

Delaware Department of Education

**2014 DELAWARE TALENT
PRACTICES SURVEY REPORT**

*An analysis of educator recruitment and
retention in Delaware schools*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The most important school-based factors that influence student achievement are teacher effectiveness¹ and the quality of school leadership². Whereas the prior version of the Talent Practices Survey focused solely on the practices used to recruit and retain educators, this version also highlights those practices used to recruit and retain school leaders in Delaware schools.

The Talent Practices Survey on which this report is based was administered to all Delaware school districts in April, 2015. Survey respondents were asked about the 2014 hiring season (February 2014 through October 2014). All 19 of Delaware's traditional public school districts responded to the survey, as well as 4 charter school districts. Personnel managers responded to questions regarding the number of new teachers hired, staffing challenges, timing of hiring, recruitment, incentive and educator selection practices. Questions were asked regarding educators—instructional and non-instructional, as well as regarding school leaders.

Additionally, for the first time ever in April, 2015, the Delaware Department of Education administered an Aspiring Educator Survey to gather information about the professional plans and preferences of aspiring educators and recent graduates of educator preparation programs in Delaware and neighboring states. The survey was sent to current seniors who plan to pursue a career in education, as well as novice educators (between 0 and 5 years as an educator). The 348 respondents had or were earning a Bachelor's degrees from the following in-state institutions: University of Delaware (37%), Wilmington University (18%), Delaware State University (2%), and Wesley College (1%). The out-of-state institution with the most respondents was Kutztown University in Pennsylvania (18%).

Together the Talent Practices Survey and the Aspiring Educator Survey paint a robust picture of the educator marketplace—exploring the practices used by prospective employers to recruit and retain educators, as well as the preferences of prospective employees as they make decisions about where they would like to work.

Some key findings from the Talent Practices Survey include:

- Hard-to-staff positions remain relatively unchanged
 - Foreign language, bilingual/ESOL, and high school science instructional positions
 - Speech therapist and psychologist non-instructional positions
- Only 6 districts stated that they had the majority of their educators (75-100%) hired in a time frame generally considered to be early hiring (i.e. before July 1st)
- Districts continue to recruit heavily from in-state institutions: The University of Delaware, Wilmington University, and Delaware State University
- The most used methods by districts for recruiting educators include staff networking/word of mouth, posting job opportunities and job descriptions on district web sites, University of Delaware's Project Search, presentations at job fairs, and Join Delaware Schools

¹ Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A., & Kain, J.F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement, *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458.

² Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

- There is variation in the dedicated recruitment budget of districts, with some districts having no dedicated recruitment budget, and some districts spending \$30,000 per year on recruiting activities.

