



# Recruiting and Hiring Teachers in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools

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**Recruiting and Hiring Teachers in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools**

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Susan Moore Johnson  
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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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*Dedicated to the women in my family who made careers in teaching:*

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**Aliza Abadi Greenvald (1954- )**

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## Acknowledgements

I chronicled my life as a third grader in a pink diary with a lock that never worked. I reported being bored by the curriculum and antsy about sitting still all day, and I recounted being sent to the principal's office regularly. There, my principal and I brainstormed about how school could work better for me. Although, in reality, the possibilities for transforming my tiny Jewish day school in Missouri were quite limited, in my imagination, they were endless. Those days in the principal's office made me hungry to learn everything I could about education. For me, earning my Doctorate in Education is the fulfillment of a lifelong dream, and I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the individuals, communities, and institutions that have helped me realize it.

I worked in three public schools in New York City before starting graduate school. The lessons I learned from students, teachers, and staff at Harry Van Arsdale, Jr. High School, the Harvey Milk School, and the Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice (SLJ) ground me. I am grateful to have had Elana Karopkin as my principal, and to have worked with extraordinary colleagues at SLJ. My SLJ students are my muses. Their experiences in high school, in college, and—now—working in education and public service continue to shape my thinking. I am especially grateful to Shannon, Leotha, Samantha, Shiyah, and Calou, who have provided feedback on my ideas throughout my doctorate. My work is for them.

Starting SLJ sparked my interest in understanding the work of other schools that do well with students from long underserved communities. I am grateful to the six schools that agreed to participate in this study and to the 142 individual administrators, teachers, and staff who entrusted us with their stories. I also thank the Spencer Foundation for funding this project.

I am so lucky that the Harvard Graduate School of Education believed in my ideas and funded my studies. The best thing about Harvard is its faculty—and I got the platinum package. My advisor, Susan Moore Johnson, is a teacher first. She has taught me about pedagogy, preparation, persistence, and patience. For me, Susan is a model of what it means to be a good citizen and a strong woman. She has encouraged me to stand tall even when everyone around me feels (and usually is!) gigantic in comparison—and she has helped me understand that modesty and confidence are not mutually exclusive. Susan has taught me the power of collaboration and the importance of good grammar. As Susan's very last advisee, the honor of being her student feels all the more profound.

Susan introduced me to David Cohen and Andrés Alonso, and together the three of them have served as my all-star dissertation committee. From David, I have learned history—about education and American democracy, about schools and school systems, and about the teaching profession and its longstanding predicaments. I have learned (or rather, confirmed) that offices are no place for rich conversation and that good bread and coffee can do wonders for classroom community building. Andrés preaches the importance of leading from a place of hope and love—and he has shown me what it looks like to do that. He has taught me to see the good in people and communities—and in their work. He models what it looks like when powerful players genuinely listen to the big ideas of little

people. I will carry with me Andrés's charge to be true to the "bones of my beliefs" and to have the "courage of my convictions."

When Susan invited me to join The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (NGT), I didn't know what a special collection of people I would meet. I appreciate the early NGTers for their work, their cheerleading, and their approachability. It has been awesome to work alongside Emily Kalejs Qazilbash out in the real world, implementing ideas we have written about as part of the Project. I am also indebted to the more recent crew—especially John Papay and Matt Kraft—and to my writing partner, Geoff Marietta, who isn't *technically* an NGTer but may as well be. When I make decisions—about writing and about work—I often think: WWGMD? Finally, I cannot imagine having done this project without Stef Reinhorn, my partner in research and in dissertation misery. Her twenty-plus years of teaching experience have shaped this work, and her humor and positive attitude (even about 6 feet of snow) have kept me going. I also thank Micki, Noam, Tamar and Avi—for sharing Stef with me during this year.

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Education is our family business, and my parents, Roy and Karen Simon—both teachers—have always encouraged me to pursue this path. My mom returned to teaching my senior year of high school. She practiced her demo lesson about butterflies for me in her bedroom, and that lesson—complemented by posters hung on dressers and windows, and manipulatives all over the bed—has been my benchmark for good teaching ever since. I am proud that my mother- and father-in-love, Aliza and Dani Greenvald share these values. They are endlessly supportive of me. My parents' commitment to education was shaped by their parents, Arthur and Liliane Schwarzschild and Roy and Fannie Bowman Simon. I am told that education was so important to my great grandmother and namesake, Rosa Korneich Fuss, that when she arrived in New York in 1941—after fleeing her native Belgium—she enrolled my Grandma Lili at the Little Red Schoolhouse, a school still known for its fiercely progressive, child-centered approach.

Finally—Dotan Greenvald, Activist, Baker and PhD-to-be—is my partner in love and life. In the words of one teacher in this study, Dotan is my "crazy lucky story." On to the next dissertation...

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	v
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter One.</b> A Quest for “the Very Best”: Teacher Recruitment in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools	7
<b>Chapter Two.</b> The Matchmaking Process: Teacher Hiring in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools	59
<b>Chapter Three.</b> The Challenge of Recruiting and Hiring Teachers of Color: Lessons From Six High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Schools.	114
<b>Appendix A: Tables</b>	161
Table 1: <i>Selected Characteristics of Six Sample Schools</i>	
Table 2: <i>Number of Interviewees at Each School</i>	
Table 3: <i>Interviewed Teachers’ Years of Experience</i>	
Table 4: <i>Race/Ethnicity of Teachers Interviewed</i>	
Table 5: <i>Race/Ethnicity of FTEs at Each School</i>	
<b>Appendix B: Interview Protocols</b>	165
<b>Appendix C: List of Codes and Descriptors</b>	169
<b>Bibliography</b>	172
<b>Vita</b>	179

## Abstract

Good teaching matters, especially for students growing up in poverty. But, effective teaching does not alone depend on the contributions of talented and skilled individuals. Rather, promising pedagogues are far more likely to rise to their potential when they are well-matched with both their teaching assignment and with the school organization where they work. Although recent staffing reforms have decentralized hiring and enabled many schools to exercise more discretion in recruiting and selecting teachers, little is known about how individual schools conceptualize and carry out these processes, or how administrators and teachers experience these efforts. This dissertation investigates these issues, drawing on data from a larger exploratory study conducted by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. The sample includes interviews with 142 administrators, teachers, and staff in six schools—three district and three charter—that were demonstrating success with low-income, minority students, in the same city. The dissertation includes three papers: *A Quest for “the Very Best”: Teacher Recruitment in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools*; *The Matchmaking Process: Teacher Hiring in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools*; and *The Challenge of Recruiting and Hiring Teachers of Color: Lessons From Six High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Schools*.



## Introduction

During my junior year in college, I participated in Cornell’s Urban Semester Program in my home city, New York. I worked at Van Arsdale High School, a huge school where less than 30% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders made it to graduation. The city had deemed the school failing, and I was part of the “transformation team” charged with turning the school around. The assistant principal in charge of the project, Elana Karopkin, had a million ideas for how to do this—teacher teams, curricular support, student advisory, and even an intern (me!) who would plan college field trips. Elana had enormous flexibility programmatically— but there was one major caveat: she could not hire her own people.

This was 2002. Joel Klein had just become chancellor and Randi Weingarten had just been elected union president. Big changes were on the horizon in New York. But, as in most urban districts, staffing policies and practices did not yet allow principals to carefully select a faculty who would meet the needs of their students. For decades, policies rooted in ideals of efficiency and fairness to teachers had shaped staffing structures, and as in most districts, hiring was conducted and controlled by the central office. Like most public schools, Van Arsdale had long depended on district-level personnel to recruit, select, and assign teachers, and to manage the complicated transfer process for teachers already in the system. At Van Arsdale and elsewhere, prolonged delays in placing teachers meant that new teachers weren’t hired until summer—and others were not hired until after school had already started.

At Van Arsdale and at schools nationwide, these staffing policies and their resulting administrative practices prevented both new and experienced teachers from finding positions that matched their knowledge, skills and interests. As Ed Liu and Susan

Moore Johnson (2006) characterized it, hiring was late, rushed, and information poor. The vision of how to transform Van Arsdale didn't match up with that of the teachers who were already teaching at the school or with that of those who were newly assigned there. As in many urban schools—where teachers frequently report being dissatisfied with their jobs—teacher turnover at Van Arsdale was rampant, and like so many principals, Elana left the school after one year. The project was deemed a failure, and the city began to rethink its strategy for improving schools like Van Arsdale.

Fast forward to 2005. New York City had begun opening its 212 new Small Schools of Choice, which ultimately replaced most large comprehensive schools like Van Arsdale. And, like districts across the country, the district had begun reforming its staffing policies. In fact, the New Teacher Project said that “in 2005... New York City went from having some of the most restrictive contractual staffing rules to some of the most progressive” (Daly, Keeling, Grainger, & Grundies, 2008). One step that the district took to decentralize hiring was to negotiate with the teachers union a process that was both more accelerated and based on “mutual consent.” These reforms recognized that school communities differ in their needs and expectations and that individual teachers also have unique expertise and interests that “fit” (Liu & Johnson, 2006) better in some schools and programs than others.

I had finished my Master's in Design and Environmental Analysis and was hunting for a job when I saw—on the front page of the New York Times Metro section—that Elana, the AP from Van Arsdale, had started her own small school, the Urban Assembly School for Law & Justice (SLJ). She hired me to develop the college programing and to basically be her special assistant.

When I came to meet with her, Elana told me that I would be joining an extraordinary team of educators that she had hand-picked. Some were brand new, others had come with her from Van Arsdale. She had chosen everyone in the building—and everyone in the building had chosen her, and her vision. In selling me the position at SLJ, she said to me, “at Van Arsdale, I’d see kids wandering the halls and I’d say “go back to class! You’re missing out on your education!” but I knew in my heart that they weren’t missing a thing. But here, at SLJ, when I tell kids “go back to class! I am fully confident that they *are* missing out on their education.”

As my advisor, Susan Moore Johnson, says, Elana recognized that her “riches were in her people”—and the policy shifts in New York were allowing her to engage in “information rich hiring” (Liu & Johnson, 2006). As research in both education and in industry affirm, a strong system allows hiring that is site based, and viewed as a two-way process, whereby schools and teacher candidates exchange information and assess one another. Each party can decide whether a good “fit” exists—and then the school decides whether to offer a position and the candidate decides whether to accept it. Teachers who experience an information-rich process—one that provides them with a realistic preview of their future job—report that they are more satisfied with their positions, and ultimately, more likely to stay in their school (Liu & Johnson, 2006). We saw this bare out at SLJ, where I spent four years chairing the school’s hiring committee. Although there were many other factors that inhibited and enabled our work, it is without a doubt that hiring autonomy was--and continues to be—a key factor in SLJ’s widely recognized success.

But, policy changes don’t magically result in shifts in practice. Although New York City did not allow existing schools to start from scratch in assembling a team of

teachers, it did grant that autonomy to all new small schools. Further, the mutual consent provisions did apply to all schools in the district (Daly et al., 2008)—as they now do in many locales across the country. As Cannata and Engel (2012) calculated, more than 90% of principals nationally report that they now have “extensive autonomy” (p. 459) in teacher selection. But, many teachers still experience hiring as “late, rushed, and information poor” (Liu & Johnson, 2006). When I left SLJ in 2009, many teachers in New York City were still being hired after one short interview with the principal, which I often watched happen at huge hiring fairs where teachers would line up at tables and—over the hubbub—present their credentials to principals. Every few minutes, someone from the district would come on the loudspeaker to remind candidates that the goal of the night was to get their commitment form signed by a principal.

It is therefore not that surprising that, in spite of these policy shifts, teachers—especially those in urban schools serving Black and Latino students—continue to leave their schools in droves, and the gaps between what poor students achieve and what wealthy students achieve are now higher than ever before (Duncan & Murnane, 2014).

I came to Harvard because—although like most teachers, what mattered for me was what was happening right there in my school—I wanted to understand the larger context of my work. It felt good to work at a place where we were doing right by students—especially in comparison with the very wrong that was done by their older siblings and cousins at the Van Arsdales of the world. But, at SLJ, we were building the plane as we flew it. In the case of recruitment and hiring—which is the focus of this dissertation—most of our ideas were born out of our limited collective personal experiences and beliefs about how the work should be done. I wanted to understand how

other high-poverty schools that were beating the odds and demonstrating success with their students were doing *their* work. What exactly were they doing? How were the administrators and teachers inside those schools experiencing this work? I wanted to understand the history and rationale for policies and practices that were affecting *my* work and I wanted experience working at the various levels of decision making so that I could return to the field with a much better sense of what Bronfenbrenner (1977) might have called education's ecological system—where my work in my supply closet of an office was being shaped by forces that most school-based folks never get time to understand.

This dissertation is comprised of three papers that present the findings of larger study entitled “Developing Human Capital Within Schools,” conducted by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. The sample includes interviews with 142 administrators, teachers, and staff in six schools—three district and three charter—that were demonstrating success with low-income, minority students, in the same city.

My three papers focus on what happens at the beginning of the human capital development continuum. The first paper focuses on recruitment—how did the six schools think about cultivating a pool of applicants from which they selected teachers? The second paper focuses on hiring—how did they select teachers from that pool? The third paper focuses on one of the major challenges that these schools faced—recruiting and hiring Black and Latino teachers. We found that all six of the schools in our study employed active and strategic recruitment—a striking departure from the “passive and provincial” recruitment that happens in most urban schools and districts. Then, they then invested heavily in an information-rich hiring process. Finally, because finding, selecting,

and keeping teachers who are from the communities that they serve had been a major challenge for the schools, each school was developing strategies for attracting and hiring teachers of color.

## Chapter 1

### A Quest for “the Very Best”:

#### **Teacher Recruitment in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools**

The popularity of Teach for America and other selective teacher preparation programs it has inspired provides evidence that schools in long-underserved communities have the potential to attract top talent. This notion contradicts a long-standing belief among researchers and policy makers that “teachers systematically favor higher-achieving, non-minority, non-low income students” (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004, p. 12)—a well-cited explanation for why teachers transfer from high-poverty, high-minority schools as they gain experience. It counters researchers’ suggestion that “districts possess few policy options” (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004, p. 352) for remedying the problems of teacher quality in the schools where students most need strong teachers (Downey, Hippel, & Hughes, 2008). Instead, it bolsters the case that many teachers enter schools serving low-income and minority students precisely because of their “humanistic commitment” to teaching in long-underserved communities (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010, p. 71; Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Despite this evidence, most urban districts and schools have made little progress in developing strategies for actively recruiting teachers and efforts to improve human capital systems have been fragmented. Even as districts have reformed staffing policies by granting increased hiring autonomies to principals and eliminating seniority-based transfers, teacher recruitment has largely remained “passive and provincial” (DeArmond, Shaw, & Wright, 2009, p. 54). Consequently, the pool of desirable teacher candidates—

particularly in high-poverty urban schools—remains shallow and weak. The inattention to recruitment has stifled the potential benefits of shifts that might affect schools and teachers in doing the work of educating students. As a result, low-income and minority students who attend so-called “hard-to-staff schools” are routinely taught by the least experienced, least effective teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carroll, Reichardt, Guarino, & Mejia, 2000; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007; Hanushek et al., 2004; R. M. Ingersoll, 2001).

Yet, some high-poverty schools succeed in recruiting, and subsequently hiring, strong teachers. However, little is known about how such schools approach this work, and even less is known about how teachers experience their school’s efforts. In addition, few researchers have explored how a school’s particular policy context influences these processes. In this paper, I investigate these issues by drawing on data from a larger exploratory study by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers that focuses on how human capital is managed and developed within schools. The sample includes six schools—traditional, turnaround, and charter—located in the same city. These schools had all demonstrated success with low-income, minority students. However, each school’s process for recruiting and selecting teachers—both those transferring from within the system and those new to the system or profession—was influenced by a different combination of state and local policies. Nonetheless, each of the schools had an explicit mission and unique character. These ideas shaped their approach to identifying and attracting applicants strategically by actively seeking out teachers and deliberately creating a school where those in the city and beyond desired to work. However, their ideas about the attitudes and skills required to succeed in their school also had shaped a



belief across schools that the pool of potential candidates was very limited.

Consequently, they reported facing significant challenges in recruiting the candidates they sought.

In the following sections, I review the literature regarding teacher recruitment, beginning with a discussion of how districts generally approach recruitment—initiatives traditionally characterized by passive efforts that are poorly aligned with the needs of particular schools. I explain how the culture of urban public schools—due in large part to their policy context—have made it difficult for individual schools to counter these trends. I contrast district recruitment approaches with those employed in other fields. Then, I provide an overview of how some schools and school systems—both district and charter—have introduced deliberate, active approaches to teacher recruitment. I will then present my research questions and methodology for studying them, followed by my findings.

### **Literature Review**

Recruitment in urban public schools is markedly different from recruitment in prestigious professions, such as law and finance, where human resources offices support the human capital needs of firms by engaging with them as strategic partners (DeArmond et al., 2009). In such fields, firms proactively recruit candidates by reaching out to potential applicants—sometimes even courting the competition’s talent. They use a range of approaches to boost their visibility among potential candidates. For example, building relationships with university career offices, sponsoring scholarships and offering summer internships, featuring guest lectures by current employees, and hosting recruitment events. Top firms recruit widely for the candidates they seek (DeArmond et

al., 2009). As DeArmond and colleagues write, “[i]n the so-called war for talent, the battlefield is large” (DeArmond et al., 2009, p. 57).

In contrast, public school districts tend to be “passive and provincial” (DeArmond et al., 2009, p. 56) about teacher recruitment. In surveys about districts’ search tactics, most districts report employing “fairly traditional” (p. 56) and “highly localized” (p. 57) search techniques. For example, districts advertise openings on their own website, in local newspapers and trade publications, and at nearby colleges. They also report attending education job fairs and relying heavily on word-of-mouth. With rare exception, district recruitment practices have remained passive, even as the national discussion regarding teacher quality has intensified. As DeArmond and others explain, districts continue to “simply post job announcements and then wait to see who applies” (p. 56-57).

In general, individual schools rely upon their district human resources divisions to recruit a pool of candidates (Johnson, Marietta, Higgins, Mapp, & Grossman, 2015; Levin & Quinn, 2003). In part, this is because staffing policies have historically limited whom schools could consider hiring. For example, seniority-based transfer rules in many cities have obligated principals to accept teachers who seek to transfer from other schools. In a study of five representative urban districts, researchers at TNTP found that, on average, voluntary and involuntary transfers or excessed teachers filled 40% of vacancies. In many cases, schools had no choice at all regarding such hiring decisions. In other cases, principals were granted “restricted choice” (Levin, Mulhern, & Schunck, 2005, p. 12)—they were required to hire from a pool of voluntary transfer applicants. In addition, in some districts, voluntary transfers were permitted to bump novice teachers and claim their positions.

Such policies often have prompted principals to “hide vacancies” (Levin, Mulhern, & Schunck, 2005, p. 16) from central office until after the district’s transfer window closes. In such instances, principals might resort to recruiting candidates on their own, usually through their own networks. Often, they would wind up hiring teachers who either student-taught or substituted in their schools (Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, & Ingle, 2008). This is why teachers in urban districts frequently report taking a substitute position as a deliberate strategy to “get [their] foot in the door” (Cannata, 2011, p. 488) and accumulate more contacts within a district. As Cannata found, prospective teachers often depend on their social networks—both personal and professional—for “good job leads” (p. 488). In other words, since principals are apt to hide their vacancies and recruit covertly through word of mouth—rather than through formal channels—shrewd teachers realize that they need to be connected to those in the know in order to get hired.

Even as staffing regulations have changed dramatically over the last decade and schools have been granted increased autonomy over hiring, principals often have been obligated to hire from within the pre-vetted pool of applicants available through district channels (Daly et al., 2008). For example, in New York and Boston, district human resources offices introduced computer-based systems through which internal and external candidates could apply. Schools are frequently expected to interview and hire from this online pool, and individual, school-based efforts to recruit more actively are often either prohibited or seen as “illegitimate” (DeArmond, Gross, & Goldhaber, 2010, p. 337). Furthermore, even in districts where schools are permitted to actively recruit, in high-poverty schools, the demands on principals are extraordinary and budget constraints make it difficult for them to predict whom they can hire (Levin & Quinn, 2003). Thus,

even schools that try to recruit frequently struggle to do so.

Nonetheless, some principals work to expand their applicant pool. As DeArmond and others (2010) found in a study of teacher selection in ten elementary schools in “a large, decentralized urban school district” (p. 322), some principals “vigorously market their schools to win over specific candidates” (p. 337). Principals who did this saw recruitment as, in the words of one, “a constant activity.” They employed strategies including calling teachers whose schools were slated for closing, reaching out to former colleagues, and hosting informational meetings about their school where prospective applicants learned about the school’s culture, toured classrooms, and met their potential future administrators and colleagues. Interestingly, principals in the study did not appear to regard the district human resources office as a strategic partner. Rather, the authors report, savvy principals figured out ways to, in the words of one principal, “circumvent the system” by “pulling strings” at central office to ensure that their applicant of choice made it through the district bureaucracy (p. 339).

Johnson and others (2015) found similar trends in their study of how five urban districts that had been recognized for success and/or steady improvement managed relationships between the central office and schools. Even in districts such as Charlotte-Mecklenberg, North Carolina and Baltimore City, Maryland—where schools had substantial hiring autonomy, principals saw the district’s recruitment efforts as inadequate. This was particularly true among principals of high-poverty, hard-to-staff schools, which routinely cope with high teacher turnover. In both districts, principals reported that the district’s pool of candidates did not meet their needs and, as one said, this prompted them to “seek out and recruit my own teachers because I know what I’m

looking for... I kind of grow my own. I find a relationships with a college or university and I get... students who are in their student teacher placements” (p. 102).

Not all central offices in that study fell short. In three districts—Aldine, Texas; Long Beach, California; and Montgomery County, Maryland—participants described ambitious recruitment programs. For example, Aldine principals said that, in response to the district’s national recruitment campaign, universities students from across the country were relocating there to student teach so that they could network with principals before applying for permanent positions. In contrast, Long Beach strategically hosted students from a local university teacher education program for their school-based practicum so that, as the superintendent said, prospective teachers could “lear[n] the ‘Long Beach Way’” (p. 102)—and so that the district could vet teachers and encourage them to apply. In these districts, carefully calculated recruitment strategies were complemented by an online system that allowed principals to search for candidates in the district pool. In Montgomery County and Long Beach, the district pre-vetted applicants in the system—a service that one principal described as “great” (p. 101). Consequently, principals in all three districts reported satisfaction with the pool that the district recruited and appreciation for the district’s support in finding teachers.

Charter schools, which typically operate in a substantially different policy context than do traditional district schools, have employed similar strategies. Gross and DeArmond (2011) studied how 24 charter schools in three states approached teacher recruitment and, subsequently, teacher hiring and development. The authors aimed to provide examples of strategies that charters employ in scouting teachers who will be well-matched to their school’s mission and model. The authors found that schools set a

“strong foundation for recruitment and hiring” by articulating the “knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics they are seeking” (p. 3). Then, they proactively set out to find their desired applicants. They did this in four ways: (1) by keeping their hiring radar on at all times and unabashedly trying to convince strong potential candidates to apply; (2) by cultivating relationships with both formal pipeline programs and others with desirable social networks; (3) by building their own pipeline by offering an in-house training program; and (4) by using the recruitment process to convey the school’s culture and what it takes to work at the school. The schools complemented their well-conceived recruitment processes with carefully aligned hiring processes to help ensure that, if offered a position, applicants would accept the position.

In a subsequent study, DeArmond, Gross and their colleagues (2012) expanded on these contributions by analyzing data from a larger study by Mathematica-CPRE of ten Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)—the non-profits that frequently oversee and support charters in ways that are conceptually similar to a district central office. The authors found that CMOs play a significant role in their schools’ staffing endeavors by implementing a centralized strategy aimed at recruiting “mission-driven people they believed would fit their schools and programs” (p. 7). Similar to the charter schools in Gross and DeArmond’s (2011) study, these CMOs focused their efforts on specific training programs that they believed produced teachers who would be a good fit for their schools and built formal partnerships with them. These formal partnerships often allowed them to, as one administrator said, “cherry-pick” (DeArmond et al., 2012, p. 9) promising recruits. Importantly, CMOs used a deliberately-developed, honest recruitment message, often articulated in a specific job description, to help candidates

“self-select” into the application process based on “their commitment to meeting the demands and aspirations” of the CMOs (p. 9). Such efforts allow CMOs to select from a pool of candidates that were likely to meet the needs of the specific schools they serve.

### **Methods**

This paper is based on a qualitative, comparative case study embedded in a larger study conducted by Professor Susan Moore Johnson, Stefanie Reinhorn, and me, at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. The larger study, “Developing Human Capital Within Schools,” examined how six high-poverty, urban schools—all of which had received the state’s highest performance rating—attract, develop, and retain teachers.

#### *Research Questions*

The research questions guiding this analysis are:

1. What policies (state, local, or CMO) shape school-level approaches to recruiting teachers and what opportunities and constraints do administrators report they present?
2. How do high-poverty schools that are succeeding with students approach teacher recruitment?
3. How do principals and teachers in these schools describe and assess their experiences with these practices?

#### *Sample of schools*

Our sample selection was guided by four principles. First, we sought a sample that included charter and district schools in one city. Second we looked for schools that served high-poverty populations ( $\geq 70\%$  of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch) and also primarily served students of color. Third, we sought schools that were considered high-performing, having achieved the highest rating in the state’s accountability system. Fourth, we sought schools that were employing distinctive approaches to human capital development.

To attend to the first three principles, we examined publicly-available demographic and student performance data. We used the state's accountability ratings as a proxy for academic success with students. At the time of our study, Massachusetts rated schools on a scale from 1-5; one designated the highest performing schools. The school ratings were based on four years of data that documented both the school's student performance growth and its success in narrowing race-based proficiency gaps on state tests. Although this definition of success is limited because it relies heavily on standardized test scores, which can be a narrow and problematic measure of achievement, it is the best proxy available for schools that succeed in educating their students. Importantly, it is also the measure by which schools are judged by the state and district and by funders, school boards, and the press.

To attend to the fourth principle, we researched various schools' approaches to human capital development by consulting our professional networks and considering information about specific schools and CMOs. Based on this inquiry, we drew up a sample of six schools—all geographically located within one large urban school district in Massachusetts. The sample included three district schools (one traditional; two former turnaround) and three state-authorized charter schools. All schools were elementary and/or middle schools, which facilitated cross-site comparisons. We contacted school leaders explaining our study and requesting their participation and all agreed to participate (For school descriptive statistics, see Appendix B).

The purposive nature allowed us to conduct an in-depth, exploratory study of a particular context—high-poverty, high-minority schools that have demonstrated success with their students. By design, this sample is not representative of schools in the region.



### *Data Collection*

**Interviews.** In Spring 2014, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 142 teachers, administrators and other staff (including talent directors, where applicable) in the six schools. Administrator interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes; teacher interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. All research team members were present for most interviews with the principals and CMO directors; every team member interviewed teachers at each school. This approach facilitated cross-site comparisons, improves inter-rater reliability in coding data, and ensures that each research team member understands each school's structures and culture.

Our interview sample within schools was purposively constructed. At each school, we first interviewed the principal to learn both what processes they used to select, develop, and retain teachers and how those processes were conceived and implemented. Then, we recruited teachers who varied in personal background, teaching experience, preparation, teaching assignment, and role. We also interviewed additional key staff (e.g. curriculum coaches, discipline deans, family coordinators) when it became apparent that their views would inform our understanding of teachers' experiences. To build our sample, we relied on staff lists and on recommendations from administrators and teachers. We solicited participation through emails, flyers, and word-of-mouth. Participants were ensured confidentiality—neither the content of their interview nor the fact that they had been interviewed was shared with the principal (although many discussed their participation with their principal).

In each school, the number of teachers we interviewed varied depending on the school's size, its organizational complexity, and the practices used. We interviewed

between 33% and 56% of teachers at each school, plus additional staff. At the three charter schools, we also interviewed full-time Teachers in Training (TTs). (For sample demographics see Appendix B). We used semi-structured interview protocols (Appendix C) to ensure that data would be comparable across sites and interviewers. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interview protocols included several questions that encouraged participants to discuss the school approach to staffing. Specific questions included topics such as where they recruit, what positions they struggle to fill, and how they decide whom to hire. Teachers were asked to describe the process through which they were recruited and hired at the school and to explain whether and how they were involved with recruiting and selecting new colleagues. With all interviewees, we used follow-up questions to further explore each of these topics and to identify particular issues that warranted deeper inquiry. For example, at every school, interviewees discussed the challenge of recruiting, hiring and retaining Black and Latino teachers; we therefore modified our protocol to explore this topic in greater depth.

**Document Collection.** Although interviews are the main data source for this study, we also gathered a range of documents that describe school policies and programs related to recruiting, developing and retaining their teachers. These documents vary by school and include a range of resources, such as professional development calendars, school handbooks, and results of teacher surveys. When possible, we also collected extensive documentation of recruitment and hiring processes, such as protocols for interviewing teachers and watching demonstration lessons and rubrics for assessing candidates. We also collected charter applications, collective bargaining agreements, and applications for

contractual waivers, along with other documents which illuminated the state and local policy contexts in which each school operates.

