

THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN THE SELECTION OF TEACHERS

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## INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the major responsibilities of the elementary principal is the selection of teachers. The importance of this responsibility is exemplified in the development of an elementary school's educational programs. Many times the elementary principal's opportunity to initiate change in the various functions of the school or to strengthen the curriculum, depends upon the decisions he makes concerning the selection of teachers.

A function for which elementary principals are assuming more responsibility is staff selection. Many principals are finding they can no longer rely on the superintendent to solve all their staffing problems. Most superintendents have been forced to concentrate their time and energy almost entirely on budgets, building programs, public relations, and other community aspects of the school system. This trend has placed new emphasis on the staffing function of elementary principals.<sup>1</sup>

The elementary principal is held responsible, according to many school policies, for the teachers in his building as he works with them. Most local school board policies have statements to the effect that the elementary principal is to supervise and evaluate all employees under his direction. It may be equally true that he should have an important part in the selection of elementary teachers.

Since the elementary principal must provide leadership in order to improve the quality of his staff, he should view replacement

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<sup>1</sup>Fred A. Snyder and Duane R. Peterson, Dynamics of Elementary School Administration (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), p. 110.



as an opportunity to improve the skills and abilities that the staff lacks.<sup>1</sup> The addition of new teachers is an opportunity to strengthen the school. It is an opportunity to analyze the skills and abilities of the teachers and to secure the types of leadership that are lacking and needed.

The effectiveness of the school in achieving its objectives is largely dependent upon the professional competence of the staff. Much of the elementary principal's impact upon the operation of the school is achieved through his work with the staff.<sup>2</sup> If quality school programs are to be developed and maintained, careful attention must be given to the selection of the staff.

The term selection refers to the process of assessing candidates for teaching positions; handled either by the central administration or by selection committees, of which the school principal is often a member, frequently with staff participation in evaluation of professional candidates.

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<sup>1</sup>Kimball Wiles, Supervision for Better Schools (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1967) , p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Henry J. Otto and David C. Sanders, Elementary School Organization and Administration (New York: Meredith Publishing Co., 1964) , p. 251.

## PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this report was to make a study of the available literature on the elementary principal's role in staff selection. The books used in this review were dated 1964 through 1973 and the periodicals used were dated 1968 through 1973. The literature was studied to see the principal's role in the following areas; job analysis, selection criteria, recruitment, screening process, interview, and final selection and nomination. Using this literature the writer developed the importance of the elementary principal in the entire selection process. Based on this review of literature, the writer made some recommendations where additional research needs to be done.

## JOB ANALYSIS

The elementary principal has a very important function in determining the personnel needs of his school before the recruitment of teachers is started. This function is to prepare a job analysis giving specific information about each position.

The principal in preparing a job analysis may use the assistance of his staff and central office personnel. A study should be made for each position to determine what the person does, how the job is currently done, and what knowledge and skills are necessary for satisfactory performance. Attention should be given to such factors as purpose, duties and responsibilities, physical and mental activities, and work conditions. With the information objectively obtained through the job analysis, the principal is able to prepare a written statement describing each position. This job description serves to clarify the nature of the position so that it may be given an accurate title and describes the qualifications necessary and desirable for the position. The principal should review periodically the job description for each position in his school to insure that they are current in light of changing conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Moore suggests that if the system operates with job descriptions, it could be the operating principle of the system that the candidate's qualifications would be checked against the job description that covers the position that is to be filled.<sup>2</sup> This same principle would also

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar T. Jarvis and Haskin R. Pounds, Organizing Supervising and Administering the Elementary School (West Nyack: Parker Co., 1969) , p. 220.

<sup>2</sup>Harold E. Moore, The Administration of Public School Personnel (New York: Research in Education Inc., 1966) , p. 41.

apply to the candidate to know what is expected of him as he reviews the job description.

Many educators believe that principals who have vacancies to be filled should provide position specifications describing the vacancies. These specifications would include such matters as training required, personal qualifications, responsibilities, and experience.<sup>1</sup>

It is very important for the elementary principal to develop accurate definitions or descriptions for each position. The job description should clarify the school's goals and to set forth the job expectations for each position. Some educators suggest that the job description should consist of two dimensions. One dimension is essentially the tasks to be performed. These tasks are a set of normative behavior and are called expectations. The second dimension includes the member benefits or the inducements. The candidate then can weigh the expectations against the benefits and then select on the basis of the two dimensions being satisfactory to him.<sup>2</sup>

A job description should never be viewed as a rigid structure but should provide guidelines with some flexibility. A job description should be supplemented by a list of qualifications of the individual desired to fill the job, but it should be flexible enough to provide for reasonable discretion in selection and for individual growth and experience by the candidate. Both the job description and the list of

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<sup>1</sup>Paul B. Jacobson, James D. Logsdon, and Robert R. Wiegman, The Principalship: New Perspectives (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1973), p. 375.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen P. Hencley, Lloyd E. McCleary, and J.H. McGrath, The Elementary School Principalship (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1970), p. 233.

qualifications tell both the principal and the candidate something of the two dimensions that are suggested in the previous paragraph. It gives a starting point for staff selection. Although job descriptions and qualifications for candidates are helpful, they do not identify the person to be selected. The principal will still need to make a judgement of the candidate.<sup>1</sup>

When preparing a job description that includes certain desirable characteristics, it is important for the elementary principal to establish the degree of emphasis he will place on each characteristic. Miller stresses that if a description sounds overidealized, it may be worded as desirable or preferred characteristic of staff members. This will mean that candidate is not left out of consideration on the basis of any one of the specific points, but is rather considered in terms of compatibility with the general description.<sup>2</sup>