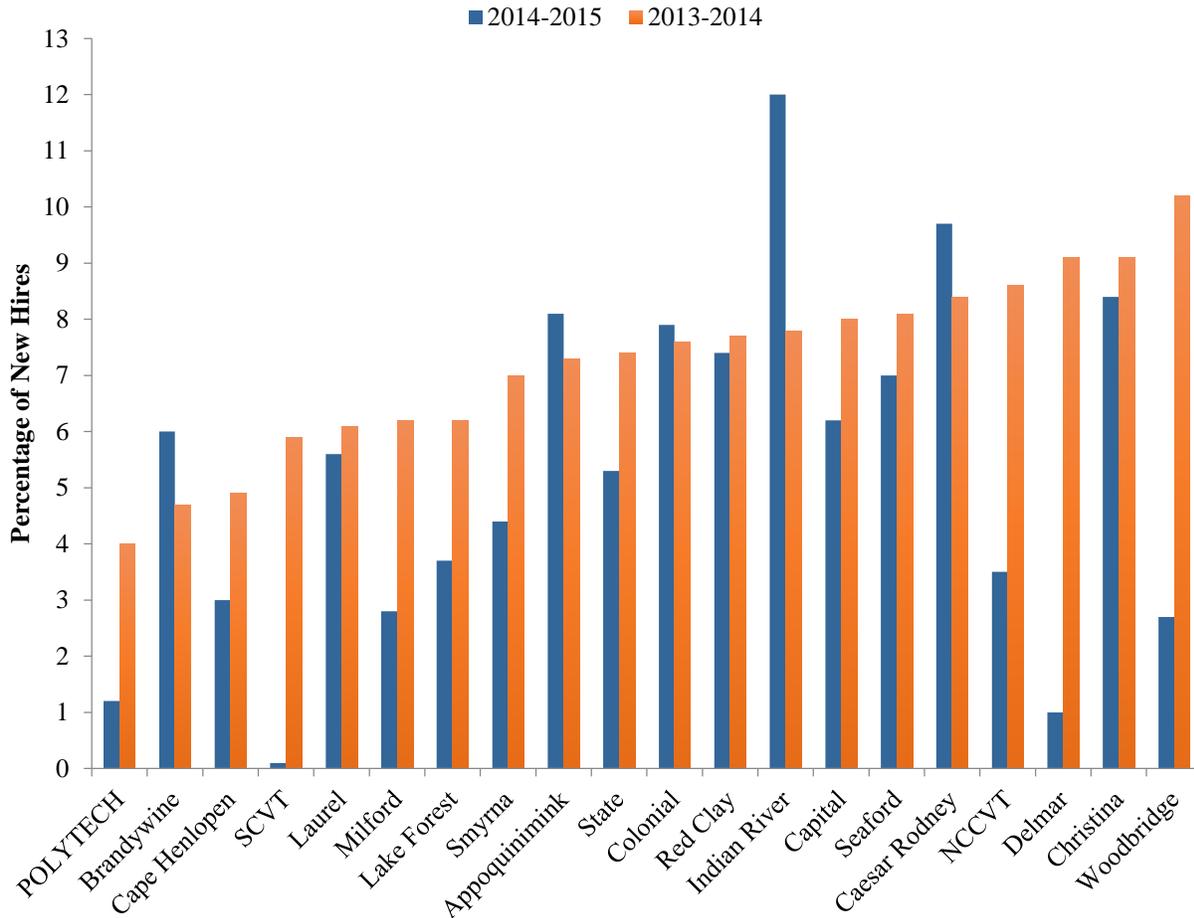
Some key findings from the Aspiring Educator Survey include:

- Aspiring educators who lived in or attended school in Delaware were more likely to choose Delaware as their top choice teaching destination
- The opportunity to have an impact on students was rated as “extremely important” by 77% of respondents
- The top five sources aspiring educators use for learning about employment opportunities were online postings, school district website, friends/family, recruitment fairs, and career services

EDUCATOR HIRING NEEDS AND STAFFING

In the 2014 hiring season, 862 teachers were hired in the state of Delaware. This represents a slight decrease from the 998 teachers who were hired in the 2013 hiring season.³ On average, fewer than one in twelve teachers are new hires each year in Delaware.⁴ The chart below shows the percentage of teachers who were new hires by district for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. The state average for the 2014-2015 hiring season was 5.3%.

**Percentage of New Hires by District
2013-14 & 2014-15**



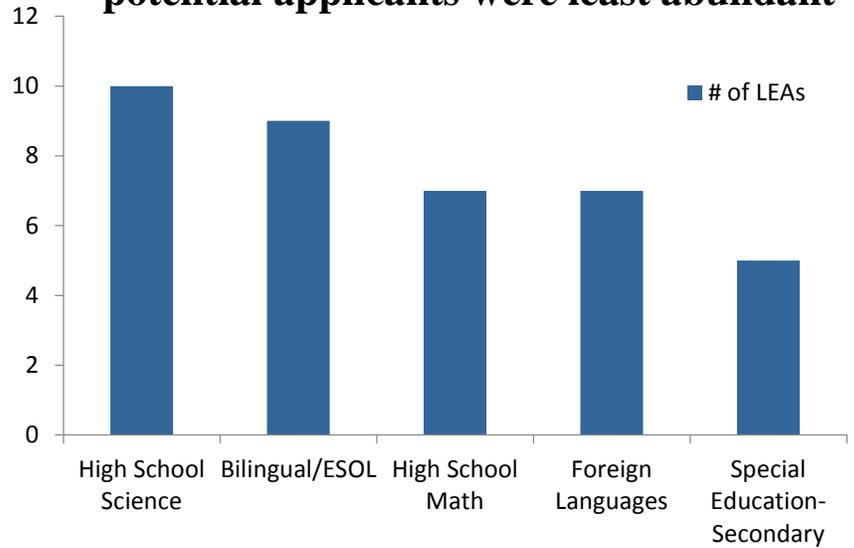
³ Data from Delaware Department of Education records, 2013-14 and 2014-15.

