

1-1-2011

The Initial Application Screening Process For P-12 Potential Teacher Candidates

Brian Edward Neighbors

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Neighbors, Brian Edward, "The Initial Application Screening Process For P-12 Potential Teacher Candidates" (2011). *Masters Theses*. 156.

<http://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/156>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

*******US Copyright Notice*******

No further reproduction or distribution of this copy is permitted by electronic transmission or any other means.

The user should review the copyright notice on the following scanned image(s) contained in the original work from which this electronic copy was made.

Section 108: United States Copyright Law

The copyright law of the United States [Title 17, United States Code] governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that use may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. No further reproduction and distribution of this copy is permitted by transmission or any other means.

THESIS MAINTENANCE AND REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

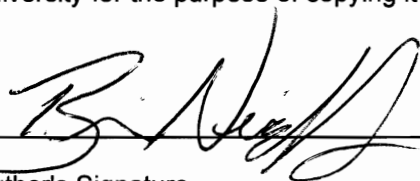
TO: Graduate Degree Candidates (who have written formal theses)

SUBJECT: Permission to Reproduce Theses

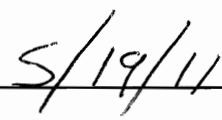
The University Library is receiving a number of request from other institutions asking permission to reproduce dissertations for inclusion in their library holdings. Although no copyright laws are involved, we feel that professional courtesy demands that permission be obtained from the author before we allow these to be copied.

PLEASE SIGN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University has my permission to lend my thesis to a reputable college or university for the purpose of copying it for inclusion in that institution's library or research holdings.



Author's Signature



Date

I respectfully request Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University **NOT** allow my thesis to be reproduced because:

Author's Signature

Date

This form must be submitted in duplicate.

The Initial Application Screening Process for P-12 Potential Teacher Candidates

By

Brian Edward Neighbors

B.A., Blackburn College, 2006

THESIS

Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

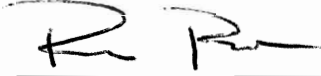
Master of Science in College Student Affairs

In The Graduate School, Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois

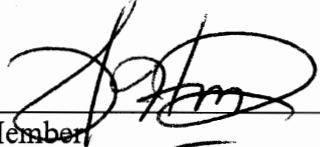
May 2011

I Hereby Recommend that this Thesis be Accepted as Fulfilling
This Part of the Graduate Degree Cited Above

JAMES H. SYLWAGE 04 MAY 2011
Thesis Committee Chair Date

 5-23-11
Department / School Chair Date

Stephen E Lucas 5/4/11
Member Date

 5/4/11
Member Date

Copyright 2011 by Brian Neighbors

**THE INITIAL APPLICATION SCREENING
PROCESS FOR P-12 POTENTIAL TEACHER CANDIDATES**

Brian E. Neighbors

Thesis

**Department of Counseling and Student Development
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, IL**

May, 2011

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to understand what factors determine how a school district hiring official takes a stack of many applicants and screens those down to a few to bring in for a face to face interview. The application process is seldom a focus in teacher education curriculum, and the study sought to see how important the application documents were in determining how the candidate was viewed by the hiring official. The researcher conducted one on one interview with a selected sample of district hiring officials using a qualitative inquiry method. Interviews were analyzed to determine how district size and administrative role of the hiring official affected the initial screening process, and how the application documents were utilized. Results showed the size of the district plays a role in how the initial screening process is conducted and the number of steps in the initial screening process. District size did not determine the application documents requested or what was considered important information, but some information included in the cover letter and resume is preferred depending on district size.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin I would like to thank the members of my committee for their time, effort, and valued support throughout my project. I would especially like to thank Dr. James Wallace for the hours spent in his office developing my ideas, providing valuable guidance, and encouraging me to fight over all obstacles to achieve this goal. I am forever grateful of your time, advice, and most importantly mentorship during these two wonderful years. You forever have my respect and gratitude. To my other committee members, Dr. Stephen Lucas and Dr. James Hardin, it has been a great honor for me to have had your thoughts and guidance during this project. Both of your experiences in the P-12 system took my simple ideas and helped them grow to a new level.

To my fellow cohort members, it has been a pleasure working with you during this experience, and I wish each of you well during your careers. I want to thank the “Doc’s” for all they have taught me over the course of graduate school. Thank you, Dr. Charles Eberly, Dr. Angela Yoder, Dr. Jeffrey Cross, Dr. Daniel Nadler, and Mr. Lou Hencken, your lessons throughout graduate school have been amazing. Without each of you I would not be the future leader in higher education that I set out to become.

To my fellow colleagues in the Student Success Center, Brian Brausch and Jessi Rinkel, thank you for your thoughts, help, and confidence during our time together. A special thanks to Cindy Boyer for being the best supervisor on Eastern’s campus, and allowing me to learn by doing and not by being told.

Most importantly to my family who without their support none of this would have been possible. To my beautiful wife Shannon, your sacrifices well expand my own, and without you none of my career goals and dreams would have ever come true. Thank you

for being the best thing in the world to come home to after all my difficult days. To my children, Connor, Cohen, and Kinsley, you are the best things the world has given me, and all this work is to encourage you to accomplish your goals through education. To this I say thank you.

DEDICATION

As the character Galadriel said in J. R. R. Tolkien's, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, "To you...I give you the Light of Eärendil, our most beloved star. May it be a light for you in dark places, when all other lights go out." In this thought, the following thesis is dedicated to my wife Shannon. Your sacrifices made this dream possible. You are forever my "Light of Eärendil" shining your light on me when the world seems dark.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Significance of the Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	3
Limitation of the Study.....	4
Operational Definitions.....	4
Overview of the Study.....	5
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	7
Review of Literature.....	7
Job Attainment.....	7
Application Documents.....	8
Screening and Selection Process.....	12
Chapter Summary.....	15
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY.....	16
Purpose of the Study.....	16
Research Questions.....	16
Participants.....	17
Data Collection.....	20
Data Analysis/Presentation.....	21
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS.....	23
Introduction.....	23
Interview Protocol 1.....	23
Interview Protocol 2.....	25
Interview Protocol 3.....	27

Interview Protocol 4.....	27
Interview Protocol 5.....	28
Interview Protocol 6.....	30
Format.....	31
Objective Statement.....	32
Experience and Training.....	32
Connection to District.....	33
Interview Protocol 7.....	34
Format.....	34
Certification.....	35
Experience.....	36
Interview Protocol 8.....	37
Interview Protocol 9.....	38
Interview Protocol 10.....	38
Interview Protocol 11.....	40
Interview Protocol 12.....	40
Interview Protocol 13.....	41
Interview Protocol 14.....	42
Interview Protocol 15.....	44
Small Districts.....	44
Medium Districts.....	45
Large Districts.....	45
Interview Protocol 16.....	46
Interview Protocol 17.....	47
Chapter Summary.....	47
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION.....	49
Discussion.....	49
Research Question #1.....	49
Research Question #2.....	52
Recommendations.....	55
Potential Teacher Candidates.....	55

Future Studies.....	56
Arranging Interviews with District Administrators.....	56
Conclusion.....	58
REFERENCES.....	60
APPENDICES.....	64
Appendix A: Interview Protocols.....	65
Appendix B: Informed Consent.....	67
Appendix C: Rights of Research Subjects.....	70
Appendix D: Participation Email.....	72
Appendix E: District F's Hiring Process Outline.....	74
VITA.....	76

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: *Online Application Process Component between districts based on size.....28*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an introduction to the present study, a statement regarding the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, research questions, limitations, operational definitions, and an overview statement.