A job analysis should describe the following: (a) the general nature of the position, including the broad goals of the system, the organizational structure of the system, and general expectations of the teacher in and out of the classroom, (b) the static and dynamic features of the position, including what is important at the beginning, what is likely to change, what will affect these changes, the nature of the students, and how the position will be affected by other people, (c) the teacher behavior required and desired in the classroom and out of the classroom, and (d) the teacher characteristics sought including aptitudes,

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<sup>1</sup>Otto and Sanders, Elementary School Organization and Administration, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>Van Miller, The Public Administration of American School Systems (New York: MacMillan Co., 1965), p. 291.

skills, social requirements, interests, and physical requirements.<sup>1</sup>

A job description for all positions in the school district provides the basic data upon which decisions are made relative to the number of needed additional personnel and their qualifications and duties. The following items are among those which are normally included in job descriptions:

1. Title of the position.
2. General descriptive statement of the position.
3. Required qualifications and skills including desired level of experiences and training.
4. Classification and pay scale.
5. Person to whom the teacher is responsible.
6. Basic duties and responsibilities:
  - a. Actual tasks to be performed.
  - b. Frequency of the tasks.
  - c. Usual working hours.
  - d. Supervising responsibilities.
  - e. Relationships with the other employees.<sup>2</sup>

The principal should make a periodic check of his staff to determine the strengths and weaknesses and to view the resources of the staff in light of the needs of the school. A systematic review of personnel resources may reveal a need for more balance in regard to ages. The school may have a particular need for more men teachers in the elementary

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<sup>1</sup>Dale L. Bolton, Selection and Evaluation of Teachers (Berkeley: McCutchan Co., 1973) , p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Forbis K. Jordan, School Business Administration (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1969) , p. 40.

grades. Teachers with specific strengths in specific curriculum areas, such as reading, mathematics, or physical education may be needed. Only when the principal knows the strengths and limitations of his staff and the needs of his school can be made intelligent requests and judgements in staff selection by him. Unless he does this, he is in no position to offer leadership in improving the staff when replacements or additions are made.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Otto and Sanders, Elementary School Organization and Administration, p. 252.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

Every school district or organization desires to employ quality personnel. Many school districts have statements that every effort will be made to employ teachers with maximum educational qualifications. Also that all teachers must meet the certificate requirements of the particular state in which they are employed. This standard of quality may vary from state to state and even among the school districts within the state, but each school district or organization has a standard and desires to maintain it in the selection of teachers.

In order to make certain that a standard will be kept in selecting teachers, the establishment of a selection procedure is a necessity. The purposes of a selection procedure are: (a) to determine specific needs of the district in terms of the number of teaching positions and the general nature of the position, (b) to determine specific teacher attributes for each position, (c) to recruit desirable candidates by locating sources of supply and devising ways to attract candidates, (d) to collect and process data from written documents, tests, and interviews, (e) to select the best candidate, and (f) to establish controls over the entire process to determine any sources of error.<sup>1</sup>

In a study on teacher selection by Yantis and Carey, superintendents and personnel directors from 507 Michigan school districts were surveyed. School administrators were asked to rank various evaluative criteria as to the importance they placed on each item when evaluating

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<sup>1</sup>Bolton, Selection and Evaluation of Teachers, p. 3.



graduating seniors seeking employment and the experienced teacher seeking employment. The rankings were then averaged to determine an average-ranked score for each item. For the graduating seniors, the three most important criteria were, in order, (1) personal interview, (2) student teaching evaluation form, (3) past employer references. For the experienced teacher, the three most important criteria were, in order, (1) past employer references, (2) personal interview, (3) student teaching evaluation form. The least important criteria ranked for both the graduating seniors and the experienced teacher was character reference letters. The item most desired by school administrators was the attitude of the candidate toward children.<sup>1</sup>

Two types of criteria has been used by Merritt that follows closely the findings of the previous study. After the administrator has reviewed the records of the candidate and the results of the interview, he selects or rejects the candidate according to two types of criteria; (1) measures of success in teaching or work presumed to be related to teaching, and (2) the particular attitude of the candidate relating to all aspects of education.<sup>2</sup>

There is another important aspect to consider in developing a criteria for staff selection. In staffing a school system it is important not only to think of the desirable qualities to be sought for each individual, but also to think of the desirable characteristics of the school staff as a total entity. In the modern school there is no standard

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<sup>1</sup>John T. Yantis and Michael Carey, "Improving Teacher Selection," Journal of College Placement, December 1971, pp. 76-77.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Merritt, "Attitude Congruency and Selection of Teacher Candidates," Administrator's Notebook, February 1971, p. 1.

comprehensive description of the "best" teacher, because the "best" teacher is one who will fit in with the rest of the staff, with the educational programs, and in the community.<sup>1</sup>

In developing a criteria the elementary principal should consider using the present staff to assist. They would be especially helpful in indicating the behaviors desirable for a given position. The principal would still be responsible for defining the job precisely but the input from the staff would be very valuable. Involving teachers in the development of the criteria may serve two purposes: the position may be defined more accurately, and the morale of the staff may be increased.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, The Public Administration of American School Systems, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup>Bolton, Selection and Evaluation of Teachers, p. 60.