⁴ Data from Delaware Department of Education records and includes teachers from the 2007-08 through the 2011-12 school years.

Instructional Hiring Needs

Foreign language, Bilingual/ESOL, and high school science teaching positions continue to be among the most difficult to staff in the state of Delaware. This trend continues from prior years. These positions were reported most often by LEAs as being those that received the least number of applications overall as well as the least number of *high-potential* applicants. Positions that received the most applications when posted were elementary, social science, and special education-elementary positions.

Instructional positions in which high-potential applicants were least abundant



Aspiring Educator Survey Data

The University of Delaware, Wilmington University, and Kutztown University had the largest number of respondents to the DDOE’s Aspiring Educator Survey administered in April & May of 2015. The chart below depicts the most popular teaching areas for aspiring educators at these schools.

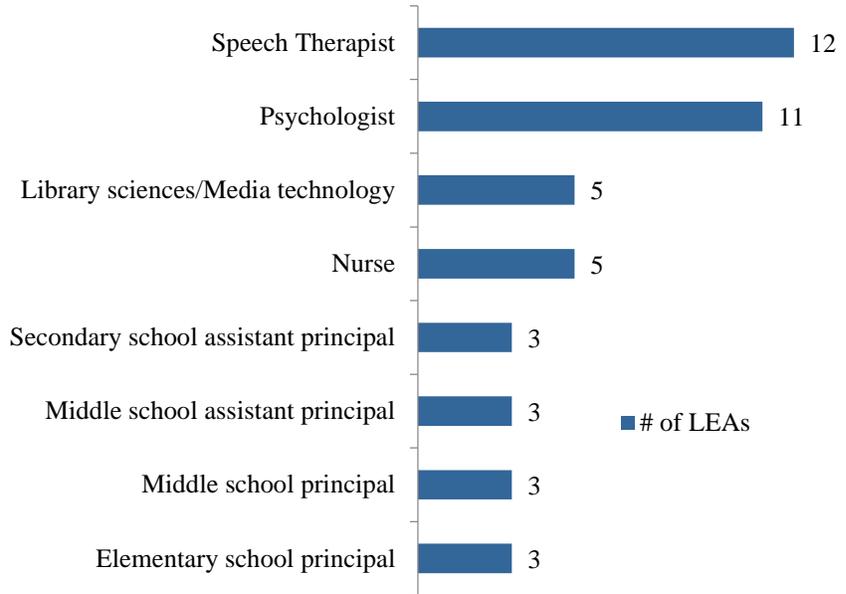
Kutztown University	University of Delaware	Wilmington University
Special Education-Elementary (22%)	Elementary (28%)	Elementary (47%)
Elementary (22%)	ELA, High School (17%)	Special Education- Elementary (16%)
ELA Middle School (7%)	Music (10%)	Math, Middle School (6%)
Foreign Languages (7%)	Special Education- Elementary (8%)	Early Childhood Education (4%)

Non-Instructional Hiring Needs

Speech therapist & psychologist continue to be among the most difficult non-instructional positions to staff in the state of Delaware. These non-instructional positions were the ones for which the most job opportunities were posted, however, they received the least number of applications and the least number of *high potential* applicants.

The three non-instructional positions that received the most applications when posted were guidance counselor, secondary school assistant principal, and elementary school assistant principal. The position of guidance counselor was also the position in which high-potential applicants were most abundant.