In our visits to the schools, we also observed day-to-day practices, and sought evidence of the school's organizational culture, which we recorded in our notes.

### *Data Analysis*

After each interview, we wrote detailed thematic summaries describing the participant and summarizing his experiences with the school's practices for recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining teachers. First, we identified themes or *etic* codes drawn from the literature on the elements of developing human capital. Then, we used thematic summaries to analyze each site individually and to conduct cross-site comparisons, identifying common themes and differences. We used this preliminary analysis to supplement the *etic* codes with *emic* codes that emerged from the data. For example, in interviews, pay emerged as a challenge for charter teachers, although we had not identified that theme in the literature. We used this preliminary code list to review a small subset of the transcripts, individually and together, in order to calibrate our understanding and use of the codes, as well as to refine the list and definitions. We repeated this process to finalize the code list (Appendix D) and to improve inter-rater reliability. We then coded each transcribed interview using Dedoose software.

After coding interviews, I engaged in an iterative analytic process, using data-analytic matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to track findings related to school-based staffing. To understand the policy context in which each school operated, I identified the particular policies that affected each school and influenced what they could do. For example, I determined which components of the district's collective bargaining

agreement remained binding in turnaround schools and how state-issued charters affect each charter school. I then analyzed the interview data and documents from each school separately. I ultimately completed a data analytic matrix showing the components of recruitment and hiring at each school and connections among them within schools. I wrote an analytic memo comparing the different staffing strategies across the sample in order to first develop a deep understanding of the process that candidates experienced as they were being recruited to apply, vetted as applicants, and offered positions.

To understand how principals and teachers described and assessed their experiences with these practices, I created school-by-school matrices comparing interviewees' responses to their school's recruitment and hiring processes, by component where appropriate. I again wrote an analytic memo presenting initial hypotheses about how teachers experienced and assessed these processes. I also sorted codes by particular interviewee characteristics. For each transcript, I categorized the interviewee according to relevant characteristics, such as years of teaching experience and age (See Appendix D). I then investigated whether teachers' perceptions of the recruitment and hiring processes varied, within and across schools. I wrote a third analytic memo about emerging trends and hypotheses. Finally, I addressed risks to validity by returning to the data to review coding and check my emerging conclusions and to seek rival explanations or disconfirming data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I also shared analytic memos, outlines and drafts with my research team and with other colleagues, and with my dissertation committee.

## **Findings**

At the six schools in our study, teacher recruitment processes were far from the

“passive and provincial” (DeArmond et al., 2009, p. 56) efforts that characterize recruitment in most public schools. Instead, each school engaged in active and strategic efforts to develop a pool of teaching candidates from which it could hire when openings arose. As Kincaid Executive Director Beckford said, the substantial time and resources that schools devoted to recruitment reflected their beliefs that the “paradigm of what we are doing”—educating historically underserved students—depended on “finding the very best staff members to lead and teach in the school.”

In this section, I begin by presenting each school and explaining the policy and structural context within which each operated. I then describe how each school deliberately created a foundation for recruitment, and then enacted their recruitment strategy. Although approaches differed across schools, each collaborated with an array of sources to find and attract applicants. Because they struggled to recruit an adequate supply of teachers who met their preparation standards, I explain how schools had begun in-house teacher pipeline programs. I then describe the district- and CMO-based supports that schools counted on (or did not) in their recruitment efforts. Finally, I explain the challenges that schools faced in recruiting the teachers who they were seeking.

### **The Schools**

As noted above, all six schools in the study are located within Walker City<sup>1</sup>, Massachusetts and primarily serve students who reside in Walker City School District (WCSD). The sample includes one traditional district school, two district schools that had recently emerged from turnaround, one in-district charter school, and two state-sponsored charter schools that were entirely independent of the local district.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms are used for the district, the schools, and all study participants

### *The District Schools*

**Dickinson Elementary** was a century-old, traditional elementary school serving 400 children in grades Pre-K-5. For generations, the school primarily served immigrant children; at the time of our study, 75% of its students were English Language Learners. Teachers belonged to WCSD's teachers union and Dickinson was bound by the WCSD collective bargaining agreement and other state and district policies. Monica Davila, the school's sole administrator, began teaching at Dickinson in the 1980s and became principal in 2010. Dickinson had experienced stable leadership for over two decades, although the school had three principals during the years just before Davila was appointed. However, interviewees reported that the culture had remained stable because teacher turnover was rare: several Dickinson teachers had taught at Dickinson since the 1980s. As teachers repeatedly said, "you don't leave Dickinson—you retire from Dickinson." This mantra appeared to have some truth: in Davila's four years as principal, she reported that she had only hired four new teachers and more than half of those we interviewed had been at the school for a decade or more.

In 2013-14, Dickinson began implementing WCSD's new hiring system, which granted all district schools significant autonomy in selecting candidates but mandated that a site-based hiring committee composed of the principal, teachers, and parents, follow a multi-step process involving interviews and demonstration lessons. Although the principal was required to interview all tenured teachers from within WCSD who applied for the opening, she was not required to select the most senior applicant from the district. In fact, after the interviews, she was permitted to hire teachers who were new to the district even if veteran WCSD teachers applied for the position.

**Fitzgerald Elementary** was founded in the 1960s and served 400 students in grades K-5. Early in its history, Fitzgerald was lauded as a top WCSD school. But, it severely declined in the 1980s. In 2008, Shannon Forte, an experienced WCSD principal, began her tenure as Fitzgerald’s seventh principal in ten years. She brought Daniella Randall with her from her prior WCSD school to serve as Assistant Principal. Randall had taught for nearly two decades. Forte and Randall had led Fitzgerald for fewer than two years when the state placed the school in turnaround status. This was important because if Forte had been at the school for two years or more, state turnaround law would have required the district to replace her. Principal Forte explained that it was “such a gift” that she and Randall had been at Fitzgerald pre-turnaround, because they knew which teachers they wanted to rehire. Although the law required Forte to replace at least 50% of the teachers—and granted her autonomy to decide which teachers would receive offers—Forte replaced 65%. Tenured teachers who did not receive an offer from Forte had the right to transfer to a different WCSD school. Since turnaround, administrators said that Fitzgerald had little annual turnover annually; one reported that the school had hired roughly 3-5 teachers each year since the start of turnaround.

When the school exited turnaround as a Level 1 school at start of the 2013-14 school year, the state granted Fitzgerald special status as a Innovation School, the state granted Fitzgerald special status as a Innovation School, which allowed Forte to maintain some hiring autonomy—namely the right to select teachers without regard to seniority, a provision that was subsequently granted to all district schools. However, the status did not allow Forte to involuntarily transfer teachers; if Forte wished to dismiss an underperforming teacher, she had to comply with the WCSD evaluation process for doing

so.

**Hurston K-8** opened in 2003, with roughly 800 students. It was founded by WCSD as a Pilot School—a district school that has significant decision-making authority, is exempt from most union and school committee work rules, and is overseen by a joint district/union committee. Despite its relative autonomy, Hurston had a rough beginning. It had five principals during its first seven years and then was put into turnaround by the state, which required that a new principal be hired. Daniel Hinds—an experienced district principal—began the turnaround process at Hurston in the spring of 2010. He was supported by an administrative team including an Assistant Principal, a Professional Development Director, an Operations Director, and several others. As part of the turnaround process, Hinds was required to replace at least 50% of the school’s teachers. He had autonomy in deciding which teachers would receive contract offers; others with tenure had the right to transfer to different WCSD schools. In the first year of the turnaround, Hinds replaced approximately 80% of Hurston’s teachers. Since then, the school had retained 92% of those hired—a fact which some credited to Principal Hinds’ belief that, as one explained, “if you go through blood, sweat and tears to make [replacing 80% of staff] happen, then you need to choose the right people [and subsequently] make sure that you’re retaining them.”

At the start of the 2013-14 school year, Hurston exited turnaround as a Level 1 school. The school maintained Pilot School status, which continued to allow the principal hiring autonomy and the right to transfer teachers involuntarily. During layoffs, however, the school would still have been affected by the district’s need to assign surplus tenured teachers in WCSD and might be required to accept one. All Hurston teachers



were covered by the WCSD teachers contract and paid according to the district's negotiated pay scale.

### ***The Charter Schools***

**Kincaid Charter Middle School**, an in-district charter school authorized by the state, served 470 students in Grades 6-8. It opened with all three grades in 2011 as the first of five schools managed by the expanding Kincaid Charter Network, using federal turnaround funds to “restart” a WCSD school. Although no teachers from the prior school were rehired, most students remained. Kincaid's principal at the time of our study, Louis Kain, succeeded Kincaid's founder in 2013, after serving as a founding Leader of Instruction (LI) at the school. His administration included three LIs, a Director of Operations, and two Deans of Discipline.

After Kincaid's charter was approved by the district and then by the state, its board of trustees was required to “negotiate in good faith” a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WCSD teachers union. However, state law entitled Kincaid to “fully implement” its proposed charter if an agreement between the parties was not reached 30-days before the school opened. Although Kincaid is overseen by the state, teachers continue to be covered by the WCSD collective bargaining unit. They achieve tenure under state law and are paid and accrue seniority in keeping with the district's contract. In compliance with the charter's MOU with the district, Kincaid had hiring autonomy for all school-based positions, and the school was permitted to involuntarily transfer teachers out of the school and into the WCSD excess pool. WCSD was responsible for processing the hiring and dismissal of Kincaid teachers. Executive Director Beckford explained that teacher turnover at Kincaid was higher than he desired:

he estimated that 78% of teachers had remained at their school from year to year. Of that 78%, however, some who stayed in the building moved out of teaching positions and into other roles. When they did so, they left a teaching vacancy in their wake and the school therefore had to hire a new teacher to fill the position. The school also hired three new TTs each year.

**Naylor Charter K-8**, a state-authorized charter school founded as a new school in 2002, served 400 students. The school was the first of three schools established in the Naylor Charter School Network. Claire North, a Naylor teacher, was promoted to principal in 2011, when her predecessor became network co-director. As principal, she was supported by an Assistant Principal, a Director of Operations, and a Dean of Discipline. Naylor operated independently of WCSD and was state-funded. The school was not unionized; teachers were at-will employees. Salaries were determined by the school, and according to Executive Director Samantha Ram, were comparable to WCSD salaries in 2014.

Naylor had complete hiring autonomy; teachers had to be “highly qualified,” but only ELL teachers had to be licensed. In general, Naylor administrators reported that retention rates within the network were high—roughly 90%. However, as at Kincaid, this number included teachers who switched positions—often moving into a leadership role within the school. It also included teachers who moved to a new school within the network. The school also hired nine new TTs each year.

**Rodriguez Charter K1-8**, also a state-authorized charter school, was founded in 1995 and served 490 students. The school did not belong to a network, although an Executive Director, Tamar Trotman, managed both the lower and upper schools within

the same building. She began her tenure at Rodriguez in 1996, as a teacher, and succeeded the school's founder as Executive Director in 2013. Rodriguez's two divisions were led by Principals Sam Ryan and Julia Rega. Like Naylor, Rodriguez received funding from the state and operated independently of the district. Rodriguez teachers were not unionized and their salaries were substantially lower than those of WCSD teachers. Like Naylor, Rodriguez had complete hiring autonomy; teachers had to be "highly qualified," by federal standards, but only ELL teachers required licensure. Retention rates at Rodriguez were high; Principal Rega reported hiring "between 0-2" teachers annually.

### **Creating a Foundation for Recruitment**

All six schools in our study had a strong sense of organizational identity; across interviews within a school, administrators, teachers, and staff articulated coherent notions about the school's mission and vision, and about the characteristics of educators who succeeded in their school. Like the schools in Gross and DeArmond's (2011) study, those described here used their organizational identity to lay the foundation for a targeted recruitment process—first defining the types of candidates they sought and then framing what one talent director called their recruitment "pitch," which explained why candidates should consider teaching at their school.

At some schools, the process of articulating an organizational identity and complementary recruitment materials was formal. For example, at Rodriguez Charter, the school community engaged in a lengthy process of redefining their mission and defining the characteristics of the teachers they sought. They subsequently drafted recruitment language for job postings, which explained that Rodriguez "combines

rigorous and engaging academics with extensive social/emotional programming to help all children succeed. We strive to develop scholars who embrace effort, seek knowledge, act thoughtfully, and commit to the common good.” The job postings also provided candid language about the challenges of working at Rodriguez—and about the expectations for teachers: “Many children come to us with significant challenges. We don’t give up on them. Our goal is that all of our students thrive at Rodriguez, graduate from high school, and pursue post-secondary education on the path to life success.” Therefore, postings were clear that Rodriguez “hire[s] teachers who reflect these values” and “welcome[s] those who mirror the diversity of our student body.”

Similarly, Naylor’s mission, as articulated by Talent Director Gold, was to “close the achievement gap by providing excellent teachers to our students.” Gold explained that what they sought was “nothing novel, and... really not super technical.” Excellent teachers—what she referred to as the school’s “special sauce”—possessed a set of “core competencies” that Naylor sought in recruits. These competencies, which administrators had defined on rubrics used to assess potential candidates and subsequently to determine whom to hire, included: “fit” for the school and its mission, an internal locus of control, a collaborative nature, a “growth mindset,” and a “reflective spirit.” To Naylor administrators, these competencies signaled a commitment to ongoing improvement in teaching.

Not all schools pointed to carefully crafted mission statements or recruitment rubrics in explaining the types of candidates they hoped to attract. Nonetheless, wide agreement existed about the teachers whom those schools hoped to recruit. For example, at Dickinson, most interviewees described their faculty as a “family” and Principal

Davila called the school “a home away from home for both the students and staff.” Almost everyone we interviewed had grown up in the greater Walker City area, which Principal Davila—a self-described “Walker City girl”—explained was an important contributor to Dickinson’s community feel. Davila further noted that because faculty members saw themselves as members of the Dickinson family, it was easy for everyone to “realize that we are here for our students and that’s what needs to be the bigger picture.” For Dickinson teachers, Davila believed, “it’s always about the students: this is what we live by.” New colleagues needed to believe that individualized attention was, in Davila’s words, “the way to make a difference for [Dickinson] children”—and they had to be willing to “give 110%” towards the school’s goal of “mak[ing] sure that our children are successful when they leave us.” Giving “110%” included collaborating with other teachers, with parents, and with the school’s robust School Support Team—all in an effort to ensure that every child’s academic and socioemotional needs were met.

### **Enacting a Recruitment Strategy**

Once schools were confident about what they sought, they set out in search of a pool of candidates from which they could hire when openings arose. To do this, they cultivated relationships with formal channels—non-profits, universities, and the school district—whose organizational purpose was to create a human capital pipeline into schools, and with informal channels—the personal and professional networks of those working in the school.

#### ***Formal Channels***

##### ***Non-Profits***

At every school except Dickinson, principals explained that they worked with

non-profit organizations whose explicit mission was to support high-poverty schools with staffing. These organizations served as conduits into schools for three different groups of teachers: (1) Experienced teachers who had taught in high-poverty schools; (2) Novice teachers who were selected and trained through a selective teaching residency or alternate certification pathway; (3) Novice teachers who had experience working in high-poverty schools through competitive service corps organizations.

**Experienced teachers who had taught in high-poverty schools.** Across schools, principals said that a chief criterion for teachers was having had experience working at a school serving similar students. Principal Rega expressed a common sentiment: “two [years] is really good because they’re still sort of young and excited and hardworking and have a lot of ‘I want to take this on’ mentality. They aren’t set in their ways yet.” In contrast, she thought, “the brand new ones,” were “too new.” To her and others, “the two-year ones are perfect—they’ve got some classroom management... some experience dealing with kids, they know to look around the room the whole time. They know those basic things.”

At four schools—Hurston, Kincaid, Naylor, and Rodriguez—principals said that the most promising recruits were alumni of Teach for America (TFA). As one Rodriguez interviewee said, “We love Teach for America... When we see [a TFA alumnus]... we pounce right on ‘em” because, as Principal Ryan explained, they “had really hard, ground-level experience in challenging situations.” In addition, “they’ve also got some pretty good training—albeit short, and it could be much better.” When alumni initially applied to the TFA corps, they were vetted through a lengthy process involving a written application, a phone interview, a demonstration lesson, more interviews, tests, and

monitored group discussions. Thus, Ryan said, when they applied to Rodriguez after completing the corps, they had “already shown strong... skills, and they had some success with [low-income] kids.” Furthermore, Ryan believed that “if they survive... teaching in rural Arizona for two years and want to still teach urban kids back in Walker City” it was a sign of “resilience.” Otherwise, “they would have just run out of the room, screaming and crying, and not returned, which is what happens to a whole bunch of them.” In addition, he said, completing TFA also “shows a commitment to the right ideology.... the sort of civil rights movement of education. They're not in it for the summer breaks.”

The schools worked with TFA in a variety of ways. At Kincaid and Naylor, talent directors explained that their schools had formal relationships with the local TFA alumni office. Both belonged to a recruiters network with other no-excuses charter school talent staff, which TFA convened. They met bi-monthly to share resources and discuss challenges, plan events, and strategize about “getting more [teaching candidates] in Walker City.” TFA often featured their schools on its website and in its alumni newsletter, and invited recruiters to lead events for current corps members. In addition, when TFA alumni moved to Walker City, one talent director explained that TFA staff “divv[ied] up the people based on the charter schools in the area.” Naylor Talent Director Gold received a résumé “every couple of weeks” and several teachers reported learning about the school through the TFA alumni office, which they contacted when relocating. For example, one explained that she saw a Kincaid posting on TFA’s job board while teaching down South. She wasn’t actively looking to move to Walker City, but was “really intrigued because it was an in-district charter, which is special.” Inspired to help found a school that she expected would become “a proof point for what’s

possible,” she applied. Convinced she might be a good catch, Kincaid recruiters flew down to meet her in person.

At Kincaid and Naylor, both talent directors were, themselves, TFA alumni, and thus explained, as one said, that “[the alumni director] and I are buds.” Their relationships allowed them to, as the other said, “email [TFA staff] every once in a while and say, “hey, we’re looking for this job. Do you know anybody who would be interested?” Not only would TFA send résumés, but they would also give candidates the school’s pitch. Talent directors also had relationships with TFA staff at sites nationwide. They cultivated these relationships by “cold calling” alumni directors and asking them to connect their school with alumni who planned to move to Walker City. When the alumni office did so, Kincaid Talent Director Bluth said, “We just bomb them. We e-mail them. We go see them.” Both Naylor and Kincaid also cultivated similar relationships with TNTF, which had Teaching Fellows programs across the country similar to TFA’s. Naylor’s Talent Director Gold said that TNTF site directors, like TFA staff, knew to send résumés of their alumni to Naylor, and they did so.

In contrast to Kincaid and Naylor, Rodriguez had not formally cultivated relationships with TFA or similar programs. Interestingly, although several faculty members—including Executive Director Trotman—were TFA alumni, Talent Director Evans reported relying primarily on TFA’s “complicated” website to advertise specific positions. However, some alumni teaching at Rodriguez reported that after learning about Rodriguez through some other channel, they contacted TFA to see whether current alumni were working there and to get their advice.

Hurston and Fitzgerald partnered with Teach Plus, a national non-profit that



supported high-poverty schools in turnaround by recruiting and selecting experienced teachers to serve as school-based teacher leaders. While their school was in turnaround, these teachers held formal leadership positions for which they earned \$6000 stipends. They also received leadership training from Teach Plus staff—some of whom were school-based. A Hurston administrator explained that Teach Plus was a “key part of the turnaround” because they helped realize the administration’s “distributive leadership vision of the school, where teachers are empowered within a very clear mission and annual goals to make decisions that are in the best interest of the school.” The partnership was also critical in recruiting teachers who cared about there being what he described as, “a lot of saying yes to good ideas that teacher teams” formulate. One teacher who was recruited through Teach Plus explained that she left her charter school to work at Hurston because she was drawn to the opportunity to “lead outside the classroom”—while remaining a teacher. At her prior school, holding a leadership role had meant “having two jobs with a slight stipend—which presumes that your career is the only thing important in your life.”

**Novice teachers who were selected and trained through a selective teaching residency or alternate certification pathway.** Fitzgerald, Hurston, Kincaid, Naylor, and Rodriguez recruited novices through two types of programs that selected participants who wanted to work in high-poverty urban schools through highly competitive application processes. Residency programs, such as the Match Teacher Residency (MTR) and the Walker City Teacher Residency Program (WCTRP) engaged participants in a yearlong, classroom-based apprenticeship which was complemented by graduate coursework, through which they received a Master’s degree and became a licensed

teacher-of-record. In contrast, alternative certification programs, namely TFA, provided a five-week summer training experience for participants before the state granted them a provisional teaching license.

Interviewees explained how their schools recruited from these programs. For example, a current Kincaid teacher and MTR alumnus explained how the partnership between Kincaid and MTR worked. He was recruited through what MTR called a “Show Day,” which occurred during his usual Saturday student teaching time. He said, MTR “invited all the charter schools to send representatives to observe us student teaching.” He recalled, “I just did what I was going to do that Saturday. It just so happened that people were walking through, filling out slips about each of us.” In advance of Show Day, he and other residents had “indicated what schools we were interested in, and so [MTR] sent those representatives to come observe us. I believe it was [Kain and Beckford] who came in... [Kain] followed up.”

Competition for MTR alumni was fierce. For example, at Rodriguez, Talent Director Evans reported that they were intrigued by the MTR, so they sent a teacher ambassador to an event. She “gathered [résumés from] a few people,” but when Evans called those residents later that day, they had already been “snapped up” by other schools.

Principals were less effusive about WCTRP. At Hurston, the school trained WCTRP residents and residents had therefore functioned, in the words of one, as “a kind of farm team.” Although Hurston appreciated that WCTRP “attract[ed] somewhat non-traditional candidates,” the program had not “become a huge pipeline” because the quality of residents Hurston had hired proved to be “uneven.” At Fitzgerald, Principal Forte elaborated about why she thought this was so: although WCTRP residents had “the

right mindset,” they were often “too idealistic for people who have never taught in hard schools. They think they are just going to create this amazing community and they’re not going to need any management system. That’s not going to work.”

Although all of the schools reported that they strongly preferred teachers with experience in urban schools, both Hurston and Kincaid reported that they had hired new TFA corps members when they fulfilled a particular need. At Hurston, for example, Principal Hinds reported that he hired “5 or 6” corps members in preparation for the first year of turnaround, when he was charged with replacing 80 teachers over the summer. He felt “comfortable having such a big cohort of new TFA folks” because he had also recruited 11 TFA alumni who could “work with them through the process of, ‘yeah.... This is hard.’” Although he explained that new TFA corps members were “the most energetic people around and are willing to do anything,” Hinds no longer recruited them because he no longer needed to. His applicant pool had changed considerably: in 2014, he received 102 applications for an open kindergarten position—including many experienced teachers. He marveled at this number, saying “four years ago, I’d have four.”

Kincaid—which reported receiving 4100 applications before opening—still hired a few new TFA corps members annually. Generally, one reported, TFA corps members—“like all new teachers” at the school—were people of color. Because of their formal partnership with TFA, Kincaid was able to hire for the following year from TFA’s pool of incoming corps members beginning in December. TFA required corps members to accept the first offer that was extended to them, and therefore, a partnership with TFA all but guaranteed Kincaid that, when they hired new corps members early enough, those teachers were bound to be people of color.

**Novice teachers with experience working in high-poverty urban schools through competitive service organizations.** Schools also partnered with competitive AmeriCorps service programs, including City Year and Citizen Schools, to recruit teachers. These organizations—which ran afterschool programming at Rodriguez, Fitzgerald and Hurston—primarily hired recent college graduates who committed to a year of service in high-poverty schools. As one alumna explained, Citizen Schools provided a “sideways entry point” through which she was able to determine “do I really want to work in a school?... it’s a low stakes way to try it.” Others concurred, saying that their experiences had prompted them to apply for more permanent positions at their placement schools. For example, one current teacher explained that, while working for Citizen Schools at Hurston, she realized, “I really liked working here, and I really liked the teachers and had a good sense about the people who worked on the... grade team.” Other current teachers said that they had not been placed in the school where they ultimately wound up teaching, but had learned about it through an AmeriCorps colleague. Similarly, although Naylor was not a City Year site, the school had a formal partnership with City Year, which featured an “employer spotlight” about Naylor in their newsletter. In exchange, Naylor granted City Year alums an automatic interview for a teaching position, if they applied. Because, as one explained, City Year’s focus was to have a “City Year-to-teacher” pipeline, schools like those in our study were a “good partnership[s] for them.”

#### *Universities*

Every school recruited some teachers through universities. At all schools—but particularly at district schools, where teachers were required to have teaching certification,

recruitment efforts focused on students in traditional teacher education programs.

However, because charter schools teachers were permitted to hire uncertified teachers, talent staff broadened their search beyond the education departments and teacher certification programs at universities.

**Students in traditional teacher education programs.** Schools recruited teacher education students in various ways. They posted advertisements on university career websites and also trained student teachers. Occasionally, some hosted student groups. However, with the exception of Dickinson, principals said that recent graduates of traditional teacher education programs were rarely their first-choice hires. Fitzgerald Principal Forte elaborated, “teacher ed schools are really not preparing” candidates who know how to “analyz[e] running records...how to do guided reading, how to really teach using the writer’s workshop model”—skills that she believed were necessary for teaching students who were academically behind. To improve pre-service training—and to develop an in-house pipeline of teachers—Forte had partnered with an elementary education program that had “physical[ly] translocate[ed]” its students and faculty to Fitzgerald. However, Principal Forte had not yet hired any graduates of the program because, she believed, there was a “very huge cultural disconnect” between the university students and the community that Fitzgerald served. In a similar initiative, a local public university—which Talent Director Bluth explained was “much more diverse” than surrounding universities—was placing student teachers at a different school in the Kincaid Network. This saved the network money because, as Bluth said, “we don’t have to pay them, and they’ll get to learn. That, hopefully will be building a pipeline there... we can interview them all and hire them.”

**Students with potential interest in teaching.** Because charters could hire uncertified teachers, they recruited non-education majors at prestigious universities. Part of Kincaid’s strategy involved convincing college students that they wanted to become teachers—and that their ultimate goal was to teach at Kincaid. At colleges, Talent Director Bluth and her team therefore went through “channels that are not normal”—systematically guest lecturing in classes, meeting with professors, and making themselves known among student leaders on campus. This work involved first determining “Where are the Posse scholars at each of the schools?... Where are the sorority presidents?... Fraternities?... Spanish Club?... Majors who really cannot do anything with their lives with a bachelor's degree?” Then, they “persistent[ly] buil[t] relationships” with these students by taking them to lunch—when possible, with a Kincaid teacher who had attended the college—and by asking students to publicize the opportunities at Kincaid to their peers. For example, students organized tours of Kincaid so that they could, as Bluth said, “See what we’re doing.” In her view, “the best recruiting I can do is bring somebody into a school. I don’t even need to say anything. They’re, like, ‘Look at these five-year-olds!’” In addition, at both Kincaid and Naylor, recruiters often brought current teachers who were alumni of the college at which they were recruiting.

*The Walker City School District Human Resources Office*

In most districts, schools depend on the central office to recruit a pool of teachers from which they can hire. Although the district schools in our study deviated from the norm in public schools by actively recruiting from other sources, all three made strategic use of district channels, as did Kincaid Charter, which belonged to the district and therefore had access to district human resources services. Naylor rarely advertised

positions to district teachers because, as one said, they were “wary” of district teachers, who lacked “just a bit of alignment... this is horrible to say, but work ethic a little bit.”

District principals reported that WCSD was beginning to improve its historically ineffective recruitment systems. In Fall 2013—a few months before we began this study—WCSD had reorganized its human resources division and introduced what Principal Davila called an “amazing website”—a platform through which applicants could apply for positions at particular schools. Each school managed applicants through its individualized portal. Veteran district teachers and teachers hoping to join the district used the same system to apply. Consequently, schools reported that, as a Hurston administrator said, there was finally “a really large pool of people that apply... a lot of great candidates.” Further, Principal Forte explained that a major benefit of the new system was that she could “look at all of the candidates who applied to the system... for example... I need a sixth grade math teacher. Only 13 people applied to *my* sixth grade job, but 168 applied to the district.” The website enabled her to “just open up every one of those résumés” and actively recruit intriguing candidates.