Introduction

The initial job search can be difficult and taxing for students about to graduate from college. After spending years in the classroom learning skills and knowledge that will help them perform on the job, teacher education majors still have one crucial obstacle to conquer, the job application process. During this process, students seeking positions in the public and private Preschool-12 education systems will be sending application packets to potential employers for career opportunities in their field of their expertise. However, it is the quality of the cover letter and résumé that may determine an applicant's chances to meet face to face with prospective employers. When seeking employment, many teacher candidates send letter packets to the school district in hopes of being offered an interview. The first impression interviewers have of candidates is gleaned from what they see on paper. The cover letter and résumé must contain certain information that the employer wants to see and learn about the candidate. Ultimately, this first impression must create within employers the need to meet a person face to face. What is it in these documents that turns employers off or advances the candidate to the next level of the hiring process? For many perspective teachers, professional document writing was not included in their college's teacher preparation program curriculum. Students who did not seek professional advice when creating their application packets may not be able to demonstrate the skills necessary to make it to the next level of the

screening process. The present study seeks to examine how school district hiring officials screen these application documents (e.g., cover letter, résumé, letters of recommendation, written communication skills).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to conduct an assessment of the initial screening / selection processes of potential teacher candidate job application packets as conducted by school district hiring officials. Many school districts collect paper application packets (i.e., cover letter, résumé, list of references, transcripts) and screen candidates initially based on the information contained within these documents. The present study seeks to understand what information is included or left out of these documents and their quality that determine whether the applicant gets further consideration or is rejected for the applicant pool.

The initial screening process of job applications can be completed in a district's human resource office or by the building administrator. When the process varies between school districts, are different qualities focused on between the different application materials screeners?

Upon receiving an application packet, employers consciously decide after a cursory review one of two things: 1) Additional consideration should be given to this applicant or 2) this person's application does not deserve (rate) further consideration. Consequently, it is up to the candidate to sell themselves in a way that leaves the individual who reviews their credentials wanting to advance their application to the next stage in the hiring process.

Statement of the Problem

The primary researcher's intent was to interview a sample of district hiring officials and solicit their thoughts on the importance of application materials. These officials held titles such as human resources director, building principal, or district superintendent. Specifically, the purpose of the interviews was to gain knowledge and insight into what district officials look for in a candidate's cover letter and résumé that either excites them about the prospect of knowing more about the applicant or causes them to be less than enthusiastic about the applicant as a potential hire. After completing the interviews of the sample population, transcriptions were created from each interview and information was categorized to understand more about the initial screening process of teacher applicants.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study is its contribution to our knowledge and insights regarding the initial screening process of application packets of teacher candidates. Of additional significance are the phenomena of current day application processes (e.g., electronic submission of application materials procedures), the prevalence of single individual (i.e., building principal) versus multiple review processes, prior knowledge of an applicant, or the basis upon which decisions are made to invite an applicant for an on sight interview or to eliminate the applicant from the application pool.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the present study.

1. What happens during the initial screening of potential teacher candidates that categorizes them for consideration for the position?

2. What criteria are current school district hiring officials looking for on teacher candidate's application documents that determines their potential consideration status?

Limitations of the Study

The present study was limited in that all school district hiring officials throughout the central region of the targeted Midwestern state were not included. All public school district population demographics were considered when requesting participation in the study, but individual participants were sought utilizing purposive sampling (i.e., only participants within the central region of the Midwestern state were considered for participation). Another limitation to the present study was that participants may have had ideas and criteria they use during this process, but when actually conducting application screenings, their actions may differ from the information stated during the interviews. The actual screening processes conducted by the participant were not reviewed.

Operational Definitions

- School district hiring official – the person assigned in each district or building to collect all cover letters and résumés of prospective employees and go through the applicants to determine who to interview.
- Job attainment skills – Skills possessed by students in the process of seeking employment and making themselves stand out to potential employers. Skills in writing cover letters and résumés.
- Cover Letter – A document which accompanies the résumé to inform potential employers about the applicant that the résumé may not entail and encourages the employer to look closer at the résumé'.

- **Résumé** – A one to two page document containing information about the applicant's sought position, work history, skills, education, and other information that would make them a valuable employee for the company.
- **Certificate/Certification** – The official document licensing the individual to teach a specified content area in the state's P-12 school system.
- **Endorsements** – An endorsement is a statement appearing on a certificate that identifies the specific subjects or grade level that the certificate holder is authorized to teach
- **Transcript** – Document from educational institution listing student's completed courses with grades and cumulative grade point average.
- **Teacher Content Area** – Subject area with concentration of study, i.e. English, History.
- **Regional Office of Education (ROE)** – state office in county area that handles the certification process for teachers
- **P-12** – Pre-school through 12th grade

Overview of the Study

The present thesis presents, in five chapters, findings regarding the process district hiring officers go through when screening applicants for teaching positions in their districts. Chapter I provides an introduction to the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions that guided the present study. Chapter II contains a review of the current literature regarding the job attainment experience, creating application documents, and screening and selection processes. Chapter III includes the research methodology and reasoning, descriptions of the processes used to identify

participants, methods of data collection and analysis procedures, a statement acknowledging the impact of the researcher on participant responses, and limitations to the study. Chapter IV contains the findings from participant responses to interview protocols. Chapter V contains an analysis of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research, district hiring officials, and teacher applicants.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The following literature review will have as its focus three phases. First, the job attainment experience of the applicants and the skills they have developed in college to help them in this process will be addressed. Second, the documents applicants present to prospective employers will be considered. Third, screening process (e.g., procedures, prior training of hiring personnel, etc.) differences between school districts will be explored.

Job Attainment

McCorkel, Alexander, Reardon, and King (2003) noted that many students, including the better students, often wait until their last semester in school before job search preparations become a focus. Many of these aspiring student-teacher candidates have an unrealistic expectation that good jobs will come to them without much effort on their part. Kitchen (2004) stated that “often students are released into the job market with only a hazy idea at best of how to market the most important product: themselves” (p. 4). McCorkel, Alexander, Reardon, and King (2003) also noted that “understanding the job search process – how to find out about job openings; making contact with businesses; and how to effectively market one’s skills, abilities, and knowledge, as well as personal characteristics – is vital to both the short and long-term career success of students” (p. 198). When describing the knowledge it takes to be hired, Kaul (1992) stated that “it’s not the one who can do the job necessarily that gets hired. It’s the one who knows the most about getting hired” (p. 32).