Non-Instructional Positions with the Least Number of Applications during 2014 Hiring Period



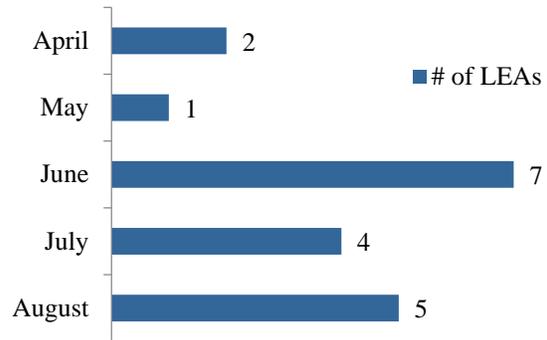
HIRING PRACTICES

Timing of Hiring

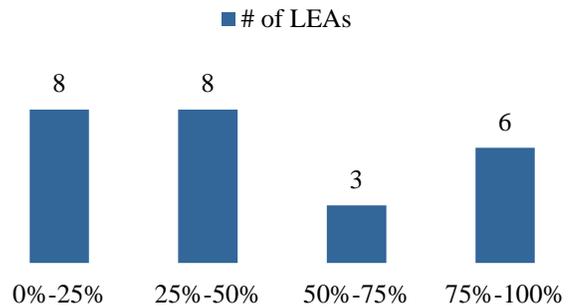
While there has been a general decrease in late hiring in the past 5 years, few LEA hiring target dates are considered early hiring. 20 LEAs reported that they have a target date by which they intend to fill the majority of their instructional positions. However, only 10 LEAs had a target date that would be considered early hiring, i.e. before July 1st. Studies suggest that a consequence of late hiring is the loss of stronger candidates, which leads to the hiring of weaker ones.⁵

6 LEAs reported that 75-100% of their teachers were hired before June 30th. 23 LEAs reported that 0-25% of the teachers they extended contracts/offers to did not accept the offer. The same number of LEAs reported that 0-25% of teachers who committed to work in their district/charter later changed their decision during the period of June-September.

Hiring Target Dates



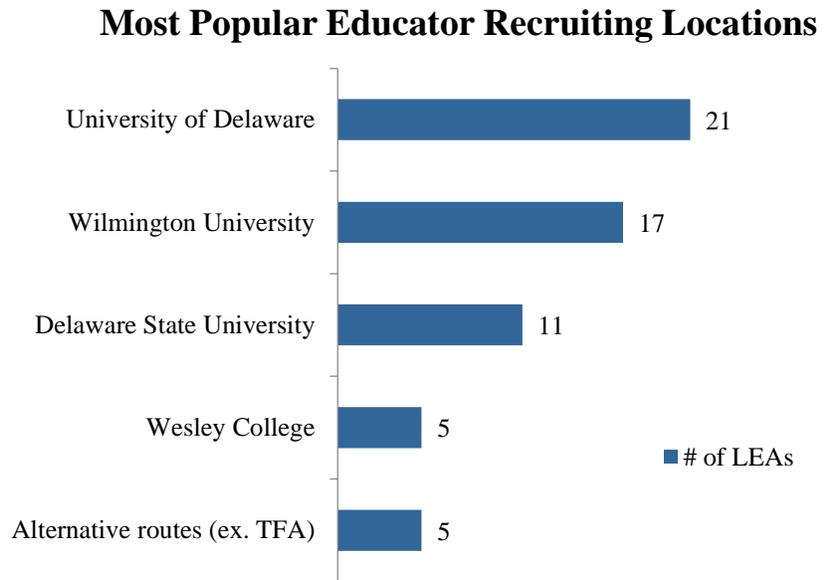
Percentage of Teachers Hired Before June 30th



⁵ Levin, J; Quinn, M. M. (2003). *Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms*. The New Teacher Project.

EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

The majority of districts stated that they recruited frequently from universities within the state of Delaware. Personnel managers were asked about the institutions from which they recruit most frequently. The top three institutions selected were 1) The University of Delaware, 2) Wilmington University, and 3) Delaware State University. Popular out-of-state recruiting locations included



Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland universities. Salisbury University, located on the eastern shore of Maryland, was specifically listed by three districts, and Millersville University, located in Pennsylvania, was specifically listed by two districts as out-of-state locations targeted for teacher recruitment.