Ironically, several principals worried that, as Kincaid Principal Kain said, the fact that “the district [was] becoming much more active in recruiting pools” was making it harder for them to recruit because the competition had increased—while the number of strong teaching applicants in WCSD had not. In addition, Principal Davila expressed concern that the new system would affect her ability to spot candidates who persevered in spite of the district’s human resources poor systems—those “willing to go the extra mile.” For example, one current teacher at her school explained how he had been recruited. After being laid off from one WCSD school, he had tried to use the district’s “really,

really terrible” former online system: “They ha[d] a lot of listings but—for example, when I got hired at Dickinson, [Davila] goes ‘Ok, so you’re hired, I just need to post it online and then... once it appears online, you apply for it.’” Thus, when she posted the job online, “it was for everyone to see. Everybody [saw] it as an open job, where it [was] really not. [Principals] ha[d] to post all the jobs anyway, even if someone at the same building was taking [the position].” This was why it had been so difficult for this teacher to use the online system to determine who had openings: “75% of the [posted] jobs—they [were] already full... [the schools] already kn[ew] exactly who they [were] going to hire.” Beginning in June, he had “probably put in 10, 15 applications a day” through the online system. Finally, he said, “I just printed out a lot of copies of my résumé... went around with [them] to schools to drop them off, to see if I could talk to the principal.” In August, after he had visited more than twenty schools, Principal Davila—excited that he was a “Walker City kid,” impressed at his résumé, and amazed at his assertiveness in 90 degree heat—interviewed him on the spot, even though she didn’t have an opening. She saved his résumé, and when a position opened, she called him.

### ***Recruiting through personal networks***

At all six schools, principals engaged what one referred to as “connectors” (Gladwell, 2000)—members of their personal networks who “know everyone” (p. 38)—in recruitment. Schools relied on connectors to—in Gladwell’s words—“gain access” to “worlds to which [they] don’t belong” (p. 54).

### ***Teachers Connected to Current Teachers***

Several principals explained that their most promising connectors were teachers. Kincaid Talent Director Bluth said that candidates “automatically ge[t] a major bump”



when referred by current teachers because they “know what it takes to work here” and “would never refer a friend who doesn’t.” Similarly, a Hurston administrator explained, “Our teachers know a ton of teachers. They’ll refer people they know are good.” One current teacher said that Hurston teachers are so trusted that Principal Hinds hired her based entirely on “testimonial” from another Hurston teacher and potentially from a Teach Plus staff member. Similarly, a Fitzgerald teacher described being recruited by a friend who had consulted there. The friend told him that Fitzgerald “doesn’t use the district mandated curriculum,” and was doing “intriguing” things, pedagogically. At Hurston and Dickinson, teachers said that they learned about the school from current teachers whom they met at district workshops, and one said that she learned about Dickinson from her husband, who had substituted there thirty years before and remained friends with teachers who were still there when she was looking for a job.

Although teachers were often engaged in informal recruitment—and, at Naylor and Kincaid, received a bonus if they referred someone who was hired—other schools engaged teachers more formally. For example, at Rodriguez, teachers of color had prompted what one described as a “proactive” effort to develop the school’s reputation as a neighborhood “shining star”—and as a great place to teach as a person of color. With administrators, they designed a plan for engaging current teachers of color to be what one called “teacher ambassador[s],” both at formal job fairs frequented by strong candidates of color, and in their own personal networks. For example, one teacher said he planned to invite leaders from an interfaith, multi-racial group of clergy to tour Rodriguez. He had also written a letter to Black male students and alumni at his alma mater and a recruitment letter template for others to adapt and send to their own college alumni

associations and fraternities or sororities. Although teachers acknowledged that, as one explained, “it’s not going to happen overnight to make ourselves more diverse,” most were hopeful that their carefully orchestrated involvement would yield the results they sought.

### *Teachers Connected to Philosophically-Aligned Contacts*

Some schools used their membership in formal professional networks to recruit teachers who they expected would be philosophically aligned with their school. For example, a Hurston administrator who said, “We love [the guided reading method of] Fountas and Pinnell” recruited teachers through those experts’ national Literacy Collaborative. Likewise, Naylor and Kincaid administrators explained that, in the words of one, their “most promising applicants come from other high-performing [no-excuses] charters.” Although a formal non-compete relationship with most local charters prevented them from poaching candidates, they prized referrals from no-excuses schools in other cities. As one principal explained, “you know that they’re already mission-aligned if they’re working at a charter organization that we highly respect.” A Kincaid teacher who had been teaching in New York explained how he was referred through the no-excuses network: “My CEO [in New York] told me about [Executive Director] Beckford. He said ‘he’s doing something no one’s ever done before...’—it was incredible how things just happened... My CEO sent him an email on a Monday morning and we spoke that night, at 9:30...” Beckford asked, “‘Are you planning on coming to Walker City this weekend?’ I said, ‘I’m really not sure of my schedule.’ He said, ‘Well, if you can’t I’ll come to meet you.’”

Even at Hurston and Rodriguez—which were decidedly not no-excuses schools—administrators explained that they sometimes used their networks to recruit from these charters. In the words of a former no-excuses charter administrator at Hurston: “specific charters... do an amazing job of training teachers and of instilling a really data-driven approach in their teachers.” She explained, “There’s a mindset that we look for from there. Not so rigid that they’re not going to be able to hang in the more fluid, a little bit less predictable world of a huge public school, which is... a different reality.” Rather, Hurston wanted “somebody who’s got the structure and the mindset but also has the personality to take a lot of initiative, but also work with others and not be totally like, ‘We’re doing it this way, because this is the way I’ve done it.’” Such teachers were “willing to constantly reassess, reinvent and really be creative.” Sometimes, charter teachers were eager to transfer to district schools, because the salary, benefits, hours, and job protections were substantially better.

#### *Teachers Connected to Other District Contacts*

District principals relied heavily on other district principals to identify candidates. For example, Principals Davila and Forte frequently emailed other trusted principals to ask whether they knew individuals who would fit at their school. Occasionally, they also received unprompted recommendations. For example, one Fitzgerald teacher whose position at a “failing [WCSD] school was cut after two years” explained that she was “in limbo for months, waiting to hear if I was going to have a position.” In July, her principal “called and said ‘I don’t have anything for you. Someone else with seniority has your job.’” The principal then recommended her to Forte, who hired her.

Principals who had led multiple schools reported that they had recruited former colleagues to their new school. For example, one Hurston administrator described how Principal Hinds had approached him while he was working at Hinds' former school, asking "hey, you want to basically do a cool job like this that's full-time at my new school?" Similarly, a teacher who had left the district for a suburban school after working for Hinds recalled learning that Hinds was taking over Hurston: "I sent him a quick congratulations," and Hinds responded, "'hey, if you're ever thinking of coming back to the city, let me know..." They met and Hinds "kinda put the full-court press on me" to join him at Hurston.

#### *Teachers Connected to Parents*

Some schools were beginning to engage parents as connectors to teachers within the community that the school served. At Rodriguez, for example, administrators informed parents that Rodriguez was always seeking applicants, and asked them to spread the word, as Principal Ryan said, "through your churches, your own networks, your own social ties."

#### **Building an in house human capital pipeline**

All principals reported struggling to recruit a supply of teachers who met their preparation standards. They had therefore developed strategies for growing their own teachers—an initiative most developed at Naylor. Each year, the school hired nine Teachers in Training (TTs) who, at the time of our study, were paid \$32,000—roughly \$17,000 below the starting WCSD teacher salary. Most TTs were recent college graduates with no prior teaching experience, although several had a Master's degree in teaching or school-based work experience. TTs were assigned a mentor teacher and

belonged to their mentor's grade-level team. Naylor's assistant principal oversaw the program, and throughout their training year, TTs engaged in a structured cycle of observation and feedback through which they sought to master specific aspects of teaching.

TTs were carefully recruited through similar channels as novice teachers. For example,

Talent Director Gold explained that TFA provided her with a list of those who competed in the final round of TFA's selection process but didn't ultimately gain acceptance as corps members. This allowed Gold to recruit specific individuals who TFA believed held promise. As one current TT explained, very shortly after being rejected from TFA, "a lot of schools reached out to me... and said, 'we saw that you applied [to TFA]. Here's a program that's similar. Learn more about us.'" Naylor also often recruited City Year alumni to be TTs.

Principal North explained that almost all TTs were promoted to classroom teacher roles in the school or network when their training year was over. In fact, she noted, she began her own career as a Naylor TT—as did many of the teachers we interviewed. Each year, almost everyone who was offered a position accepted it. One teacher explained that she had not considered other schools after her TT year because she had visited several with the TT program and felt Naylor was "the best fit because of the support and the team work... The expectations that we set for our kids, I haven't seen anything that matches it. Just the quality of instruction... is a lot more rigorous here." Interestingly, a number of teachers said they were promoted well before completing their training year; the TT pool

was an important source of teachers for Naylor when midyear turnover occurred—which teachers reported usually happened a few times per year.

Both Kincaid and Rodriguez also offered TT programs, but neither was as structured as Naylor’s program. In fact, some described applying to multiple programs and choosing Naylor for precisely that reason—even though Kincaid TTs were paid as WCSD first-year teachers—\$49,000 in 2014. Kincaid TTs reported primarily functioning as building substitutes which, as at Naylor, enabled the school to quickly replace teachers who quit midyear. For example, one interviewee explained that Kincaid had recently filled two positions with TTs at midyear—a teacher who transferred to a district school in September and a teacher who “got fired” after he was “put on a Performance Improvement Plan and didn’t meet the goals.” The school “moved an ESL teacher to the English job,” filled ESL “with a part-time history teacher so she could have a full-time job” and then “had the part-time history job open for a long time” until administrators decided to “just make a TT do part-time history.” Kincaid then replaced the TT—which, Talent Director Bluth explained was “more possible” than the “impossible” task of replacing an English teacher midyear.

Despite the fact that they received little formal training or mentorship, most Kincaid TTs were offered classroom teacher positions after their training year, which they usually accepted. In contrast, Rodriguez TTs—most of whom were City Year alumni—were not currently being cultivated as a teacher pipeline—although some veteran teachers reported beginning their careers at Rodriguez as TTs or as afterschool assistants. Instead, most current TTs planned to pursue a career elsewhere following two years as TTs at Rodriguez, and several planned to pursue a teaching degree.

As described above, some district schools partnered with outside organizations, such as the WCTRP or a local college to train future teachers. However, none offered an in-house program that enabled them to carefully recruit and vet TTs and employ them on the school payroll. Nonetheless, the district schools each created a pool of potential teachers using existing district structures. However, because these solutions were dependent upon partners or district policies, principals were limited in whom they could select and dismiss, and in how they could assign and compensate individuals. Principals also reported that making these strategies work often took significant time and ongoing negotiation with WCSD and with teachers themselves.

At Dickinson and Hurston, multiple teachers reported being initially hired at their current school as substitutes. Some explained that they took those positions shortly after earning their teaching credential, because getting a district position was notoriously difficult and substitute positions were, in the words of one, “a good way to start.” Others described resorting to taking a substitute position upon moving to Walker City after teaching elsewhere. At Dickinson—where openings were rare—numerous teachers explained that they took substitute positions because, as one said, they “loved [the school] from the moment [they] walked in” and knew it was where they wanted to teach. For example, one reported leaving a full-time private school teaching job for a part-time position at Dickinson. She’d grown up near the school, and “really wanted to give back to the community.” Though her family questioned her decision—“you’re going to leave full-time to go part time? That’s crazy!”—her willingness to do so “got [her] foot in the door.” Because the position was only a few days a week, she substituted “every other day... even days I wasn’t working, I would come in just to help out, learn the school, or

help my partner teacher... adjust.” The following year, a teacher retired and she was hired full-time. Almost a decade later, she reported, “I’m so grateful that I took that chance and it all worked out.” Although teachers routinely reflected fondly on their experiences as substitutes, they conceded that, as one said, it was a “very frustrating [career] move” to have to make.

At both schools, teachers explained that even as substitutes, their principals invested in them because they saw a substitute year as, according to one, an opportunity for them to “prepar[e] for the future.” He described his decision to substitute: “The interview process was just the principal and one of the principal interns... We talked about what my goals were.” Hinds “understood that being a permanent sub isn’t exactly a career in and of itself.” Hinds therefore talked with him “about the possibility of me becoming a full-time teacher in the future if that opening was there. Then we talked about how—that year wasn’t just going to be being a substitute... there were going to be professional development opportunities” because Hurston had a “wealth of experienced and exemplary teachers” and Hinds “wanted me to use that as a resource.” Throughout the year, Hinds observed the teacher and gave him feedback, and when a teaching position opened, he offered it to him.

**Recruitment support from central office: What did schools and teachers count on?**

Although all of the schools in our study employed active recruitment strategies rarely used by public schools, their reports about the supports that they could count on in doing this work differed dramatically. While district schools reported being largely ill-supported and even hampered by the district human resources office in their recruitment efforts, charter schools saw their CMOs and talent offices as indispensable partners who



handled most of their recruitment work—and, in doing so, made their more instructional work possible.

***The District.*** District principals largely expressed frustration that central office did not do more to attract candidates to WCSD or to pitch their school to recruits. As one said, “they have a whole department and they’re not helpful.” In her view, the district did not “really try” to recruit experienced teachers—a problem because her students were “very far behind” and “really need[ed] expert teachers.” Similarly, at Kincaid, which was entitled to district services because of its in-district charter status, the talent director explained that, although there were “pockets of excellent [teachers]” in district schools, they did not depend on the district for support in “find[ing] them” because “their recruitment has actually been hiring.” The job of recruitment, she believed, should be to “get people jobs... [to] make people very happy when they get a job or very sad when they don’t.” It was not “to bug them about licensures... [or to] get them on payroll—that’s HR’s job.”

None of the district schools employed a full-time talent director, despite the fact that both Hurston and Fitzgerald had hired dozens of teachers when they entered into turnaround. Instead, principals managed recruitment work personally, sometimes with support from teachers or other administrators who, like principals, had many other duties.

Teachers concurred that district systems had historically proven problematic. Multiple charter teachers who had worked in other districts told of experiences similar to this teacher’s: “I really wanted to get into the Walker City public school system, which was really, really hard to get into if you’re not already a teacher. Like, in order to really apply, you would... already need your ID number.” Another said that, on top of

navigating district bureaucracy, he couldn't figure out the state's licensing website, which he described as a "terrible, awful, labyrinthine Kafkaesque nightmare" that he needed to survive to apply for a district job. Ultimately, he applied to Naylor because "I was in desperate need of a job"—and they didn't require a teaching license.

***The Charter Schools.*** In contrast to the district schools, principals at all three charter schools worked closely with their talent director, whose recruitment efforts were carefully aligned with their school's needs. At Naylor and Kincaid, principals benefitted from enormous network-level recruitment resources. Naylor's CMO employed a full-time talent director—Sophie Gold—a TFA alumnus with a Harvard Master's degree. Gold was paid on par with teachers and managed a \$60,000 recruitment budget, which she used to fund her own recruitment-related travel, to fly candidates to Naylor, to list advertisements, and to purchase Naylor "swag." At Kincaid, Executive Director Beckford said the CMO employed 10 talent staff members—"five times as many recruiters as Walker City Schools." This "very big team" was "all over the country on a given day" managing "the sourcing, outreach, and process of recruitment" for the network's five schools and central office. The team was well compensated: the Chief Talent Officer's salary was advertised at \$120,000-\$140,000, while the Director of Recruitment, Lola Bluth—a Teach for America alumnus and former Kincaid teacher—was paid \$95,000. Her five recruiters averaged three years of work experience and were paid between \$58,000-\$72,000. Finally, Rodriguez—which did not belong to a CMO and hired substantially fewer staff annually than did Naylor and Kincaid—employed one full-time talent director, Virginia Evans, a former law firm recruiter who managed recruitment, hiring and other human resources functions.

At all schools, principals paid careful attention to the school’s reputation and understood its ongoing role in recruitment. However, in contrast with district school principals, charter principals depended on talent staff to manage what several called “branding.” For example, Kincaid hosted an annual Educators of Color Symposium for teachers across Walker City. Executive Director Beckford explained that the symposium was not “explicitly a recruitment vehicle—we actually fairly shy away from that.” Yet, he said, it had “helped a little bit of our reputation... as Kincaid... trying to be thoughtful and innovative in its approach to broadening the diversity of its team.” Events like these—even those that Talent Director Bluth called “unbranded”—were intended to pique curiosity about the school.

At Rodriguez, teachers described similar events—the Father/Son Day and the Women’s Brunch—during which, as one said, “all the women of the school community come together—grandmothers, teachers, our principal—everyone” to hear “a speaker of color who’s doing something phenomenal.” Talent Director Evans co-planned these events with the teachers who had started them because they allowed local community members to see the school in action—a powerful recruitment strategy.

### **Recruitment Challenges and Solutions**

Despite tremendous expenditure of effort and money, interviewees at all schools reported that they continued to face significant challenges in finding the candidates they wanted. In addition, although the schools had sought different criteria for recruits, the pool was so limited that, as one talent director said, “we’re all competing for the same candidates.”

All of the schools struggled to find both experienced teachers and novices who had been trained in ways that the schools desired. Schools therefore had to recruit teachers who showed promise of being what several principals called “coachable,” and subsequently, schools had to devote resources to providing that coaching.

Schools faced additional challenges. All reported that recruiting Black and Latino teachers was extremely difficult. For example, a Rodriguez administrator explained that, the school “look[s] very hard,” for candidates of color, but “of the hundreds and hundreds” of inquiries they received regarding employment, “very few [were from] Black teachers or people of color, in general.” Similarly, at Kincaid and Naylor, recruiters flew to Morehouse College and Howard University to recruit, and the school invited those who applied for a carefully orchestrated, all-expenses paid visit during which they met other teachers of color already on faculty. However, though some schools experienced greater success in their efforts to recruit teachers of color than did others (See Appendix D), all reported that diversifying their mostly white, female faculties was enormously time-consuming, expensive, and required what one called “aggressive” work.

Schools also reported having difficulty recruiting teachers with knowledge and expertise in particular subjects—namely Special Education and middle school math and science. At Rodriguez, Principal Ryan explained why: “What you really need is somebody who has the knowledge base of high school math or science, but yet wants to get down, rolling on the ground, with the kids in middle school.” This combination of characteristics was “really hard to find.” Sometimes, he said, candidates “did nature camp for a million years, and... love to get down and dirty with kids.” But, they lacked the knowledge to “field all [those] crazy questions” that arise in science classes. The

problem was similar in math: “If you're teaching pre-algebra, you need to know where they're going... How does this relate to algebra and trig and geometry later?” It was difficult to solve that problem by simply giving teachers a curriculum because, as he explained, “if you just follow the curriculum, you can't actually adapt to [students'] learning and what they're thinking.”

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Across the six schools in this study, administrators, talent directors, and teachers were dedicated to, as Executive Director Beckford said, “finding the very best staff members to lead and teach.” This, they believed, was crucial to, as one said, “altering the course of [their] kids' lives.” At each school, those we interviewed described recruitment strategies that were far from the “passive and provincial” (DeArmond et al., 2009, p. 56) efforts that have long characterized teacher recruitment in public schools. Instead, each school engaged in an active strategy for developing a pool of candidates from which it could hire new teachers when positions opened. All laid the foundation for recruitment by first determining whom they hoped to attract and then creating a plan for how to market their school to those prospective teachers.

Like those whom DeArmond and colleagues (2010) studied, the principals we interviewed approached recruitment as a “constant activity” (p. 337). They carefully pursued candidates by developing relationships with formal organizations—non-profits, universities, and the school district—whose organizational purpose was to create a human capital pipeline for schools. They also cultivated informal channels—the personal and professional networks of those working in the school. Often, they depended most on those who shared their explicit mission of educating low-income, minority students and

had carefully vetted candidates. However, their recruitment efforts did not reliably yield the supply of teachers that they sought, and thus each school had developed a strategy for growing its own teachers. Despite these highly focused and time-consuming efforts to recruit and train strong teachers, principals routinely expressed frustration that the pool of teachers they sought remained shallow.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

These findings provide a very different picture of teacher recruitment than is typically reported in public schools. Despite longstanding beliefs that teachers do not desire to work with students who grow up in poverty, substantial evidence suggests that long-underserved communities have the potential to attract top-talent. The schools in our study provide another proof point—along with a host of concrete ideas for how districts and schools might approach this work. This is especially important given recent policy shifts in districts across the country that have granted substantial hiring autonomy to schools but have not yet provided the means to improve recruitment (S. M. Johnson et al., 2015).

The district schools in our study reported a concerted focus on recruitment and a sense of optimism that WCSD’s new online platform would eventually streamline their work. Yet, in contrast with the charter schools, who relied heavily on their CMOs and talent teams to identify and court teachers who would be a good fit for their specific school, none of the district schools reported counting on the central office as a partner in their efforts. Principals themselves therefore spent countless hours on recruitment, often explaining how they “gamed the system” (S. M. Johnson et al., 2015) to develop a pool of teachers from which they could hire. In turn, many district teachers described going to

great lengths to get their “foot in the door” at district schools—as if making an enormous personal sacrifice were a necessary rite of passage to get a job in a high-poverty district school. Several teachers in our study confided that they had taken jobs in charter schools—where they worked longer hours for less pay—because they had failed to navigate the district bureaucracy or because they could not make the sacrifices involved in earning a district job.

To improve the support that they provide to schools, districts might learn from how the charter networks supported individual schools in their recruitment efforts. At all three charters, talent staff believed that their job was to serve the schools, and their efforts to recruit the candidates that principals sought reflected those beliefs. In turn, principals who worked at charters within a network never described spending time complying with a bureaucratic requirement for recruitment imposed by their CMO, nor did they discuss tactics for “gaming” their network’s systems. Likewise, because talent staff viewed their work as “selling” the advantages of working in their schools to potential candidates, charter recruits were often quick to apply for positions—even, when the promise of a union contract at a district school was far more appealing. To begin shifting the culture of the relationship between district offices and schools, district officials might meet with principals about their needs and about where and how the district might recruit on their behalf. Large districts might arrange for specialists to know and support sub-groups of schools. Districts might also support schools in articulating their organizational identity and in developing recruitment materials based on the unique needs and characteristics of specific schools. District personnel might also work to identify promising pipelines by surveying recent hires about where they were trained and how they were recruited.

Districts might also offer stipends to strong teachers who are willing to serve as district ambassadors in future recruitment efforts. In many districts, this work would require a shift in mindset, as the purpose of these efforts is to transfer aspects of the recruiting work to personnel at central office so that principals and teachers can focus more squarely on hiring.

The principals in our study offer an important caution to districts that are trying to improve their recruitment strategy: desirable teachers are already scarce, and as districts become, as one said, “more active in recruiting pools,” they will need to substantially increase the number of candidates in the pipeline. Otherwise, they risk undoing the success of those schools that have long fought an uphill battle of recruiting teachers on their own—in spite of their district’s passive approach. To do this, districts would be wise to learn from Naylor’s highly structured Teachers in Training program, which carefully vetted TTs and trained them through a paid yearlong, well-managed apprenticeship. Through this program, Naylor developed a strong pool of novice teachers—and when they hired them to be teachers of record, they did so with confidence that they would succeed with students. In addition, both schools of education and residency-based training programs might reflect on some of the findings presented here. These institutions and organizations might partner with districts and together, strategize about how to attract more strong candidates into the profession. For example, local colleges might offer free summer courses to district high school students, in which they could explore the teaching profession. Schools might provide paid or credit-bearing summer or school-year internships for college students who are alumni of the district and in search of meaningful employment. Local teacher residency programs might allow



outstanding college seniors to begin their training during their last year of college. Cities might offer scholarships to district students or to parents who are pursuing a degree in teaching, on the condition that they return home to teach.

It is worth considering whether the pool of potential teachers might seem smaller to the schools than it actually is. At most schools, principals expressed certainty about the profile of a teacher who was likely to succeed at their school. Perhaps schools might consider expanding this profile—and they might rethink how the organization itself could shift to accommodate the talents and approaches of experienced teachers who might not be in perfect alignment with the characteristics that the school seeks. This was especially true at Naylor and Kincaid, where many participants were, in the words of one, so “wary” of district teachers’ “work ethic” and mission “alignment” that they often did not actively recruit within the district.

### **Implications for Research**

This paper makes an important contribution to what is known about how high-poverty schools that are doing well with their students conceive of and enact teacher recruitment. However, more information is needed to really understand how the different strategies work. As CMOs and districts develop more active approaches to recruitment, researchers should collect both qualitative and quantitative data about the methods that they use and about the teachers who respond to them. Of course, longitudinal data that tracks candidates from their first point of contact with a school, CMO, or district until they are hired would contribute to our understanding of how teachers approach and make career decisions. In addition, tracking whether teachers are more likely to stay in a school that actively recruited them would also contribute to our understanding of whether

schools with more complex recruitment processes are better able to recruit, hire, and retain teachers over time.

Studies might also focus on particular populations of teachers, such as TFA alumni who remain in teaching or those who complete traditional teacher training, in order to better understand what such individuals seek in a school and to determine what types of recruitment strategies to which they respond to. Researchers might also survey alumni of top universities who did not major in education but were recruited into teaching after visiting a school or hearing from a panel of teachers. In addition, given the rising importance of non-profit organizations whose mission is to create a human capital pipeline into schools, researchers might also study how leaders at these organizations conceive of their work and devise their strategy for recruiting, selecting and placing novice and experienced teachers.

In conclusion, the schools in this study collectively illustrate how schools and school systems might reverse the long-standing trend of “passive and provincial” teacher recruitment (DeArmond et al., 2009, p. 54). Through strategies grounded in their organizational identity, each school actively cultivated a pool of promising teachers from which they would subsequently hire. Although their recruitment successes provide evidence that many teachers desire to work in historically underserved communities, the pipeline of recruits who have the characteristics that schools desire is often inadequate. Learning from the work of these schools—and overcoming the challenges that they face—will be integral to ensuring that all students have excellent teachers—especially those who need them most.

## Chapter 2

### The Matchmaking Process:

#### Teacher Hiring in Six Successful, High-Poverty, Urban Schools

Good teaching matters, especially for students growing up in poverty (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Downey, Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). But, effective teaching does not alone depend on the contributions of talented and skilled individuals. Rather, promising pedagogues are far more likely to rise to their potential when they are well-matched with both their teaching assignment and with the school organization where they work (Daly, Keeling, Grainger, & Grundies, 2008; Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Levin, Mulhern, & Schunck, 2005; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Liu, Rosenstein, Swan, & Khalil, 2008; Loeb, Kalogrides, & Béteille, 2012). However, in urban school districts, outmoded staffing policies and practices have long impeded school leaders from carefully selecting and cultivating a faculty who collectively meet the needs of the school's students. (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt, & Wyckoff, 2011; Daly et al., 2008; Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Levin et al., 2005; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Liu et al., 2008; Loeb et al., 2012). The consequences of this have been severe—particularly for low-income and minority students.

For decades, policies rooted in ideals of overall efficiency and fairness to teachers shaped staffing structures (Levin et al., 2005). In most districts, hiring was centralized—conducted and controlled by the central office. Schools depended on district-level personnel to recruit and select teachers, and then to assign new hires to specific vacancies at individual schools. Districts also managed the teacher transfer process through which

teachers were reassigned due to layoffs or programmatic changes. Prolonged delays in placing current teachers often meant that new teachers could not be hired until summer, often just before school started (Liu & Johnson, 2006). As a result of these policies and of delays in municipal or state approval of the education budget, urban districts routinely lost prospective teachers to surrounding wealthier, whiter suburbs (Liu & Johnson, 2006). On the whole, these staffing policies and their resulting administrative practices prevented both new and experienced teachers from finding positions that matched their knowledge, skills, and interests (Ballou, 1996; Cannata, 2010; Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Levin et al., 2005; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006). Consequently, teachers in urban schools frequently reported being dissatisfied with their jobs, which they often left within a few years (S. M. Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; S. M. Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Liu et al., 2008; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Since 2000, the effects of centralized, impersonal, and slow-moving staffing systems have prompted many districts to transform their historically bureaucratic personnel offices into human capital management systems, designed to recruit, select, develop and compensate a talented teaching force (Odden, 2011). One step some districts have taken is to decentralize hiring and to negotiate with the local teachers union a process that is both more accelerated and based on “mutual consent” (Daly et al., 2008). These reforms recognize that school communities differ in their needs and expectations and that individual teachers also have unique expertise and interests that fit better in some schools and programs than others. Thus, some districts have granted schools increased autonomy over teacher hiring and transfer and, simultaneously, have given teachers greater say in where they teach.

Research in education and industry affirms the wisdom of these reforms (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1989; Daly et al., 2008; Kristof, 1996; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). In a strong system, hiring is site-based and viewed as a two-way process whereby schools and teacher candidates exchange information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract (Liu & Johnson, 2006; Winter, Ronau, & Munoz, 2004). Through this process, each party can decide whether a good “fit” exists—the school decides whether to offer a position, and the candidate decides whether to accept it.

Although staffing reforms have enabled many schools to adopt more “information-rich” processes (Liu & Johnson, 2006, p. 324), policies and practices have not ensured that schools could succeed in doing so. Remarkably little is known about how individual schools conceptualize and carry out the process of hiring teachers, and even less is known about how teachers experience these efforts. In addition, few researchers have explored how a specific school’s policy context influences these processes. This paper investigates these issues by drawing on data from a larger exploratory study conducted by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, which focuses on how human capital is managed and developed within schools. The sample includes six schools—traditional, turnaround, and charter—located in the same large city in Massachusetts. These schools all have demonstrated success with low-income, minority students. However, each school’s process for selecting teachers is influenced by a different combination of state and local policies.