## RECRUITMENT

Teaching candidates, whether they be graduating seniors or experienced teachers, compare school districts in terms of teaching assignment, curriculum load, teacher-pupil ratio, community advantages, salary schedule, and fringe benefits. They are interested in the working conditions of the attendance center to which they might be assigned. It is this interest on the part of the teaching candidates which has forced the involvement of elementary principals in the recruitment of teachers.<sup>1</sup>

There are many resource areas that the elementary principal may use to recruit teachers, the major resource being the placement agencies in Teacher's Colleges and Colleges of Education. Other resource areas for prospective teachers would be application files, recommendations from staff members, commercial teachers placement agencies, former teachers, and contacts with other school systems.<sup>2</sup>

The degree of involvement for the principal in recruitment will depend upon the size of the school district where he is employed. He will become more directly involved in a smaller system because a larger school system probably will have employed a person in the central office who is directly responsible for recruitment.

A central office personnel recruitment officer in a large school system is frequently assigned the task of traveling to various teacher training universities to recruit the most promising candidates. The officer upon returning to the school district frequently gives to the

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<sup>1</sup>Snyder and Peterson, Dynamics of Elementary School Administration, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Jarvis and Pounds, Organizing Supervising and Administering the Elementary School, p. 221.

elementary principal a list of the candidates. The principal then recruits for his own school from the list. This arrangement is an economic necessity because sending all principals on a recruiting trip would not only be prohibitive financially but also a duplication of effort.<sup>1</sup> Thus the elementary principal has a select list from which to recruit teachers as developed by the central office recruiter.

It is becoming common for school districts to prepare brochures giving information about the school district, the attendance centers in the district, the community or communities the district serves, and the opportunities for the teachers in the district. A good description of the nature and resources of the community, the general philosophy of the school, and any unique features about the organization not only attracts desirable people, it also tends to repel those who would not fit into the school system or the community. In preparing such a brochure the principal, staff, and community leaders plan together.<sup>2</sup>

In a nationwide sample survey conducted by NEA Research Division, more than 1,600 public school teachers were asked the following question: "Should teachers be sent out by their school system to recruit prospective teachers?" About one-fourth responded with "yes," about half said "no," and about one-fourth were undecided. More elementary teachers than secondary teachers opposed the survey question. There was no attempt to determine why teachers voted the way they did.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hencley, McCleary, and McGrath, The Elementary School Principalship, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, The Public Administration of American School Systems, p. 290.

<sup>3</sup>"Teachers as Recruiters," NEA Research Bulletin, pp. 13-14.

It is very important in recruiting that a school district establish and maintain good relations with several colleges. This is important not only to establish with the placement or employment office but with the students as well. One way to improve the recruitment reputation of the school district is to focus on the prospective teacher. It is important that the school district possess a sound credibility with the students in colleges. Such a reputation can be attained through the systematic establishment of good relations with colleges over a period of time. The recruiter must also keep placement officers and other college officials up-to-date on current staff needs and recent developments in the curriculum programs for the district. A relationship should be developed whereby an open exchange of information between colleges and the personnel department may be had at any time during the school year.<sup>1</sup> When a mutually convenient date is established for the recruitment date, it is advisable to contact the college by phone or mail at least a week in advance to make certain the recruitment visit is adequately publicized. This will make certain that a full schedule of good candidates will be interviewed for the district.<sup>2</sup>

In research done by Caress, over 62 per cent of the superintendents who were selected at random from five midwestern states reported they would not employ a teacher without knowing the contents of the candidate's credentials which are available from the college maintaining those credentials. The remaining superintendents, except one, expressed

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas A. Plain, "Recruiting From Minority Groups for Urban Teaching," The Clearing House, December 1972, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

a strong preference for knowing the contents of the credentials.<sup>1</sup> In this same study, the desire for teachers with the Master's Degree was not as strong with only 28 per cent believing the Master's Degree should be earned within five to seven years after the Bachelor's Degree; 36 per cent thought that the candidate should be allowed ten years.<sup>2</sup> Of the school districts that use student teachers, almost 90 per cent indicated that they frequently employ those practicing in their districts immediately upon the graduation of those students from their respective colleges.<sup>3</sup>

Recent research in industry indicates that companies with the most effective recruiting programs follow nine steps which can be adapted for education. The steps are: (1) plan ahead for district needs noting student growth patterns for future years, (2) select the proper recruiter, preferable one who is experienced and well-trained, (3) coordinate the recruiting by using the central office of the school district, (4) compile a thorough brochure describing the school, community, positions available, and qualifications needed, (5) prepare with research giving salaries, class load, working conditions, and district policies, (6) use campus placement offices asking for their assistance, (7) plan the interview, (8) make the candidate talk, and (9) do not hold back the decision.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles W. Caress, "Teacher Recruitment," The Clearing House, March 1971, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. , p. 393.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. , p. 394.

<sup>4</sup>John Sandberg, "How Schoolmen can Recruit Teachers More Effectively," Nation's Schools, May 1969, pp. 80-81.

In recruiting candidates, recruiters and principals desire to make what they consider to be the best choice. In so doing this they will want to consider numerous candidates prior to making a decision. There is a need for greater frankness in telling a candidate, especially at the initial stage, that he is not a serious contender for the position available. Those candidates who are felt to be unqualified for the position should be notified as quickly as possible. There is also a need for more prompt notification to the candidates when the final decision is made. Unsuccessful candidates can then reassess their situation and act accordingly in pursuing other leads.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond J. Yerkovich, "Recruitment: Overhauling Archaic Practices," The Clearing House, February 1969, p. 329.