The networking skills of the candidate become important because companies prefer to hire the candidate who is known or personally recommended. If the applicant has personal contacts or references who are colleagues of the employer the candidate is more likely to get an interview (Wagner, 1999). During a candidate's student teaching experience is the opportunity for the student to increase their network contacts, and to demonstrate their teaching skills to other professionals. The more professionals in the building a student teacher can demonstrate their skills to the larger the network of people who can refer them to potential employers. Networking does not guarantee a candidate the position, but it does help them obtain an interview (Gallagher, 2010). Teaching future job applicants the skills needed to gain employment may be just as vital as the information they learn in college course work. Therefore, it seems clear that instructing students on how to write an effective résumé' and self-market skills for job searches should begin early in college (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, & King, 2003).

Application Documents

In a poll, 95% of school administrators stated they made selection decisions during the initial application document and interview stages of screening candidates. Administrators use a collection of documents about each candidate, typically a cover letter, résumé, application form, and letters of recommendation, to guide their decisions in the screening and selection process (Rinehart & Young, 1990). Bredeson and Caldwell (1988) state collecting information on candidates, using application forms, is important in initial paper screening activities" (p.82). The cover letter and résumé are the applicant's first introductions to impress prospective employers. If these application documents are not presenting the applicant in the best image possible, their chances of

marketing themselves successfully are drastically reduced (Hayden, 2000). Pelletier (2000) stated that the purpose of the cover letter and résumé are to introduce oneself to the employer, arouse the employer's interest, and convince the employer to request an interview. The applicant only has a few seconds to create this impulse in the employer because most employers review a résumé for as little as 7 seconds (Crosby, 2009); 20 seconds ("Career Directions," 2004); 30 to 60 seconds (Peterson, 1993). Because a single job opening can generate hundreds of applications, busy reviewers often spend less than a few seconds deciding whether the applicant's application packet deserves further consideration or is initially screened out of the process (Crosby, 2009). Shakoor (2001) affirmed advice to career applicants in stating, "your challenge then is to produce a résumé that will be viewed favorably, will stand out, and will result in an interview" (p. 16). The cover letter and résumé need to highlight the applicant's skills and experience, and state examples relating education and experience to the position (Gallagher, 2010).

The résumé is a brief summary of the applicant's education, work experience, and skills that are important to the job. The résumé is used to market these skills to the employer, usually in one or two pages. The goal of the résumé is to increase the chances the applicant lands an interview with the employer. The first rule in creating a résumé is that there are no rules, however, certain information and formatting are expected. The résumé should be grammatically correct, written in the same tense throughout, and free of spelling and typographical errors (Crosby, 2009; Shakoor, 2001; & Snyder, 2010). The over-all look of the résumé is important, and the information should be stated in a clean professional format. However, the formatting of the résumé is less important than the information stated, but a clean look gives a more professional appearance of the

candidate (Shakoor, 2001). It is standard amongst experts what information is included on the résumé. Most résumés included sections on job objectives, experience, education, extracurricular activities, honors, and references. It is discouraged, however, to use a résumé template because these are recognizable to employers. The use of a template can demonstrate a lack of creativity or care in the process. When writing a résumé the applicant's experiences have value, but not equal value. Applicants should list only experiences that can be directly related to working with students in and outside of the classroom, and show the employer what you have done. Avoid stating information that is unrelated to the position (Lloyd-Dennis, 2010; Thompson, 1993; Snyder, 2010). Since the résumé is used to quickly scan the applicant's qualifications the candidate should place an emphasis on experience accomplished over work responsibilities (Thompson, 1993). In a study by Cole, Rubin, Field, and Giles (2007) found that different compilations of résumé content received high employability ratings from employers. If the applicant had a high rating in two of the three areas of academic qualifications, experience, or extracurricular involvement the employer rated the candidate as likely to be brought in for an interview. If the applicant was scored high in only one of the three areas they were not rated as likely to be screened to the interview phase. The applicants should avoid using abbreviations, acronyms, or contractions in their résumé, and state information in short direct statements and not paragraphs (Hayden, 2000; Snyder, 2010). As on all the application documents it is important that the résumé be proof read and free of grammatical and spelling errors (Gallagher, 2010; Snyder, 2010; Kniseley, Vesey, & Zakin, 2010; Thompson, 1993).

The cover letter is also essential in the application process and should always accompany a résumé. The cover letter provides the candidate an opportunity to express to the employer in short paragraph form their qualifications for the position. The cover letter is the first impression of the candidate, and is the attempt to create interest about the candidate to the employer. The purpose of the cover letter is to highlight the applicant's skills and experience in a way that entices the employer to carefully review the accompanying résumé (Hayden, 2000; Thompson, 1993; Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center, 2000). Peterson (1993) stated that the purpose of the letter is to highlight and elaborate the candidate's important qualifications in their own words. The quality of the writing is just as important as the information highlighted. In addition, Hayden stated, "if one's cover letter leaves a poor impression, the chances of ever getting that all important interview may be markedly reduced" (p. 122).

It is important to research the school before sending in the application documents. Get familiar with the person in charge of hiring and up to date district information. Included in the letter should be statements that demonstrate knowledge about the school that relate to the applicants strengths. The greeting on the document should be addressed to a specific person involved in the hiring process (Kniseley, Vesey, & Zakin, 2010). The cover letter and résumé that are plain with no specific reference to the district or person in charge of hiring are like junk mail to the employer. It is on the basis of information contained within these documents that the initial screening of candidates takes place (Lloyd-Dennis, 2010).

Screening and Selection Processes

In 1988, Bredeson conducted an analysis of personnel screening and noted that personnel selection in schools typically includes a wide range of activities from initial paper screening to personal interviews and finally, hiring decisions. Specifically, “the collection of written information on candidates and the use of application forms is important in initial paper screening activities” (p. 82). Certain teaching positions result in large numbers of applicants. The administrator conducting the screening must devise a system to reduce the large number of applicants to a workable number. This usually results in administrators collecting paper application documents ranging from cover letters and résumés to transcripts (Mason & Schroeder, 2010). The initial screening process is more of a search for negative information or for information that disqualifies a candidate from the position as opposed to looking for the best (Bredeson, 1983). According to Hindsman (2008), “applicants for position openings traditionally complete applications and submit materials such as résumé’s and letters of reference, but how the contents of these items are assessed and transmitted to the people who need to know is often fragmented” (p. 2).

