community*
 - *Students and teachers engaged in active learning*
 - *An adult advocate for every student*
 - *School-initiated family and community partnerships*
- *Successful schools for young adolescents provide:*

- *Curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory*
- *Multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to their diversity*
- *Assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning*
- *Organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning*
- *School-wide efforts and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety*
- *Multifaceted guidance and support services*

At our March 21, 2006 Middle School Reform Human Resources Project Team meeting, members reviewed, analyzed, and discussed the stakeholder responses from the stakeholder focus groups and surveys and reached consensus that the following knowledge, content expertise, skills, and dispositions are essential in an effective middle school teacher.

Knowledge:

- Content
- Differentiation
- How to use a variety of strategies
- Understanding middle school adolescents
- Technology

Content Expertise:

- Curriculum
- Teaching reading, writing, and math through content areas

Skills:

- Classroom management
- Organizational skills
- Human Relations skills
- Communication skills
- Ability to use a variety of instructional strategies addressing exceptionalities of students
- Data analysis

Dispositions:

- Sense of Humor
- Organized
- Flexible/organizational agility
- Collaborative
- Team Player
- Believe that all students can learn
- Lifelong learner (continued professional development)
- Self-reflective

As a result of the qualitative analysis, the project team members recommended differentiating the job description for classroom teacher by levels (elementary, middle, and high schools) to create a new *Middle School Classroom Teacher Class (Job) Description* incorporating the knowledge, content expertise, skills, and disposition identified by stakeholder groups and in the literature emphasizing:

- Knowledge of content, adolescent child development and appropriate behavioral management strategies
- Non-measurable qualities/dispositions such as believing that all children can learn, being enthusiastic and likes children, being persistent and does not give up on children who have difficulty learning concepts
- Ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students
- Ability to be able to use data for instructional decision-making
- Ability to be flexible and self-reflective about own practice
- Ability to model inclusive, collaborative, democratic, and team-oriented approaches to teaching and learning

No resources are needed for the first three recommendations since the director of recruitment and staffing and certification coordinator drafted a new *Middle School Classroom Teacher Class (Job) Description* incorporating the knowledge, content expertise, skills, and disposition identified by stakeholder groups and research literature, and distributed the draft at the last Middle School Reform Steering Committee for their consideration. For the last recommendation, resources are needed to provide staff development for:

- *Skillful Teacher* Training
- Teacher training addressing student' affective domain
- Teaching content area teachers how to reading, writing, and math across the content areas
- Strengthening teaching strategies targeting special populations (e.g., special ed, ESOL, GT)
- Supporting middle school teachers to meet Highly Qualified designation for their core academic subject area as needed

In terms of budget implications for the Task 3 recommendations, the cost of providing on-going staff development to meet the needs of middle school teachers need to be developed.

Task 4: Review job descriptions for MS teachers and instructional support staff, and make recommendations which define the roles and responsibilities, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that align with MS reform.

An analysis of the findings from the research literature and stakeholder feedback in Task 3 led to the conclusion that our district's one job description for all classroom teachers did not differentiate across elementary, middle, and high school levels. Therefore, the rationale for Task 4 is that job descriptions for middle school teachers and instructional

support staff must address the particular needs of the middle school student aligned with the middle school reform which led to the following recommendations:

- Draft a new *Class (Job) Description for MS Classroom Teacher*
- Revise *Class (Job)Description for the Paraeducator*

In Task 3, data collected from the principals' focus groups and staff/student surveys indicated that effective middle school teachers should possess the following:

Knowledge: curriculum, content, differentiation, variety of strategies, adolescent development, technology, and teaching reading, writing and math through content areas

Skills: classroom management, human relations, communication, differentiation of instruction to meet exceptionalities of middle school students, data analysis

Disposition: Organized, flexible, collaborative, team player, sense of humor, belief that all students can learn, committed to young adolescents, self-reflective

Findings from a publication from the National Middle School Association (*This We Believe: Success Schools for Young Adolescents, 2003*) indicates that:

- *Educators committed to young adolescents provide significant academic learning experiences characterized by high content and high expectations for all learners, and developmentally appropriate classrooms, schools, programs, and practices for all young adolescent students within the learning community.*
- *Middle school teachers committed to the students they teach perform at least five specific roles: student advocate, role model, supporter of diversity, collaborator, and lifelong learner.*

To draft a new *Middle School Classroom Teacher Class (Job) Description*, the director of recruitment and staffing and certification coordinator incorporated information from the:

- Qualitative data collected from two focus groups of principals and staff/student surveys which identified knowledge, skills, content expertise, and dispositions required of effective middle school teachers.
- Knowledge, dispositions, and skills of middle school teachers identified by the National Middle School Association.