## SCREENING PROCESS

Even in the screening process of teacher selection, it necessitates setting forth a criteria or of maintaining a criteria. In the screening process of teacher selection the criteria are those behaviors or results of behavior that the personnel worker or principal is trying to predict. The personnel worker or principal attempts to determine the attributes or performances of candidates that indicate those individuals who can successfully perform the on-the-job tasks. In this process, the personnel worker or principal initially specifies standards of successful teaching for a given situation. He then identifies through study and experience, those variables that will help him predict which candidates will be the "good" teachers in this specific situation.<sup>1</sup>

All potential teachers for the school district should complete the application form that is used by the school district. The use of the application form as provided by the school district will enable the principal to have in writing the essential information about the candidate. The screening process actually begins with the first contact in person or on paper with the candidate. The principal may improve his efficiency in the entire selection process as he organizes a file for each candidate. This file would include the application, credentials, transcripts, letters of recommendations, correspondence, notations of telephone conferences, and the interview.<sup>2</sup> The principal should study each file carefully before he ranks the candidates for the positions

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<sup>1</sup> Bolton, Selection and Evaluation of Teachers, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> M. Dale Baughman, Administration and Supervision of the Modern Secondary School (West Nyack: Parker Publishing Co., 1969), p. 55.



that are available.

In screening the candidates, the following qualities and categories should be assessed: (1) educational preparation, (2) teaching experience, (3) scholarship, (4) ability to meet state certification requirements, (5) previous experience in educational programs, (6) personal qualities, (7) recommendations from previous employers or college faculty, (8) participation in school and community activities. This list is not all inclusive so the principal will need to add the other itmes that are pertinent to his setting.<sup>1</sup>

One area often neglected in the screening process is the input that students can make on potential teachers during their student teaching and also upon the experienced teacher as well. It would be very helpful to the principal if he could obtain this type of information.

It is important to use children's perceptions as one factor in the selection of teachers. A study identified five perceptual factors pupils utilize in judging teachers. The factors are: (1) effective-the approachable teacher, (2) cognitive - the teacher's ability to communicate, (3) disciplinary - the teachers are able to maintain order in the classroom, (4) motivational - the ability to make students want to learn, and (5) innovation - the teacher's ability to use a variety of methods.<sup>2</sup>

There are various types of reference forms that are used in evaluating the student teacher or the experienced teacher. In a study,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> C.H. Slaughter, "A Proposed Screening Program for Elementary Teacher Candidates," Journal of Teacher Education, Fall 1969, p. 344.

the combination type of reference form which utilizes the check response to criteria and a provision for written comments was preferred by three-fourths of the principals. There was a feeling on the part of many principals that a strictly objective form which utilizes only the check response, was too easily completed by the evaluator without the serious thoughts which must be a part of the evaluation of prospective teachers. But the form on which there is only provision for a written evaluation tends to lead to evaluations which are often too subjective and general to be of any real benefit to the principal. The evaluator may tend to be evasive and overemphasize the strengths of the candidate on this type of form.<sup>1</sup> For the graduating senior, the student teaching evaluation form which is completed by the supervising teacher, is held to have the highest degree of importance. This student teaching evaluation form still continues to be important even after the teacher has gained experience in the classroom. Character references which may be supplied by community leaders are not considered nearly as important as employer or academic references.<sup>2</sup>

There is great doubt placed by some on the value of letters of recommendation. The candidates written letters of recommendation have traditionally been regarded as the second most valuable source of information in hiring of personnel. Although the subject has not been adequately researched, it would seem that the letters would not be very reliable. For the letters to have meaning, the principal must

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<sup>1</sup>Yantis and Carey, Journal of College Placement, December, 1971, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

know personally the person who wrote the recommendation, and even then the letter may frequently be misleading. Experienced principals attempt to read between the lines for often what is not stated is more important than what has been included.<sup>1</sup>

There are many factors that enter into whether the letters of recommendation are valid. There are more students in the college classroom today and with the number of student turnover at each semester, makes meaningful evaluation very difficult. Many professors who do not know the student in a personal way, tend to give the student the benefit of the doubt realizing that a poor recommendation may permanently limit a new and inexperienced teacher. It is nearly impossible to make predictions of on-the-job success dependent to any degree on the grades attained in college. Therefore the evaluation form should ask meaningful questions and questions that professors are in a position to answer. This will give the professors the opportunity to evaluate the candidate better because they have the evidence to support their statements.<sup>2</sup>

The problem with using letters of recommendation in the selection process is best summarized to be that (a) their validity varies greatly according to their quality, and (b) most letters do not discriminate sufficiently among applicants.<sup>3</sup>

Most school systems continue to rely mostly on the interview,

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<sup>1</sup>Snyder and Peterson, Dynamics of Elementary School Administration, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Harry G. Miller and Lawrence J. Dennis, "Placement Forms: What Good Are They?" The Clearing House, October 1972, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Bolton, Selection and Evaluation of Teachers, p. 66.

letters of recommendation, performances in student teaching, scholarship, etc., to determine the potential of the candidate. One part that is often missing in the selection and assignment processes has been a sample of the candidate's actual teaching performance. Very few school districts have the financial resources or personnel to make a classroom evaluation of a candidate, particularly if that candidate is located in another state. But it would be especially helpful to have an example of the candidate's teaching performance. A videotape of a candidate's teaching performance could be produced at a very low cost. The use of videotape can be beneficial in determining the kind of classroom situation the teacher would best be used. This would be important for the beginning teachers so that they are not placed into a situation that they are not ready to handle.<sup>1</sup>

Videotaping of student teachers in actual classroom situations has been in use for many years. However at the New Mexico State University, they are now using these tapes as an aid in placing graduating student teachers. If a principal is interested in recruiting student teachers, he forwards a blank tape to the University together with a description of the type of teacher he needs including grade level, subject matter, and other pertinent information. The tape is then returned from the University and the principal can turn on a television set and watch the potential teacher demonstrate his or her teaching skills. The potential for this type of program is great, how-