In the past the responsibility to screen candidates when hiring a potential teacher fell to both the building principal and the school district. At the district level the screening focuses on credential verifications, while the principal is focused on the candidate’s skills and experience (Hill, & Casteel, 1994; Kersten, 2008). During the selection process the responsibilities interweave between the districts human resource office and the building administrators expertise. However, in many districts it is the building administrator that makes the final decision and recommendation on which

candidate to offer the position (Hindsman, 2008). For building administrators, one of the most important job responsibilities is the hiring of new staff members who are highly qualified to increase student academic growth (Mason, & Schroeder, 2010; Caldwell, 1993; Townsell, 2007). Credential screens are conducted to remove applicants from the pool who are deemed unqualified or who have weak credentials which place them in the bottom percentage of the applicants who apply (Hindsman, 2008). Writing on the selection and screening processes, Wise, Darling-Hammond, and Berry (1987) wrote that “despite the conventional wisdom that everyone knows a good teacher when he sees one...very different conceptions of the ‘good teacher’ are actually expressed in school district selection processes” (p. 82). As research shows, school administrators can have a different perception of what qualities and credentials make up an excellent teacher (Caldwell, 1993). In many school districts, administrators do not have the training in how to effectively use a systematic process to select new teachers (Hindsman, 2008). For school districts to hire quality teachers who can improve learning, the district will need a systematic approach to hiring that aligns with the school’s mission, values, goals, and vision (Atha, 2009).

Typically, schools fall into two categories when it comes to the hiring process. The first group is lax and inconsistent, and fails to pre-establish a skill set sought in the candidate. The second group is consistent in the process and informed on the knowledge, experiences, and skill set sought for the position (DeArmand, Gross, & Goldhaber, 2010). The first step in creating an effective teaching staff is to carefully select the type of person you want to join it. An analysis of the students and existing staff will help to determine the specific skills, experiences, and traits of a candidate who would most

benefit the school (Whaley & Cox, 2002). Atha (2009) found that principals rank the following qualifications of an applicant as most significant during screening: proper credentials and certifications, recommendations from a trusted colleague, and evaluating past experiences (p. 55). School administrators place more value on the candidates teaching experience than on classroom experience when in college. While administrators do place some value on the candidate's college performance the teacher experience was rated as more significant in the decision to hire (Ralph, Kesten, Lang, & Smith, 1998). Within the context of candidate screening and selection it appears that the candidate's verbal and quantitative abilities are good predictors of teacher performance (Webster, 1988). However, most professional organizations look for similar qualities amongst candidates no matter the organizations function. The candidate who can demonstrate a good work ethic, leadership abilities, and willingness to learn are all important (Wilson, 2006).

The screening process becomes the most important step in the hiring process because the screeners are making evaluations that eliminate people from potential jobs. When large numbers of potential candidates are to be screened at one time, some type of instrument is almost essential to track the strengths and weaknesses of each applicant (Berg, & Brimm, 1978). However, the use of an instrument to measure and track candidates creates additional problems. The screening instruments used during the selection process and weights given to them may favor different qualities in certain candidates. Effective teacher selection then depends on the predictive power of the measures used (Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1987).

The application screening process in itself is inconsistent when looking at district's student populations. It was found that urban districts vary in the process of hiring teachers. Some districts have applicants apply to the district, while others require applicants submit application to a specific building. It was also inconsistent in the urban districts where hiring is officially done, but most is at the building level (Useem, & Farley, 2004). Mason and Schroeder (2010) suggest that district or school size plays a role in determining the over-all hiring process. Large districts usually have a well-defined centralized process for screening teacher applicants. This structure may be in contrast to small rural districts where the screening processes are developed mostly by the building principal. The size of the district can also determine how the applications are submitted. Suburban and urban districts are more prevalent to requiring applicants use an online system, where as rural areas still widely request paper applications (Kersten, 2008).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, literature reviewed encompasses the importance of job attainment skills learned by teacher candidate before beginning the job search, importance a cover letter and résumé play in the initial screening process, and how the screening process is conducted by districts of varying size. The current study seeks to understand how district hiring officials conduct the initial screening process, and what information is sought in the application documents that affects how the candidate is viewed during the initial screening.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter reviews the purpose of the present study, research questions, a description of study participating school districts, along with the methodology of data collection and its analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to conduct an assessment of the initial screening / selection processes of potential teacher candidate job application packets as conducted by school district hiring officials. This present study sought to understand what information is included or left out of these documents that determine whether the applicant gets further consideration or is rejected from the applicant pool. The initial screening process of job applications can be completed in a district's human resource office or by the building administrator. When the process varies between school districts, are different qualities focused on between the different application materials screeners?

Research Questions

The following research questions focus the purposes and will guide the present study.

1. What happens during the initial screening of potential teacher candidates that categorizes them for consideration for the position?
2. What criteria are current school district hiring officials looking for on teacher candidate application documents that determine their potential consideration status?

Participants

The participants of this study were P-12 district administrators involved in the initial screening process of potential teacher candidates. The participants were selected based on location and size of the district represented. Districts located in the central region of a Midwestern state were determined along with the district's student population size. Purposeful sampling was used to pick districts based on location and size to get a variation of small, medium, and large districts. Participants were e-mailed a request to participate in the study which was followed by a phone call from the researcher. The size component of the districts consisted of 2 small, 4 medium, and 2 large districts. Population size is defined as small, under 1000, medium, 1000-5000, and large over 5000. The eight districts are identified in the present study by classification from A-H according to size. District A represents the district with the lowest student population all the way to District H who represents the largest student population. Districts A and B represent the small size districts with student populations under 1000. Districts C, D, E, and F represent the medium size districts with student populations between 1000-5000. Districts G and H represent the large size districts with student populations over 5000.

District A is the smallest district in the present study and the participant was a building principal, holding the position for approximately six years. The district had a population of approximately 320 students. The principal agreed to participate in the study, but arranging an interview time was limited on his schedule. The participant appeared to be very involved in the building and interacted regularly with students and teachers. The participant's interactions with the teachers daily allowed her/him to monitor growth and deficiencies in the teachers hired to work in the building.

District B is one of the smallest districts in the present study with a student population of approximately 400. The superintendent of the district was the participant interviewed. The administrator has been with the district for approximately 10 years and was very involved in all hiring within the district. Before working in the current district, the building administrator worked for a large district in the area, and offered comparisons/contrasts between the screening processes between the two districts. After a brief explanation over the phone, the hiring official agreed to be a participant in the study. During the actual interview, it was apparent that this administrator had close interaction with the teachers in the building and the district.

District C has a student population of approximately 1300 students. The participant was a building principal who has held the title for approximately eight years. He/she does all the hiring for their building and was very involved with the teachers after they were hired. This administrator was very candid and open about how the process was conducted in the building. When asked to be a participant in the study, the administrator was very gracious in accepting and accommodating to the researcher when setting up a date and time. An initial 40 minutes session was scheduled to conduct the interview, yet the administrator discussed the questions and topics for an additional 30 minutes with enthusiasm.