Recruitment Practices

Not all LEAs have money set aside specifically for recruitment. Eighteen LEAs reported that they had a recruitment budget for the 2014 hiring season. Fifteen of the nineteen traditional districts had a dedicated recruitment budget. This is an increase from the fourteen traditional districts that reported having a recruitment budget in the 2012-2013 school year. For those LEAs that do have a specific recruitment budget, the majority of this budget is spent on traveling to attend job fairs, career fair registration, and newspaper advertising. Budget amounts for those LEAs that did have a specific recruitment budget ranged from \$1,000 to \$30,000.

The recruitment strategies LEAs reported using most often to recruit teachers were staff networking/word of mouth, posting job opportunities and job descriptions on district web sites, University of Delaware’s Project Search, presentations at job fairs, and Join Delaware Schools.

Aspiring Educator Survey Data

In the Aspiring Educator Survey, aspiring educators were asked about the sources they used to learn about employment opportunities. This chart matches the top five sources selected by respondents to the Aspiring Educator Survey to the top five recruitment strategies used by LEAs. While the Aspiring Educator Survey did not ask about the specific online postings aspiring educators used, it is clear that new educators are looking online for job opportunities. This may hold additional potential for Join Delaware Schools, which offers a one-stop location for educator openings across the state.

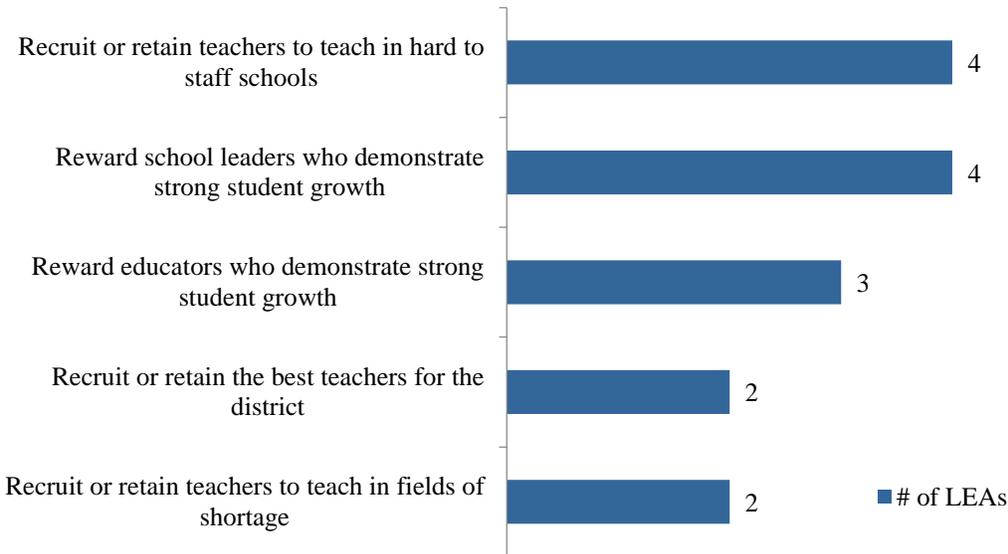
Top Five Most Used Recruitment Strategies by LEAs	Top Five Sources Aspiring Educators Use for Employment Opportunities
1. Staff networking/word of mouth	1. Online postings
2. Posting on district websites	2. School district websites
3. University of Delaware Project Search	3. Friends/Family
4. Presentations at job fairs	4. Recruitment Fairs
5. Join Delaware Schools	5. Career Services

Incentive Practices

In the 2013-14 school year, three districts stated that they offered recruitment incentives to teacher candidates. In the 2014-15 school year, four traditional districts and one charter district stated that they offered recruitment incentives to teacher candidates. Only two LEAs stated that they offer recruitment incentives to principal candidates.

Three traditional districts and two charter districts reported that they used pay incentives such as financial bonuses, salary increases, different steps on the salary schedule to do some or all of the following: a) reward school leaders who demonstrate strong student growth, b) recruit or retain teachers to teach in hard to staff schools, c) recruit or retain teachers to teach in fields of shortage, d) recruit or retain the best teachers for the district, and e) reward educators who demonstrate strong student growth.