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<sup>1</sup>Perry M. Kalick, "Screen Testing Teacher Candidates," Audiovisual Instruction, September 1971, p. 76.

ever, the program has been in operation for too short a time to draw definite conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

Some school districts use psychological and educational tests in the selection of teachers. There are many factors that a district should consider in using such tests. These factors would include the tests ultimate value in predicting a successful teacher, the cost involved with administering and evaluating the test, its impact upon the candidate taking the test and the effect it could have on the morale of the teachers currently employed. Many times employee-employer relationships can be greatly affected if the purpose of the testing program is not made clear.<sup>2</sup>

The principal has many aids to help him make a decision on the candidate during the selection process. However no one particular item will definitely give a complete clear indication of the candidate. So the principal should use a combination of aids, taking into account as many factors as possible before making a decision.

The cost of recruiting teachers, screening candidates, and interviewing them represents a sizable sum to most schools with little guarantee as to the actual performance levels of the teachers who are hired.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert E. Wright, "A New Angle on Job Placement for Student Teachers," Today's Education, May 1972, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Bolton, Selection and Evaluation of Teachers, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>Slaughter, Journal of Teacher Education, Fall 1969, p. 343.

## INTERVIEW

The principal uses the interview to fulfill one of his most important responsibilities which is staffing his school with the right kind of persons. It is essential that these people be selected carefully because of their responsibility in teaching the young students. Because an individual's personality has a way of permeating everything he does, the expression of a candidate's personality should take priority during an interview. A principal cannot entrust the important position of education to anyone whose personality is not conducive to working with young students.<sup>1</sup>

McKenna stresses the importance of the principal developing a program for those who conduct the interview because the interview will be no better than the ability of the person conducting it. The principal, in order to conduct a good interview, should have broad knowledge in a variety of areas such as job descriptions, communications, social psychology, skills in human relations, and interpretation of data and evaluation.<sup>2</sup>

To be effective the principal will need some guidelines to follow so that each candidate will be interviewed impartially. Some suggested guidelines are: (1) make a brief opening statement about the school district, school personnel, or some other aspect of education in order to get the candidate to talk and relax, (2) avoid the forming of definite impressions and conclusions about the

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas F. Koerner, "Interviewing: Ask the Right Questions," The Clearing House, October 1969, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard H. McKenna and Charles D. McKenna, "How to Interview Teachers," The American School Board Journal, June 1968, p. 8.

candidate during the first several minutes of the interview, (3) the principal should phrase questions that cannot be answered "yes" or "no" so that the candidate will do most of the talking, (4) try to phrase questions in such a manner that they do not suggest a desired response in order that the candidate's personal views might be known, (5) make the candidate feel comfortable by being outwardly friendly, pleasant, and calm, (6) the questions that are asked early in the interview should be topics that are related to the candidate's background, teaching experience, and educational preparation, (7) do not contradict or argue with the candidate or appear to cross-examine him in order that the candidate may freely express his views, (8) pause a few seconds after the candidate appears to have completed a response thus allowing the candidate to reveal useful knowledge he might otherwise withhold, (9) do not start an interview unless there is ample time and where interruptions, including phone calls, can be avoided, (10) do not schedule interviews in succession as it is difficult to interview candidates in continuous succession and still maintain the high degree of concentration that is required to make the best evaluation, (11) use flashback-type questions to probe an area not completely explored thus assuring the candidate that the principal is interested and absorbed in what he is saying, (12) use a touch of humor, and (13) record the results of the interview immediately following its conclusion using a combination of check list and write-in statements.<sup>1</sup>

One interesting instrument that can be used very effectively

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 9.

in the interview is the tape recorder. The value of the tape recorder is great especially if the principal is extremely busy and needs to interview several candidates.

The use of the tape recorder to present the general items of interest and value to all candidates permits the principal to conduct complete interviews regardless of how busy the daily schedule. This allows each candidate to hear the same general items concerning the school district, attendance centers, school personnel, salary schedules, fringe benefits, community life, and other educational concerns. During the presentation on tape which may be from ten to twenty minutes in length, the candidate is urged to take notes he might wish to have and to write questions that occur to him. Upon the conclusion of the tape, a face-to-face interview begins. Some guidelines to follow during the face-to-face interview are: (1) check the candidate's file to make sure it is complete, (2) answer the questions the candidate wrote down from the tape, (3) give complete information concerning the position the candidate applied for, (4) the principal should have the candidate elaborate upon his professional experiences, (5) discuss the salary schedule and show potential earnings, (6) make it clear to the candidate that the principal will notify him when a decision is reached and the position has been filled, (7) take the candidate on a tour of the building visiting classrooms, meeting other staff members, and answer any final questions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Baughman, Administration and Supervision of the Modern Secondary School, pp. 59-60.



In a pilot project conducted at the State University of New York at Brockport, student teachers are video-taped while actually teaching in the classroom. This five to ten minute tape becomes a part of their credential folders and is used by the principal to help evaluate their potential as teachers. This tape then can be used by the principal either before or after the interview or even during the interview. This gives the principal a chance to observe the candidate's rapport with students, control of classroom, teaching ability, and mannerisms.<sup>1</sup>

One aspect of the interview that should not be overlooked is involving other staff personnel in interviewing prospective candidates. This also allows staff members to be involved with decision making which can be very helpful to the principal.