Drafts of the new *Middle School Classroom Teacher Class Description* (Attachment 1) and *Paraeducator Class Description* (Attachment 2) were distributed at a Middle School Reform Steering Committee Meeting for consideration.

For the review and adoption of the proposed new *Middle School Classroom Teacher and Paraeducator Class Descriptions*, input would be solicited from staffing analyst for paraeducators, job classification specialists, administrators, school staff, students and parents, the director of high school instruction, and representatives from the Middle School Councils on Teaching and Learning.

Material resources will be needed for printing the new job classification forms for Middle School Classroom Teacher and Paraeducator once they have been approved.

Budgetary implications would be minimal since the new *Middle School Classroom Teacher* and *Paraeducator Class Descriptions* will be posted on the Job Classification Website.

Task 5: Examine and report ways to recruit and attract highly qualified teachers specifically to middle school (with priority given to targeted middle schools with high poverty/Free and Reduced-priced Meals Systems, Limited English Proficiency, special education, etc.).

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003), the "average cost to recruit, hire, prepare and lose a teacher is \$50,000". "Economic and educational costs associated with this loss include: lost tuition and tax support for preparing new teachers who leave; lost investment in professional development, improved skills, curriculum knowledge; loss of community within school and with parents; and lost continuity and stability for students."

In a study conducted by the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (2000), the conservative cost of teacher turnover per lost teacher, by years of experience averaged about \$8200 for a novice teacher; \$9300 for a teacher with 5 years experience; almost \$11,000 for a teacher with 10 years experience; \$12,000 for a teacher with 15 years experience and \$13,000 for a teacher with 20 years experience. The formula used to calculate these figures was Turnover cost = 25% of the leaver's annual salary + benefits. Benefit cost is equal to 30% of the leaver's annual salary. Applying this formula to the district, the cost of turnover can range from \$22,000 for a novice teacher with an annual salary of \$40,500 to \$45,500 for a 20-year veteran teacher with a master's degree and an annual salary of \$82,800.

"Turnover also causes intangible effects. It is hard to build a learning community or sustain a reform effort when the faces change every year. Researchers have found strong links among organizational conditions and employee motivation, commitment and turnover" (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 511).

"If teachers repeatedly leave a school before becoming competent in their practice, students will be taught by a string of teachers who are, on average, less effective than more experienced teachers" (Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson, 2005, p. 11).

"Almost one out of every two new teachers has left the classroom by the end of the fifth year. Teachers cite many reasons for leaving, but school culture and professional conditions are always high on the list." In order to ensure long-term teacher retention, teachers induction programs must be designed to build and deepen teacher knowledge; integrate new practitioners into a teaching community and school culture that supports the continuous professional growth of all teachers; support the constant development of the teaching community in the school; and encourage a professional dialogue that articulates the goals, values, and best practices of a community. (NCTAF, *Induction into Learning Communities*, p.1)

"Effective induction programs not only retain highly qualified new teachers, they also ensure that these teachers are teaching effectively from the very first day of school. Induction is process of preparing, supporting, and retaining new teachers. A structured and sustained induction program typically lasts three years." (Effective Teaching, Wong & Wong)

Good teachers are attracted to and thrive in good schools. These schools are places where teaching and learning prosper, because they are focused on what we know about how both students and teachers learn and grow. Recent research, summarized by the National Academy of Sciences, has found that successful learning environments are those organized to be: (1) learner-centered, (2) assessment-centered, (3) knowledge-centered, and (4) community centered. (NCTAF, *No Dream Denied* p.16). In order to meet these goals, schools need to become small, well-focused learning communities.

Teacher turnover must be addressed if the school district is to have highly effective, world class middle schools. The majority of recruiting and retention strategies fall into four general categories – early recruitment training programs for students in middle and high schools, hiring and/or retention incentives, alternative certification methods, and mentoring/ teacher induction programs that support new teachers. The district will need to employ a range of innovative, short, and long-term strategies in each of these general categories in order to recruit and retain the most effective teachers at the middle school level.

- Negotiate with unions and stakeholder groups to allow highly impacted priority middle schools to have early access to open contracts in effort to obtain more highly qualified staff
- Train middle school principals on how to promote their schools and attract the best qualified candidates sent to them from OHR for interviewing.
- Explore the utilization of the Gallup Teacher Insight Online Assessment to identify strong middle school teacher candidates.