In the following section, I review the literature on teacher selection, beginning with Liu and Johnson’s (2006) concept of “information-rich hiring” and a description of

how hiring has traditionally worked in urban districts. Next, I explain how teachers experience information-rich hiring and describe the ways in which some school systems have innovated with hiring. After presenting my research questions and methods, I discuss the findings of this analysis. I conclude by considering the implications of this work for policy, practice, and research.

### **Literature Review**

In their study of new teachers' experiences of hiring, Liu and Johnson (2006) posit that, "a new teacher's effectiveness in working with students may depend not only on her general qualifications but also on the fit between her particular skills, knowledge, and dispositions and the school position she has been hired to fill" (p. 325). The importance of a strong fit between a teacher and his school is consistent with research in the field of organizational behavior and management, which explores person-organization and person-job fit and examines their links to work-related outcomes, including overall satisfaction, effectiveness, and plans to stay or quit (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996; Rynes et al., 1991). As in industry, Liu and Johnson posit, when a school hires well, it engages candidates in a two-way process through which both parties—the school and the candidate—can gather the information each needs to make an informed decision about whether the individual and the position are a good fit for one another. Teachers who experience such an "information-rich" (p. 324) hiring process—one that provides them with a realistic preview of their future job—report that they are more satisfied with their positions and, ultimately, are more likely to stay in their schools (S. M. Johnson & PNGT, 2004; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Liu et al., 2008).

*Traditional Teacher Hiring in Urban School Districts and Schools*

Historically, most urban teachers were assigned to their school through a centralized process conducted by district administrators. Developed in the 1960s to ensure efficiency and to prevent nepotism and discrimination, centralized processes frequently relied on standardized procedures that treated all new applicants uniformly and entailed similar steps (DeArmond, Gross, Bowen, Demeritt, & Lake, 2012; Johnson and PNGT, 2004; Levin et al., 2005; Levin and Quinn, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2006). In addition, policies governing the placement of new teachers were affected by staffing procedures that often gave priority to teachers with seniority in the district, to whom the district had ongoing obligations, including tenure. In the past, some district regulations granted “bumping rights” to permanent teachers, allowing those with more seniority to claim positions within a school with little or no input from the principal. In addition, district and state policies commonly required that layoffs among teachers be seniority-based. As a result, all teachers with tenure were retained by the district in order of seniority and had to be placed before opening the hiring process to new teachers. Often this was a protracted process and, as a result, many staffing decisions occurred just before the opening of school or even once classes were already in session. Strikingly, Liu and Johnson (2006) found that in Florida, only 18.6% of new teachers were hired more than a month before the start of school and that roughly one-third of teachers were not hired until after school had started. Comparable data emerged in other states.

In a qualitative study examining the experiences of 50 new teachers in Massachusetts, Johnson, Liu, and colleagues (2004) found that most teachers who had been hired at the “last minute” (p. 171) before school started had spent months trying to secure a position. When an offer was finally made—often on the spot, based on a résumé

and a single, short interview with the principal—the new teachers quickly took the position. Such “down to the wire” (p. 171) timing meant that new teachers rarely met future colleagues or saw the school in action before signing a contract. In addition, because their schools lacked opportunities to watch prospective teachers interact with students or to observe them teaching, the schools were unable to utilize hiring as a bridge to new teacher induction.

Unfortunately, even as districts across the country have shifted towards more decentralized selection—indeed, more than 90% of principals nationally report that they now have “extensive autonomy” (Cannata & Engel, 2012, p. 459) in teacher selection—recent research (Cannata, 2010, 2011) continues to suggest that many teachers still experience hiring as “late, rushed, and information-poor” (Liu & Johnson, 2006, p. 324).

*The “Realistic Preview:” Information-Rich Hiring in Practice*

What happens when teachers are not hired at the last minute, or when schools seize the opportunities provided by new policies that enable strategic, site-based hiring? In Johnson et al.’s study (2004), some teachers who initially accepted positions that proved to be a poor fit quickly transferred to another school or district. In doing so, they searched for a position that better matched what they wanted, often participating in an information-rich process that allowed them to learn about the school—at the same time that the school was learning about them. In following teachers over the course of four years, the authors found that those who had engaged in such processes were more likely to stay in their schools than to transfer or to leave teaching.

In a study of thirty principals who benefited from hiring autonomy in one Florida district, Harris and colleagues (2010) found that information-rich hiring enabled school



leaders to carefully assemble the organizational “mix and match” (p. 228) that they sought—a team of teachers who differed demographically, in skill and experience, and who might work well together and therefore stay in the school for the long-term.

DeArmond et al. (2012) explain how school leaders approached a similar “mix and match” selection process in their study of 43 Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) across the country. Generally, state laws allow charter schools to operate unconstrained by local collective bargaining agreements and to hire and fire teachers without regard to tenure. They are not bound by the legal requirements of seniority-based layoffs. This policy context has allowed these CMOs to innovate with staffing strategies.

Most CMOs in DeArmond et al.’s (2012) study approached recruitment and hiring with the goal of employing “mission-driven people they believed would fit their school and programs” (p. 7). Some sought teachers who had particular characteristics; several looked for instructional knowledge or skill, while others prioritized work ethic or personality traits. However, all CMOs included in the study engaged candidates in an array of activities to recruit them, to gather information about whether they were a good fit for the school, and to ensure that, if offered a position, they would accept it. For example, several CMOs built partnerships with pipeline programs, most commonly Teach for America (TFA), whose mission aligned with their own. Then, in efforts to “give [candidates] as much information as possible,” they engaged them in “real upfront” (p. 9) conversations about both positive and negative aspects of working at their schools. Their purpose was to convey the message: “the job is hard, but we are doing it because we are on a mission to help kids learn” (p. 10). After applicants were invited to be interviewed—which sometimes involved meeting with teachers, parents, students, or

community members—nearly all CMOs required applicants to teach a demonstration lesson.

These CMO leaders cited staffing as a main function of their job and, thus, invested considerable time and resources in potential candidates. They recognized that a timely two-way hiring process is not a “one-shot event” (p. 14). Rather, they viewed it as the first step of an induction process that “socializ[es] staff around the organization’s mission and expectations for how they should work to achieve that mission” (p. 17), ideally before the school year begins. It also enables administrators to prepare to support teachers as they enter a new school.

Additional research on “high-performing” CMOs (Chadwick & Kowal, 2011, p. 5) as well as “high-performing” new, small, district schools in New York City yielded similar findings (Villavicencio & Marinell, 2014, p. 5). Together, these studies demonstrate that many schools that effectively serve low-income students conceive of information-rich hiring as critical to their success. They also provide useful descriptions about how school leaders strategically manage hiring systems. Here, I build on this work by exploring how relevant policies and administrative practices combine to work at the school-level in six high-poverty, urban schools that the state recognizes as “high-performing.” I analyze the day-to-day practices that they employ in selecting teachers, and I describe how administrators and teachers experience these processes.

## **Methods**

This paper is based on a qualitative, comparative case study embedded in a larger study conducted by Professor Susan Moore Johnson, Stefanie Reinhorn, and me, at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. The larger study, “Developing Human

Capital Within Schools,” examined how six high-poverty, urban schools—all of which had received the state’s highest performance rating—attract, develop, and retain teachers.

### *Research Questions*

The research questions guiding this analysis are:

1. What policies (state, local, or CMO) shape school-level approaches to selecting teachers and what opportunities and constraints do administrators report these policies present?
2. How do high-poverty schools that are succeeding with students approach teacher selection?
3. How do principals and teachers assess their experiences with these practices?
  - a. To what extent do principals and other personnel engaged in teacher selection report that the process garners accurate and useful information about candidates?
  - b. To what extent do teachers report that the selection process they experienced provided them with an accurate preview of their job and school?

### *Sample of schools*

Our sample selection was guided by four principles. First, we sought a sample that included charter and district schools in one city. Second we looked for schools that served high-poverty populations ( $\geq 70\%$  of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch) and also primarily served students of color. Third, we sought schools that were considered high-performing, having achieved the highest rating in the state’s accountability system. Fourth, we sought schools that were employing distinctive approaches to human capital development.

To attend to the first three principles, we examined publicly-available demographic and student performance data. We used the state’s accountability ratings as a proxy for academic success with students. At the time of our study, Massachusetts rated schools on a scale from 1-5; one designated the highest performing schools. The school ratings were based on four years of data that documented both the school’s student

performance growth and its success in narrowing race-based proficiency gaps on state tests. Although this definition of success is limited because it relies heavily on standardized test scores, which can be a narrow and problematic measure of achievement, it is the best proxy available for schools that succeed in educating their students. Importantly, it is also the measure by which schools are judged by the state and district and by funders, school boards, and the press.

To attend to the fourth principle, we researched various schools' approaches to human capital development by consulting our professional networks and considering information about specific schools and CMOs. Based on this inquiry, we drew up a sample of six schools—all geographically located within one large urban school district in Massachusetts. The sample included three district schools (one traditional; two former turnaround) and three state-authorized charter schools. All schools were elementary and/or middle schools, which facilitated cross-site comparisons. We contacted school leaders explaining our study and requesting their participation and all agreed to participate (For school descriptive statistics, see Appendix B).

The purposive nature allowed us to conduct an in-depth, exploratory study of a particular context—high-poverty, high-minority schools that have demonstrated success with their students. By design, this sample is not representative of schools in the region.

#### *Data Collection*

**Interviews.** In Spring 2014, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 142 teachers, administrators and other staff (including talent directors, where applicable) in the six schools. Administrator interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes; teacher interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. All research team members were present for most

interviews with the principals and CMO directors; every team member interviewed teachers at each school. This approach facilitated cross-site comparisons, improves inter-rater reliability in coding data, and ensures that each research team member understands each school's structures and culture.

Our interview sample within schools was purposively constructed. At each school, we first interviewed the principal to learn both what processes they used to select, develop, and retain teachers and how those processes were conceived and implemented. Then, we recruited teachers who varied in personal background, teaching experience, preparation, teaching assignment, and role. We also interviewed additional key staff (e.g. curriculum coaches, discipline deans, family coordinators) when it became apparent that their views would inform our understanding of teachers' experiences. To build our sample, we relied on staff lists and on recommendations from administrators and teachers. We solicited participation through emails, flyers, and word-of-mouth. Participants were ensured confidentiality—neither the content of their interview nor the fact that they had been interviewed was shared with the principal (although many discussed their participation with their principal).

In each school, the number of teachers we interviewed varied depending on the school's size, its organizational complexity, and the practices used. We interviewed between 33% and 56% of teachers at each school, plus additional staff. At the three charters schools, we also interviewed full-time Teachers in Training (TTs). (For sample demographics see Appendix B). We used semi-structured interview protocols (Appendix C) to ensure that data would be comparable across sites and interviewers. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interview protocols included several questions that encouraged participants to discuss the school approach to staffing. Specific questions included topics such as where they recruit, what positions they struggle to fill, and how they decide whom to hire. Teachers were asked to describe the process through which they were recruited and hired at the school and to explain whether and how they were involved with recruiting and selecting new colleagues. With all interviewees, we used follow-up questions to further explore each of these topics and to identify particular issues that warranted deeper inquiry. For example, at every school, interviewees discussed the challenge of recruiting, hiring and retaining Black and Latino teachers; we therefore modified our protocol to explore this topic in greater depth.

**Document Collection.** Although interviews are the main data source for this study, we also gathered a range of documents that describe school policies and programs related to recruiting, developing and retaining their teachers. These documents vary by school and include a range of resources, such as professional development calendars, school handbooks, and results of teacher surveys. When possible, we also collected extensive documentation of recruitment and hiring processes, such as protocols for interviewing teachers and watching demonstration lessons and rubrics for assessing candidates. We also collected charter applications, collective bargaining agreements, and applications for contractual waivers, along with other documents which illuminated the state and local policy contexts in which each school operates.

In our visits to the schools, we also observed day-to-day practices, and sought evidence of the school's organizational culture, which we recorded in our notes.

### *Data Analysis*

After each interview, we wrote detailed thematic summaries describing the participant and summarizing his experiences with the school's practices for recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining teachers. First, we identified themes or *etic* codes drawn from the literature on the elements of developing human capital. Then, we used thematic summaries to analyze each site individually and to conduct cross-site comparisons, identifying common themes and differences. We used this preliminary analysis to supplement the *etic* codes with *emic* codes that emerged from the data. For example, in interviews, pay emerged as a challenge for charter teachers, although we had not identified that theme in the literature. We used this preliminary code list to review a small subset of the transcripts, individually and together, in order to calibrate our understanding and use of the codes, as well as to refine the list and definitions. We repeated this process to finalize the code list (Appendix D) and to improve inter-rater reliability. We then coded each transcribed interview using Dedoose software.

After coding interviews, I engaged in an iterative analytic process, using data-analytic matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to track findings related to school-based staffing. To understand the policy context in which each school operated, I identified the particular policies that affected each school and influenced what they could do. For example, I determined which components of the district's collective bargaining agreement remained binding in turnaround schools and how state-issued charters affect each charter school. I then analyzed the interview data and documents from each school separately. I ultimately completed a data analytic matrix showing the components of recruitment and hiring at each school and connections among them within schools. I wrote an analytic memo comparing the different staffing strategies across the sample in

order to first develop a deep understanding of the process that candidates experienced as they were being recruited to apply, vetted as applicants, and offered positions.

To understand how principals and teachers described and assessed their experiences with these practices, I created school-by-school matrices comparing interviewees' responses to their school's recruitment and hiring processes, by component where appropriate. I again wrote an analytic memo presenting initial hypotheses about how teachers experienced and assessed these processes. I also sorted codes by particular interviewee characteristics. For each transcript, I categorized the interviewee according to relevant characteristics, such as years of teaching experience and age (See Appendix D). I then investigated whether teachers' perceptions of the recruitment and hiring processes varied, within and across schools. I wrote a third analytic memo about emerging trends and hypotheses. Finally, I addressed risks to validity by returning to the data to review coding and check my emerging conclusions and to seek rival explanations or disconfirming data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I also shared analytic memos, outlines and drafts with my research team and with other colleagues, and with my dissertation committee.

### **Findings**

All six schools in our study conceived of hiring as a two-way process—one in which both parties have opportunities to exchange information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract. Each school had developed a clear understanding of what it sought in teaching applicants and a specific, structured process for selecting teachers from their pool of applicants. Each administrator explained how the steps within their process were designed to provide both the school and the applicant



with information they needed to make a sound judgment of the other party. Not surprisingly, however, each school's context appeared to have shaped how effectively it could implement its intended hiring process.

In this section, I begin by describing each school and explaining the policy and structural context within which each operated. I then discuss the steps that the schools used to determine whether to offer candidates a job and describe how teachers perceived these processes. Finally, I explain the challenges that schools faced in implementing their thoughtfully designed systems.

### **The Schools**

As noted above, all six schools in the study are located within Walker City<sup>2</sup>, Massachusetts and primarily serve students who reside in Walker City School District (WCSD). The sample includes one traditional district school, two district schools that had recently emerged from turnaround, one in-district charter school, and two state-sponsored charter schools that were entirely independent of the local district.

### ***The District Schools***

**Dickinson Elementary** was a century-old, traditional elementary school serving 400 children in grades Pre-K-5. For generations, the school primarily served immigrant children; at the time of our study, 75% of its students were English Language Learners. Teachers belonged to WCSD's teachers union and Dickinson was bound by the WCSD collective bargaining agreement and other state and district policies. Monica Davila, the school's sole administrator, began teaching at Dickinson in the 1980s and became principal in 2010. Dickinson had experienced stable leadership for over two decades,

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used for the district, the schools, and all study participants

although the school had three principals during the years just before Davila was appointed. However, interviewees reported that the culture had remained stable because teacher turnover was rare: several Dickinson teachers had taught at Dickinson since the 1980s. As teachers repeatedly said, “you don’t leave Dickinson—you retire from Dickinson.” This mantra appeared to have some truth: in Davila’s four years as principal, she reported that she had only hired four new teachers and more than half of those we interviewed had been at the school for a decade or more.

In 2013-14, Dickinson began implementing WCSD’s new hiring system, which granted all district schools significant autonomy in selecting candidates but mandated that a site-based hiring committee composed of the principal, teachers, and parents, follow a multi-step process involving interviews and demonstration lessons. Although the principal was required to interview all tenured teachers from within WCSD who applied for the opening, she was not required to select the most senior applicant from the district. In fact, after the interviews, she was permitted to hire teachers who were new to the district even if veteran WCSD teachers applied for the position.

**Fitzgerald Elementary** was founded in the 1960s and served 400 students in grades K-5. Early in its history, Fitzgerald was lauded as a top WCSD school. But, it severely declined in the 1980s. In 2008, Shannon Forte, an experienced WCSD principal, began her tenure as Fitzgerald’s seventh principal in ten years. She brought Daniella Randall with her from her prior WCSD school to serve as Assistant Principal. Randall had taught for nearly two decades. Forte and Randall had led Fitzgerald for fewer than two years when the state placed the school in turnaround status. This was important because if Forte had been at the school for two years or more, state turnaround law would

have required the district to replace her. Principal Forte explained that it was “such a gift” that she and Randall had been at Fitzgerald pre-turnaround, because they knew which teachers they wanted to rehire. Although the law required Forte to replace at least 50% of the teachers—and granted her autonomy to decide which teachers would receive offers—Forte replaced 65%. Tenured teachers who did not receive an offer from Forte had the right to transfer to a different WCSD school. Since turnaround, administrators said that Fitzgerald had little annual turnover annually; one reported that the school had hired roughly 3-5 teachers each year since the start of turnaround.

When the school exited turnaround as a Level 1 school at start of the 2013-14 school year, the state granted Fitzgerald special status as a Innovation School, the state granted Fitzgerald special status as a Innovation School, which allowed Forte to maintain some hiring autonomy—namely the right to select teachers without regard to seniority, a provision that was subsequently granted to all district schools. However, the status did not allow Forte to involuntarily transfer teachers; if Forte wished to dismiss an underperforming teacher, she had to comply with the WCSD evaluation process for doing so.

**Hurston K-8** opened in 2003, with roughly 800 students. It was founded by WCSD as a Pilot School—a district school that has significant decision-making authority, is exempt from most union and school committee work rules, and is overseen by a joint district/union committee. Despite its relative autonomy, Hurston had a rough beginning. It had five principals during its first seven years and then was put into turnaround by the state, which required that a new principal be hired. Daniel Hinds—an experienced district principal—began the turnaround process at Hurston in the spring of 2010. He

was supported by an administrative team including an Assistant Principal, a Professional Development Director, an Operations Director, and several others. As part of the turnaround process, Hinds was required to replace at least 50% of the school's teachers. He had autonomy in deciding which teachers would receive contract offers; others with tenure had the right to transfer to different WCSD schools. In the first year of the turnaround, Hinds replaced approximately 80% of Hurston's teachers. Since then, the school had retained 92% of those hired—a fact which some credited to Principal Hinds' belief that, as one explained, “if you go through blood, sweat and tears to make [replacing 80% of staff] happen, then you need to choose the right people [and subsequently] make sure that you're retaining them.”

At the start of the 2013-14 school year, Hurston exited turnaround as a Level 1 school. The school maintained Pilot School status, which continued to allow the principal hiring autonomy and the right to transfer teachers involuntarily. During layoffs, however, the school would still have been affected by the district's need to assign surplus tenured teachers in WCSD and might be required to accept one. All Hurston teachers were covered by the WCSD teachers contract and paid according to the district's negotiated pay scale.

### ***The Charter Schools***

**Kincaid Charter Middle School**, an in-district charter school authorized by the state, served 470 students in Grades 6-8. It opened with all three grades in 2011 as the first of five schools managed by the expanding Kincaid Charter Network, using federal turnaround funds to “restart” a WCSD school. Although no teachers from the prior school were rehired, most students remained. Kincaid's principal at the time of our study,

Louis Kain, succeeded Kincaid's founder in 2013, after serving as a founding Leader of Instruction (LI) at the school. His administration included three LIs, a Director of Operations, and two Deans of Discipline.

After Kincaid's charter was approved by the district and then by the state, its board of trustees was required to "negotiate in good faith" a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the WCSD teachers union. However, state law entitled Kincaid to "fully implement" its proposed charter if an agreement between the parties was not reached 30-days before the school opened. Although Kincaid is overseen by the state, teachers continue to be covered by the WCSD collective bargaining unit. They achieve tenure under state law and are paid and accrue seniority in keeping with the district's contract. In compliance with the charter's MOU with the district, Kincaid had hiring autonomy for all school-based positions, and the school was permitted to involuntarily transfer teachers out of the school and into the WCSD excess pool. WCSD was responsible for processing the hiring and dismissal of Kincaid teachers. Executive Director Beckford explained that teacher turnover at Kincaid was higher than he desired: he estimated that 78% of teachers had remained at their school from year to year. Of that 78%, however, some who stayed in the building moved out of teaching positions and into other roles. When they did so, they left a teaching vacancy in their wake and the school therefore had to hire a new teacher to fill the position. The school also hired three new TTs each year.

**Naylor Charter K-8**, a state-authorized charter school founded as a new school in 2002, served 400 students. The school was the first of three schools established in the Naylor Charter School Network. Claire North, a Naylor teacher, was promoted to

principal in 2011, when her predecessor became network co-director. As principal, she was supported by an Assistant Principal, a Director of Operations, and a Dean of Discipline. Naylor operated independently of WCSD and was state-funded. The school was not unionized; teachers were at-will employees. Salaries were determined by the school, and according to Executive Director Samantha Ram, were comparable to WCSD salaries in 2014.

Naylor had complete hiring autonomy; teachers had to be “highly qualified,” but only ELL teachers had to be licensed. In general, Naylor administrators reported that retention rates within the network were high—roughly 90%. However, as at Kincaid, this number included teachers who switched positions—often moving into a leadership role within the school. It also included teachers who moved to a new school within the network. The school also hired nine new TTs each year.

**Rodriguez Charter K1-8**, also a state-authorized charter school, was founded in 1995 and served 490 students. The school did not belong to a network, although an Executive Director, Tamar Trotman, managed both the lower and upper schools within the same building. She began her tenure at Rodriguez in 1996, as a teacher, and succeeded the school’s founder as Executive Director in 2013. Rodriguez’s two divisions were led by Principals Sam Ryan and Julia Rega. Like Naylor, Rodriguez received funding from the state and operated independently of the district. Rodriguez teachers were not unionized and their salaries were substantially lower than those of WCSD teachers. Like Naylor, Rodriguez had complete hiring autonomy; teachers had to be “highly qualified,” by federal standards, but only ELL teachers required licensure. Retention rates at Rodriguez were high; Principal Rega reported hiring “between 0-2”

teachers annually.

In summary, each of the six schools had a unique history. Although Dickinson and Rodriguez each had relatively new leaders, both schools benefited from many years of a stable administration and teaching faculty, and both Principal Davila and Executive Director Trotman had worked at their respective schools for many years before taking the helm. Similarly, Naylor's relatively new Principal North had taught at the school before succeeding Executive Director Ram as principal. In contrast, at Fitzgerald and Hurston, both principals were appointed by the district to turn around schools that were notorious for their unstable leadership, while at Kincaid, Principal Kain was appointed to be the school's second principal in three years, during the restart phase of a formerly failing school. In addition, at Fitzgerald, Hurston and Kincaid, most current teachers had been hired during the turnaround phase.

Each school also operated within a particular policy context, which influenced their approach to staffing. Dickinson did not have special status and was therefore bound by all WCSD collective bargaining agreements and other state and district policies. By contrast, Fitzgerald and Hurston benefited from substantial hiring autonomy as a result of both turnaround regulations and their special status within the district. However, they were required to hire teachers who were certified to work in WCSD and each had to comply with some provisions related to layoffs and involuntary transfers. Kincaid's status as an in-district charter granted Principal Kain substantial hiring autonomy, but, like Fitzgerald and Hurston, he was required to hire certified teachers. Finally, because Naylor and Rodriguez were not formally part of the district, both schools had complete autonomy to hire teachers and were only bound by certification rules for a small number

of specialized positions.

### **Organizational Perspectives on Hiring**

Leaders at all six schools were clear that their school was not the right place for every teacher. They believed that the purpose of hiring was to determine whether there was a good match between the school and an applicant. At Rodriguez Charter, Executive Director Trotman captured this common sentiment. In describing her applicant pool, she said, “some are a good fit for Rodriguez. Others are great teachers, but we are not perfect for them and they are not perfect for us.”

Schools assessed fit on several dimensions. First and foremost, leaders explained that teachers had to be aligned with their school’s mission. As an administrator at Fitzgerald said, their mission was one of “social justice,” where “we all know that this school is altering the course of these kids’ lives.” At Naylor, this mission was repeatedly described as “closing the achievement gap.” Principals at both Fitzgerald and Hurston said that during the turnaround process, their primary decision rule in hiring was, as Principal Forte explained, whether teachers shared the “belief system” that would enable them to achieve their mission—“did they think that children who are African American or Latino and poor could learn?” Principal Hinds attributed his school’s success in moving beyond turnaround status to the fact that teachers “had that fundamental belief,” even if they “didn’t have a track record of success.” It wasn’t necessary to convince them that “this *could* be done. It was... supporting them in the how.”

Schools also assessed a candidate’s fit based on whether applicants were aligned with the school’s philosophical and practical beliefs about how this goal could be achieved—namely, how the work would get done. Although the schools differed



dramatically in their beliefs about what the Dickinson principal called “the way to make a difference,” all suggested that teachers had to agree with their school’s way of doing things. Principal Kain at Kincaid Charter explained that when hiring, he weighed the “will-skill” dimension: “We try to limit as many low-will hires as we can because [will] is the thing that we’ve found we cannot change or don’t have the patience to change.” He said that the school was “willing to do what we have to do to help you build content, if you really want... to be here.”

Ideas about what teachers would be expected to do differed. At some, they had to be ready to implement the school’s behavior system—which administrators saw as contributing to “school culture.” For example, at Kincaid, teachers had to endorse a “no excuses mentality,” defined in school documents as a belief that “regardless of circumstances... there is no reason why a student cannot be successful in school and why a teacher cannot achieve meaningful results with his or her students.” For example, if a student failed to turn in homework, “we do not want to hear excuses about why it’s missing. Instead, we want to see the homework completed and we don’t want the homework to be missing in the future.” Those interviewed at Naylor identified similar expectations. One described the school as “similar to the traditional no-excuses charter school,” noting “super high expectations for behavior.” In contrast, at Rodriguez, Trotman said, “the biggest thing for us is... we’re not a ‘no excuses’ charter school. That’s not what we believe in... You need to believe that you’re here to serve all the kids who walk through the door and you need to believe that they can and will succeed. You need to believe that we’re not giving up on kids and that it may sometimes take heroic efforts. But we’re going to work with kids and families to have them succeed.”

Beyond norms of discipline, however, all schools sought teachers who were committed to the school's prevailing pedagogy and could be expected to participate actively in the school's professional culture. For example, at Fitzgerald and Rodriguez, participants explained that the curriculum was, in the words of one teacher, "very demanding academically" because teachers were expected to develop complex, project-based learning experiences for students. At Hurston and Dickinson, the arts were a priority because, as Principal Davila said, a strong arts program is key to providing students with an education on par with what their suburban peers' experience.

Each school's approach was supported by its professional culture. For example, at all schools, teachers were expected to exhibit what those at Naylor called a "growth mindset"—an unwavering commitment to improving one's craft. Across schools, teachers routinely gave and received instructional feedback and were held accountable for implementing that feedback in subsequent classes. Executive Director Ram explained that administrators were not focusing on teachers' deficits, but rather on their continuous improvement: "What's interesting in life is getting better at things all the time." At Hurston, administrators concurred, explaining that to be successful, teachers must have what one described as, "the mindset to make things work for the kids that they have that period, that year. That might not necessarily be what worked for the kids they had third period... or last year." Teachers had to "be willing to constantly reassess, reinvent and really be creative."

Although administrators in the six schools in our sample realized that many applicants saw their school as a desirable place to work, they believed it was important, as one Fitzgerald interviewee explained, to simultaneously "[sell] the school and... be

upfront about the challenges.” Principal North said that she had “tried to be more transparent” since two new hires left because they “didn’t realize what they were signing up for.” Several principals explained what “being upfront” involved. Principal Rega talked with applicants about what she called Rodriguez’s “work ethic.” Teachers, she said, were “never satisfied—we want every child to succeed... there are teachers who stay ‘til 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 at night. There are teachers who come early. There are teachers who have [their own] kids and go home and... [continue doing school] work.” At Naylor, Principal North explained to applicants that they would be expected to “work really long hours... creating curriculum from scratch...staying after school tutoring...calling parents on their way home... I have teachers who sign up for observation debriefs with me starting at 6:15 every morning.”

At Fitzgerald, one administrator recalled that teachers who wanted to remain at the school during turnaround were told, “We have a lot of hard work to do. It’s going to require you doing more than maybe some of your other teacher friends are doing in other schools. It’s going to require more of your time. It may require you to change the way you feel about your teaching practice.” She was clear—“we’re on a mission and if you don’t see yourself as fitting in here, we welcome you to go somewhere else.” Since turnaround, the principal had also been explicit with applicants about what one described as the emotional “intensity” of teaching children growing up in poverty: “The biggest challenge is that our student population is very demanding... they don’t have a lot of their basic needs being met... they just live in a high-poverty environment where they don’t have a lot of social and emotional support.” Consequently, she explained, students “need a lot of their needs to be met by their classroom teachers.”