Reasons LEAs Use Pay Incentives:

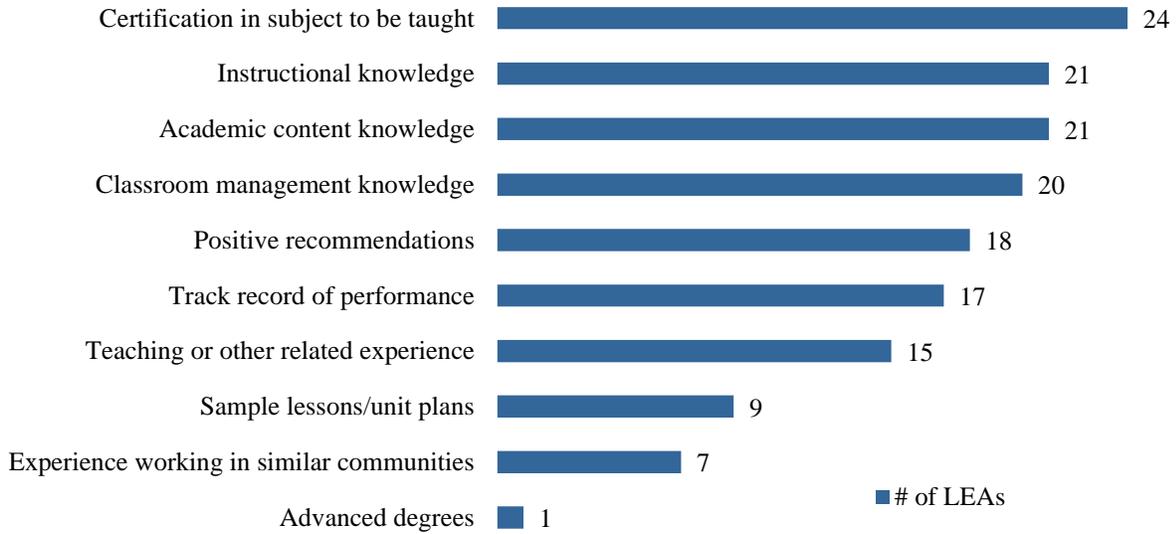


Educator Selection

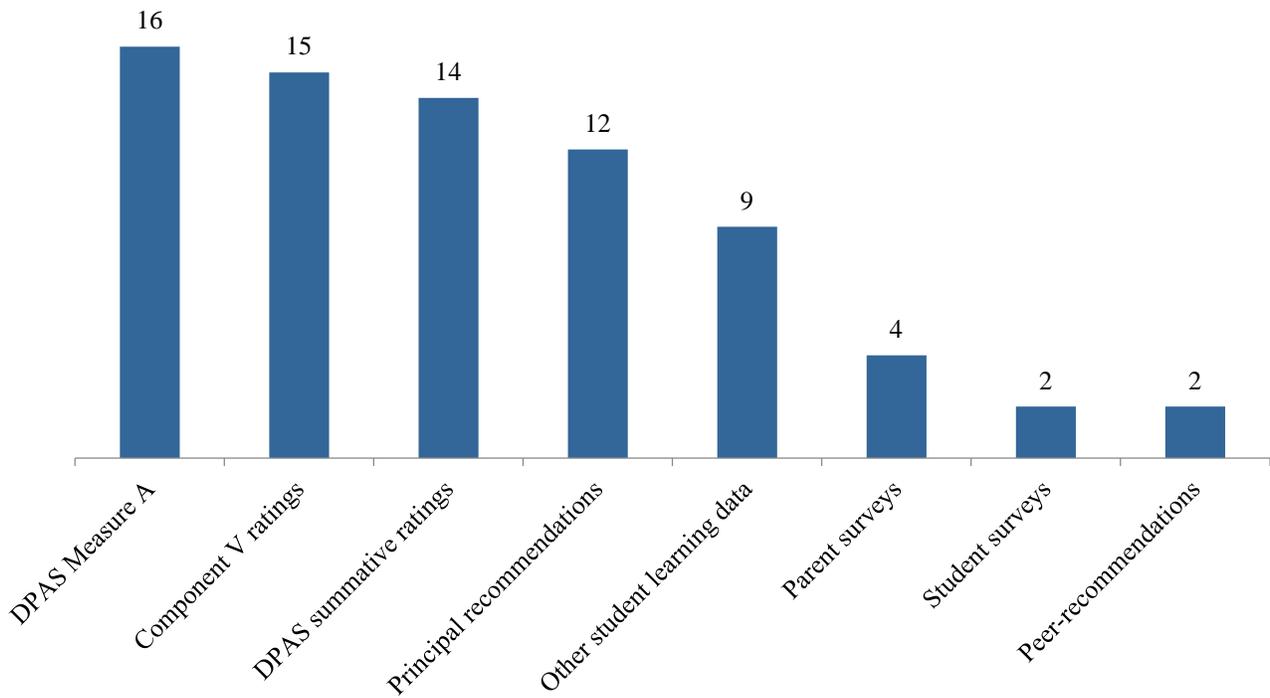
Eleven traditional districts and two charter districts stated that they had a model of attributes, values, dispositions, and professional competencies that clearly establish the district’s ideal teacher. The same LEAs responded similarly with regards to the ideal principal. When making a job offer to teacher applicants, the top three qualities that districts looked for were 1) certification in subject to be taught, 2) academic content knowledge, and 3) instructional knowledge. The table below lists additional qualities and the number of districts that deemed each particular quality “very important.”