Short-Term Strategies

Marketing and communication should be increased significantly to recruit potential candidates and principals. Strategies to support this are:

- Post middle school vacancies on the district website and World Wide Web
- Use Resumix (applicant tracking system), and Teacher-Teachers.com electronic websites to search for resumes of middle school certified teachers
- Advertise in local newspapers and university publications
- Use online advertising and Listservs at universities and associations

- Establish and maintain relationships with university supervisors and career centers through phone calls, emails, electronic postings, and visits to keep them informed of our middle school vacancies
- Contact and follow up with prospective middle school candidates personally and in a timely manner
- Inform elementary and special education candidates about middle school opportunities by providing information about Middle School Praxis II tests
- Inform and encourage high school candidates to consider middle school vacancies
- Arrange visits for middle school candidates to highly impacted middle schools
- Highlight the supports, unique programs, and an opportunities to make a significant difference in the life of a child at high poverty schools
- Increase recruitment trips to universities in states that have middle school teacher certification programs (e.g., Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia)
- Increase recruitment efforts at racial/ethnic association events, Minority Job Fairs, Historically Black Colleges, and colleges with high percentage of bilingual students to attract more diversity to the pool of middle school teacher candidates
- Update recruitment materials (packet, DVD, giveaways, laptop display) to remain competitive with recruiters from other school districts to include photos of middle school teachers and students

To be successful in recruitment efforts requires ongoing support from internal and external stakeholders. It is recommended that the MCPS Office of Human Resources:

- Develop University partnerships for teacher induction programs that include pre-service training focusing on middle schools. Encourage colleges/universities to place student teachers in impacted middle schools.
- Engage business community in recruitment efforts such as offering discounts in housing costs, utilities, rental fees, transportation, shopping, entertainment, gas, etc.
- Partner with the Teachers Federal Credit Union to obtain benefits for new teachers in the district (e.g., lower interest loans for purchasing cars and residences).

- Partner with the Office of Organizational Development's Comprehensive Induction Program to increase staffers' knowledge of district's support and mentoring to teachers new to our system so that they can use induction as a recruitment tool.
- Require new teachers to participate in New Educator Orientation (NEO) and expand the program to include ongoing opportunities for professional development during the first two years of employment, prior to granting tenure.
- Outreach to middle school principals by the director of recruitment and staffing to address the staffing needs of their schools.
- Partner Human Resources staff with middle school principals on recruitment trips (especially with principals from highly impacted middle schools).

Long-Term Strategies

Long-term strategies are designed to sustain the initial recruitment and retention efforts. Some will require additional funding, negotiations with unions, and university partnerships in order to be implemented. Although these strategies require sustained effort, there was strong support for them because the literature indicates that they have proven to be effective in other systems. Long-term strategies fall into five categories.

1. Early recruitment strategies focus on interesting middle and high school students in the field of teaching. Implement early recruitment strategies such as high school teaching career academies and the teacher cadet program to encourage students to make a long-term commitment to teaching. The "Teacher Cadet Program" offers high school juniors and seniors an innovative, hands-on course with a curriculum that allows them to test drive teaching. Students explore current issues in education and innovative teaching practices. The Teacher Cadet Program is an innovative approach designed to attract talented young people to the teaching profession through a challenging introduction to teaching. The Program seeks to provide high school students insight into the nature of teaching, the problems of schooling and the critical issues affecting the quality of education in America's schools (CERRA, www.cerra.org/cadets, 2006). In 2004-2005, each Teacher Cadet class received a grant to purchase supplies, develop curriculum materials and provide additional activities for the class. The grant amount was based on allocations of \$250 for sites with 15 or more students. Sites with fewer than 15 students received \$16.65 per student with no site receiving less than the base of \$100. These funds were used to provide teaching related activities, speakers, college campus visits, classroom supplies, film and processing, receptions and workshops. High School Teaching Career Academies, implemented through partnerships with local colleges or universities, give students a chance to explore the teaching career through specific coursework related to teaching and intern and/or field work in classrooms (CERRA, www.cerra.org/cadets, 2006). The literature suggests that intensive teacher academy/magnet programs are more likely to transition students into higher

education and the teaching profession. The impact on hiring wouldn't be immediate, but it could have a strong long-term effect by interesting county students in working in the school district.