District D has a student population of approximately 1450 students. The participant in the present study was a building principal who has held the title for the past 8 years. The participant is a native of the community and taught in the district for approximately 10 years before becoming an administrator. The participant expressed involvement in the building, with students and teachers, which plays a role in their hiring

process. When arranging the interview for the study, the first two scheduled meetings were cancelled due to inclement weather. It took a week to arrange another meeting with the participant, who was accommodating and appeared enthused to take part in the study.

District E has a student population of approximately 1650 students. The participant holds the title of superintendent and has held the position for five years. Before the current role as district superintendent, the participant was a building administrator for approximately 17 years. This participant's role in the hiring of teachers was sought for their experience at both the superintendent and principal levels. Their perspective and roles in the process provided the researcher with a multifaceted understanding of the hiring process from two administrative viewpoints.

District F is a district with a student population of approximately 2300 students. The participant was a former building administrator who currently works in the district office as the lead hiring agent for the district. The participant involves the building principals in the screening process, but leads the review process of applicants for the district. The participant vocalized other roles and duties within the position, but held primary responsibility regards the hiring of all district personnel.

District G is the second largest in the present study with a student population of approximately 9000 students. The participant involved in the screening process works in the district's human resource department. This participant's role appeared to exist exclusively in the HR department with little interaction within the buildings or with the applicants after hiring has been finalized. The participant's role in the screening of applicants consisted of conducting the initial screens and then passing forward a select group of applicants to the building administrators for interview.

District H is the largest district in the present study with a student population of approximately 14,000 students. There were two interviewees for this district. The first interview was conducted with an individual representing the district's human resources department. This participant's role in the office was to recruit applicants to the district and collect applications and documents. After interviewing the participant, it was noted that minimal screening is done at this level and a second participant was sought to participate in the study at the building administrator level. The second participant was a building administrator who held such a title for the past 10 years. This participant appeared very involved in the building and in daily interaction with the teachers and students.

Data Collection

Qualitative inquiry methodology was utilized for data collection in the present study. This methodology was selected because it allowed participants to respond to interview protocol using their personal thoughts and experiences. These questions (Appendix A) had been prepared by the primary researcher and were asked of each participant. Using the open-ended method, the participant was not directed to answer questions specifically, but allowed the interviewee the opportunity to interpret the question and provide a response that is coming from their personal experience.

Participants were interviewed for 25-35 minutes and asked 16 interview protocols (Appendix A). The interview protocols sought participants' experiences in how the initial screening process is carried out in their district, and what specific information affects the candidate in the initial screening.

The participant responses were audio recorded upon consent of the participant. Participants were informed that all audio recordings and written transcripts would be confidential, and personal names and district names would not be used. The researcher expressed to participants that their responses would only be associated with the approximate student population of the district, and the participant had the right to refuse to answer any question or decline to participate in the study at any time. All additional information linking the participant with the study would not be included. Participants were told that all audio and written transcripts of the interview would be destroyed at the completion of the study. Participants were given Consent to Participate form to sign before participating in the study (Appendix B). The consent form informed the participant that the study followed guidelines established by the Internal Review Board and the prior approval was granted by the IRB to conduct the study and ask the interview protocols (Appendix C).

Data Analysis/Presentation

After each interview, and in keeping with the basic tenets of qualitative inquiry, a transcription of the interview was created and used to analyze the content of how each participant responded to specific questions. Using the qualitative data analysis techniques, the information gathered was coded by the researcher and analyzed for differences and similarities of each response. During this analysis the researcher categorized information from the interviews to find significant and non-significant similarities and differences among participant responses. These data will be presented in narrative format and reported in the aggregate either by size of school district or via the use of pseudonyms for each interviewee. When possible, the researcher will describe the

responses given by participants and present examples of statements, placing them within the context sentiments for the whole group and in relation to district size.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter reviews the findings of the present study. Contained in this chapter are individual responses to each interview protocol. The participants are unique because they represent the district personnel who is in charge of screening candidates in the hiring process. The chapter concludes with a summary. The present study interviewed eight school districts located within the central region of a Midwestern state.

Introduction

The information present in this chapter details responses to interview protocol asked to the districts based on the initial screening and selection process they utilize, and feel are important when selecting and screening applicants for teaching positions within their district or building. A summary of responses and/or selected individual responses follow each interview protocol.

Question #1. How often do you screen potential candidates based on their cover letters and résumés?

Each group responded that the cover letter and résumé are vital parts in the initial screening process of teacher applicants. Each district used these documents to screen potential candidates.

The hiring official from the small districts state the use of the cover letter and résumé are vital in the initial screening process and are used every time during the screening of potential teaching candidates. District B stated, "I use them every time we have a position open." The documents allow the screener to determine if the candidate is

qualified for the applied position, and if the applicant had the credentials the screener is looking for in the open position.

District A stated:

I use them 90 percent of the time because the applicant is unknown so it is a vital part of understanding who the applicant is and what they can do and have done.

However, the participant goes on to say that he does not take the information on the documents at 100 percent face value because applicants are only stating the very best about themselves. District A uses the documents to get informed about the applicant and get a feel of them through their past, which allows them to understand if the applicant a candidate they want to consider further.

The medium size districts all responded that the documents are used every time when screening potential teaching candidates from the pool of applicants. However, the process is not consistent for each teaching position.

The large districts differed from the other groups in that the application documents are first submitted to the district's human resource departments for initial screening before the candidate's documents are moved to the building administrator for further screening. However, both districts stated that applicants are not screened out of the hiring process by the human resource officer, but at that stage each candidate is entered into a computer database. The screening of the candidates is done at the building level. District H stated that the district's human resource department collects the information and documents from applicants, and when the process is complete a list of names is sent to the building administrator. In District H the human resource office collects applications, cover letters and résumés for specific positions, but actual screening

out applicants is not done within the office. In the large districts the Human Resource office collected the application documents and presented the candidate's documents to the building administrator for screening.

Question #2: What additional information or documents are requested from applicants besides the cover letter and résumé?

In each district the cover letter and résumé were not the only documents collected to conduct the screening process. Most of the districts required applicants fill-out an application, submit transcripts, and a copy of the applicants teaching certificate.

District B commented:

I also like to have the most recent transcript, because sometimes we are looking for a particular position, but we can look on their transcript and think about another area that they could support us in that they haven't covered in their cover letter or résumé.

This response was similar to the others size districts on this aspect of reviewing transcripts. Districts also request transcripts for the purposes of understanding more about the candidate.

District H stated:

I want to see their grades. It doesn't matter if they are right out of college or have been teaching for 10 years, I want to see what kind of a student you were.

The transcripts have multiple uses in the screening process and inform the screener of a few characteristics about the applicant.

The teacher certificate is the official document from the state that certifies that the applicant is licensed to work in specific content area(s) listed on the certificate. The

teaching certificate not only lists the applicant's major content area, but also content endorsement the candidate contains.

District B stated:

I want a copy of their certification because it gives us information like the person can do multiple things to help strengthen that department. The applicant may not be aware of this because we know that next year someone is retiring, and we know this person has cross content areas, which can help both departments.