When personnel directors were asked whether they had a process in place for identifying their most impactful teachers, 77% responded yes. All of the school districts who stated that they had a process in place for identifying their most impactful teachers used multiple measures for identifying such teachers. The chart below shows the various measures used by school districts as well as the number of districts that used each particular measure to identify its most impactful teachers.

Number of LEAs who rated the following qualifications "very important" in making a job offer

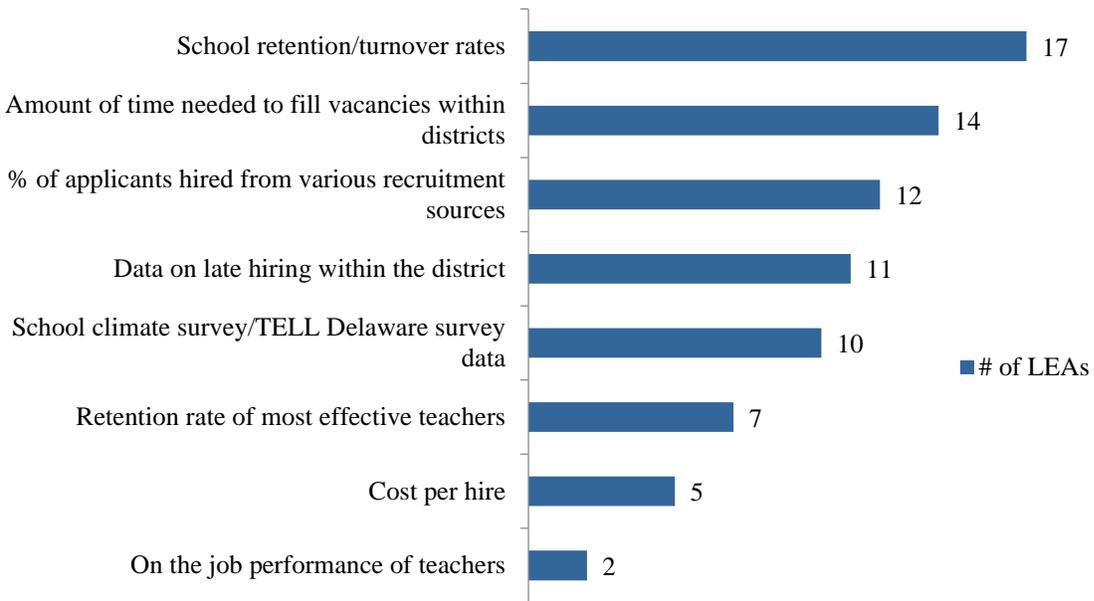


Data Sources Used to Identify the Most Impactful Teachers



School retention/turnover rates and the amount of time needed to fill vacancies were the most popular indicators used by LEAs to make recruitment and hiring decisions. Fifteen traditional districts and two charter districts reported school retention/turnover rates as an indicator used to make decisions/policies for recruitment and hiring on a regular basis.