At the Bladensburg, Maryland Elementary School the staff members are involved with the interviewing of candidates. There are usually two other teachers with the principal during the interview. Teachers can also be effective in taking the candidates on a guided tour of the facilities. The reasons for involving teachers are: this can serve as a technique to promote and facilitate the acceptance of new teachers by staff members and their involvement directly affects their perception of their status and worth in the school and community.<sup>2</sup>

Koerner suggested fifteen questions that can be asked to uncover the candidate's personality, requiring him to think while he

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<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Lang, "Instant Replay for Placement," Journal of College Placement, December 1970-January 1971, pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup>David I. Zatz, "Teachers Help Interview Prospective Teachers," Today's Education, February 1970, p. 47.

is verbalizing. The questions require on-the-spot decisions which have no pat answers. (1) Where do you want to be ten years from now? (2) In your opinion what are your strengths? (3) What weaknesses do you perceive in yourself? (4) How do you compensate for these weaknesses? (5) If you had to describe your personality, how important would a characteristic like a sense of humor be? (6) How do you spend your weekends and holidays? (7) What kind of vacations do you enjoy the most? (8) What importance do you place on communication skills? (9) How do you react to persons with whom you have personality conflicts? (10) How do you describe your physical and emotional reactions to failure? (11) What kinds of books and magazines do you find most rewarding? (12) What kinds of activities depress you the most? (13) What role do you perceive for yourself in the total environment of the school? (14) What past experience do you value the most? (15) When you want something badly, how do you get it?<sup>1</sup>

Because the home environment in which the candidate grew up and his own family are very important in shaping the personal values and views, some questions should be asked on these topics. These questions are not meant to cause embarrassment to the candidate but are used to better understand these areas of the candidate's life. The principal will use questions in these areas to find out the candidate's reaction to his family background and to his own family.

Questions that could be asked concerning the candidate's family background are varied and many. The principal may want to use only a general type of question. (1) What was your father's occupation

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<sup>1</sup>Koerner, The Clearing House, pp. 103-104.

when you were in school? (2) Was your mother employed while you were in school? (3) Who was the disciplinarian of the family? (4) What did you and your parents disagree most often about? (5) How many others were there in the family? (6) What jobs did you have as a child around the home?<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the candidate toward his own family needs to be questioned by the principal. Some questions that could be asked are: (1) How long have you been married? (2) Do you have children? (3) Where is your spouse employed? (4) What does your spouse think of your work? (5) Do you participate in any groups together? (6) Do you participate and entertain much as a family? (7) What are some things you would like to do as a family but don't get a chance to do? (8) What kind of people annoy you?<sup>2</sup>

In interviewing experienced teachers, there are several questions that can be answered only by experienced teachers. (1) What are two major accomplishments you have made in educating your students? (2) What performance standards do you set for your students? (3) In your mind what are the major ingredients which make for a successful classroom? (4) What sort of outside resource people have you brought into the classroom? (5) What would you say is the most creative thing you have done in the classroom?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Claude W. Fawcett, School Personnel Administration, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1964), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. pp. 35-36.

<sup>3</sup>Terry Whaling, "Unblocking the Recruitment Route," The Nation's School, October 1971, pp. 60-61.

The principal will need to make much preparation for the interview with the candidate. The principal must be prepared to answer questions from the candidate. The principal's preparation should be in the following areas: the district's philosophy of education, the salary schedule including fringe benefits, the length of the school year and length of teacher contracts, consultant services available for teachers, hot lunch program, philosophy concerning classroom discipline, policies pertaining to pupil progress and grades, policy pertaining to homework, parent-teacher conferences, playground duty, planning periods during the school day, and liability insurance.<sup>1</sup>

When the interview is completed, the candidate should be given a complete tour of the building by either the principal or another staff member. The principal may want to take this responsibility in order to answer any further questions the candidate may ask.

A study using 500 random selections of elementary principals in New York State, excluding New York City and Long Island, made two interesting conclusions concerning the attitude of the principal toward the candidates. The findings indicate that principals are more attracted to candidates with attitudes about education that are similar to their own than to candidates with attitudes dissimilar to their own even when the later are more highly qualified by objective measures of probable competence. The principal showed a greater attraction for

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<sup>1</sup>John L. Morris, "Guidelines for Making the Interview a More Effective Hiring Device," The Clearing House, September 1971, pp. 37-38.

the highly qualified candidate only when they shared their attitudes.<sup>1</sup>

In one research using 144 elementary principals whom were involved in the selection process, some conclusions were made that tend to decrease the value of the interview. The consistency of ranking of candidates was not significantly affected by the information gained from the interview. The interview information does increase the discrimination of the principal, but seeing the candidate was no more helpful than hearing him. Seeing the candidate did increase the principal's feelings of certainty about the candidate. The total time taken for the decision-making task was greater when the interview information was received.<sup>2</sup>

Some writers would question the importance and value of the interview. Certain factors must be present and maintained if the interview is to be proven effective. The interview may be valid or not according to the skill of the principal doing the interviewing, the situation, and the nature of the candidate. The assumption that the person who does the interviewing can consistently gather, weigh, and evaluate the information accurately has not been proven. The interview can be of importance if the principal has received training in the techniques of interviewing. Training in this area has been demonstrated to be effective in preventing errors and in improving the ability to select from among the candidates.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Merritt, Administrator's Notebook, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Dale L. Bolton and Michael E. Hickey, "Effect of Interviews on Teacher Selection Decisions," Journal of Applied Psychology, December 1969, p. 505.

<sup>3</sup>Bolton, Selection and Evaluation of Teachers, p. 74.