District C commented:

I am looking for a copy of their certificate, because it is more common than you think that on the résumé they will list multiple certifications that do not exist on their certificate. It does not mean they do not have it but I have to work in a world, because of No Child Left Behind and Highly Qualified, that if you say that you are certified then it must be an endorsed in an area and it must be on the certificate. Sometimes I will tell the great applicant, 'hey you need to go home now and call the Regional Office of Education and get your stuff sent up there. I'm looking at your transcript and you probably are endorsed in that area, but you have not applied for the endorsement and that is going to cost you down the line.' I am not saying it is going to cost them the job with me, but I am saying I look for it. That is why I want the copy of transcript because I can read them myself or I will send them to the Regional Office of Education to have them analyzed.

The teaching certificate informs the screener that the applicant is legally licensed to teach in a certain content area and grade levels.

The medium and large districts also require applicants to fill-out an application to work in the district and not just to apply for a certain position. In District H the Human Resource department requires that before a person can apply for a specific position they first must apply to the district. If the applicant meets the basic employment certification then that applicant can begin submitting documents for specific district positions. These documents are also collected by the Human Resource department.

Question #3: How much time do you spend reviewing these documents for each candidate?

The amount of time it takes reviewing each document depended on the content area of the teaching position, and was consistent for each category of district size. If the position vacancy resulted in only five to eight applicants, the initial review may be quick because all candidates may reach the interview stage. However, other teaching positions may result in the hiring official receiving over one hundred application. The study indicates that the consensus of time appears to be between 10-15 minutes for each applicant for the initial screening. Some district hiring officials do conduct multiple initial screenings and include other administrators in on this process, but study indicates the amount of time spent on each applicant still appears to be approximately 10-15 minutes.

Question #4: Do you require applicants submit their documents using an online or paper format?

The online application format began to show significant differences between district population sizes. Only three of the eight districts have the capabilities to allow applicants to submit applications online, and not all of the three have the capabilities for

applicants to submit the additional documents, cover letter and résumé, online. The online aspect appeared only in the districts with over a few thousand students and even then how the districts utilize the online application process varied. The smaller districts expressed preference for hard copies, and most of the medium sized districts expressed that the district was looking into creating an online application process. However, District F, a medium size district has a developed online application and screening component that is comparable to the large size districts.

Online Application Process between participant districts based on size.

District	Approximate Size	Online Application	Online Documents
A	320	No	No
B	400	No	No
C	1300	No	No
D	1400	No	No
E	1650	No	No
F	2300	Yes	Yes
G	9000	Yes	Yes
H	14000	Yes	No

District size data taken from 2009 and 2010 District Report Card

Question #5: If online, how is the screening process carried-out throughout this process?

Only Districts F, G, and H have an online aspect to the application process.

District F, a medium size district, uses a system that allows the hiring official access to screen applicants based on certain sought out skill sets stated on the applicants' application documents.

District F stated:

It's easier for principals who are a vital part of the process and the director of support staff. We can sit anywhere in an office, sit at home, and go through all

the applications. The online system allows the flexibility for all of us to screen online after we have talked once, and before we get together again to make a decision about interview candidates. There is also a filter. So, if you want to look at maybe how teachers show they have 3 to 10 years experience, you can filter by years experience, you can filter by degree, you filter by endorsement. Also, let's say you have some coaching openings that you have to fill in additional to the teaching openings. You can filter by that, so that you can narrow the focus. But still, I personally will go through every single application online without the filter. It streamlines the process and it is certainly easier in terms of efficiency of being able to access things online and not have to worry about paper.

The online process in District F allows the screener a filter which automatically screens out candidates based on a number of skill sets or credentials that the district is seeking in the vacant position. Instead of the district screening through every paper application packet for each potential candidate the district can have the computer system do the screening for them, which presents the opportunity that some candidates' documents may never be viewed by the hiring official.

In the large districts, District G screens candidates online in the Human Resource office. District G stated that, "when an application is approved to move forward then the building administrators are allowed to see them and they can do what they want." The initial screen to review a candidate's credentials and qualifications are conducted during the human resource screening, and after an applicant has made it through this initial screen their documents are passed along, through the online system, to the building administrators for them to screen.

The online process for District H is different from how Districts F and G screen applicants using the online system. District H requires applicants to apply for potential employment to the district and not for a specific vacant position.

District H commented:

Currently candidates can only apply to the district online and if they are qualified we will send them a letter requesting them to send in more information. After an applicant applies online the candidate's name is entered into a database. What I will normally do is ask the office to print off a list of all the people in the database who applied to the district over a certain period of time. This list has the candidate's student teaching dates, institutions, current residence, and if they are available right away. This list is then sent to the building administrators for review.

The cover letters, résumés, and other requested information is kept at the human resources office, and is only available if the administrators requests the documents and comes to the office. The large districts were the only districts in the study that had a human resource department. The evidence suggests that in large districts the human resource department handles all collection of applicants and reviews the documents to determine if the candidate contains the required credentials for the vacant teaching position. The building administrator still conducts the screening of potential candidates from the pool of applicants, but in these districts works with another department.

Question #6: What specific aspects of a cover letter grab your attention?

The cover letter contained multiple areas where the district hiring officials focused on certain information to screen potential candidates. The study indicates that

the size of the district was not a factor in what information screeners wanted to find on a candidates cover letter. The main themes of a cover letter that grab the screener's attention were the format, objective statement, experience and training, and connection to the district.

Format

The study indicates that districts of all sizes want the candidate's cover letter to be formatted with the following guidelines. The length of the cover letter should be one full page. The person conducting the screening or the building administrator's name should appear on the letter. The evidence suggests that the greeting statement, "To Whom it May Concern," reflects to the hiring official that the candidate has not taken the time to research about the position. The hiring officials want to see their name or the name of a district administrator on the cover letter greeting statement. Also, the formatting should demonstrate the author's technology skills. When inserting a bullet the use of an asterisk indicates lack of these skills. The spacing, font size, sentence structure, and over-all look of the cover letter are important factors to hiring officials. Sentence structure demonstrates the candidate's skills in written communication. In addition, the way the candidate expresses thoughts on paper are related to how well they will communicate with students in the classroom. A wordy cover letter will indicate that the candidate's oral communication may be similar. Statements about the candidate should be to the point and well constructed.

District B commented:

Within the first couple paragraphs tell me something about you that is really going to excite me so that I want to continue reading your letter. Why should I want to talk to you over the other 60 applicants?

District E stated:

I hate to say it but most cover letters are pretty form. What is going to grab your attention is if they screw it up and do something wrong. Incomplete sentences or misspellings are egregious to the process.

District H stated:

How well the letter is written will make a huge impact. It is amazing some of the cover letters that come through to me. It is obvious that somebody did not proof read it. Grammar and structure are huge factors.