At each school, principals were convinced that a two-way, information-rich process of hiring had played a significant role in their success. “Good hiring matters,” Principal Ryan explained, “If you hire well, and you’re explicit beforehand, you don’t need to fire people... If you’re really clear about what kind of teacher [a Rodriguez teachers is]... [applicants] just know they’re not that teacher and they’re like... ‘This isn’t the right environment for me.’” If they subsequently discovered that teachers disagreed with the school’s mission and culture, school leaders often took responsibility. As one said, “It’s probably just our fault in hiring.”

### **Components of a Two-Way, Information Rich Process**

#### **Decision Making Authority and System Management**

The schools employed a range of systems for managing the hiring process. At all six, the school-based leadership team was ultimately responsible for offering positions and every principal reported spending significant time on hiring. At the district schools, principals often made these decisions with help from others. For example, at Dickinson, Principal Davila’s decisions were informed by teachers on the school’s hiring committee. At Fitzgerald, Principal Forte relied on her assistant principal and instructional coach in making hiring decisions, whereas at Hurston, Principal Hinds frequently consulted with other administrators. At the charters, a range of school-based administrators made decisions about hiring. Naylor’s Executive Director Ram said that Principal North had “decision rights” over hiring, though she often conferred with Ram and with her assistant principal and teachers. At Kincaid, decisions were made by Principal Kain or by LIs. Finally, at Rodriguez, both principals recommended candidates to Executive Director, Tamar Trotman, who virtually always concurred.

While all principals were heavily invested in making hiring decisions, management of the hiring process was decidedly different at charter schools than at district schools. At the district schools, principals spent countless hours reviewing résumés in their personal inboxes and on the district’s new online dashboard, and then personally communicating with candidates to schedule interviews and organize demonstration lessons. At these schools, hiring was often fragmented because, as one interviewee explained,

There’s so many demands that in the moment, when you get the résumé and the person looks good and you’re afraid that tomorrow they might take a different job, there’s an instinct to call... then you’re on the phone... and somebody comes in and has had a fight, so you hang up the phone and go to the crisis and then you never get to logging [the call]. So then, the next day... you remember, ‘Oh! I called someone!’”

Consequently, district principals asked other administrators or teachers to help manage the process. One such person explained that although hiring is “outside the scope of my work... it needs to be done and there’s only so many human[s] who can do it.”

In stark contrast, at the charters, the hiring process was formally managed by talent staff who had been carefully trained by their network and principals and who collaborated with school-based leaders to ensure a process that was organized and smooth for the school and for applicants. At Kincaid Charter Network, the talent division included ten members, who were responsible for staffing all five schools in the growing network. The recruitment team was directed by Lola Bluth, a TFA alumna with five years teaching experience, including one at Kincaid. In addition to supervising three full-time recruiters, Bluth oversaw the network’s part-time “résumé reviewer”—a former teacher who worked from home. At Naylor, one individual, Sophie Gold—also a TFA alumna—was responsible for staffing the network’s three schools. Likewise, Virginia

Spronz managed staffing at Rodriguez. New to education, Spronz had worked for decades in HR at a law firm prior to joining Rodriguez.

The talent staff at all three charters had developed systems for managing the many applications they received—sometimes hundreds per position. At Kincaid and Naylor, where the highly structured hiring process was codified in handbooks and rubrics, talent staff tracked the progression of each application on-line. At all three charters, talent staff reviewed applications and eliminated what one called “obvious no’s,” screened the “maybes,” and quickly spotted the rare candidate worthy of being “fast-tracked” through the process. The talent team alleviated the problems that the district school principals experienced with managing hiring while still being responsible for everything else in the schools. Candidates recounted the benefits of that system. A current Kincaid teacher recalled, “The hiring process was great.” He “was very impressed...I didn’t feel like their questions were necessarily revolutionary, but I felt like the system of ‘We’re going to do a phone interview. It [will] be at this time... They didn’t even have a building yet... and they seemed very much to have their stuff together.’” As an urban educator who had experienced working in what he called an “underperforming” district school, he said the organized system was a much-needed “breath of fresh air.”

## **The Process**

### **Step 1: Screening**

During the first phase of a multi-stage hiring process, all six schools relied on application materials—a résumé, sometimes a cover letter, and occasionally additional components—to decide whether candidates were worth serious consideration.

#### *The Initial Application*

Each school assessed a candidate's initial application to determine whether a potential match existed. Because application reviewers "wield a lot of power," as Lola Bluth explained, it was important that they understood what the schools were seeking. All of the schools required applicants to submit a résumé, and some also requested a cover letter. The schools used these materials in different ways. For example, at Fitzgerald, Principal Forte explained that résumés gave her "a pretty good sense" of candidates' teaching experiences—a priority, because her students "can't afford a lost year" because they are "very fragile." Others at her school relied on résumés for information about the candidates' content knowledge based on the colleges they had attended and the degrees they had earned. This was important, as one explained because Fitzgerald students were "very far behind." At Dickinson, Principal Davila looked for teachers with experience at specific schools within the district; she preferred candidates who had attended WCSD schools, themselves. Because candidates applied to district schools through a centralized online system—and therefore could easily apply to multiple schools—Davila also looked for candidates who added "a personal note... saying how they've heard wonderful things about Dickinson and they really want to work here." For certain positions, she also looked for specific experience and training. For example, in hiring a new literacy interventionist, Principal Davila scanned résumés for a teacher who was "Wilson-trained and ha[d] taught first grade."

At Rodriguez Charter, several administrators said that, in addition to résumés, they carefully read cover letters. One explained that she looked for "interesting experiences," such as living abroad or an esoteric job experience. Another said, "I like seeing if cover letters are thoughtfully done and if they have personality... I hate really

dry, boring cover letters.” Her colleagues reported that they also used cover letters to learn about a candidate’s philosophy or, as one said, “thinking about children.” Several said that they quickly rejected applicants with subpar writing. In addition, Rodriguez administrators looked for teachers with experience in urban schools; as one explained, they “bring in almost anyone who has it.”

## **Step 2: Pre-Interview Screening**

Some schools invited candidates who passed the first round of paper screening to participate in an exercise before deciding whether they should advance to the next round. At Rodriguez, applicants were sent a “pre-screening questionnaire,” asking them about their educational philosophy, their interest in urban education, their classroom management strategy, and their approach to teaching specific subjects. The purpose was not only to learn about the candidates, but also to give them a sense of what the school stood for and to eliminate those who lacked genuine interest in Rodriguez. As one administrator explained, “it’s a kind of test to see how much you want to work here. If you’re sending your résumé to a thousand places and we [say], ‘now do a little more work’ and you do that work, it’s showing that you want it.” She continued to describe the responses they sought, admitting that, “it’s not actually the answer that matters so much to me as—who is the person?” If the answers were “articulate, well thought out... if we’re on the same page, we bring them in.”

At Kincaid, Naylor, Fitzgerald and Hurston, a short phone interview conducted by someone other than the principal served a similar purpose. At Kincaid, the network talent team conducted roughly 100 phone interviews each week. They asked applicants scripted questions and considered their responses to determine what one called “mission fit and



basic educational philosophy.” Candidates were assessed on a 5-point scale; they earned up to four points based on their responses and an additional point for meeting what the talent handbook called “strategic diversity requirements around gender, race, or second language.” Candidates who scored 3-5 points advanced to the next stage in the network’s process: an interview at a specific school.

At Naylor, Sophie Gold conducted all screening interviews. She used a protocol to determine whether candidates were “mission aligned,” possessed a “growth mindset, and exhibit[ed] “organization and overall poise.” Gold reported that Naylor “never take[s] a chance on mission alignment,” which she ascertained by asking candidates why they wanted to teach at Naylor. “If they don’t have a good answer,” she said, “that’s a big red flag. If they don’t ever mention the achievement gap, if they don’t ever discuss urban kids and that all students need good teaching—not just rich white kids”—they are rejected.

Gold said that Naylor quickly rejected candidates whose “attitude towards the students was “not respect-based, but instead deficit-based.” Executive Director Ram explained, “We screen out any people with savior complexes, who think that they’re here to save our kids and there’s something wrong with them.” They sought candidates who said things such as, “I was given an excellent education—I want to give that to others.” But, if a candidate said, “oh, these kids, the homes they come from’—as soon as the ‘homes they come from’ comes in, they’re not a good candidates for us.”

They further assess candidates’ attitudes, testing whether they have a strong internal locus of control. Ram described asking questions such as “Tell us about your student who made the most progress last year and why. Tell us about the student who

made the least progress and why.” They seek candidates who “own both sides”—rather than those who say things like, ““really, it’s the parents in both situations.””

In contrast, Fitzgerald and Hurston reported using phone interviews to learn about what one called applicants’ “teaching practice and beliefs.” A Hurston administrator explained,

If they’re a literacy coach, I might ask [how they teach] tone and mood... If it’s math, ‘How do you get kids to not just do fractions, but understand fractions? What does that look like? How do you make it come alive for them?... What’s a difficult concept that you’ve cracked—that you have figure out how to present it to kids and engage kids with it and get them to master it?’

Similarly, Fitzgerald administrators asked teachers to describe their lesson planning process and posed scenarios to candidates, such as how they would approach teaching students who were significantly behind academically. Administrators explained that they sought candidates who recognized that, as one said, “it’s stressful, not only for the child, but it’s stressful for the family because nine times out of ten, there’s a behavior problem that’s attached to whatever is impeding the learning.” Administrators also reported asking teachers why they wanted to teach at Fitzgerald—a question that elicited responses that were, as one said, “helpful in understanding whether they’ve done any research on the school.”

Across schools, current teachers talked positively about participating in a screening interview before interviewing with the principal. At Kincaid, one explained that it gave applicants the opportunity to learn more about “what the organization is about,” how it functioned, and then ask questions. It also enabled applicants to get a sense of what the school was seeking and, as another said, begin thinking about “how you could fit into that.”

### **Step 3: Interview with an Administrator**

At most schools, the next step in the process was an interview with the candidate's future supervisor—most often, the principal. At Kincaid and Naylor, school-based interviewers followed up on what the talent team had learned about candidates and further explored whether the candidate was, as Principal Kain explained, “philosophically inclined to want to hold the kinds of expectations we believe help students focus and prepare them for learning experiences.”

Principal Kain explained that he asked Kincaid's applicants questions such as, “you see a student on Friday afternoon walking down the hall. They're getting ready to leave and their shirt is untucked. What do you do?” Kain noted that applicants were “typically pretty candid if you ask that question without a lot of framing,” and the school used it to gauge candidates' instincts:

If, philosophically, you might say something in that moment—‘I don't think students should ever have to have their shirt tucked in,’ then you're not going to really like that they have to raise their hands [in class]... or that we require them to sit up without their hands on their face.

He questioned whether such candidates were “coachable.” Current Kincaid teachers repeatedly reported that the school's strict systems were a key attraction to the school. As one said, the interview made it clear that she would be able to “slip right into the culture” and teach, instead of dealing with behavior.

At other schools, administrators used interviews to learn more about candidates' approaches to curriculum design. For example, a Hurston administrator explained that strong literacy candidates would not say, “I use this textbook, or only this book.” Instead, she said, they would describe a more nuanced approach, such as, “if I want to grow the reading, writing, speaking of my English-language learners, then these are the

key components of my classroom I need to have. I'm going to pull from this material and that material.” To her, such candidates would be “truly able to describe how they think about designing lessons... they're describing, ‘Okay, these are some of the lower order things. These are some of the middle, the higher order thinking we want them to have, and this is how I'm going to scaffold it.’”

Current teachers recalled appreciating being asked to dig deeply into curriculum when they were being hired. They reported that these conversations helped them understand how the school would help them grow as teachers. For example, a math teacher at Rodriguez described her “long phone conversation with Tamar Trotman about math methodology in general.” In that conversation, the teacher explained, “she and I were just on the same page. Tamar is one of the most incredible people I've ever met, so smart and has her finger so on the pulse. As soon as I spoke with Tamar, I got off the phone and said... I hope I get this job.” Current teachers also explained that it had been important to them to know that their future colleagues were carefully vetted for their subject expertise—especially when they would fill hard-to-staff middle school positions, such as combined math/science positions. Teachers who filled hard-to-fill positions often left quickly, and teachers who stayed wound up training their new, frequently novice, colleagues.

At Dickinson, the only school in the sample fully bound by the district's new hiring process, Principal Davila was required to ask a particular set of questions in every interview. She said that this made the process “cumbersome.” She recalled one candidate who reported already knowing the questions because “they're the same questions wherever you go.” Therefore, Davila supplemented with “little questions” that

allowed her to “go with [her] gut” about what she believed would be important for teachers at Dickinson—a commitment to working in partnership with families and an interest in the “family feel” of the school’s professional environment. Before the district began requiring her to use the scripted questions, Davila had asked candidates just two questions: “Tell me about your family” and “why do you want to be a teacher?”

The teachers Davila hired appreciated being asked to talk about their links to the local community and to their own family. To them, the questions signaled shared values—as did the personal manner in which the interview was conducted. One Dickinson teacher said that when she was hired, Principal Davila invited her future grade team colleagues to participate in the interview because, as Davila told them, “You’re the ones who are going to have to work with [her].”

Administrators across schools also thought of interviews as providing an opportunity to convey to candidates, as one said, “what we’re all about.” Teachers reported that this strategy worked. For example, a Kincaid teacher reported that she “knew in the interview that I would love working here” because of the “fabulous questions” she was asked, such as, ““If you could wave a magic wand and fix things at your school, what would you do?”” She was amazed to hear administrators discuss a vision that “might [actually] come true”—especially since, “as an isolated teacher” she had not always felt like teachers had a “hand in the vision.” However, based on her interview, “it was pretty clear that [teachers] would have a hand in it.” Likewise, a Rodriguez teacher who had been hired a decade earlier still remembered how her interviewer’s “really good questions” illuminated how special Rodriguez was. Compared with her prior school—where “it was kind of like, ‘Do you plan on having any kids?’ All

right, you're hired,"—her interview at Rodriguez was “very interesting. The contrast was so remarkable.”

#### **Step 4: Teaching Demonstration**

In contrast to the hiring process in many schools, interviews carried limited weight at the schools in this study. As one Fitzgerald administrator explained, “you can have the most fabulous answers in an interview, but if you can't stand up in front of the class and build positive relationships with students... it's not going to be a good fit.” Therefore, every school in our sample required candidates to teach a demonstration lesson—or “demo”—before they decided whether to offer the applicant a position.

Principals repeatedly said that, as Hurston Principal Hinds remarked, “with demos you can tell really quickly” whether a candidate would be a match for the school. For example, Hinds recalled visiting one applicant's classroom, at a school slated for closure. He said, “as soon as we walked in the room, I knew. I was like, ‘I want this woman... every kid should have this... teacher.’ Just remarkable.” For Hinds, “it was a reminder... to suspend judgment [about teachers in failing schools]...as soon as we walked out, we were like, ‘we're done!’” Similarly, at Dickinson—which was requiring demo lessons for the first time—a current Dickinson teacher and hiring committee member compared watching two finalists for a drama position teach:

One [applicant] did a demo lesson that was very... rudimentary and she spent... 10-15 minutes waiting for the kids to not only sit still... but looking at her and not moving. And I wanted to pull my hair out... and then she did a few fun little games, but they were very low level... Then the second woman that came in...she did classroom management... in about a minute... She had quickly told the kids what she wanted, where to go...by the end of it she had taught them about pantomime. She had had the kids paint—with their bodies—this picture of being at a baseball game... She put one kid in a pose and it was obvious that the kid was about to hit a baseball and then she said ‘now, who could add something to this picture?’ One kid ran up... she had another kid selling hot dogs. Another

person was cheering in the stands. Another person was an umpire. Another kid was fielding – it was incredible. And, you know, both women gave pretty good interviews, but one – the demo lesson was—we all went back and were like, “okay so we’re going to hire her right?” And everybody was like “yes.”

He and his colleagues “couldn’t believe how revealing” demos were.

Some principals preferred to observe candidates in their own classroom because, as Hurston Principal Hinds said, “context matters. You can’t manage a group of kids you don’t know.” Further, by April, he wanted “to see the relationships that [candidates] have with the kids that [they’ve] worked with all year.” A Fitzgerald administrator concurred, describing that when she observed applicants in their own classroom, she assessed, “are they more stand-in-front-of-the-classroom-and-lecture, expect the kids to take notes and then do practice problems? Or do they have manipulatives?” She also observed, “What kind of work is on the wall? How have they prepared for me to come and see them? On a daily basis, what is it like to be a kid in their class? Do they have management issues?” However, others favored conducting demos at the hiring school, in a current teacher’s classroom. This saved principals travel time and allowed candidates to see the school and interact with teachers and students. It also allowed others to watch. At Dickinson, for example, hiring committee members watched the demos. At Rodriguez, Principal Rega always invited teachers to watch with her so she could “have some teacher voice” in assessing candidates’ teaching. However, arranging live demos introduced a host of logistical problems, which Naylor tried to solve by asking candidates to film themselves teaching—an approach that Principal North preferred because it allowed her to see candidates’ classrooms.

Some administrators gave applicants substantial guidance about what to teach during their demo. Principal Rega said she learned a lot about applicants from what they

asked about the class they would teach: “I am always looking for that extra, that creativity, that critical thinking, that something that’s beyond... standard good teaching.” She admitted, however, that she was also “pleased when [candidates] say, ‘I’ll just come in and do something.’” Principal North instructed Naylor’s candidates to “tilt the [video] camera so that I can see the kids,” which enabled her to provide “management feedback.” Similarly, at Kincaid—which also focused on management during demo lessons—a novice teacher explained how she had been counseled by another teacher when preparing for her demo: “As long as you catch anything that looks off task, they’ll love you... Sound confident... Stand up there and don’t be afraid to give a demerit. Don’t be afraid to be sharp and on task—don’t let the kids intimidate you.” Although she recalled that this advice was “very intimidating,” it ultimately proved useful.

Several administrators explained that the lesson itself was not the most important factor in the demo; they were equally interested in what they called the post-lesson “reflection” because it helped them understand whether candidates possessed the “growth mindset” required to thrive at their school. Administrators assessed this in a formal debrief following the demo, where they looked for what the applicant said went well—or, more importantly—what didn’t. Principal Forte listened for whether applicants took personal responsibility for shortcomings in the lesson, or if they subtly blamed students. For example, she listened for whether a candidate said, “‘I wish I had put nametags on the kids when they were moving on the rug and I couldn’t catch their attention’... or ‘oh, the kids moved around a lot on the rug.’” Forte further explained that she was perpetually amazed at how often “people try to fight” when she offered constructive criticism. Like her fellow principals, she knew that “if [candidates] can’t take any hard



feedback,” teaching at her school was “not going to go so well.” In the words of a Rodriguez administrator, “we want teachers to understand that that’s part of being here.”

Current teachers were generally very positive about their experiences with teaching demo lessons and debriefing them during their application process. Many said that they had expected schools would ask them to demonstrate their teaching and they reported feeling skeptical of schools where they were not asked to do so. At some schools, the demo requirement conveyed the priority that the school placed on pedagogy; as Principal Ryan observed, the teachers Rodriguez hires “do not want to work at a school where someone’s going to hire you just on how well you interview!”

At schools that viewed the post-lesson debrief as a key part of the demo process, current teachers suggested that the experience of getting feedback on their instruction was what convinced them that they wanted to work at the school. For example, one Naylor teacher, who left her previous school where she had been “thrown to the wolves” as a novice with no curriculum and no coaching, accepted a job at Naylor because of its explicit focus on supporting teachers. Another explained that, although she had delivered “kind of a dry, boring lesson,” she was surprised that the feedback she received “wasn’t...demeaning,” but rather allowed her to reflect. That experience contrasted with working at her previous school, where administrators “didn’t talk about the teaching when observing,” but instead assessed, “does your board look great? Is your room straight and neat?”... It was more of a performance evaluation than a teaching evaluation.” A third, recently hired teacher reported that he “loved the hiring process.” To him, the lesson debrief provided “a great preview of what it would be like to work [at the school]. Having taught at Naylor for less than a year, he reflected:

[It] was exactly the same tone and intent as my weekly debriefs with my principal after she observes me. The questions were... What did you think went well in this lesson? What are some things you think could have gone better? Instead of feeling like they were looking for canned answers, we really got into the nitty-gritty of the lesson in a way where I felt like... I had actually gotten a lot of helpful ideas about how to improve the specific lesson that I had sent them [and] a much better sense of the sort of classroom management that they were looking for. They were commenting on how informal I was in the classroom, which I was really shocked by because I thought it was the strictest and most efficient class... and I was really proud of it.

At Kincaid, teachers similarly discussed how much their experience in the debrief mattered in their decision to join the faculty. For example, one teacher recalled the feedback he received in exacting detail: “the ratio of my voice to student voice was too high. I was talking too much and... the exit ticket was not aligned as well as it should have been to the objective of the lesson.” The teacher was invited back a week later to re-teach the lesson, incorporating the feedback. Another teacher told a different story about the extraordinary effort on the part of administrators to see her teach and to debrief with her signified the support she would get at Kincaid. Because she lived out-of-state, she interviewed by phone and provided a demo video. Then, because she was, “dead in the middle of standardized testing,” a Kincaid administrator flew across the country to debrief with her in person. She explained, they “gave me pluses and deltas on how I can improve” and asked her to respond—“they wanted to see how I would interact with feedback.” Impressed, she moved to Massachusetts to take the job.

Although schools were less likely to see a demo lesson when hiring right before the start of the school year, some went to great lengths to ensure that they could see candidates teach, whether they were hired in early April, late August, or even mid-year. For example, summer hires at Rodriguez taught summer school students, and at Kincaid, they taught at a nearby afterschool club. However, although principals believed that

demos are usually good predictors of who succeeds at the school, they're not foolproof. As Principal Ryan said, "even when you've seen the person teach, you're still rolling the dice. You never know. People I thought were mediocre have been incredible. People I thought were incredible have been mediocre."

### **Step 5: Meeting with Current Teachers**

Before extending an offer, some schools engaged candidates in additional steps. At Fitzgerald, candidates were asked to collaborate with the grade team that they would join. For example, a fourth grade candidate might have met with the fourth grade team to analyze data and plan a future lesson. Determining whether candidates would collaborate well was crucial because, as Principal Forte believed, "a lot of our success is because we really work as teams—it's like you're married to your team."

At Naylor, the virtual demo and debrief was followed by a school visit, during which candidates took a self-guided tour, met the principal, and interviewed with current teachers. Although current teachers described the interview as informal—explaining that candidates could, as one said, "almost interview us too"—they also asked candidates tough questions. For example, one asked candidates about how they used data to inform instruction. She explained that if a candidate's answer was "vague" or "not that great for us—like, 'oh, I use projects to assess their understanding'" she "push[ed] them" because "we're not really big fans of projects." For example, she would follow up with, "do you ever use data from any sort of assessments to measure mastery of different standards? Can you give an example of that?" She tried to "get them to be more specific, because...we just believe in data. Tracking it speaks for itself... it's not usually biased." She believed that candidates who were "not experienced at using data, or maybe even

have some opinions against it” would not fit well at Naylor, where quantitative data “informs everything.” At Naylor, teachers recorded their thoughts about candidates and the principal reviewed them before making a final decision.

### **Step 6: Reference Checks**

Every school checked candidates’ references before extending an offer. Although candidates generally listed references, principals sometimes contacted an applicant’s current principal or colleagues—even if they were not listed. Sometimes references checks were informal—as Principal Hinds said, he had gotten great references “on the soccer field.” Usually, however, they were more formal. For example, Principal Davila explained that she regularly contacted her district colleagues to see “how [applicants] are doing at their old school.” Occasionally, she learned that applicants “that we thought would be amazing... were having [difficulties] at their old school, so much so that the principals really didn’t want to say anything regarding them... they were very careful, but... they were not trying to keep them.” This type of information weighed heavily in a school’s decision about whether to extend an offer.

Even when a school was eager to make an offer before another school did so, reference checking was—as one talent director puts it—“a hard and fast rule.” Schools generally did not have a standard set of questions. Instead, as Principal North explained, at Naylor, they develop “a whole line of questioning... after we’ve met the person.” This was intended to yield “information on what we think they might struggle with.” For example, North specified, “we watch a [demo] video, and let’s say the management is just awful, but we have a great debrief where the teacher takes a ton of awesome feedback. Then you wonder, ‘Well, it’s still really bad after two years.’” So, she would

ask the reference “How often is this teacher getting observed? How often are they getting feedback? Have they ever responded negatively to feedback?” North recalled a teacher with “terrible” behavior management who was “great on the phone. I found out from his principal he’s never been observed. Well, if you have no one helping you, you’re not going to get better.” After checking references, the principal extended an offer.

### **Part III: Courting the Candidate**

Although the schools received many applicants for each opening, the candidate pool remained shallow and strong applicants often received several offers. Recruitment, therefore, did not end once a candidate submitted an application. Instead, at various stages of the hiring process, schools worked to ensure that candidates would choose to accept an offer if extended. Current teachers said that this strategy worked: as one explained, Kincaid made her “feel wanted”—a welcome experience in her otherwise frustrating quest to find an urban teaching job.

District schools generally did not have, as one Hurston administrator said, “a ton of glossy, branding type of things.” Instead, they “do the selling with our results and with showing them what kind of team they’ll be a part of.” Charters, however, used their substantial hiring budgets to send applicants what one called “swag” emblazoned with the school logo. In addition, all schools paid close attention to what favored candidates were seeking in a school—and then, based on those factors, customized their recruitment strategy. For example, a Rodriguez administrator explained, if a candidate “really wants to be in a place where they’ll be mentored and they’ll get some professional development,” she invited them to professional development and, “pair[ed] them up with a teacher to go and see what that’s like.” Similarly, she made sure that favored

candidates saw the school's unique features: "if we really like them but they still haven't sat in on a town meeting, or a seventh grade science class, or even with a group of kids, we'll get them in here and give them face time."

Often, this "face time" involved a school tour after the interview, usually with the principal. Teachers repeatedly reported that they were sold on the school by this time with administrators. As one recalled, the principal was "very personable—it wasn't robotic, just relaxed," which made her want to work for him. Likewise, principals described their strategy in spending time touring the building with teachers. At Rodriguez, Principal Rega said, "I walk them around and I say, 'when we're going into the rooms you'll see children who are all engaged. You'll see children doing different things. You'll see two teachers in a room... working with kids... This is the kind of place we are.'" Occasionally, parents or students conducted the tours.

In reflecting on their school tour, several teachers recounted being struck by what one called the, "feeling of when you walk in the school." One said Dickinson was "noisy, dynamic, alive, happy!"—a welcome contrast to another school where she had interviewed, which was "quiet, orderly, and stuffy." Similarly, a Hurston teacher described the atmosphere there as "bright" and "focused," rather than "one of hostility. It's not one of bare walls or old, broken-down things." A Naylor teacher who had served as a TFA corps member in a "very disorganized" setting recalled being "blown away by...the work that I saw teachers doing [at Naylor] and just the overall calm of the school in comparison to my chaotic, ridiculous classroom." She recalled realizing "there's a lot of learning going on and not a whole lot of other nonsense. I want to be a part of that."

At most schools, another form of courting candidates was what one dubbed “fast-tracking” those who seemed especially attractive through the process. For example, Naylor’s Sophie Gold asked such candidates to send a demo video before a principal’s interview and she occasionally checked references before the school visit so that Principal North could make an offer on the spot. Kincaid employed a similar process and hosted special days for applicants from pipeline programs like TFA and Match Teacher Residency so that they could efficiently conduct interviews, demo lessons, and debriefs and make offers to coveted candidates quickly. However while wooing was key, one talent director cautioned that it was important not to try too hard: “You don’t want to be that dorky kid who keeps asking others to the prom. We want them to want us as much as we want them.”

### **Challenges of Implementing a Two-Way, Information Rich Process**

Across schools, teachers who experienced a rigorous, information-rich process spoke about how it helped them prepare to join their school’s faculty. However, the barriers to implementing such processes were significant, and principals often reported that the ideal two-way, information-rich hiring process that they described could not be implemented as planned. Frequently, this was the result of the differing levels of autonomy that schools had to make decisions, coupled with the bureaucratic requirements with which some had to comply. In addition, principals explained that certain positions were difficult to fill, and that the strength of their hiring process could not make up for the weakness of a school’s candidate pool—nor could it counter the competition for the limited number of candidates.

Not surprisingly, teachers at schools with dedicated talent staff and substantial hiring budgets—namely those supported by CMOs—were far more likely to experience the hiring process as it was intended. But at district schools—where principals explained that central office efforts were rarely aligned with their needs and district personnel were frequently more frustrating than they were helpful—many teachers reported having been hired in a haphazard fashion, often long after submitting their application either to the district or the school, and without having taught a demo lesson. Principals explained that this often happened because WCSD’s bureaucratic processes were, in the words of one, “too doggone tedious and long” and sometimes took until September, when, as another explained, “you’re just sweating bullets... because the person isn’t on your template... it’s a mess, bureaucracy-wise.” Thus, despite principals’ better intentions, a number of teachers we interviewed said that they had accepted jobs knowing little about their schools because, as they admitted, “I needed a job” and any position was “a foot in the [district] door.”