In summary, the value of the interview can probably be determined in two ways. (1) The value can be determined by the extent to which it helps to predict which candidates will be the most successful. (2) The value may be obtained by determining how the interview contributes to factors necessary for successful predictions concerning candidates.<sup>1</sup>

There is a danger in the interview if the principal depends too much on this aspect in determining his final selection. An even greater danger would be if the interview was the only aspect used in selecting the candidate for the position. The principal needs to be reminded that the interview is only one aspect of the selection process.<sup>2</sup>

The principal should realize that candidates for the available positions are in a different situation today than candidates ten or fifteen years ago. The changing situation is that today there are a great many candidates for each available position. With this recent increase in the number of candidates available for each position, each candidate must now describe and draw attention to all the attributes that makes him or her a more desirable candidate than all the others that have applied.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bolton and Hickey, Journal of Applied Psychology, p. 501.

<sup>2</sup>Moore, The Administration of Public School Personnel, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Morris, The Clearing House, p. 35.

## FINAL SELECTION AND NOMINATION

The final step in the selection of a teacher is the actual nomination of a candidate by the principal for a certain position. Before this is done the principal must know how much money is budgeted for teachers' salaries. The financial condition of the school district could be a factor in the principal's decision of the candidate.

One of the purposes of most salary schedules is to reward teachers for experience and for continuing their own education, particularly at the graduate level. This purpose of rewarding experience and education is defeated when the more expensive teacher, the one with experience and Master's Degree is turned down because of a lack of sufficient funds.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if two candidates are equal as desirable candidates for the position, sometimes the principal must select the one who will have a lower salary because of insufficient funds in the budget.

In the final selection process, the principal will weigh the information he has accumulated on each candidate before making his final selection. Experienced elementary principals, when considering a candidate for a position, gave considerably greater weight to the expressive characteristics than to the instrumental characteristics.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this was that many elementary principals believed that expressive characteristics were more difficult to change than were the instrumental characteristics.<sup>3</sup> Expressive characteristics

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<sup>1</sup>"We're Trapped by Degrees," Today's Education, March 1971, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin M. Bridges, "Preferences of Principals for Instrumental and Expressive Characteristics of Teachers," School Review, September 1968, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 334.

are those characteristics of the teacher that are concerned basically with the kind of person the teacher is and how he or she relates to the students. Instrumental characteristics of the teacher are concerned basically with how he or she performs the task of teaching the subject matter and building the intellectual skills of students.<sup>1</sup>

Before making the final decision, the principal should reflect back concerning his knowledge of his present faculty and its impact upon the young students. He should keep in mind the kind of staff he has in terms of cultural background, race, religion, and the institutions where the staff received teacher training. He needs to consider the type of teachers needed to work with his present staff so that cooperation and open communications will be strengthened. He should realize that a good faculty needs to be made up of persons who are different in many areas. Teachers from various religious faiths such as Catholic, Protestant, Jew, and other faiths should be included in a faculty so that the young students may know that good people exist in all faiths.<sup>2</sup> It is equally important for the young students to have the experience of studying with good teachers of many races and ancestral backgrounds so that they will learn to respect the dignity and accomplishments of men regardless of background. The principal should select teachers who come from many different colleges and universities so that the impact of their differences in training will have a desirable effect upon the school system. The need for considering the staff as a total unit is far more imperative than ever before.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 327.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, The Public Administration of American School Systems, p. 287.



Attention should be given to developing a staff that complement each other and are compatible.<sup>1</sup>

When the principal has examined all the information on the candidates and has fully examined the needs of his present staff, he is ready to select the candidate for the position. The principal can only recommend a candidate for the position as the principal has no authority in the actual hiring and signing of contracts. It is the board's responsibility and function to actually hire the candidate.

The principal assembles all the information on the candidate he has selected including credentials, interview sheets, etc., for presentation to the board at its regular meeting. The principal should be prepared to give a verbal explanation of his choice by matching the job description with the professional and personal qualities of the candidate. The principal is to assume full responsibility for the selection and recommendation. The principal then is to conduct the entire selection process from the beginning with a job description to the end with the final selection of a candidate with such thoroughness as to preclude any question or doubt in the mind of any school board member regarding the recommendation.<sup>2</sup>

The final step in the entire selection process is actual employment. The local board establishes the procedures necessary for the issuing of contracts. These procedures are in conformity with state legislation which are legal and therefore binding on both parties.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Baughman, Administration and Supervision of the Modern Secondary School, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>Jacobson, Logsdon, and Wiegman, The Principalship: New Perspectives, p. 376.

Therefore, the principal should stress to the candidate the importance of his responsibility of signing a contract. The principal should make sure there is complete understanding on what will become the teacher's responsibility before final agreement is reached. No point should be left unclear that may result in dissatisfaction or misunderstanding. He should stress to the candidate the binding effect of the contract.<sup>1</sup>

When the signing of the contract is completed, the principal's responsibility in the selection process is not completed however. He still has at least four more responsibilities. One, he should stress to the newly hired teacher the importance of notifying all other districts where he or she has applied to withdraw the application because he or she has accepted this position. This will notify the principals in the other districts that he or she is no longer available for employment. The second responsibility is to notify all the candidates who applied that the position has been filled. This could be time consuming but it is a courtesy that should be extended and it will help to build a better image for the school district.<sup>2</sup> The third responsibility is to make sure the new teacher is placed on the school district's mailing list to receive the school bulletin and other communications. The fourth responsibility is to write a letter to the new teacher extending a welcome to the school and to the school district. The principal should express in this letter his confidence

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<sup>1</sup>Wiles, Supervision For Better Schools, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Baughman, Administration and Supervision of the Modern Secondary School, p. 60.

in his or her potential and the contributions he or she will make to the staff.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Fawcett, School Personnel Administration, p. 44.