Objective Statement

When reviewing a cover letter the district hiring official wants to know within the first lines the exact position the candidate is seeking. The study indicates the candidate who uses a generic statement like, "I would like to work for your district," is not considered as strongly as the candidate who states, "I am seeking your 3rd grade position and list below are my strong qualification to successfully fill the vacancy."

Experience and Training

A candidate's experience and training are important parts of the cover letter. The experiences of the candidate are what set them apart from the other candidates in the applicant pool. This information should be specific and based around the applicants experiences working with students. The information must express to the hiring official

what the applicant can do, and some information that makes them different from the regular applicant.

District D commented:

I do not want to know about their high school job or summer jobs. I want their actual direct contact with students and student achievement and learning. They need to praise themselves. Sell me, why do I need to spend more time and do research on you, tell me why. Were you nominated for an award, or you were involved in extracurricular and would like to coach. Coaching is a big additional point on a cover letter, but athletics must be second and teaching the focus of the letter.

District F stated:

Are they coming from a school with a professional development program . . .? At a professional development school they do a whole year of student teaching usually in two or three different buildings. There are certain schools in the Midwest that are known for different expertise. Those things will certainly catch my eye.

District H stated:

I want to know and see what experiences that person has whether it be student teaching in that subject area or two years teaching in that area. I look for their past teaching experience right away.

Connection to District

In the cover letter the district hiring official wants the applicant to include information that connects their letter specifically with the district. A cover letter that

makes the point to include specific information about the district shows that the candidate did some research on the district and position. The study indicates that district hiring officials are favorable to candidates during the initial screening when the documents include names and specific information about the district in connection to the candidates wants and past experiences.

District D stated:

I want to see the statements, “When I look at your website,” then I know at least they are researching my school a little bit and are interested enough to go look at my website. If they tell me a little bit about why they want to be here and not just they want a job. Statements about wanting a specific school size like mine, or a community like this one all point to that person learning about our district.

Question 7: What information on a résumé grabs your attention?

The résumé contained multiple areas where the district hiring officials focused on certain information to screen potential candidates. The study indicates that the size of the district can influence the importance of certain information included on the résumé. The small and medium district has hiring officials state that when reviewing a résumé the teaching credentials of the candidate are a factor. The main themes of the résumé that grab the screener’s attention are the format, certifications, and experience.

Format

The résumé should give the hiring official all of the information about the candidate to present a clear understanding of who the candidate is and what they have done and can do as a teacher. The information should be presented in sections and each section should included specific information about the candidate’s experiences.

Information on the résumé should be presented in short bulleted phrases and not in paragraph form. The layout of the information should pass an eye test to appear neatly done and structured.

District B commented:

I like the résumés that are very easy for the eye to read. I do not like paragraph form. I want it bulleted, short phrases, and I can find your objectives, education, work experience, and honors easily.

District E commented:

It goes to the format. You can have a six page long résumé but that is too much information. It should be no more than two pages. As I look at the résumé, I look at the style, is it neatly done? Is the information concise, and can I get a lot out of it?

Certification

The study indicates that the small and medium districts place a higher value for candidates who have multiple certifications, and thus can teach in multiple areas. The study does not indicate that the large districts do not value candidates with these credentials; however, it was not indicated in their responses. The potential teaching candidate who possesses certification in multiple content areas can teach multiple subjects in a single day, year, or change content position between years.

District A stated:

I like the teachers who are not limited to only one thing, such as PE only. You should have a Health endorsement as well as a Driver Education and Science

endorsement. Do not limit yourself, because it limits how valuable you are to the school.

District C stated:

For us, I want to emphasize for a district our size, dual certification is really important. The first thing I am going to scan what fields are they certified in, and are they certified in both middle school and high school. That is really important because we move staff around and share staff between the middle school and high school. So I am looking for dual certification or multiple certifications.

Experience

When it comes to the experience of a candidate, district hiring officials are looking at certain information. For example, how long a candidate has held their current or previous position and are there gaps in employment are important. What is the candidate's experience working with students? Information about a candidate that is not directly linked with working with students is not considered important by the hiring official.

District A stated:

I look at their work experience to see how long has the person stayed in one spot. Are they transient and hard to keep employed for more than a couple of years? I also look for the trainings they have that they can bring to the district. Something they can add to our school.

District D stated:

Even though you were a cub scout or team leader in high school, I do not care. I do not. I want to know about your college preparation all the way until applying

for the position. What is your contact now with students? I just like transparency.

Question #8: When reviewing a candidate who is right out of college, what do you look for on their documents?

For a novice teacher the study indicates that hiring officials expect to see information about the student teaching experience. This is the novice teacher's only direct teaching experience with students in the classroom. The cooperating teacher should appear on the students list of references because this is the only person who has witnessed the skills and abilities of the novice teacher at this point. The student candidate who was involved in extracurricular activities and organization should make reference to these and detail responsibilities held and how it gave experience that will be beneficial to the candidate in the classroom. The evidence suggests that extracurricular activities demonstrate to the hiring official that the student went above and beyond the minimal expectations to earn the teaching certificate. The student's college GPA was not stated as being important information on the résumé, and most districts expressed interest in the student's transcripts to review grades.

District G commented:

I look for extracurricular activities and have they been in service organizations. Has the candidate had experience with kids as far as being involved in Big Brothers - Big Sisters, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts; those extra things they gave time to work with kids when it was not required of them?

Question #9: Have you ever chosen to move along a novice teacher over an experienced teacher in the screening process because of quality of their documents?

Size of district was not a factor in any differences identified in the interview protocol responses. The small, medium, and large districts stated that they have moved along a novice teacher over an experienced because of quality of application documents. It was not always due to the novice teacher's documents being of a higher quality, but to something negative on the experienced teacher's documents. The enthusiasm and eagerness of the novice teacher expressed in the documents was a factor in the screening. When a novice candidate expresses the desire to be in a classroom and work with students, and contribute to the over-all importance of the district it impacted the decision of the hiring official to screen the candidate to the next phase of the hiring process. How well the novice teacher communicated their skills and abilities was enough for some hiring official to move them to the interview phase of the hiring process.

Question #10: What information in documents sends up red flags that cause you to discontinue reviewing someone as a candidate?

The evidence suggests that size of the districts is a factor for certain information being viewed as red flags. However, other information that causes the red flag is consistent amongst all districts. The small and medium districts viewed candidates applying from large urban area or from across country as a red flag, where the large districts have recruited candidates from out of state and urban areas.

District B stated:

I will never forget this one candidate who called from [a large urban city] and really wanted to come to the district. I think the candidate would have been very

good, but we talked and I learned they had been born and raised on Michigan Avenue. The candidate expressed a desire to come to our district and I told them, no, you really do not. If you were born and raised on Michigan Avenue and you come here where the town closes around 5:00 p.m., I think you would be miserable here.

District D stated:

If I am in [the Midwest], why am I getting this applicant from El Paso, Texas, and their documents are not telling me a reason they want to come here? The likelihood of them getting to an interview is difficult at best. Not that we want to pass up a good candidate, but to have the person come here at their own expense and then realize they are not a good fit is an expensive decision for them, and I am not comfortable with that.