Principals at every school reported dealing with late and midyear hiring challenges, because turnover was sometimes unpredictable. They were clear that late hiring did not always yield negative results. As one said, “You never know who you’ll get in the summer, I got one of my best science teachers ever in the summer.” Similarly, teachers who were hired without the full process the school set out to use sometimes considered themselves fortunate for having been hired by their schools. One Dickinson teacher said, “I’m lucky. It’s a crazy, lucky story. It was written in the stars.” Another recalled, “As soon as I was here, I knew I wanted to stay... I’m so grateful that I took that chance and it all worked out.” But, on the whole, last minute hiring was extremely



challenging and forced principals to make decisions that, as one said, “in my gut, I wasn’t comfortable with.” Likewise, some teachers who had been hired at the last minute were also less positive and had plans to leave. As one disgruntled teacher said, she accepted her position because she had been laid off from another WCSD school just before summer and desperately took the first offer she received. She flatly stated that she “would not recommend that anyone work at the school.”

Even at schools that struggled less with timing and implementation, a rigorous and multi-faceted hiring process did not always ensure that schools could hire good matches. High-poverty schools are demanding environments, and even successful schools face the well-known shortage of strong candidates, particularly in math, science, and special education. These positions were hardest to fill in middle schools, or when they involved teaching multiple subjects—e.g. middle school math *and* science. As one administrator reported, her school offered a middle school math/social studies position “to like eight people who were really great, who all said, ‘in addition to being a demanding place to work, I have to teach history? I don’t know history!’” Exasperated, she said, “middle school math teachers want to teach math.”

When schools failed to find the candidates they sought, one principal explained that they “wait and wait and wait and hope we can find someone.” Frequently, as another explained, they ultimately “[took] chances on people who we might not usually take chances with,” which usually meant hiring novices who needed significant support. It sometimes also meant deemphasizing subject expertise in the hiring process. To some interviewees who had been hired to teach a subject in which they lacked expertise, this made sense. In the words of one current teacher who was hired as a novice, the

administrator who hired him said, “I can teach you how to teach math,” which she told him was secondary to his “no-excuses mindset—your willingness to hold students to high expectations and your mission alignment with the school”—traits which she “[did]nt’ think [she] could teach.” Thus, she told him, “despite your lack of experience in math, based on your mission alignment and no excuses mindset, I know that we have a place for you.” The teacher understood her point—she had boosted his confidence that, in his words, he would “be in control probably regardless of what I’m teaching. Because they were so focused on classroom management, I was like ‘this is a verb,’ ‘this is a fraction’—in practice, they look very similar.” He took the job because he “wanted a seat at the [Kincaid] table”—a good decision, in retrospect—because, he said, “I was able to learn, I suppose.” However, as is common among out-of-field teachers (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010) some interviewees resented being asked to teach a subject in which they had, as one said, “absolutely no background.” Those teachers tended to leave more quickly.

Even in subjects that are generally easier to fill, schools reported that the competition for strong teachers was fierce—and as both charter and district principals noted, had been growing since the district started becoming, in the words of one, “more active in recruiting pools.” Alumni of prestigious pipeline programs—common examples included TFA and Match Teacher Residency—got “snapped up in 24 hours by middle schools across the country,” according to one principal. Consequently, schools reported the need to make decisions more quickly than they would have liked. As one talent director said, “I’ve gotten people offers in less than a week.”

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Across the schools of this study, principals attributed their success with students to the teachers they had so carefully selected. To shape their hiring processes, each school had developed a clear philosophy about what it sought in teaching applicants. They drew upon that philosophy throughout the hiring process in assessing whether candidates were right for their school. At all schools, principals believed that teachers needed to be aligned with their school's mission and with its unique philosophical and practical beliefs about how to achieve that mission. In addition, each school had its own different ideas about the skills that teachers needed in order to succeed. At some, teachers had to be ready to enforce the school's behavior system, and at all, teachers had to be committed to the school's prevailing pedagogy. In addition, at all schools, teachers had to be well-matched to the existing professional culture, which required a willingness to collaborate and a desire to improve continuously. Teachers also had to be prepared to cope with the challenges of working in a highly demanding, urban school, where students' basic needs were often unmet.

Each of the six schools assessed candidates through a thoughtfully developed, two-way hiring process, which provided schools and candidates with ample opportunities to exchange frank information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract. At each school, the hiring process included multiple steps, such as screening résumés and cover letters, conducting pre-interview screening, an interview with the principal, a teaching demonstration and debrief, and a school visit where candidates interacted with current teachers and other members of the school community. Throughout these steps, schools recognized that they needed to court candidates, so that

an applicant who was offered a position would take it. Although these hiring processes were intensive and time-consuming, across schools, administrators and teachers alike were clear that the investment of time and resources was highly worthwhile and helped to ensure a good, secure fit between a school and its teachers. Unfortunately, however, in spite of better intentions, schools often faced challenges in implementing the information-rich hiring process that they had developed.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

These findings provide a very different picture of selecting and hiring teachers than is typically reported about the practices in public schools. Despite widespread local policies that allow public schools to develop a multi-step, information-rich hiring process, the schools in our study learned more about candidates during the pre-interview screening stage than most public schools learn about candidates during their entire process. Further, in stark contrast to the 7.5% of teachers who reported teaching a demo lesson in Liu and Johnson's (2006) study of new teachers across four states, new hires at all of the schools in our study were routinely asked to demonstrate their teaching before being offered a position. In addition, candidates in our sample often had opportunities to interact with an array of school community members and were rarely hired before meeting future colleagues.

Several principals in our study explained that, as one said, "the number one thing" that accounted for their success was hiring autonomy. These six schools collectively make a case for increasing principals' power over how and whom they hire. However, it is important to note that, despite the fact that schools in our study operated in a variety of policy contexts and with differing degrees of autonomy to hire teachers, many

components of their hiring processes were within the bounds of the hiring provisions that govern most public schools. Even Dickinson—a traditional school with no special autonomies—had the right to adopt most of the practices being employed at the other schools in the sample. Therefore, principals who wish to maximize their autonomies might use this study’s findings to guide their school-based, information-rich hiring process—one that allows both the school and its candidates to ascertain whether a promising fit exists. Simultaneously, state and district policymakers must recognize that, for district schools in our sample, contending with bureaucratic obligations was a major hurdle in implementing their carefully designed processes. In addition, district schools often lacked the resources that enabled charter school leaders to invest so much time in hiring. Policy reforms should address these issues.

School-based practitioners are rarely able to translate policies into strong practice without training and ongoing support in doing the new work. Lessons from our study might help states and districts maximize the potential of newly-granted autonomies more effectively. For example, we conducted our study as WCSD was implementing a new system requiring all schools to engage candidates in a multi-step process—one that began in early spring, rather than in late summer. Our findings illustrate the balance that districts must strike as they compel schools to change their long-standing practices. For example, at Dickinson, the new system felt “cumbersome” to the principal because it forced her to ask scripted questions that candidates already had memorized from interviews at other schools. Similarly, at Fitzgerald, administrators were overwhelmed with the tedious reporting that the district required. Yet, those interviewed at Dickinson were also impressed that the new system pushed them to begin hiring earlier and through

a committee-based process. At all of the district schools, administrators appreciated the online system. In addition, Dickinson participants lauded the new mandate for demonstration lessons, which faculty members quickly came to see as valuable. Although the schools' hiring processes were at different stages of development before the district's new system took effect, administrators at all three district schools said that the new policies were pushing their practice in a positive direction. There is therefore hope for the support that districts can offer and the standards that they can set for hiring—even in large, urban districts.

District officials might also learn from how CMO-based talent staff partnered with individual schools to support *their* needs—rather than functioning as a bureaucracy bent on standardizing and monitoring processes. Charter school administrators counted on their CMO as an indispensable partner in recruiting and vetting a pool of candidates who would be well-matched to their unique school organization. They expressed views that differed dramatically from those of district principals—some of whom viewed district staff as unreasonable bureaucrats or in the words of one, “police,” whose primary function was to ensure that schools complied with district rules. As WCSD and other districts move to shift this dynamic, districts should consider how to become resources to district schools in their hiring efforts and in doing so, free up principals time to focus on instruction. For example, districts might pre-screen applicants through written applications and/or phone screens. Principals could subsequently read candidates' responses or listen to recordings of phone screens. Such screens would also serve to minimize favoritism. Instead of mandating that principals ask a prescribed list of questions, district staff might engage school communities in a process through which

they determine what their school seeks in teachers. Then, specialists from the central office who are assigned to specific schools might help hiring committees draft interview protocols designed to assess whether applicants are a good fit. In doing this work, districts must also recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for supporting schools—both because schools differ in their needs and expectations and because some schools have well-established systems for hiring while others do not.

In addition, districts should learn from how teachers described their interactions with CMOs during their own hiring process—which starkly contrasted with how teachers described their interactions with the district central office. Numerous teachers who had initially tried to work in the district ultimately took jobs in charter schools, where they worked more hours for less money. They explained that this happened because they could not navigate what one called the “Kafkaesque nightmare” of bureaucracy required to work in a district school. Of course, districts and schools might also learn from how CMOs and individual charter schools prioritized hiring by allocating substantial time, money, and personnel to the process. On the other hand, charter schools might learn from district schools, which held less fixed definitions of the profile of promising teachers.

It is important to note that a strong hiring process cannot make up for an insufficient candidate pool. Although these schools received many applications for each open position, the number of strong applicants was very small. The six schools spent a great deal of time and resources competing for highly coveted candidates, and many of the candidates to whom they offered positions considered multiple offers. Further, because district efforts to improve hiring were not sufficiently complemented by district

efforts to improve recruitment, all schools—even charters that did not belong to the district but operated in the same geographic region—reported that the competition for promising candidates was becoming increasingly fierce as WCSD helped all schools improve their hiring systems—and, in doing so, tap into this city’s pool of candidates.

### **Implications for Research**

This paper contributes to what is known about how high-poverty schools that are doing well with their students conceive of and enact hiring procedures, and how administrators and teachers experience and assess those efforts. However, significantly more information is needed to understand how the different components of hiring might work. Future research might follow candidates—both new teachers applying for their first job and experienced teachers transferring between schools or school systems—as they go through the process of securing a new job. For example, districts such as WCSD, that are beginning to require all internal and external candidates to apply for new positions through a centrally-managed online platform, might survey applicants about where they are applying, how they learned about particular positions, and what factors eventually drove their decision about where to teach. Districts might pay special attention to where teachers with promising résumés ultimately take positions, and they might conduct follow-up interviews with those who do not ultimately take positions in the district. In addition, future studies might also track whether and how schools within districts or CMOs that are revamping their hiring processes improve as a function of new hiring policies.

Research might also follow candidates over time to determine whether information-rich hiring predicts particular outcomes. For example, are teachers who



taught demonstration lessons during the hiring process more likely to succeed with their students than those who did not? Are teachers who met with their future colleagues more likely to report positive teamwork experiences? Are principals who hire inexperienced teachers through information-rich processes better equipped to induct and support them? Are teachers who report that they had a good preview of what it would be like to work at their school ultimately less likely to depart?

In conclusion, the six schools in this study present promising strategies for improving education for students who need their teachers most. While many reformers who seek to improve teaching quality have focused attention on teacher evaluation and other human capital practices aimed at remediating or dismissing weak teachers, the schools in our study invested a large share of time and resources in hiring well. Ultimately, they reported, this meant that they were largely able to focus on helping good teachers become great—rather than worrying about dismissing teachers who were poor matches for their school or for the profession. They focused on hiring candidates who were well-matched both with their future teaching assignment and with the school organization where they worked. It is unlikely that public education will fulfill its promise of being the society’s great equalizer if districts and schools continue to ignore the importance of hiring strong talent and placing them in schools where they are likely to thrive.

## Chapter 3

### The Challenge of Recruiting and Hiring Teachers of Color:

#### Lessons From Six High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Schools

Nearly half of US public school children today are Black or Latino (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). In large urban districts, that proportion is often closer to 90% and most minority children attend schools where most other students are Black or Latino and growing up in poverty (Aud et al., 2010; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). In many districts—particularly in the Northeast—the odds of a Black or Latino student attending an integrated school today are only slightly higher than they were in the south before the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Yet, unlike in the segregated schools of the Jim Crow South where almost all teachers in Black schools were Black (Tyack, 1974), teachers of color<sup>3</sup> are poorly represented in today’s classrooms (Boser, 2014; Dilworth & Coleman, 2014; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Nationally, 82% of teachers are White, and in Massachusetts—where this study took place—97% of teachers are White (Boser, 2014). In some American cities, the odds that a Black male student will be taught by a Black male teacher are roughly one in fifty-five (Toldson, 2013).

In response to these trends, more than 36 states and the federal government have introduced initiatives to recruit more people of color to teach in public schools (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Although some efforts have been successful, recent evidence shows that

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<sup>3</sup> Although non-White teachers of every race are underrepresented in American public schools, in this paper, I use the term “of color” to refer to Black and Latino individuals. This is because the vast majority of the students in the study’s schools identify as Black and Latino, and consequently the schools primarily discuss the challenge of hiring teachers of such racial/ethnic backgrounds.

nationally, the average rate of attrition among teachers of color continues to outstrip their rate of entry (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Consequently, the overall percentage of non-White teachers has effectively diminished (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Boser, 2014; Ingersoll & May, 2011) and the “demographic divide” (Boser, 2014, p. 2) between teachers and their students in high-poverty schools remains large—and growing.

Numerous explanations exist for the dearth of Black and Latino teachers. First, Black and Latino students are far less likely to graduate from high school, and subsequently, from college, than are their White peers (Schott Foundation, 2015; US Department of Education, 2012; US Department of Education, 2013), which means few are eligible to pursue teaching careers. In addition, in spite of efforts to encourage Black and Latino college graduates to enter teaching, few do so, and those who enter frequently struggle to meet the certification requirements (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). Among Blacks and Latinos who do enter teaching, the vast majority teach in schools that enroll large portions of students of color (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irvine & Fenwick, 2011). Researchers explain that they often choose to teach there, due to a “humanistic commitment” to give back to their own communities (Achinstein et al., 2010, p. 71; Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2013). However, because the poor working conditions present in high-poverty public schools so often impede teachers’ opportunity to teach and their students’ chance to learn (S. M. Johnson, 1990, 2006; S. M. Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Simon & Johnson, 2015), teachers of all races frequently leave these schools. This well-documented phenomenon of teaching’s “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 501), which is particularly prevalent among minority teachers and in high-poverty schools, has

severely undermined efforts to increase the proportion of teachers of color (Achinstein et al., 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Given these trends, it is not surprising that schools frequently have difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers of color.

Yet, some high-poverty schools are more successful than others. Although considerable resources are spent to recruit and retain teachers of color, little is known about how individual schools conceptualize and carry out this work. Even less is known about how teachers of color experience these efforts—both during their own process of being recruited and hired at their school and as they subsequently participate in the process of recruiting and hiring new colleagues. This paper investigates these issues. It draws on data from a larger exploratory study by my research team at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, which focused on how human capital is managed and developed within schools. The sample includes six high-poverty schools—traditional, turnaround, and charter—located in the same city.

On many fronts, the six schools in our study had found solutions to problems that others in education continue to find intractable. All demonstrated academic success (as measured by state standardized tests) with their students—most of whom were Black or Latino and low-income—and several had received significant attention from public officials for their work turning around formerly failing schools. However, without exception, they reported that recruiting teachers and other staff members<sup>4</sup> of color was an enormous challenge—one compounded by the rapid rate of turnover among the educators

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper, the word teacher will be used to discuss all school-based professional staff included in the study, including all teachers, discipline staff, parent coordinators, instructional coaches, etc.

of color whom they did hire. The schools were implementing targeted strategies for recruiting and hiring more teachers of color and they were experiencing varying degrees of success in their recruitment efforts.

In the following sections, I present the demographics of teachers in American public schools and discuss why students might benefit from being taught by teachers of the same race. I then review the literature regarding the experiences of teachers of color in high-poverty schools, and explain how this work relates to recruitment. Next, I present the study methods and findings. I begin by explaining why the teachers and administrators in these schools reported that it was important to recruit teachers of color. Then, I describe how the schools approached this work and how teachers of color experienced those efforts. Finally, I explain how recruiting and hiring teachers of color remained a challenge.

## **Literature Review**

### **Background: The Challenge of Recruiting Black and Latino Teachers**

There has not always been a dearth of teachers of color in the United States. Before the Supreme Court ordered public schools to integrate, schools across the country that served Black students were primarily staffed by Black teachers (Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2000). But, in the years following 1954, as Black students were assigned to formerly White schools, tens of thousands of Black teachers and principals lost their jobs. In the 1970s and 80s, states introduced teacher certification exams, which had extraordinarily low pass rates among the small percentage of Black teachers who took them. Simultaneously, Blacks and women—who had long been teaching's guaranteed recruits—had opportunities to pursue a much wider selection of occupations. Fewer

chose education. Consequently, the percentage of Black teachers today—7% of teachers overall (Boser, 2014)—is a fraction of what it was prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* (Ahmad & Boser, 2014).

The history of Latino teachers in U.S. public schools is different. Over the last several decades, the population of Latinos in the United States has increased substantially. Currently, Latinos are the fastest growing minority group entering teaching (Flores, 2011). Nonetheless, the percentage of Latino teachers remains miniscule at 8% of teachers nationally, and the gap between the percentage of Latino teachers and the percentage of Latino students is the largest of any ethnic or racial group (Boser, 2014). For example, in Chelsea, Massachusetts, there is a 76 percentage point gap between the percentage of Latino students and teachers (Boser, 2014).

As the population of public school students has become increasingly diverse and as the population of public school teachers has become increasingly White, considerable attention has been placed on recruiting more teachers of color into teaching. Yet, substantial barriers remain. Today, fewer than 40% of Black and Latino 18-24 year olds are enrolled in college, and fewer of those enrolled are likely to graduate. Of course, just a fraction of college students plan to pursue a career in teaching. In total, only 14% of education majors identify as Black or Latino and in most states, educators must pass teacher certification exams before being hired. Pass rates on these exams remain low for Black test takers—hovering around 40%. This is roughly half the pass rate of their White peers—and Latino test takers only perform slightly better than Blacks. For those who do gain entry into the profession, however, the low salaries offered to all teachers often pose an additional set of barriers (Ahmad & Boser, 2014).

## **Why Teachers of Color Benefit Students of Color**

Dee (2005) provides the most commonly cited research-based rationale for recruiting more teachers of color. In an analysis of data from the Tennessee Project STAR experiment, which randomly assigned students to teachers, Dee found that there are “rather large educational benefits” (p. 209) to both math and reading achievement for students who are assigned to a teacher of the same race. These effects were particularly strong among Black students who were from low-income families and attending racially segregated schools. Others have found similar results for Black students and for Hispanic students (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2001; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Based on their review of the literature, Villegas and Irvine (2010) describe a wide variety of positive effects on a range of achievement-related outcomes—including test scores, attendance, high school graduation, and college-going rates—for both Black and Latino students in schools and districts where the teaching force more closely approximated the demographics of the student population, on the whole (Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1995; England & Meier, 1985; Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shuan, 1990; Fraga, Meier, & England, 1986; Hess & Leal, 1997; Meier, 1993; Pitts, 2007, as cited in Villegas & Irvine, 2010). England and Meier (1985) found additional positive effects, including that a higher proportion of Black or Latino teachers in a district was associated with lower instances of what the authors dubbed “second generation discrimination” indicators. These included Special Education placement, suspension and expulsion, higher rates of placement in gifted programs or enrichment classes. The positive effects remained even when students were not assigned to same-race teacher.

The most common argument for the importance of teachers of color is that they can serve as role models for students of color. Many scholars posit that, for low-income, students of color—who frequently do not have enough models of college-educated professionals in their lives—being taught by adults who look like them and better understand their life experiences would help them feel as if school reflected their needs and that the adults there cared about them. In turn, students might be inspired to strive high academically and professionally (Dee, 2005; Irvine, 1990; Irvine & Fenwick, 2011; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Some argue that mere exposure to same-race teachers can be powerful (Dee, 2005). Others suggest that teachers of color can strategically draw upon shared knowledge and experiences and model positive behavior in order to motivate their students to stay resilient, despite the many challenges they might face (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Irvine, 1990; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Such teachers may also be more likely to both hold and convey high expectations, exhibit caring and trusting relationships with students and their families, and serve as advocates or cultural brokers for their students. In addition, they may be less likely than their White colleagues to attribute achievement gaps to student misbehavior, a lack of effort, poor parenting or problematic home environments. Finally, teachers who share a background with their students may be more likely to employ culturally relevant teaching techniques, which have been correlated with positive student achievement outcomes (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). They may also be more likely to help students make sense of how race and power intersect in their lives and in this country (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).



Studies of pre-service and in-service teachers of color find that serving as a role model for students of color is a main driver in their decision to teach (Achinstein et al., 2010; L. S. Johnson, 2008; Ochoa, 2007; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). As Johnson (2008) found, new teachers of color often believe that they are “exemplars of possibility” (see Villegas & Irvine, 2010, p. 177) for students of color. However, teachers of color sometimes question why their supervisors and colleagues assume that they will be appropriate role models for students of color simply because of their shared racial and ethnic characteristics. Thus, sometimes teachers of color object to being identified as role models by others (Maylor, 2009).

### **Black and Latino Teachers in the Profession**

The career patterns of teachers of color differ from those of White teachers—especially in high poverty schools. Black and Latino teachers are significantly more likely to teach in high-poverty schools that enroll students of their same race. However, in contrast to White teachers who move to wealthier, Whiter schools when they transfer, Black and Latino teachers who switch schools are more likely to move to other hard-to-staff schools (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Hanushek et al., 2004; R. Ingersoll & May, 2011; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). Nevertheless, on the whole, teachers of color are more likely to leave the profession than are their White peers. Research demonstrates that when schools have trouble retaining teachers, they frequently also struggle to fill vacancies as they arise—and this contributes to a cycle of chronic turnover (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Understanding the experiences of teachers of color once they enter the profession is an important part of explaining why they are so prone to leave.

Teachers of color are, on the whole, less satisfied with their positions than are their peers (AFT, 2012; Grissom & Keiser, 2011a). In general, teachers of color are clustered in high-poverty schools, where notoriously problematic working conditions frustrate teachers, whatever their race (Simon & Johnson, 2015). In high-poverty schools, where principals are even more central to teachers' satisfaction than they are in wealthier schools (Grissom, 2011), the prevalence of inexperienced, weaker-than-average principals may substantially influence the work of teachers of color. Ingersoll and May (2011) suggest that certain aspects of the principal's leadership may be especially important for teachers of color. For example, while all teachers report leaving schools to avoid principals who are "arbitrary, abusive, or neglectful" (S. M. Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 594), Grissom and Keiser (2011) suggest that minority teachers may be especially prone to inequitable treatment at their schools—especially when their supervisor is White. For example, drawing on data from the 2003-4 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 2004-5 Teacher Follow-Up survey, they found that White principals tend to allocate special benefits—including more opportunities to earn supplemental pay and to work in specialized positions—to White teachers. Consequently, even at schools with standardized pay scales, Black teachers earned less than their "observationally equivalent" (p. 565) White colleagues at the same school. The survey data that the authors used to determine these patterns do not provide an explanation for them. Nonetheless, these trends may explain why, as minority teachers gain experience, they sort towards schools with principals of the same race—where they are subsequently likely to stay (2011). Madsen and Mabokela (2014) provide further explanation for the dissatisfaction of Black teachers. In their study of principals and assistant principals, the authors found that

White principals frequently passed on students with disciplinary challenges to teachers of color. In addition, they found that Black assistant principals were often charged with disciplinary duties and reported that they had to work harder than their White colleagues to prove their instructional expertise (2014).

Teachers of color, like all teachers, want colleagues whom they can count on for the “social interaction, reassurance, and psychological support” (Johnson, 1990, p. 156). Teachers of color also prize colleagues who possess “multicultural capital” (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011, p. 74). Yet, Black and Latino teachers frequently report that they lack such colleagues. For example, in a study of 21 teachers of color, Achinstein and Ogawa (2011) found that those teachers cared deeply about whether their colleagues shared their perspective on social justice. When teachers in their study left their schools, they frequently cited a “lack of multicultural capital (low expectations for, or negative attitudes about, students of color and lack of support for culturally responsive or socially just teaching)” (p. 74) as a chief reason for doing so.

The negative effects on individuals within organizations where they are “rare and scarce” (Kanter, 1977, p 382) have been documented repeatedly (Bristol, 2014; Flores, 2011; Hoffman, 1985; Kelly, 2007; Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978). Researchers in many fields have employed Kanter’s seminal research on women workers in male-dominated corporations in the 1970s to frame studies regarding the experiences of what Kanter calls “tokens” (p. 382), or those workers who are in the extreme numerical minority—less than 15% of the total. In Kanter’s study, such women became “symbols of how-women-can-do, stand-ins for all women” (p. 382). Like Kanter, researchers have repeatedly found that such numerical tokens are cast into stereotypical roles—often

positions that are less profitable or prestigious—and frustrated by unwritten social rules that govern their behavior. They also sometimes struggle to form “supportive alliances” with other tokens within the organization. Because a Black or a Latino teacher is frequently one of very few non-White teachers in their school, researchers who study their experiences often draw on Kanter’s framework to explain their findings. For example, in a study of Black male teachers, Bristol found that Black men who were the only Black male teacher in their school reported feeling “socially alone and disconnected from the core mission of the school” (p. 127). As one interviewee explained, being the sole Black male teacher “almost feels like I’m in someone else’s house, intruding (p. 136).” Similarly, in a study of Latina teachers in California, Flores (2011) found that Latina teachers working on a White-dominated staff reported feeling like “racialized tokens” (p. 313) and often self-segregated in an effort to find comfort and psychological safety. Undoubtedly, the experiences of teachers of color in their schools might contribute to their dissatisfaction and, ultimately, to their decision to leave. In turn, this compounds the challenge that schools face in recruiting teachers of color: not only do schools lose the teachers whom they successfully recruited, but would-be recruits are more likely to see such schools as places where it might be difficult to be a person of color.

### **Methods**

This paper is based on a qualitative, comparative case study embedded in a larger study conducted by Professor Susan Moore Johnson, Stefanie Reinhorn, and me, at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. The larger study, “Developing Human

Capital Within Schools,” examined how six high-poverty, urban schools—all of which had received the state’s highest performance rating—attract, develop, and retain teachers.

### *Research Questions*

The research questions guiding this analysis are:

1. How do high poverty schools that are succeeding with their students explain the importance of recruiting and hiring teachers of color?
2. How do these schools approach the challenge of recruiting and hiring teachers of color?
3. How do teachers of color in these schools describe and assess recruitment and hiring processes in these schools, based on both their own experiences and on those conducted subsequently?

### *Sample of schools*

Our sample selection was guided by four principles. First, we sought a sample that included charter and district schools in one city. Second we looked for schools that served high-poverty populations ( $\geq 70\%$  of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch) and also primarily served students of color. Third, we sought schools that were considered high-performing, having achieved the highest rating in the state’s accountability system. Fourth, we sought schools that were employing distinctive approaches to human capital development.

To attend to the first three principles, we examined publicly-available demographic and student performance data. We used the state’s accountability ratings as a proxy for academic success with students. At the time of our study, Massachusetts rated schools on a scale from 1-5; one designated the highest performing schools. The school ratings were based on four years of data that documented both the school’s student performance growth and its success in narrowing race-based proficiency gaps on state tests. Although this definition of success is limited because it relies heavily on

standardized test scores, which can be a narrow and problematic measure of achievement, it is the best proxy available for schools that succeed in educating their students.

Importantly, it is also the measure by which schools are judged by the state and district and by funders, school boards, and the press.

To attend to the fourth principle, we researched various schools' approaches to human capital development by consulting our professional networks and considering information about specific schools and CMOs. Based on this inquiry, we drew up a sample of six schools—all geographically located within one large urban school district in Massachusetts. The sample included three district schools (one traditional; two former turnaround) and three state-authorized charter schools. All schools were elementary and/or middle schools, which facilitated cross-site comparisons. We contacted school leaders explaining our study and requesting their participation and all agreed to participate (For school descriptive statistics, see Appendix B).

The purposive nature allowed us to conduct an in-depth, exploratory study of a particular context—high-poverty, high-minority schools that have demonstrated success with their students. By design, this sample is not representative of schools in the region.

#### *Data Collection*

**Interviews.** In Spring 2014, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 142 teachers, administrators and other staff (including talent directors, where applicable) in the six schools. Of these interviewees, 24% (n= 34) identified as Black and/or Latino (See Appendix A for breakdown by school and race/ethnicity). Administrator interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes; teacher interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. All research team members were present for most interviews with the principals and

CMO directors; every team member interviewed teachers at each school. This approach facilitated cross-site comparisons, improves inter-rater reliability in coding data, and ensures that each research team member understands each school's structures and culture.

