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## OBTAINING PERSONNEL IN RPS

According to Helen Mickens DeMena, Director of Talent Acquisitions, Richmond Public Schools (RPS) begins its recruiting season in October before the next school year begins (Mickens DeMena, 2021). They began recruiting in October of 2020 for FY22. January is the time when recruiters are busiest as teachers are completing their intent forms and positions become open. RPS conducts a virtual transfer fair and then a “kick-off” in March with a face-to-face recruitment fair. RPS first posts available positions on the district’s Talent website using TalentEd. They then inform colleges and universities in which they partnerships to reach new graduates. However, in my interview with Michelle Hudacsko, RPS Chief of Staff, she states that RPS is reaching out to veteran teachers with exemplary teaching skills as a primary new hire source (Hudacsko, 2021). She said RPS has also hired a “sourcer” to recruit via social media and search outside of the greater Richmond area on sites such as LinkedIn and Indeed.

RPS is not as diverse as the community it serves, and so it is currently looking for men of color and bilingual teachers to fill the growing demographic needs in the district. RPS’s 28,000+ student body is 55.4% black and 18.5% Hispanic (Commonwealth of Virginia, 2020). Most of these students are located south of the James River, with most of the 21% of white students located north of the river. According to Mickens DeMena, there is a shortage of male teachers of color across the nation. Nationally, male teachers of color comprise about 1% of all teaching positions, and RPS is between 6% and 7% (Mickens DeMena, 2021). The Talent Acquisition Office has conducted Facebook Live sessions with Superintendent Jason Kamras and local educational male leaders of color and local Hispanic educators and leaders in the city to discuss the need for men of color and bilingual educators. The discussion focused on reaching those

enrolled in college or seniors in high school and bringing them into the field of urban education. The Talent Office has also traveled outside of the greater Richmond area to recruit from colleges out of state and new graduates in Puerto Rico (Mickens DeMena, 2021). The Talent Office attends job fairs that other entities, such as colleges and the city, create.

Once the Talent Office team has sourced recruits to determine certification areas and experience to meet the needs of open positions, they send the candidates' names to the principals in the schools with openings for review. Certification areas must meet the current needs of the district. A great candidate will have the appropriate certification(s) and proven experience and meet the personality, culture, and climate needs of the school. Mickens DeMena said that hiring managers (principals) select those they want to interview. They then create a panel of 3 to 5 people comprised of assistant principals, a department chair, a lead teacher for the content area, or someone who will work directly with the teacher (another teacher or counselor). All members must have a purpose to be on the panel. She also felt that it should be required for the candidate to complete a task or assignment or teach a lesson as teachers should demonstrate how they teach.

Principals then determine which candidates they would like to interview for specific positions. According to Mickens DeMena, RPS usually can obtain the recruit they choose. She stated that it was rare that a candidate refused a position, and it was generally that the person had multiple offers in the district. She also said that since she does not conduct interviews, she was not able to help with the interview questions, but she felt the following were important:

- Why do you want to teach in an urban school district?

- Classroom management techniques, philosophies, provide examples where the first response did not help, and how did you tweak it?
- Virtual learning, what are you doing to meet your students in this environment? Adjust for virtual? Flexibility.

I interviewed Dr. Shelia Hines, assistant principal at Huguenot High School, regarding her procedures for hiring, and she stated that the district puts a pool of names on the website. Then principals review them (Hines, 2021). Then, based on the individual school's needs, the principal will invite a candidate for an interview. The current pool for science and math teachers is shallow, and across the nations are hard to get. I asked her to describe what the interview process looks like from her perspective. Dr. Hines stated that she likes to invite the candidate to be interviewed face to face with the team, which consists of administration, the department chair from the content area, and a teacher from the content area. Then, the team meets to create pertinent questions from the content plus questions provided by the district.

Once the candidate arrives, the team takes a moment to introduce themselves, and they attempt to put the candidate at ease before asking questions. Dr. Hines stated that the questions are formulated to determine whether or not the candidate knows their content, information about our school and district and asks the candidate to explain what the first twenty minutes of your class look step-by-step. She also asks why the candidate wants to work in an urban school, whether or not they have experience in the environment, and why they plan to leave their current division. She also asks why they want to work in her school specifically. Dr. Hines would finish with, "If I ask someone in your current school about you, what would they say?" (Hines, 2021).

Dr. Hines indicated that she would expect the candidate to ask follow-up questions such as,

- When will the job begin?
- What qualities are you looking for to improve your staff and building? (Culture and Climate question is essential).
- What would my schedule look like?
- How many students per class will I be required to teach?
- How many classes a day?
- Do I have a planning period?
- What extra-curricular duties will I have?
- What are the school hours of operation?

Dr. Hines said that she does participate in RPS job fairs. For example, she said, “we have a table set up decorated with school paraphernalia, candidates come to you and interview one-to-one, face-to-face, you make notes, and if you want to look at the candidate more closely, HR (the Talent Office) invites them to interview at the school” (Hines, 2021). In addition, she has attended college job fairs for upcoming graduates who plan to enter the field.

This semester, I have participated in two days of interviews at two different schools for three different positions. The first day was for an exceptional education (ExEd) teacher. The Talent Office sent a list of candidates and pre-designed teacher questions, but they were not pertinent to the position. So the assistant principal over the ExEd put together the team to include herself and the department chair. She invited me to observe and participate by creating questions, which was a great experience. Now I have questions to ask the first exceptional education teacher I am in charge of interviewing. I was also able to participate by asking questions and providing input on the interview afterward. Once the interviews concluded, we ranked them and put the data in a form for the Talent Office to review. I have not heard whether or not the top candidate was chosen or if she was accepted. At the middle school level, I only asked questions

while the principal and other designee made notes. They used the generic form provided by the Talent Office but added other pertinent math and counselor questions for the two positions.

Participating in the interviews has given me an understanding of both the rigidity and flexibility of the process, depending on the role. The Talent Office needs rigid protocols to make the process work uniformly and to provide equity across schools and candidates. However, principals have greater flexibility in choosing the candidate they feel will fit their school the best. At times, it may not be the candidate that appears to be most qualified on paper but meets the social-emotional needs of the school and will benefit the school culture and climate. I am less afraid of the process from a candidate's position and the administrator's after speaking with those directly involved in the process.

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“I have neither given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of any infraction of the Honor Code.”

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