2. Scholarships and loan forgiveness programs or differentiated pay provide financial incentives to college graduate and undergraduate students in return for a commitment to enter the teaching profession. These programs may be state funded or funded by local school systems. Financial incentives such as scholarships for undergraduate and graduate degrees, funds for obtaining a middle school certificate, tuition waivers for MD colleges and universities that cover tuition for students if they teach in MD for a specified number of years, and/or differentiated pay for teachers in schools with high FARMS should be considered. Some school districts also provide signing bonuses ranging from \$2,500 to \$4,500 (Philadelphia City Schools) to attract new teachers into their district. Signing bonuses may or may not be linked to a specified period of employment.
3. Grants to support teachers seeking board certification provide funding for current teachers who wish to obtain a specialty certification in an area of identified critical need such as math, science, special education, etc. Funds are provided to staff currently employed by the school system. The district currently provides tuition reimbursement and a salary supplement for NBPTS certified teachers. Teacher Association provides intensive support to members in the NBPTS application process. Through the Teacher Association's Center for Teacher Leadership, the Network of National Board Certified Teachers offers intensive year-long coursework to assist candidates.
4. Alternative pathways to teaching train people with content knowledge to enter the teaching profession. Expand options for alternative teaching pathways and recruit local military personnel for teaching in the school district. The district currently has several university partnerships for this purpose. The Creative Initiatives in Teacher Education (CITE) program and the TLC – Transition from Laboratory to Classroom (TLC) program are examples. The CITE program is designed to assist supporting services staff with a bachelor's degree obtain a master's degree in elementary education and state certification in Grades 1-8. The TLC program enables scientists, engineers, doctors, etc. to become certified to teach in the district. The course work is completed in the evenings and the scientists (interns) spend two days at the school in the fall and complete their student teaching in the spring. These could be expanded to focus specifically on staff who want to teach at the middle school level. Additional alternatives such as Troops to Teachers, Teach America, teacher training for content experts, etc. should also be explored.
5. Mentoring, staff development, and professional learning communities create a formal induction program with an emphasis on new teachers rather than pre-service training. Such partnerships create a unique school-based structure that oversees the induction program at each participating school. In most cases, release time is built into the program so that new teachers can work closely with

department heads and mentors as well as observe peers, guiding teachers, and other teachers in district schools. The district could enhance professional growth opportunities and support for teachers coming into the system, particularly at the middle school level by implementing this model. A minimum three-year commitment would be required to build capacity to support and affirm new teachers. Potential costs would include fees for substitutes at approximately \$106.00 per day and Tier I pay for teachers at approximately \$240.00 per day.

Resources needed to implement these recommendations include both human resources and financial resources. In addition, there may be costs for facility usage depending upon the strategies that are adopted.

Budget implications (cost analysis of the recommendation) are as follows:

Scholarships and loan forgiveness programs

The school district could provide scholarships or loan forgiveness for undergraduate education courses to potential middle school teachers. The district uses as a benchmark for tuition reimbursement the tuition rate at the University of Maryland at College Park (UMCP). Using the current tuition rate of \$273.00 per credit course and 60 credits for core education courses, it would cost approximately \$17,000 per teacher to support this program. This figure is based solely on current tuition and does not factor in tuition increases.

Grants to support teachers seeking board certification

The school district provides a salary supplement of \$2000 per year for up to 10 years for nationally board certified teachers. In addition, the state matches these funds. This translates to an additional \$40,000 for middle school teachers if this same formula is applied.

Mentoring, staff development, and professional learning communities

Potential costs would include fees for substitutes at approximately \$106.00 per day and Tier I pay for teachers at approximately \$240.00 per day.

Task 6: Review the pathway to the middle school principalship and make recommendations for improvement as needed.

The workgroup reported the following recommendations:

1. To continue to follow the school district's Leadership Development Continuum Program.
Rationale: The current program is an outstanding program that prepare individuals for the middle school administrative career pathway.
2. To adopt an internship program that is similar to the elementary intern program. This will occur during the individuals' ASP3 year. The intern will supervise and

administer the school for a period of six to nine weeks. The administrator will have his/her experiences monitored by a team (community superintendent, executive staff member, outside consultant and principal).

Rationale: The ASP3 needs the experience of running the school without the presence of the sitting principal. The sitting principal will be assigned to another district office during the 6-9 week period. Research shows that "practical experience" in the job is the best preparation for becoming a principal.

3. To continue the consulting principal program for new middle school principals.

Rationale: Individuals who become first year principals need on-going support from a veteran, consulting principal.