Indicators LEAs use to make decisions/policies for recruitment and hiring on a regular basis



SPOTLIGHT: SCHOOL LEADERS

This year, the Talent Practices Survey included questions regarding recruitment and hiring practices for school leaders. Questions were similar to those asked about recruitment and hiring practices used for teachers. This spotlight highlights the major findings from the school leaders portion of the survey.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

- The three recruitment strategies used most often to recruit school leaders were 1) posting job opportunities and job descriptions on district web sites, 2) staff networking/word of mouth, and 3) Join Delaware Schools.
- Posting job opportunities and job descriptions on district web sites were also reported as being the recruitment strategies that have yielded the best results in the past, in addition to print advertisements and Join Delaware Schools.

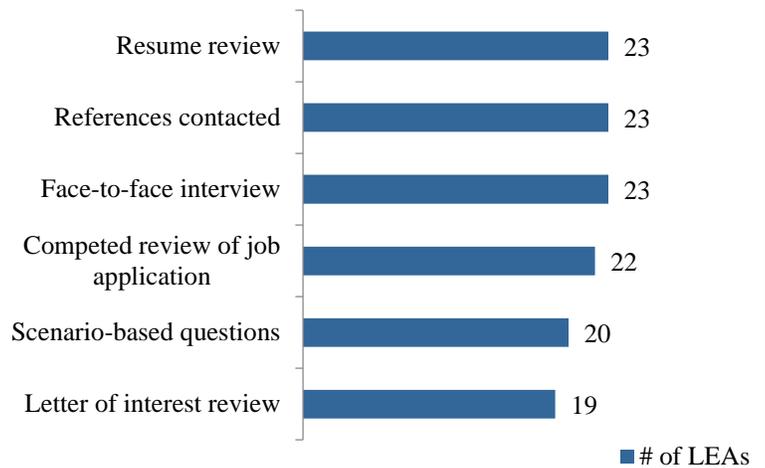
Recruitment Strategies That Have Yielded The Best Results In The Past

1. Posting job opportunities and job descriptions on district web sites
2. Staff networking/word of mouth
3. Print advertisements
4. Join Delaware Schools

RECRUITMENT & HIRING POLICIES

- 11 traditional and 2 charter districts reported that they have a list of attributes, values, dispositions, and professional competencies that clearly establishes their ideal principal.
- 16 traditional districts and 1 charter district rated the alignment of their school leader selection criteria with the criteria from the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS) as “important” or “very important”.
- The top three professional qualifications LEAs reported as being important in making a job offer to a school leader were 1) ability to lead and manage adults, 2) instructional knowledge, and 3) leadership experience.
- The three most frequently used activities in the school leader selection process were 1) resume review, 2) references contacted, and 3) face-to-face interview.

Most Frequently Used Activities in School Leader Selection Process



CONCLUSIONS

Recruitment practices, such as early hiring, have important implications for the quality of teachers that are hired. As both traditional and charter districts continue to wrestle with finding the best ways to attract and retain the most qualified educators, it is important to continue to investigate potentially promising practices. Are districts that spend more money on recruiting attracting more effective teachers, and are they able to hire earlier? Are there some districts that are having an easier time recruiting educators for some of the hard-to-staff subject areas, and what are they doing differently? This report begins to answer some of these questions. In addition, by including information from aspiring educators that highlights how this new generation searches for jobs, and the areas in which they are interested in teaching, this report adds additional context to the discussion around the best practices for recruiting these educators into Delaware classrooms. However, there is still much to be learned about the most promising practices for ensuring that the most effective teachers are in every school in Delaware.

This report highlights the recruitment practices used for attracting school leaders, recognizing their importance to the quality of a school, and the outcomes for students. However, despite the importance of this position not all districts had a model that they used for hiring for this position, and the recruitment strategy was not differentiated for educators and for school leaders. Neither was the use of incentives different based on the role for which the district was hiring. These may be additional areas for districts to innovate with promising practices.

Overall, these findings reflect areas of improved policies with more districts reporting that they have hired a fair number of their staff early. This report, however, also highlights the additional work that needs to be done to better understand the levers that are critical in not only attracting but also retaining the most effective educators and school leaders in Delaware schools.