Our interview sample within schools was purposively constructed. At each school, we first interviewed the principal to learn both what processes they used to select, develop, and retain teachers and how those processes were conceived and implemented. Then, we recruited teachers who varied in personal background, teaching experience, preparation, teaching assignment, and role. We also interviewed additional key staff (e.g. curriculum coaches, discipline deans, family coordinators) when it became apparent that their views would inform our understanding of teachers' experiences. We made special efforts to recruit Black and Latino participants. To build our sample, we relied on staff lists and on recommendations from administrators and teachers. We solicited participation through emails, flyers, and word-of-mouth. Participants were ensured confidentiality—neither the content of their interview nor the fact that they had been interviewed was shared with the principal (although many discussed their participation with their principal).

In each school, the number of teachers we interviewed varied depending on the school's size, its organizational complexity, and the practices used. We interviewed between 33% and 56% of teachers at each school, plus additional staff. At the three charters schools, we also interviewed full-time Teachers in Training (TTs). (For sample demographics see Appendix A).

Interestingly, despite the intense focus on recruiting teachers of color, neither the schools nor the district or state tracked faculty demographics in a way that made it

possible to specify the number of Black and Latino teachers in the school. Information available through one source (e.g. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)) was often inconsistent with information available through another source (e.g. the district or CMO). This was due, in part, to discrepancies in defining racial groups and calculating demographic information. In addition, both the state and the district aggregated demographic information: DESE statistics include all persons of color in the school, while at the district, statistics included “all school employees who assist in the education process, including teachers, paraprofessionals, content coaches, guidance counselors, librarians, and administrators” (District Document, 2014). It was therefore impossible to isolate the percentage of academic teachers of color from the percentage of non-academic teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, discipline and guidance staff, or administrators.

Based on our own estimates gleaned from analyzing staff lists and from asking administrators and teachers, we interviewed approximately 80%-100% of current teacher and administrators of color in each school. In total, 43 interviewees (24% of the sample) identified as Black or Latino or mixed-race Black and Latino. 101 interviewees (71% of the sample) identified as White. An additional 8 interviewees (<1% of the sample) identified as Asian- or Indian-American. Across all six schools, principals and Executive Directors identified as White and two assistant principals—both in district schools—identified as people of color. Because one was on leave during our study, we interviewed just one administrator of color across all six schools (For sample demographics see Appendix A).



The interview protocols included several questions that encouraged participants to discuss the school approach to staffing. Specific questions included topics such as where they recruit, what positions they struggle to fill, and how they decide whom to hire. Teachers were asked to describe the process through which they were recruited and hired at the school and to explain whether and how they were involved with recruiting and selecting new colleagues. With all interviewees, we used follow-up questions to further explore each of these topics and to identify particular issues that warranted deeper inquiry. For example, at every school, interviewees discussed the challenge of recruiting, hiring and retaining Black and Latino teachers; we therefore modified our protocol to explore this topic in greater depth.

**Document Collection.** Although interviews are the main data source for this study, we also gathered a range of documents that describe school policies and programs related to recruiting, developing and retaining their teachers. These documents vary by school and include a range of resources, such as professional development calendars, school handbooks, and results of teacher surveys. When possible, we also collected extensive documentation of recruitment and hiring processes, such as protocols for interviewing teachers and watching demonstration lessons and rubrics for assessing candidates. We also collected charter applications, collective bargaining agreements, and applications for contractual waivers, along with other documents which illuminated the state and local policy contexts in which each school operates.

In our visits to the schools, we also observed day-to-day practices, and sought evidence of the school's organizational culture, which we recorded in our notes.

### *Data Analysis*

After each interview, we wrote detailed thematic summaries describing the participant and summarizing his experiences with the school's practices for recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining teachers. First, we identified themes or *etic* codes drawn from the literature on the elements of developing human capital. Then, we used thematic summaries to analyze each site individually and to conduct cross-site comparisons, identifying common themes and differences. We used this preliminary analysis to supplement the *etic* codes with *emic* codes that emerged from the data. For example, in interviews, pay emerged as a challenge for charter teachers, although we had not identified that theme in the literature. We used this preliminary code list to review a small subset of the transcripts, individually and together, in order to calibrate our understanding and use of the codes, as well as to refine the list and definitions. We repeated this process to finalize the code list (Appendix D) and to improve inter-rater reliability. We then coded each transcribed interview using Dedoose software.

After coding interviews, I engaged in an iterative analytic process, using data-analytic matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to track findings related to school-based staffing. To understand the policy context in which each school operated, I identified the particular policies that affected each school and influenced what they could do. For example, I determined which components of the district's collective bargaining agreement remained binding in turnaround schools and how state-issued charters affect each charter school. I then analyzed the interview data and documents from each school separately. I ultimately completed a data analytic matrix showing the components of recruitment and hiring at each school and connections among them within schools. I wrote an analytic memo comparing the different staffing strategies across the sample in

order to first develop a deep understanding of the process that candidates experienced as they were being recruited to apply, vetted as applicants, and offered positions.

To understand how principals and teachers described and assessed their experiences with these practices, I created school-by-school matrices comparing interviewees' responses to their school's recruitment and hiring processes, by component where appropriate. I again wrote an analytic memo presenting initial hypotheses about how teachers experienced and assessed these processes. I also sorted codes by particular interviewee characteristics. For each transcript, I categorized the interviewee according to relevant characteristics, such as years of teaching experience and age (See Appendix D). I then investigated whether teachers' perceptions of the recruitment and hiring processes varied, within and across schools. I wrote a third analytic memo about emerging trends and hypotheses. Finally, I addressed risks to validity by returning to the data to review coding and check my emerging conclusions and to seek rival explanations or disconfirming data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I also shared analytic memos, outlines and drafts with my research team and with other colleagues, and with my dissertation committee.

### **Findings**

At the schools in our sample, students of color comprised the overwhelming majority of the student population (see Appendix A)—in each building, between 72% and 95% of students were identified as Black or Latino. Yet, across schools, the vast majority of administrators and teachers were White (see Appendix A). At Naylor, for example, just one classroom teacher identified as Black and no teachers identified as Latino. DESE reported that in 2013-14, only 10% of Naylor's entire staff—including

administrators, teachers, discipline staff, secretaries, school aids, TTs, etc.—was Black or Latino. At Fitzgerald Elementary—the school with the highest proportion of non-White faculty and the only Black administrator in our sample—DESE reported that 45% of Fitzgerald’s staff was Black and 2% was Latino.

Even at schools where the faculty and staff demographics more closely mirrored those of the students the school served, most administrators and classroom teachers were White and the few Black or Latino staff members on payroll were often assigned to non-academic positions, such as discipline dean, secretary, paraprofessional, physical education teacher, or family coordinator. Furthermore, at schools that had achieved more success in recruiting and hiring teachers of color, administrators and teachers reported that this was the result of enormously time-consuming and, as Fitzgerald Principal Forte said, “aggressive” work. In addition, at all schools, administrators said that turnover rates among teachers of color were high. As one principal explained, “we have to fight harder to keep [Black and Latino teachers].”

In this section, I begin by explaining why administrators and teachers believed it was important to recruit and hire more teachers of color—ideas that informed the schools’ strategies for staffing and influenced teachers’ perceptions of such efforts. I then explain how schools strategically adapted their recruitment and hiring processes to address the unique challenge of recruiting and hiring teachers of color. Because schools generally found that these efforts were insufficient—they continued to struggle to attract the pool of candidates that they desired—some had begun implementing new initiatives aimed at deepening the pool of potential candidates. Ultimately, however, principals were clear that significant challenges remained, and I conclude by describing those.

## **The School-Based Perspective: Why are Teachers of Color Important?**

### ***Administrator Viewpoints***

Administrators offered different explanations for why it was important to recruit teachers of color for their schools. Some believed that it was important because, as Rodriguez Executive Director Trotman said, “it is incumbent upon us to have our kids see role models that look like them.” Having teachers of color was also important to administrators because it mattered greatly to parents and students, who some principals said regularly expressed dissatisfaction about the dearth of teachers of color. As Kincaid Executive Director Beckford explained, this made it “really hard to build trust within the communities,” particularly during school turnaround.

Some administrators’ reasoning was also heavily influenced by a district-wide federal court order mandating that schools hire a minimum quota of non-White faculty—25% Black and 10% “other.” This quota mandate had been in effect for several decades and pertained to the three district schools (Dickinson, Fitzgerald, and Hurston) and to Kincaid, a district-sponsored charter school. Principals at these schools reported experiencing a recent surge of pressure from the district to meet the quota requirements. This was especially true among those who were far from meeting it and for those who weren’t sure whether they agreed with it, on principle. In the words of one interviewee, the quota “doesn’t have to do with performance... It’s a cumbersome topic. It’s icky. We feel that there’s too much of a focus on moving people around and filling slots and filling descriptions and not looking at effectiveness.”

### ***Teachers’ Viewpoints***

Across the six schools, teachers discussed two main reasons for why recruiting

more teachers of color was crucial. First, they believed students should have teachers from their own communities. Most Black and Latino teachers explained that they, themselves, had entered teaching so that they could serve as a role model. They were frustrated when they were the sole example or one of just a few the students had at the school. Second, teachers of color spoke of feeling isolated and, like all teachers, wished for colleagues whom they could depend on in specific ways, which I will explain below.

### *The Importance of Teachers of Color for Students of Color*

Most teachers of color said that they had begun teaching in urban schools because they wanted to improve communities similar to the one they were raised in. One Latina teacher—herself a product of WCSD schools—described getting “riled up” in college, when she “realized how cheated I was in my education.” A former English Language Learner, she wanted to “go back and work with kids that remind me of myself...who are disadvantaged by the system.” Like other non-native English speakers, she expressed a desire to work with a population that “really needs women of color who come from low-income communities [to be] role models for... students that don’t often see [this] image.” Similarly, two teachers at different schools described their own experiences as Black students in schools with few—if any—Black teachers. One said, “I never ever had a teacher that looked like me until I got to college [at a historically Black college]. There were substitutes, but that was not like my actual... academic teacher.” These experiences drove both teachers to enter teaching—work that a third described as “not just teaching. It’s loving, it’s caring...it’s being a mom... an aunt...a sister. I’m here because of that reason—because I get to make a difference that’s much greater than raising reading levels and [standardized test] scores.”

Teachers who saw themselves as role models for students wished aloud that the school was better at “getting people in the building that are reflective of our community.” For some, being one of few minority staff members meant that they had to bear the burden of being their students’ only example of what it meant to be a particular type of person. As one expressed, “it bothers me because I think that our students need more examples, male and female, of the people that look like them, and talk like them and come from similar backgrounds, as in socioeconomically.” Another explained,

I am not only a Black male, but I’m a gay Black male. I just think they need another example [in this school]—a heterosexual—just so that they have two people that they can model off of. They can say [Mr. X] is all of these things, but he just so happens to be blank, but that doesn’t matter, because if I need another example, I would have this person to model myself off of.

He also explained that it was problematic that students didn’t see leaders of color in his school. To him, their absence perpetuated students’ experiences of the historical dynamics of race: “You have one [group], who’s just in power, and the subordinates.” It was important to him that students be able to point to staff “on every level” and say, “[they] look and represent who I am, come from the similar backgrounds.”

One Black teacher said that if students were not assigned to her class, it was likely that they would never have a Black teacher at her school. She explained why this was unsettling: “I identify with the kids a lot because I grew up in an environment similar to theirs. I feel like a lot of the teachers don’t. They’re not from the neighborhood. Culturally, they can’t relate.” Some teachers of color noted that, as one said, “everyone can be a role model for students, regardless of what your race is... you don’t necessarily need to be Black or Latino.” Others, however, provided examples of how they were uniquely positioned to be role models—and how, more generally, the cultural

background that they shared with students contributed to their effectiveness as teachers. For instance, a Cape Verdean teacher explained that she was able to inspire students because, as an immigrant, “you go through this transition like a lot of students. The opportunities are less, you have to work harder.” She believed that she was uniquely successful in relating to Cape Verdean students because “It’s almost like you don’t have to say something. You can just look at them and there’s something about it—like the non-verbal communication, because you come from the same background.” Another said her perspective as a Black teacher affected the content of what she taught. She was frustrated to be “teaching a room full of Brown children and every single book [in the district curriculum] had a White main character.” “Nothing,” in her view, “represent[ed] children of color and the struggle they’re going through.” In partnership with a colleague, who—she pointed out—was White, she had developed an extensive classroom library of books that “connect to [the students], and their history, and where they come from.”

Others described how parents were more likely to trust them because, in the words of one, “we have the same culture.” A Latina teacher phrased it, “I understand what it’s like to be an immigrant, what it’s like to be bilingual, what it’s like to... not have that much money... And I feel the parents trust me a little more.” For some, that trust enabled them to discipline students with the confidence that parents would have their back. As one explained, “We can—hugs, hugs, hugs all day... smiling, laughing... [the kids] look up to us. Then, they do something out of line, we can come down and come down hard, like a parent... it allows us to draw [students] in very close and they feel that love.”



### *The Importance of Colleagues for Teachers of Color*

Teachers of color were clear that the primary reason they wished there were more teachers of color in the building was directly related to students and what they believed their students needed and deserved. However, teachers also explained why they wished they had more colleagues of color. This is not surprising, given that teachers' views of their colleagues are often a major factor in why they decide to leave (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; S. M. Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Rosenholtz, 1989). In addition, decades of research about workers who are in the extreme numerical minority demonstrate that such individuals tend to be dissatisfied (Bristol, 2014; Flores, 2011; Kanter, 1977). Across our sample and in the literature, teachers of all backgrounds reported that they join schools because of who else is on faculty—and that they seriously consider departing when they don't have the colleagues whom they think can support them.

Although teachers of color expressed great admiration for their colleagues regardless of race, they simultaneously desired to work with more teachers of color. Interviewees shared diverse life experiences and therefore had many different reasons for wanting more colleagues of color. For example, one Black teacher explained that when she was hired, she didn't know that she would be one of just two Black women in the school. Although she enjoyed her job and school, she said, "I would feel more comfortable here if I saw more people like myself." A Black male at a different school explained that he also had not anticipated being one of so few Black teachers, especially because—like several others in different schools across our sample—he had been recruited by a Black friend who then left the school unexpectedly. He explained the

“stresses and pressures” of “not having an outlet”:

I don't know if my White counterparts know it or not, and I don't think they do, but I would often shy away from [certain] conversations because they would speak about things that were culturally relevant to themselves. I don't think this was an intentional act by them, but rather just an innate experience that they shared with each other. Something as simple as the music. Allusions to music that were made or videos that were watched. Those types of things that weren't relevant in my community... not having somebody to connect with and to have that conversation with was incredibly frustrating.

A third Black teacher explained,

It's tough when there's no one else here... I can make friends, and I can talk to whomever I want, but yo! There's no other Black men on faculty... it's not easy for me... even though there are all these teachers of color... their experiences are a lot different than, obviously, a Black man.

Another reason teachers often gave for wishing they had more colleagues who shared background characteristics with them—and with their students—is that they often found themselves tasked with explaining the realities of their students' lives to their colleagues. For example, one teacher said that she wished her colleagues were “more cognizant of where our kids come from.” Oftentimes, she found herself challenging colleagues who held students to unrealistic, unfair standards that “decontextualiz[e] what's real for these kids and what's real for families.” Had they had more colleagues who could personally relate to the experience of their students, the teachers of color would have been able to share that burden.

When teachers did benefit from having even one other colleague with whom they shared a background, they often explained that such a colleague provided a critical source of support. For example, one novice Puerto Rican teacher said, “I'm not the only Puerto Rican—thank God! I'm one of two.” She then explained how her more experienced Puerto Rican colleague provided “enormous support” for her. A Black male teacher

explained a similar, “natural” feeling of being able to “connect” with the one other Black male on faculty “in a way that I can’t with many people here... we immediately have that connection and that click, and there’s some times where, in passing, we just very candidly will like, “Did you just—” [and look at each other, covertly]. We’ll have this moment where we click and connect.” Of course, however, teachers of color explained that they did not always connect with every person on faculty with whom they shared a racial or ethnic background—and some teachers expressed disappointment that their colleagues and supervisors sometimes expected them to do so.

It is important to note that not all teachers of color in our sample expressed frustrations when they had few colleagues who share similar backgrounds. One teacher explained that although she was one of few Black teachers, she was comfortable at her school because her colleagues were diverse in many other ways. Another said that although it “felt good” when she taught at a school with “a bunch of Black teachers,” most of her professional experiences had been among non-Black colleagues, and she was comfortable in that setting, too. A third said although he wished he had more Black colleagues, he had been “switching and being able to adapt” for his whole life, and so, he said, “I’ve gotten used to that.” Others echoed this sentiment. Finally, one Latino teacher who said, “I forget I’m Latino sometimes,” explained that he had no preference “one way or another. If everyone was Latino here, that would be fine. If no one was, that would be fine, too.”

### **Efforts to Recruit & Hire Teachers of Color**

Because schools saw it as imperative to recruit more Black and Latino teachers, all six described efforts to do so. Their efforts were embedded in their carefully-

developed, active recruitment and hiring processes. In a marked departure from typical public schools, the schools in our study deliberately developed a pool of candidates who were likely to possess the skills and experiences they sought. Subsequently, the schools engaged those candidates in a two-way, information-rich hiring process (Liu & Johnson, 2006), through which both the school and the applicants had opportunities to exchange information and assess one another before making an offer or signing a contract. Here, I explain how the six schools had strategically adapted their processes to address the unique challenge of recruiting and hiring teachers of color. Because schools had found that these efforts were insufficient—they struggled to attract the pool that they sought—some had begun implementing new initiatives aimed at expanding the pool of potential candidates. Their efforts were just beginning. In fact, during several interviews with our research team, administrators and teachers seemed to be describing their yet-untried ideas for recruiting teachers of color for the first time. It is therefore difficult to predict which strategies might work.

### **Recruiting Candidates of Color**

In contrast to most urban public schools, the schools in our study strategically identified and attracted applicants by actively seeking out teachers who they believed would best serve their students. They did this by first articulating their school's mission and vision, determining the characteristics of educators who would be able to collaboratively realize their goals, and then developing a strategy for recruiting such individuals. At all six schools, this strategy involved determining where the candidates whom they sought might be found, developing partnerships with human capital organizations—such as Teach for America or college career centers—and cultivating

relationships with what one talent director called “connectors” (Gladwell, 2000)—individuals who had access to these candidates and could help encourage them to apply. Once schools recruited candidates to apply, they continued to court them throughout the selection process so as to ensure that they would accept an offer if extended.

#### *Relationships with Human Capital Pipeline Organizations*

The schools recruited teachers of color much as they recruited all teachers. Administrators explained that they invested in relationships with specific organizations that had been successful in recruiting people of color. For example, two charter leaders described working closely with Teach for America (TFA), which offers alternative teaching certification to “passionate, high-achieving individuals” (TFA, 2015) who want to teach in high-poverty schools. In 2014, 31% of TFA corps members nationally identified as Black or Latino (2015). Because of their formal partnerships with TFA, some schools in our study were able to hire for the following year from TFA’s pool of incoming corps members beginning in December. TFA required corps members to accept the first offer that they received. Thus, a partnership with TFA all but guaranteed schools that when they hired new corps members early enough, they would be able to interview many of the teachers of color in the incoming corps. Of course, schools strongly preferred to hire TFA alumni of color who had already completed their service as corps members and thus had teaching experience. Their partnerships with TFA also ensured priority access to such teachers.

The same two schools also described how they formed relationships with colleges—particularly historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)—to recruit college seniors for teaching positions at their schools. For example, one CMO Executive

Director explained that one of his network's full-time recruiters was a Black male who had recently graduated from Morehouse College. According to the Executive Director, this recruiter had "spent a lot of time at Morehouse just really talking up [the network] and the opportunities." A talent director at a different charter network explained that she traveled to colleges including Morehouse, Spelman, Clark Atlanta, and Howard "a couple times a year" to conduct information sessions and attend career fairs. During these trips, she assured college students that if they were invited to interview, the school would fund their trip to Massachusetts. At the third charter school, whose recruitment budget was substantially less than that of the other schools, the talent director explained that the cost of an HBCU recruitment trip was prohibitive and that the school had focused its efforts locally.

Several schools described recruiting at local universities that enrolled substantial numbers of Black and Latino students, such as the public University of Massachusetts. Some did this by hosting a booth at events such as the annual Massachusetts Educational Recruiting Consortium (MERC) fair, which students from dozens of universities across the state attended. Some also pursued potential recruits directly, through less traditional avenues. As one charter school talent director explained, she and her team thought carefully about where high-achieving students of color might be found on college campuses: "Where are the Posse Scholars at each of the schools? Where are the [Urban Teaching] Scholars at [the local colleges]?... Where are—Spanish Club?" Similarly, schools described other places where they hoped to locate promising Black and Latino teachers. One talent director explained, "There are a lot of [military] veterans of color. There are a lot of veterans from completely different circumstances than many of our

teachers here.” At the time of this study, she was in the process of designing a strategy for recruiting veterans.

### *Relationships with “Connectors”*

In addition to developing strategic partnerships with human capital organizations that were likely conduits for talented teachers of color, schools relied heavily on “connectors”—described by Gladwell (2000) as “people who know everyone” (p. 38) and could help school leaders to “gain access” to “worlds to which [they] don’t belong” (p. 54). Principals at the six schools explained a variety of efforts to systematically develop their network of connectors and—as one talent director said—“persistently build relationships” with them by taking them to lunch, inviting them on building tours, and getting them to do the work of publicizing the school and its job opportunities within their networks. Interestingly, interviewees at multiple schools explained how these more informal channels were particularly valuable in their efforts to recruit more teachers of color—and indeed, most of the teachers of color whom we interviewed reported learning about their school through a friend or colleague who recruited them personally.

Schools were just beginning to develop new strategies for identifying connectors who might have access to significant numbers of potential recruits of color. At one district school, where an administrator described the staff as “very diverse with respect to African Americans” the principal explained how teachers of color were involved in what she called a “one-to-one kind of recruitment.” For example, one staff member had recruited a friend who was a former middle school teacher. The principal explained, “he’s African American, and so is she.”

At a charter, both administrators and teachers described how teachers of color had

recently realized the important role they could play as connectors to other teachers of color—and had thus taken it upon themselves to fulfill that role. In one case, a Black teacher approached administrators about the departure of several Black colleagues and the beloved Black male Executive Director who had initially recruited them. The new Executive Director—a White woman with many years of experience at the school—invited the teachers of color to a strategy session aimed at understanding their experiences in the school better. Specifically, she wished to understand how teachers of color were initially recruited to the school and what they thought the school could do to attract more like them. As one teacher explained, the Executive Director made “no bones” about “specifically going to [the teachers of color]” and saying “I would like to hear your voice and your perspective,” about this issue. Consequently, teachers were grateful for her candor and for attempting to address such a difficult issue—one that mattered to them so much, personally. As one teacher recalled, teachers’ reactions were, “Thank you! Thank you for having this meeting!”

Over the course of several meetings, teachers and administrators jointly examined what the school had already done to recruit and retain teachers of color. They learned that over 80% of them had been recruited to the school by another person of color—as one teacher said, usually a “really good teacher that’s a friend.” As a result, he explained, they thought carefully about how the school, as an organization, could “be more proactive” about developing its reputation within local “minority communities... as a shining star.” To do this, the school would need to do more outreach—both at community and job fairs frequented by strong candidates of color, and in less obvious settings, like local churches and community groups. The school would also have to



continue hosting community events, such as women’s empowerment brunches and father/son nights, which teachers of color explained they had been orchestrating for years as a way of celebrating students’ cultures and exposing students to role models from communities of color. They also planned to engage parents in spreading the word, as one principal said, “through [their] churches, [their] own networks, [their] own social ties.”

Teachers of color planned to support new efforts by staffing recruitment fairs—a role that one self-described “teacher ambassador” subsequently said she “really enjoy[ed].” Others intended to reach out to their personal networks. For example, one teacher said he had volunteered to invite leaders from an interfaith, multi-racial group of clergy to tour the school. He had also written a letter directed towards Black male students and alumni at his alma mater, which the talent director had been sending to potential recruits. In addition, he had written a recruitment letter template for others to adapt and send to their college alumni associations, fraternities and sororities, and other organizations with which they were affiliated. Teachers also decided to be, as one said, “more available” for talking with candidates of color during the hiring process. Although teachers acknowledged that, as one explained, “it’s not going to happen overnight to make ourselves more diverse,” most were hopeful that their carefully orchestrated involvement would ultimately yield positive results.

It is important to note that both teachers and administrators at this school felt strongly that their school’s history as, in the words of one administrator, “an inclusive environment where people feel comfortable and... represented” enabled them to have these conversations about the challenge of recruiting and retaining Black and Latino teachers—and subsequently, successfully encouraged teachers of color willing to serve as

connectors. For example, teachers of color reported that they had been asked to lead professional development for their colleagues on topics such as, in the words of one, “how to address inequality in the lives of young Black and brown boys.” Similarly, teachers of all races reported engaging in what Singleton might characterize as “courageous conversations” (2006) about race; as one White teacher explained, “it’s ok to talk about race here. We think it’s healthy; it’s what sets us apart from other schools.” Another observed, “Race comes up all the time.”

*“Color Attracts Color:” An Image Advertising Strategy*

At several other schools, current teachers of color played a different role in the recruitment and hiring processes. For example, one charter school employed an image advertising strategy based on what one talent director described as the network’s belief that “color attracts color.” This strategy systematically ensured that candidates of color saw current teachers of color during both recruitment and hiring. The purpose was to help candidates, as she said, “find connections within the organization” that would make their “experience feel good.” She explained how this worked when she gave building tours: “Like, the token [Latino] English teacher. I’m not going to show you four White females in a row. I’m going go to the classrooms that are most effective—but also represent your [cultural] experience.” Likewise, when deciding who would conduct interviews, the school employed similar principles: “If there’s more than two people in a room, one of those people has to identify as a person of color if the candidate is of color.” Although she explained how teachers of color were deliberately included in the recruitment process, neither she nor the principal had directly explained the school’s approach to the teachers involved—and, as teachers discussed, administrators had also

not asked them whether they were interested in participating in the effort to recruit more teachers of color.

Across schools, teachers of color supported aspects of this recruitment strategy. As one Black teacher said, “when you bring someone in... to do the hiring process and they come in and they observe and they don’t see anyone that looks like them, then they’re probably less likely to want to work here.” Others stated that they had appreciated the opportunity to talk with current teachers of color at the school during their own interview process. However, several current teachers of color felt that they had been left out of recruitment planning and were frustrated that administrators at their school had not formally acknowledged the extensive role that teachers of color were expected to fulfill. Those teachers expressed skepticism about their school’s motives to, in the words of one, “diversify.” For example, a few noted that their classroom was a stop on every building tour, which made them feel tokenized. Others discussed being featured on brochures and on the school website. One Latina teacher explained, “When you walk down our hallways, you’ll notice the pictures that are up of teachers teaching. It’s mostly teachers of color...there’s an intentional push, and I don’t want to feel like I’m a tool for marketing—an image that’s not real for parents.” She explained that, although her picture appeared on promotional materials for the school, she had never been asked whether this was okay with her.

### **Hiring Teachers of Color**

#### *“Prioritizing” and Fast-Tracking Applicants*

At most schools, administrators explained how they exercised a form of affirmative action for applicants of color within their pool. At one school, an interviewee

explained that they looked for clues on résumés that an applicant might be a person of color: “We’ll be like, ‘oh my God, I think this is a person that—look at her last name! She speaks Spanish! Let’s try to get her in here right away.’” She was careful to note that although they “immediately” brought in candidates whose résumés suggested that they were Black or Latino, “it’s not that we hire them because they’re Black.” She explained, “we aggressively recruit them through the interview process because they’re people of color.” However, she said, “we would not hire them based on their race, but we would make sure that they were at the front of the interview pack.” She described how they did this:

The day we get their résumé, we call them. I call them again. If they don’t call me back, I call them again. If they don’t call me back, I email them. I look them up. I try and text them. If it’s a white girl, we have plenty of young white girls... I’m not saying [white girls] wouldn’t be a valuable contribution [to the teaching staff]... but I don’t make sure that they get here, whereas the people of color—I make sure they come through the door. And if they do, we hold the same bar for them—but I make sure they get here... Whereas if I get the sense that someone is not a person of color, I’ll send one email. If they don’t write back, I don’t follow up.

In addition, she reported that, on occasion, the school had also fast-tracked especially promising candidates of color. For example, in one instance, they had insider knowledge about an applicant who was friends with the husband of someone who worked in the school. He had a reputation of being, in the words of one, “a good person, a good teacher, and—because he’s a Black guy,” they skipped the standard multi-step hiring process and instead said, “okay, we’ll hire you right now—consider this an offer,” as soon as he expressed interest in the school.