In order to make sure that the internship concept is seen as a need for ASP3s, a focus group of middle school principals were gathered together on March 22, 2006. This group of administrators, consisting of five middle school principals and one middle school assistant principal, unanimously agreed that an internship program was needed. These administrators recommended that the program begin during the 06-07 school year. They also recommended that the sitting principal be given the option of either moving a staff member into the AP's slot or hire a retired principal. Moving a staff member into the position as "acting" is a great way to identify and nurture potential middle school administrators. Having a long term substitute would be cost effective. Also, the co-chairs for Task #6 met with representatives from the Offices of Organizational Development and Human Resources to gather their input and solicit their suggestions.

The research shows clear evidence that the best way to train potential middle school principals is to give them practical experiences that are needed to administer a building (L. Potter, et. al). There are many school districts throughout the country that do not have a leadership developmental program like our district's. In fact, during the past several years, approximately twelve other school districts have either contacted and/or visited OOD to gather more information about our training program. L. Lashway believes that school districts can improve the pool of candidates by identifying, recruiting, and training prospective principals. A majority of MCPS middle school principals who were polled informally expressed the importance of comprehensive training for aspiring principals. Also, they expressed agreement that an internship program during the ASP3 year was a great idea and needed in the district. Cynthia D. Prince feels that candidates for middle school principalships must have experience as a middle school teacher, middle school resource teacher, or team leader.

Currently, there are 19 student support specialists, eleven AP1s, ten AP2s, and six ASP3s. The cost to bring in a retired principal who would fill the assistant principal vacancy is \$56.57 per hour. The cost to bring in a long term substitute teacher, someone who would fill the teacher vacancy, is \$141.77 a day. Assuming that 5 current AP2s are recommended for the ASP3 program, the cost factors would be as follows:

Based on the intern "running" the school for eight weeks:

Retired Principal	\$56.57 X 8 hours per day X 40 days X 5 ASP3s Total = \$90, 512
Long Term Substitute	\$141.77 per day X 40 days X 5 teachers Total = 28, 354.00
Sitting Principals	\$1,000 for professional growth X 5 Total = \$5,000
Outside Consultant (Part of the ASP3 Team)	\$46.00 per hour X 8 hours per month (16 hours for two months) X 5 teams Total = \$3,680.00

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY IEB

Task 1: Comments related to the Policy IEB:

- IEB indicates grades 6-8 for middle school; however, the new middle school certification area for MSDE covers grades 4-9.
- On proposed IEB draft, the interdisciplinary team model should be better defined on lines 239, 240 and 256-258.
- On line 269, if interdisciplinary team is not better defined, then it should be deleted from the statement, leaving "Staffing ratios will support organizational structure and content integrity."
- Recommend new language on lines 465-468 as follows: "Ensure that middle school teachers and principals meet state certification requirements."
- Recommend additional information on line 473 as follows: "...through job descriptions developed in alignment with professional growth system and the Maryland State Department of Education middle school certification regulation."
- On lines 475-481, we suggest ending the sentence at "middle school teachers," and removing the remainder of the sentence.
- Recommend an addition to line 486 as follows: "...specific to early adolescence."

Task 2: Middle school staff must comply with the NCLB highly qualified requirements for certification through content expertise or testing.

Task 3: On proposed IEB draft policy, recommend modifying lines 470-473 to:

Define the knowledge, content expertise, skills, and *disposition* of middle school teachers required to meet the unique needs of middle school students.

Focus on:

- Knowledge of adolescent child development and appropriate behavioral management strategies
- Non-measurable qualities/dispositions such as believing that all children can learn, being enthusiastic about engaging with children, persistent and does not give up on children who have difficulty learning concepts
- Teacher's ability to be self-reflective about their own practice
- Need to be a team player and being collaborative
- Need to be able to use data for instructional decision-making

Task 4: On proposed IEB draft policy, recommend modifying/adding:

8.a. Human resource efforts will:

Lines 475-476 to:

Implement practices to recruit, attract, and retain highly qualified teachers specifically to middle schools with priority given to targeted middle schools with substantial numbers of students receiving Free and Reduced-price Meals System, Limited English Proficient students, and special education students.

8.b. Middle school staffs will:

Lines 491-493 to:

*Be knowledgeable about early adolescent *development* and effective instructional and behavioral management strategies that meet the needs of adolescents.*

Lines 495-496 to:

*Reflect the *diversity of the student population* to the extent possible.*

Add new lines:

Work with interdisciplinary teams to provide a school culture conducive to the intellectual, physical, social and emotional development of adolescents.