## CONCLUSION

How do you know you have hired a good teacher? It would be wrong to assume that a person who is knowledgeable in a certain subject matter or who masters certain teaching techniques will be a good teacher and those who do not will be unsuccessful. It is reasonable to expect that there are many types of good teaching. Teaching occurs when students are motivated, challenged, and encouraged to achieve at their highest level. Teaching involves a sincere love and understanding of children, an ability to recognize their limitations and capabilities, and an adequate knowledge in the various subject areas using a variety of teaching techniques.<sup>1</sup> It is important for the principal not to limit good teaching as being only the way he may have taught. But for the principal to realize there are many types of good teaching, he will become more effective in the selection of teachers.

Although the development of a school program is not the consideration of this paper, it is of utmost importance when considering the personnel needs. The hiring of a teacher or teachers simply to fill a vacancy with no thought given to the school program will lead to a confusion and breakdown of the school program. The selection of teachers must be carefully planned by the principal. When this is done, the school program will be strengthened.

An ever increasing amount of responsibility is being given to elementary principals for the selection of teachers. The principal should study and prepare himself for all phases of the selection process. This will consume much time and effort on his part, but through the

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<sup>1</sup>Luther E. Bradfield, Supervision for Modern Elementary Schools (Columbus: Merrill Books, Inc., 1964), p. 157.

selection process the opportunity is great to initiate changes and to strengthen the school. It is important to recognize that the selection of teachers directly affects the nature and accomplishments of the school's curriculum, programs, and activities. Because of this, the principal will want to take this responsibility and participate in every aspect of the selection process.

The elementary principal should prepare a job description for each position. This job description would be reviewed periodically by the principal to keep it current according to changing conditions and needs. It would be the basic principle that the principal would check the candidate's qualifications against the job description before continuing any further in the selection process. This will also enable the candidate to know what is expected of him as he reviews the job description.

The degree to which the elementary principal is involved with recruitment will depend upon the size of the district. However, regardless of the size of the district the principal should plan ahead for the needs he will have for initiating changes and for additional staff. He should also establish and maintain good relations with several colleges. At this stage of recruitment and job description, he should be honest with the candidates in telling whether or not they are a serious contender for the position available.

In the screening process the principal should make a file on each candidate that would include the application, credentials, transcripts, letter of recommendation, and other notations concerning his contact with the candidate. The principal must study the file very

carefully before ranking the candidates as to desirability and proceeding with the interview.

The interview is very important because the principal can assess the candidate's attitude and personality. There are many questions that can be asked during an interview but they should all be directed in determining if the candidate is right for the position. The principal must prepare questions, study the techniques of interviewing, and have knowledge in a variety of areas in order to conduct a good interview. The interview can be a very effective means for the principal if used properly.

Upon completion of the interviews, the principal selects the candidate who is to be hired by the board for the position available.

One major importance of staff selection is that new teachers represent an important input to the school either in maintaining the current school programs or by helping the system to change. Through the deliberate selection of persons who can make certain inputs, the process of change within a school is greatly enhanced especially if those selected are given support.<sup>1</sup>

Through all aspects of staff selection a tremendous amount of preparation and training is needed by the principal to be effective in this most important task. Since the principal is held responsible for the results in his school, he should conduct the entire selection process so effectively that there is no doubt concerning the selection

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph B. Kimbrough, Administering Elementary Schools (New York: MacMillan Co., 1968) , p. 240.

of the candidate. If he does this, he will know that he has recommended a good teacher to be hired.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

There are three basic recommendations the writer would make in the area of staff selection. The first recommendation is the need for additional research work to be done. Some areas for needed research are: (1) the effectiveness of new teachers in meeting the principal's expectations and his satisfaction with the performance of the new teachers, (2) research elementary principals on how they use other staff members in the selection process, (3) research elementary principals on the amount of time they spend in the total selection process, (4) research school districts and principals to determine how they establish and maintain good relations with a college for recruitment of teachers, (5) research school districts as to their expenses in recruiting teachers, (6) research elementary principals on the five or ten most important questions to ask during the interview, (7) research the effect that an oversupply of candidates has on the principal in the selection process, and (8) further research on the elementary principal's attitude toward the candidate.

The second recommendation is for a questionnaire type survey to be conducted among randomly selected elementary principals in Kansas to determine their involvement in the various phases of staff selection.

The third recommendation is for an authority in the field of education to write a complete book on the topic of staff selection. Most books contain only a small section about staff selection. This writer believes that staff selection is too important to be limited to a few pages in any book.



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THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN THE SELECTION OF TEACHERS

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report was to make an exhaustive study of the available literature on the elementary principal's role in staff selection. The literature was studied to determine the principal's role in the following areas: job analysis, selection criteria, recruitment, screening process, interview, and final selection and nomination.

The literature stressed the importance for the principal to write a job description and to match this description with the qualifications of the candidate. The job description formats and purposes are discussed in the paper.

The principal should establish and maintain good relations with many colleges for the recruitment of staff. He should develop an effective recruiting program using recommendations from staff members, application files, and commercial teacher placement agencies as possible resources for recruitment.

In the selection process, the criteria of excellence through various qualities and categories was analyzed.

The interview can be very effective in the selection of teachers if the principal will prepare and study the techniques necessary to conduct a good interview. The techniques developed in the literature are discussed and analyzed by the author.