At another school, a talent director explained a somewhat similar strategy that involved different standards for applicants of color. She said that because their applicant

pool is “so competitive,” if a teacher is a “White female, [she would] have to have gone to a really good school, and... have had a really great GPA... their answers need to have been really, really stellar... we’re pretty liberal with our rejections... when it comes to White female teachers.” However, she said, “an African American who has okay answers... an okay GPA... then we move them” forward in the process and “sort of keep coaching them” by allowing candidates to re-do parts of the process. An administrator expanded on these ideas, explaining that they were beginning to “provid[e] a lot more clarity during our application process for people who might not have the parent coaching that some others have.” They did this by being explicit about what they sought in their candidates: promptness, professional dress... correct grammar, correct spelling.”

### **Expanding the Pool**

Despite tremendous expenditure of effort and money, all six schools struggled to find the candidates they sought. In addition, although the schools used different criteria, the pool was so limited that, as one talent director explained, “we are all competing for the same candidates”—particularly when it concerned candidates of color. Therefore, several schools were developing strategies for building their own pipelines into teaching.

One school—where the principal described the faculty as “very White”—the school had begun to prioritize hiring new college graduates of color for their in-house Teachers in Training (TT) program. The TT program recruited recent college graduates with no prior teaching experience and, through an intensive, well-developed, paid training year program, prepared them for careers as classroom teachers in their charter network. The TT program allowed the school to, in the words of one interviewee, “cast a much wider net [for] classroom teachers” because TTs did not need to have prior

teaching experience.

Administrators reported that the TT strategy had yielded a “huge jump” in the number of people of color employed in the school: for the 2014-15 school year, four of the nine newly hired TTs—including one alumna of the school—were either Black or Latino, while the remaining five were White. The school was exploring ways to recruit more TT applicants of color. As the executive director explained, they were discussing launching a summer internship, in collaboration with other local charter networks, aimed at getting college students “hooked on teaching”—and interested in applying to the TT program upon graduation.

At two other schools, administrators explained that they were also beginning to think of their TT program as a pipeline into teaching for inexperienced candidates of color. Although these efforts were promising in schools with TT programs, several interviewees expressed concerns about this strategy. As one administrator explained, “a lot of the racial diversity—if you will, people of color—are clustered in our TT program, or as Deans of Students [handling discipline], or as office staff.” Indeed, every school in the sample noted that they had compensated for a dearth of teachers of color by hiring some support staff—family coordinators, discipline deans, social workers—who identified as Black or Latino. In addition, several had hired teachers in non-core subjects, such as physical education or art teachers, who were non-White. A talent director expressed concerns about this practice, which she said caused a “hierarchy triangle.” She said the hierarchy triangle develops when “new teachers [and support staff] identify as people of color” and the more veteran teachers—those who are quickly promoted to leadership roles overseeing the newer teachers and staff—“are very White, middle-class.”

One Black male interviewee explained how this phenomenon frustrated him: “People of color are cast typed to be dean of students or to be the people who field a lot of the behaviors—disciplinary issues... I think that White people put us in this role because they think that, ‘Oh, you know what [students] are going through. You can deal with it. You’d be better equipped to talk to them.’”

### **Remaining Challenges**

Despite their efforts to recruit and hire Black and Latino teachers, achieving success remained a significant challenge and administrators offered different explanations for why it was so hard. Some believed that their school’s will to diversify had little bearing on their success in doing so because, as one said, the fact is that few minorities graduate from college and among those who do, few enter the field of education. She continued to explain that her school was “less interested in trying to poach [teachers of color] from other schools so that we’re like ‘look at us, we’re more diverse.’” Instead, she saw the “real change... in future [generations] when we close the achievement gap” and there are “more African Americans and Latinos graduating from college.” In a related point, a talent director at another school explained that it was extra hard to recruit teachers of color to teaching because of the low salaries. This was particularly true at her charter school, where the pay was substantially lower than at other charters and at the district schools. From her informal research, she had learned that if “you come out of college with crushing student debt”—which Black and Latino teachers often do—“and you want a child, or to buy a house... you need to make a lot of money.”

Although others concurred—indeed, the pool of teachers of color is small and financial concerns are real—some suggested that their school’s culture exacerbated the

challenge of recruiting and hiring Black and Latino teachers. One talent director explained that this is why some high-performing, high-poverty schools—even within her small charter network—struggled more with diversity than others. Interviewees discussed two ways in which school culture was influential; both echoed research from other fields. First, the school-based staff making hiring decisions tended to, according to one network-based staff member, “hire people who look and sound exactly like them.” With very few exceptions, those making hiring decisions at the six schools in our sample were White, and often reported having come from well-educated, middle-class backgrounds. One suggested that, within her network, there had not been “enough coaching on cultural competency—the fact of the matter is there’s a very specific profile that the school looks for to replicate success.” That profile of the ideal candidate—which she and others described as a TFA alumnus with experience teaching at a high-performing, no excuses charter school and a degree from a top university—is, in her words, “not the only profile that’s successful.” Another interviewee explained this phenomenon too: “people tend to hire people who they feel comfortable with or who are a reflection of them in their work ethics... it all boils down to the way that you vibe with the person in an interview.” Second, teachers were more likely to apply to and accept job offers at schools where they shared attributes with other teachers and with school leadership—a principle that guided the image advertising strategy that some schools employed. In other words, schools understood that it was substantially easier to hire Black and Latino teachers when a critical mass of the faculty and school leadership were already people of color.

When the need to recruit more teachers of color and the plan for doing so had not



been openly discussed, teachers wondered whether their school's efforts to hire more teachers of color were aligned with their own reasons for wanting to work on a more diverse staff—or whether their school was simply trying to fulfill a quota. Interestingly, teachers at several schools explained that the topic about the district-imposed quota had never been formally broached by the administration—which also meant that they had not had the chance to ask questions about the quota and understand the pressures it imposed upon their principal. For example, at one school, teachers explained that staff had received an email, in error, naming a particular target for the percentage of teachers of color that the school wished to hire. But, because the administration had never explained how the quota worked, teachers were left to wonder, as one said, whether administrators were simply “hiring people for the sake of them being people of color,”—rather than because they were “talented and just deserving of the position.” At several schools, teachers questioned how their school could succeed in hiring more minority teachers if the topic remained taboo. It is important to note that at several schools, teachers of color reported that the lack of conversation about the quota or the larger issue of the dearth of teachers of color had made them so uncomfortable that they were not sure whether they wanted to help recruit more teachers like them to teach at the school. Not surprisingly, this was especially true among teachers who were planning to leave.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The six schools in this study shared what several called a “social justice” mission to provide students from historically underserved communities the education that they deserve. In many ways, the schools were making great strides: all were closing persistent achievement gaps and some were offering socioemotional supports and extracurricular

opportunities for students. However, at every school, principals and teachers reported that they struggled to recruit and hire teachers of color—which the literature suggests may be very important for children of color, both academically and socioemotionally. In addition, in line with prior research, principals in our study reported that teachers of color left more quickly than their White colleagues, and teachers of color who remained frequently confided that their sense of isolation might ultimately prompt them to follow their former colleagues and depart.

The dearth of teachers of color was problematic for many reasons. Some administrators felt an obligation to provide students with role models who looked like them. Others described how concerned parents or community distrust had prompted them to prioritize staff diversity. Many were also affected by pressures from the district to meet a court-ordered quota. Teachers of color, in turn, wanted more colleagues of color because they believed that children needed more role models from their own communities. In addition, although a few teachers of color reported being unfazed by the lack of colleagues of color, most said they felt isolated in their schools. They desired colleagues with whom they could, as one said, “click and connect.” They wished that they were not solely responsible for helping their white colleagues understand their students’ lives.

All schools reported making a deliberate effort to hire more Black and Latino teachers, which was usually embedded within schools’ carefully developed, active recruitment and hiring processes. Each school had strategically adapted its process to address the unique challenges of recruiting and hiring teachers of color. To identify potential recruits, schools first determined where the candidates whom they sought might

be found and developed partnerships with human capital organizations and with “connectors” in an effort to recruit them. Principals recognized the important role that current teachers of color might play in recruiting more teachers of color and therefore each school engaged teachers of color in their recruitment and hiring processes in some way. At two schools, teachers of color were active thought partners in developing and enacting a strategy—at one, they even reported initiating a school-wide effort. Teachers were clear that this worked because the school was already an inclusive environment where conversations about race were commonplace. At other schools, however, school leaders and talent staff formulated an image advertising strategy that depended on current teachers of color. But, they did not formally acknowledge the extensive role that teachers of color were expected to fulfill. In these schools, teachers often expressed skepticism about their school’s motives and said they felt like tokens whose image was, as one said, being used as “a tool for marketing.”

Schools also adapted their hiring processes to ensure that the few teachers of color in the applicant pool were carefully considered—and courted. However, in spite of their extensive recruitment and hiring efforts, the pool of applicants of color was insufficient and schools were beginning to expand their pool by training new teachers through in-house TT programs. Schools also increased the diversity on their staff by hiring support staff and non-core subject teachers who were Black or Latino. Collectively, these initiatives were promising, but some expressed concerns about what one called a “hierarchy triangle” that was developing as new teachers and support staff were people of color and the more veteran teachers and those in leadership positions were White.

## **Implications for Policy and Practice**

Thirty-six states and the federal government have introduced initiatives to recruit people of color to teach in public schools. Although some of these initiatives have been successful in recruiting teachers of color into the profession, they have not ensured that the teachers they recruit have positive experiences within their school—and ultimately, stay in their position. It is important that policymakers recognize that Black and Latino teachers are unlikely to enter a profession where they do not anticipate having colleagues of color who are successful and satisfied with their work.

Policymakers should explore systemic ways of addressing this problem, since it is often beyond the reach of principals or even district officials. In part this is because the goals of recruiting and hiring Black and Latino teachers may depend on making progress in areas that do not seem directly related to recruitment and hiring. Therefore, policymakers might make funds available to districts and schools to create professional networks for teachers of color and offer forums for teachers of color to gather and reflect on their own pathway into teaching and brainstorm new ideas for recruiting future colleagues. Such a professional network might also engage in other paid work aimed at promoting retention among teachers of color in the district, such as collectively designing professional development sessions for other teachers or designing culturally-relevant curriculum. It might serve in an advisory capacity for district decision-makers. Districts might also consider offering leadership trainings for teachers who participate in such networks as a strategy for increasing the number of people of color in leadership positions within schools.

Belonging to a professional community of teachers of color might mitigate some teachers' experiences of isolation within their school. It might also help districts to draw upon the perspectives and advice of teachers of color. Although it will be important for districts to acknowledge the well-documented trend of teachers of color bearing sole responsibility for matters related to race, many teachers in our study explained that they want to be engaged in such work. In addition, districts should be sure to compensate teachers who participate in these efforts. Principals might begin to engage teachers of color and others within their building in similar conversations and problem-solving initiatives, and principals might also budget funds to compensate teachers for extra work that they do both in recruiting and hiring and in other realms.

To support principals in developing the culture of trust required to engage in tough dialogue about issues of race and equity, districts might invest in training principals and teachers in how to organize and lead such “courageous conversations” (Singleton, 2006). As part of this work, both the district and schools should do more to ensure that teachers understand court-mandated quotas when relevant. In addition, districts might simply build greater awareness among school leaders—most of whom are White—regarding what is known about how teachers of color experience working in their schools. Efforts such as these—those intended to build relational trust, open communication channels, and build multicultural capital—might improve the working conditions for teachers of color and, in turn, make teachers of color more likely to stay in their schools. High retention rates would likely help schools build reputations as good places for teachers of color to work.

The ongoing challenge that the schools in this study face in recruiting teachers of color make it clear that districts and schools need to create more pathways into teaching for teachers of color. Schools might begin to foster student interest in teaching as a career early by engaging middle and high school students in opportunities to mentor younger students and to be mentored by teachers of color. They might partner with local colleges to offer free summer courses to district high school students, through which students can explore the teaching profession and the sociology of education. Schools might provide paid or credit-bearing summer or school-year internships for college students who are alumni of the district and in search of meaningful employment. Cities might offer scholarships or loan repayment options to district students or to parents who are pursuing a degree in teaching, on the condition that they return home to teach. Residency programs might allow outstanding college seniors to begin their training during their last year of college. Highly structured TT programs could support individuals as they gain the skills to become a teacher of record in their school. Districts and schools might consider offering different strands of TT programs. For example, districts could offer a strand for parents, a strand for paraprofessionals, a strand for other school staff (such as parent coordinators or after school program directors), and a strand for recent college graduates. This would allow TT program leaders to provide differentiated curricula that meet the needs of individual trainees. Simultaneously, policymakers might also consider ways of supporting teacher candidates as they move through the licensing process, especially providing support as they prepare for the state's standardized teaching exam.

## **Implications for Research**

This paper contributes to what is known about how high-poverty schools whose students are succeeding academically conceive of and enact recruiting and hiring teachers of color. However, significantly more information is needed to really understand how the different strategies work and might be improved. Future research might follow recruits over time and examine how particular strategies used by CMOs, districts, and schools influence candidates' decision-making about where to apply and, ultimately, where to accept a position. A future study might also look at how districts and particular schools interact to create a more effective system for recruiting teachers of color in high-poverty district schools. It might also study whether schools with more complex recruitment processes are better able to recruit, hire, and retain teachers of color over the course of time, and analyze how the teachers they do hire fare in their roles. Of course, given the few studies about teachers of color and their experiences of work on largely White faculties, researchers should continue conducting work aimed at understanding the issues raised here.

As districts and schools try new strategies for increasing the number of Black and Latino teachers in public schools, it is crucial that government agencies more accurately track and make public demographic information about teachers and others who work in schools. Although national percentages of teachers of color are available through large surveys, the exact distribution of teachers of color in local schools is difficult to determine. As discussed in this paper, estimating the number of classroom teachers in each school—those teaching core academic subjects—was impossible to do based on

data gathered by the district and state. Accurate records about the roles that Black and Latino teachers play in their schools is critical to this work.

In conclusion, the six schools in this study continue to struggle with recruiting teachers who reflect the community of students that they serve. The fact that so many teachers of color are isolated in their schools is one of several factors that contribute to high rates of turnover—and that make it difficult for schools to recruit more teachers of color. Learning from the strategies employed and suggested here—and from of the ongoing challenges that schools face—is critical if schools are to close the “demographic divide” (Boser, 2014, p. 2) between teachers and students in high-poverty schools.



## Appendix A: Sample Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. *Selected Characteristics of Six Sample Schools*

School Name	School Type	Grades	Estimated Enrollment	% Low-income students	% African American or Black Students	% Hispanic or Latino Students	% Other Non-white students	% White Students
Dickinson Elementary	Traditional District	PK-5	380	75.5	3.7	84.1	2.1	10.2
Fitzgerald Elementary	District - Former Turnaround	PK-5	400	82.7	67.4	27.1	3.1	2.5
Hurston K-8	District - Former Turnaround	PK-8	830	73.2	40.8	54.3	3.9	1.0
Kincaid Charter Middle	In-District Charter	6-8	470	85.9	49.3	30.7	10.4	9.6
Naylor Charter K-8	Charter	K-8	490	80.0	69.1	25.4	4.3	1.2
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	Charter	PK-8	400	70.1	54.5	17.1	8.6	19.8

Table 2. *Number of Interviewees at Each School*

School Name	Administrators*	Non-Teaching Staff **	Teachers in Training	Teachers	% of Total Teachers in the School Interviewed
Dickinson Elementary	1	2	n/a	15	56
Fitzgerald Elementary	2	2	n/a	14	47
Hurston K-8	4	5	n/a	21	31
Kincaid Charter Middle	5	4	2	16	38
Naylor Charter K-8	2	3	2	17	46
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	3	3	3	16	36

\* Administrators include directors of CMOs and school based administrators who directly supervise teachers.

\*\* Non-teaching Staff includes instructional coaches, parent coordinators, data leaders, recruitment officers, deans of discipline and other administrators who do not teach students and do not supervise teachers

Table 3. *Total Teachers Interviewed at Each School & Years of Experience*

School	Novice* (1- 3 years)	2nd Stage (4 - 10 years)	Veteran (11+ years)
Dickinson Elementary	3	5	7
Fitzgerald Elementary	1	11	2
Hurston K-8	6	11	4
Kincaid Charter Middle	4	11	1
Naylor Charter K-8	8	7	2
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	1	9	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>22</b>

\*Does not include Teachers in Training

Table 4. *Race/Ethnicity of Teachers Interviewed*

School Name	Black (Includes Cape Verdean and West Indian)	Latino	Black & Latino	Asian	White
Dickinson Elementary	1 teacher	1 teacher 1 staff	1 teacher	1 teacher	1 administrator 11 teachers 1 staff
Fitzgerald Elementary	5 teachers	2 staff		1 teacher	4 administrators 2 staff 16 teachers
Hurston K-8	1 administrator 5 teachers			1 teacher	1 administrator 1 staff 8 teachers
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	1 teacher 1 TT	2 staff		2 teachers 1 staff	2 admin 13 teachers 2 TTs
Naylor Charter K-8	2 teachers		2 teachers	1 TT	3 admin 13 teachers 2 TTs
Kincaid Charter Middle	3 teachers 1 staff 1 TT	3 teachers		1 teacher	6 admin 2 staff 1 TT 12 teachers
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>101</b>

Table 5. Race / Ethnicity of FTEs At Each School

School	Total Number Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs)	African American	Hispanic	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	Asian	White
Dickinson Elementary	33.8	2.8 FTEs (8% of total)	5.6 FTEs (17%)	0 FTEs	.8 FTEs (2%)	24.6 FTEs (73%)
Fitzgerald Elementary	43.7	19.5 FTEs (45%)	.8 FTEs (2%)	0 FTEs	1.6 FTE (4%)	21.7 FTEs (50%)
Hurston K-8	96.8	25 FTEs (26%)	14.6 FTEs (15%)	0 FTEs	2.7 FTEs (3%)	54.3 FTEs (56%)
Kincaid Charter Middle	51.2	10.1 FTEs (20%)	0 FTEs	3 FTEs (6%)	3 FTEs (6%)	35.1 FTEs (69%)
Naylor Charter K-8	60.6	3 FTEs (5%)	3 FTEs (5%)	0 FTEs	2.1 FTEs (3%)	52.5 FTEs (88%)
Rodriguez Charter K1-8	56.6	7.5 FTEs (13%)	5 FTEs (8%)	2 FTEs (4%)	2 FTEs (4%)	40 FTEs (71%)

These data were drawn from the Massachusetts DESE School and District Profiles and include information from staff during the 2013-14 school year. Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocols

### Teacher Interview Protocol

Intro: Study Explanation emphasizing that we really want to learn about your experience at this school.

1. Background:
  - a. How did you come to be in your current position at this school?
  - b. Starting with college, can you tell us what you've done?
    - i. Probe for: training and employment
2. Current Teaching Assignment:
  - a. What do you teach here?
  - b. How did you wind up in this position?
3. Overall view of school:
  - a. If another teacher would ask you, "What's it like to teach at \_\_\_\_\_?" How might you respond?
  - b. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a teacher here?
4. Hiring:
  - a. How were you hired at this school? Step-by-step.
  - b. Do teachers play a role in hiring other teachers? If so, how?
  - c. Has the hiring process changed at this school? If so, how and why?
5. Induction:
  - a. Did you have some kind of induction as a new teacher at this school? What worked and what didn't?
  - b. How are new teachers inducted now? How have things changed since you got here?
6. Support:
  - a. What kinds of supports are available here for teachers to improve their instruction?
  - b. What works well for you? What doesn't? (Probe: PD, Coaching, Collaboration, Evaluation)
7. Evaluation:
  - a. How is your teaching evaluated? Describe the process.
  - b. Was it helpful? How?
8. Administration:
  - a. Who do you go to for support? For what?
9. Social & Psychological Supports:
  - a. What sorts of social and psychological supports does your school offer for students?
  - b. What support do you get for interacting with parents and families?
10. Career goals:
  - a. How long do you expect to stay at this school? In what roles?
    - i. If yes: What keeps you at this school?
    - ii. If no: Why do you think you might leave?
11. Union:
  - a. What role does the union or the contract play in this school?
12. More: Do you have any additional comments?

## Principal Interview Protocol

Overview of Study: 6 Schools, All high-poverty, high-minority. All Level 1.

1. Background:
  - a. How long have you been at this school? Prior experience in education? Anything else we should know about how you got here?
2. School Overview:
  - a. Could you first provide an overview of its structure and programs?
  - b. (Where applicable) What does it mean for your school to be a pilot/turnaround/charter school?
  - c. (Where applicable) How did you go about selecting teachers when ---- was placed in turnaround?
  - d. How would you describe it to a teacher or parent who might be interested in it—both its strengths and weaknesses?
3. Teachers: We'd like to get a sense of who your teachers are.
  - a. Where do they come from?
  - b. What formal or informal preparation do they have?
  - c. What attracts them to the school?
  - d. Approximately, what proportion has fewer than 10 years of experience? 5 years of experience? 0-5 years of experience? (Has that changed or remained steady?)
4. Recruitment and Hiring:
  - a. Could you describe the process you use to recruit and hire teachers? (Applicants per position? Teaching demonstration? Who decides?)
  - b. What challenges do you face in recruiting teachers?
  - c. Are there specific demographics or subject areas that you have trouble finding/attracting? If so, how have you addressed those challenges?
5. Assignment:
  - a. How do you assign teachers to a particular grade or subject?
  - b. Could you describe the teachers' responsibilities, both during school hours and outside of school hours? Scheduled and unscheduled time?
6. Compensation:
  - a. Please tell us about the pay scale for teachers. Are there additional stipends? If so, can you describe these opportunities?
7. Collaboration:
  - a. Are the teachers organized by teams, grade-levels, subjects? If so, what does that mean for how they do their work? What is the work of those teams?
8. Supports:
  - a. What supports can a new teacher count on in getting started? And for more experienced teachers?
9. Role:
  - a. Are there specialized roles for some teachers? (Teach +, team leaders, etc.) If so, please describe these roles.
10. Curriculum:
  - a. Does the school provide a curriculum for the teachers? If so, please tell us about it.

11. Professional Learning:
  - a. Do you have formal professional development? Instructional coaches? If so, please tell us about them.
12. Supervision and Evaluation:
  - a. How do you supervise teachers? How do you evaluate teachers? Are these separate processes? Do students' test scores play a role in evaluating teachers?
13. Dismissal:
  - a. How frequently do you dismiss or decide not to rehire a teacher? Reasons?
14. Retention:
  - a. How long do teachers stay? Why do they stay? Why do they leave? Is there a type of teacher who stays or leaves? Is turnover a challenge?
15. Policy Context:
  - a. Does state or local policy play a role in how you approach building your teaching capacity?
16. Union:
  - a. What role if any does a teachers' union play at your school?
17. Have we missed anything?

## **Recruitment Director Interview Protocol**

Overview of Study: 6 Schools, All high-poverty, high-minority. All Level 1

2. Background:
  - a. How did you come to be in your current position at this school?
  - b. Starting with college, can you tell us what you've done?
    - i. Probe for: training and employment
3. Current Role:
  - a. Please describe your role at this school / in this CMO.
  - b. How did you wind up in this position?
4. Overall View of School:
  - a. How do you describe the school to potential candidates?
5. Recruitment and Hiring Process Overview:
  - a. Please describe the process through which you recruit and hire candidates.
    - i. Probe Recruitment: How do you identify candidates? What pools of candidates do you rely on? What are your best sources for teachers?
    - ii. Probe Hiring: Once a candidate has decided to apply, what are the steps he / she must go through?
      1. How is the school principal involved in recruitment / hiring? How do you interact about the process?
      2. How are other teachers involved in recruitment / hiring?
6. Challenges:
  - a. Are there particular positions that are especially difficult to fill? How do you address these challenges?
  - b. (If it doesn't come up): Have you faced challenges related to staff diversity? If yes, please describe the challenges.
    - i. What have you done to address those challenges?
7. Determining Fit:
  - a. What do you look for in a candidate?
8. The Offer:
  - a. How do you approach making an offer?
  - b. Once you've made an offer, how do you ensure that the candidate accepts the position?
  - c. If you lose candidates, where do they go and why?
9. Midyear Hires:
  - a. How often do you replace a teacher mid-year? Does the process differ, and if so, how?
10. More:
  - a. Do you have any additional comments?



### Appendix C: List of Codes

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Description</b>
Assignment	Teacher Assignment: What do you teach/ your job at the school, views of your assignment
Background	Background: Past work history, education
WhyTeach	Why teach? Personal sense of purpose can include changes in views over time.
SchoolOverview	Facts about the school (the facts but not mission or culture), might include specific school goals
HistorySchool	History of School
FacultyComposition	Descriptions of the composition of the faculty
Equity	Interactions, policies or dynamics described in relation to race, ethnicity, social class
Hiring	Related to teacher recruitment, hiring, including teacher’s experience of being recruited / hired. –timing, demo lessons, debriefs, meetings with current teachers, written applications, Who the school seeks and how they find candidates
WhySchool	Why chose school - why teach at this particular school? May reflect changes over time
Mission	Descriptions of what the school aspires to accomplish (if explicitly talking about mission do not double code with culture)
AdminAdmin	Interactions / relationships among administrators (including non-teaching positions such as coaches and guidance, deans and other non-teaching roles)
AdminLeadership	Descriptions of administrators’ style, vision, agenda, priorities, purposes, etc. (includes self-descriptions)
AdminRole	Specific responsibilities and job descriptions of non-teaching faculty
AdminStudent	Relationship between administrators and students (include coaches, guidance, deans and other non-teaching roles)
AdminTeach	Interactions between administrators and teachers (include coaches, guidance, deans and other non-teaching roles in this code)
Demands	Teachers professional responsibilities and expectations, work hours, teachers views on demands
Resources	Material and human resources (money, buildings, positions, --if it is about admin roles will be double coded in Adminroles) - Facilities
Accountability	Related to external accountability (state accountability status and state testing, turnaround status) - what the state does and then what is done as a result
DistrictNetworkState	Formal relationships / governance from State, District or CMO, includes school boards and trustees
Testing	References to standardized tests, state tests, network tests and interim assessments and how used in the school
MonitoringStudents	Teachers’ use of assessments and instructional strategies to monitor achievement
Student	Student Characteristics: Descriptions of students and their community

Neighborhood	Descriptions of the local surroundings of the school
Family	Ways of connecting families and community to school, Perceptions of parents/ families + Teacher and admin connections to parents / families
CurriculumPedagogy	What and how you teach - including instructional planning
SpEdELL	Descriptions of programs or approaches for educating students with special needs and /or ELLs
SpecialSubj	Referring to non-core academic classes (art, music, library, dance, etc) and extra-curricular or co-curricular programs or activities
SchoolCulture	Expressions of school-wide norms & values including kids, teachers and parents (not explicit statements of mission), big picture that everyone from school would understand
Colleagues	Commentary on colleagues and their characteristics (what I think about the people I work with) - big picture impressions of colleagues
ProfCulture	Professional Culture- the norms of being a teacher or admin in this school. Big picture expectations for how we work together as professionals
Eval	Related to teacher supervision and evaluation: observations, feedback, meetings between supervisors and teachers, how work with teachers on instruction
Coaching	Formal instructional coaches, but NOT induction mentoring
Induction	Programs and supports (formal and informal) for new teachers: prior to day 1 and after day 1
FormalCollab	Deliberate, structured groups working together-organized by the school- including whole school sessions – including approach to lesson planning and who is included and who is not - JUST TEACHERS
InformalCollab	Specific work with colleagues that is not organized by the school, informal collegial interactions -JUST TEACHERS
RolesTeach	Formal roles and opportunities for career advancement (Teach Plus etc.) may have double coding when example of influence through a formal role including ILT, Teachers in Training, etc.
InfluenceTeach	Teacher opportunities as brokers of influence (teachers generally in their work having influence), including committees where you can voice concerns - Admin change view because of a teacher
CareerGrowth	Individual professional growth for career progression
OrderDiscipline	Safety, systems, expectations and rules for students, and enforcement
StudentSupports	Social and emotional and academic supports for students and behavioral - outside of classroom structure
StudentTeach	Interactions among teachers and students inside and outside the classroom.
Turnover	Why other people stay or leave; both causes and frequencies, personal plans to stay or leave, also about satisfaction and dissatisfaction, might be stuck in job
Pay	Payscale, stipends and other things related to compensation
Partners	Partners including City Year, Teach Plus, etc.
Union	Related to the union and the contract
Gem Quote	This is a great quote.

### Descriptor Categories for Characterizing Interviewees

Descriptor	Definition	Response options
School	School Name	
Grade Level	Grade Level Presently Taught	non-teacher, pre-k, k,1, 2, 2 or more grades, all grades, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Gender	Gender	male, female
Position	position in the school or system	recruitment officer, CMO administrator, principal, non-teaching faculty or administrator, teacher, assistant teacher / resident teacher, split role: teacher and other non teaching job
# years at this school	# of years working at this school counting this year	
# years at charter	# of years working at charter schools in total	
# years at district schools	# of years working at district schools in total	
# years at private schools	# of years working at private schools in total	
# years teaching	total of charter, district, private years	
Race / Ethnicity	self-identified race / ethnicity	Black, White, Caribbean, Cape Verdean, Latino/a, multi-racial, other, Asian
Classroom type	type of classroom in which interviewee teaches	self-contained elementary multi subjects, departmentalized core subject, specific subject non-core, ELL/ Special Ed only
Age	Age of interviewee	

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