Task 5: There do not appear to be any implications for Policy IEB. However, several of the recommended strategies include incentives for recruiting and retaining staff that might have to be approved by the unions and may be in conflict with existing hiring policies and/or practices.

Task 6: No implications reported for Policy IEB.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE/NEXT STEPS

Note: There will be 5 pilot schools implementing the Middle School Reform Plan in FY 2008 (2007-2008) and the remaining schools will implement the plan in FY 2009 (2008-2009).

- Obtain feedback on certification issues from a larger focus group. (Task 1)
- Since the review of middle school math has been completed, review the other middle school core academic subject areas to determine areas of current certification for most middle school teachers. (Task 2)
- Review the essential knowledge, content expertise, skills, and disposition of middle school teachers with OHR staffers and interviewers to ensure that they are looking for these characteristics as they interview prospective candidates for middle school teaching positions. (Task 3)
- Using information from focus groups/surveys and review of the literature on the essential knowledge, content expertise, skills, and disposition of middle school teachers, new job descriptions for the Middle School Classroom Teacher and Paraeducator were drafted. These drafts need to be vetted through appropriate stakeholder groups for approval and adoption. (Task 4)
- The 14 short-term strategies can be implemented immediately since they do not have significant associated costs and do not need to be tied to the pilot schools. (Task 5)
- The enhanced new teacher induction component should be implemented in the five pilot schools during FY 2008 and expanded to all middle schools in FY 2009 as it is important that this become an integral of the middle school reform effort. (Task 5)
- Exploration of additional financial incentives and alternative pathways to teaching should begin during FY 2007 with initial implementation to begin during FY 2008 as the budget permits. This should include development of additional partnerships with local universities and, if possible, the Maryland State Department of Education to obtain grant and/or state funding. (Task 5)
- Teaching academies such as the "Teacher Cadet Program" should be field tested in the five pilot middle schools beginning in FY 2008 and expanding into their receiving high schools the following year. Long-term plans for this model should include exploring the development of a signature or magnet program for the teaching career in at least one MCPS high school. (Task 5)

Appendix L

Coding of Teacher Selection Factors by External Auditor

Teacher Selection Factors Cited by Middle School Principals

Coding by External Auditor: *What characteristics do middle school principals look for in hiring teachers?*

1. Content knowledge

1.1 Content/subject knowledge (*Standard 2*)

2. Pedagogy/how to teach/instructional skills (*Standard 2*)

2.1 How to convey/engage in content (*engaging overlaps with Category 4*)

2.2 Use of technology

2.3 Teaching style: facilitation/student-centered vs. teacher-directed

2.4 Communication skills, clarity of objectives

2.5 Matching activities to objectives

2.6 Data-driven instruction/use assessment to monitor student progress (*Standard 4*)

2.7 Provision of rigor/thinking skills for all students (*also could fit under Category 7-values*)

2.8 Ability to differentiate

2.9 Ability to reflect on practice and adjust

3. Classroom management skills

3.1 Positive learning environment (*Standard 3*)

4. Relationships with students

4.1 Ability to relate to students, build relationships/trust

4.2 Kid-centered, kid-oriented

4.3 Understanding the adolescent learner (*overlaps with Category 2*)

4.4 Skills to work with students from diverse backgrounds, cultures (*overlaps with Category 2*)

4.5 Commitment to student learning, caring about students (*Standard 1*)

4.6 Ability to motivate/inspire students

4.7 Enthusiasm/love for kids

4.8 How to work/connect with kids

4.9 How to engage kids (*overlaps with Code 2.1*)

5. Relationships among teachers

5.1 Team player

5.2 Friendly

5.3 Ability to build relationships with adults, people skills, interpersonal skills

5.4 Conflict resolution skills

5.5 Ability to learn from colleagues

5.6 Works collaboratively with colleagues

5.7 Fun-loving, builds positive staff morale

6. Relationships with parents/community

6.1 Ability to deal with parents/community

6.2 Parent-oriented

6.3 Awareness of political climate

7. Character/attitudes/values

7.1 Professionalism (*Standard 6*)

7.2 Personal confidence

7.3 Goes beyond expectations, willingness to do extra duties

7.4 Commitment to professional growth/development, teachable (*Standard 5*)

7.5 Flexible/resourceful/willingness to work it out

7.6 Volunteerism, community service, dedication, heart

7.7 Risk-taker

7.8 High expectations for all students (*overlaps with Category 2*)

7.9 Integrity

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