District E stated:

If you get somebody that applied from [a larger urban city] to come down to our district, what is the likelihood of that person really wanting to be here or is that person just sending out a bunch of résumés? So you are trying to hire somebody with the likelihood to stay in the area.

When a candidate has a spelling error, leaves out certain possible references, has gaps in employment, and does not submit requested material, all districts viewed these points as red flags for potential discontinuation of the candidate from the applicant pool. When a candidate has gaps in employment, worked in multiple districts in a few years, and leaves out certain references, the hiring officials are likely to question the candidate, but indicate the candidate is still considered. If a candidate has an explanation for gaps in

employment or moving from multiple schools, this information should be stated in the cover letter so questioning by the hiring official does not occur.

Question #11: How likely are you to bring in a candidate to interview if they had errors on their document(s)?

The study indicates that size of district is not a factor for the interview protocol. The candidate who has noticeable grammatical or structural errors on the application documents is highly unlikely to be screened forward to the interview process. Grammatical and structure errors were more significant in a candidate being rejected from the pool as a potential candidate than any other finding.

Question #12: Can you tell a difference between a candidate who creates documents from a template, and changes a few words to fit each position, as opposed to creating their own documents for each position?

The size of the district was not a factor in the responses to the interview protocol. The findings indicate that hiring officials can differentiate between the candidate who creates a cover letter and résumé from scratch as opposed to using a template. The main difference stated is the personal touch and originality of the layout and how the candidate connects the information with the position and district. Where the candidate gained his or her job attainment skills is also noticed by hiring officials.

District B stated:

I can see a difference, just the way it appears on paper. It has a personal touch to it where a template does not give the flexibility to put in different information.

District C commented:

I am looking for authenticity and I think too often in the past five years applicants are going to professional services and its almost too flowery for me. I want to know the real person. I am not so impressed with that kind of flowery language, but more impressed by how it's spaced and what they are actually saying.

District D commented:

Yeah, you can tell a big difference. You can almost tell a difference between what universities are teaching about the cover letter and résumé.

District G commented:

We can tell, and I assume there is some guidance in colleges telling the students what information to put in and how to say it. So it is all formatted, in a since.

Question #13: What are the main differences between an applicant whose documents get initial screening as a potential hire and the one that gets initial rejection?

The findings indicate that the application documents, cover letter and résumé, are more likely to pass through the initial screening process if they contain correct grammar, a list of the candidate's skill sets related to the position, the candidate is certified for the position, submits all requested documents, and includes statements of personal interest to and about the district. Again, the residence of the candidate was brought up by a medium size district.

District C commented on the candidate's home residence:

I am sometimes looking at where they live [currently]. Is the person born and raised in . . . and went to school in and currently lives in [a major metropolitan city]? How long are they going to live in my town of 3500 people? Probably not

very long. As an administrator, you are trying to build continuity in your building and not constantly rehiring.

Question #14: If the applicant is known, are their documents screened or viewed any differently than the unknown? Does the known have an advantage?

The networking skills of the candidate can play a role in the screening process. Every district responded that a positive connection to a candidate does not result in screening their documents differently, but it does play a role in moving the candidate through the initial screening process to the interview stage. The findings suggest that the smaller and medium districts responded that teaching positions in the district are political. In the large districts, politics (e.g., personal connections) still play a role in the screening process but how the candidate is known does differ from the small and medium districts. In the small and medium districts, the candidate who is a relative of a current district employee or went through the district in their P-12 education are more likely to move to the interview phase. In the large districts, family and community relationships play less of a role in the screening of a known candidate, but a strong recommendation by another administrator can move the candidate directly to the interview stage.

The potential candidate who has student taught or substitute taught in a district seems to be more significant than any other quality of being known by the hiring official. If the experience was viewed as a positive one by the hiring official, the candidate has a distinct advantage in the initial screening process.

The names of references who are known by the hiring official are just as or sometimes more important than if the actual candidate is known by the hiring official. The networking skills of the potential teacher candidate play a significant role in the

initial screening process. A candidate whose reference documents come from persons of significance to the hiring official, the chances of the candidate being advanced through the initial screening process are increased.

District B stated:

This is a very political job. Being in a small community school district it is very important, so we will interview that person, just to be politically correct. We will interview locally by we know in private moments that the person is not going to be our best candidate.

District C commented:

Yes, no question. If a candidate has substitute taught for me or student taught for me and I know they did a nice job, then they have an advantage. Now the candidate who is a relative is difficult in a small town and small school. I think if an administrator tells you any differently they are stretching the truth.

District D stated:

I think you definitely look at the ones you know personally, or you know someone well who is recommending them, I think you look at them a little bit harder. It is an advantage because if I have four applicants on my desk and they all look equal, but someone has a reference who is a colleague of mine, that is going to help that candidate, without a doubt. Applicants need to realize when they are student teaching their networking is very important. It is not going to guarantee them the position, but it is going to help get them in the door and get the interview.

District F stated:

I have . . . a number of teachers working in the district currently who I taught in high school here. I would say anytime you have someone you are familiar with, and they have demonstrated already for you what they can do and are invested in your community, they have an advantage. However, when it comes down to a final decision, you base it upon a number of factors and knowing the candidate is less important. But, it does help get them to the interview stage.

District H commented:

I do not screen them any differently, but it may mean they get an interview over someone else of equal caliber. Just because of the politics of the situation. At the same time, a recommendation from someone that I value their opinion goes a long way.

Question #15: Does the district have a screening and selecting policy in place used for all teacher hirings?

The responses to the interview protocol are categorized according to district size in the groups of small, medium, and large.

Small Districts (300-400 students)

Of the small districts, none had an established policy in place regarding the screening and hiring of potential teacher candidates. These districts do have common practices repeated from one hiring to the next, but the screening and hiring are done at the discretion of the district hiring official.

Medium Districts (1300-2500 students)

A district having an established district policy for the screening and hiring process changed with the largest of the medium size districts. The districts with student populations of approximately 2000 did not have a policy in place and screening and hiring were completed at the discretion of the district hiring official. The medium size district with slightly more than 2000 students did not have a policy, but an established written practice that is utilized during every hiring process. District F's policy is included as Appendix E.

Large Districts: (9,000 – 14,000 students)

The findings indicate that districts of this size have established guidelines for the hiring and transfer of teacher candidates. The process varies depending on grade level, but standard practices and rules are followed by all administrators at the buildings in the sampled districts. The hiring official does not follow the 'gut instinct' that appears to be used in the districts with smaller student populations. The screening and hiring policies are more than just steps in how to conduct the process, but focus on certain candidate characteristics. The districts placed an importance on the hiring of minority teachers via memoranda of agreement between themselves and agencies such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, et cetera.

District H stated:

We do have a process in place because the district is trying really hard to hire minority candidates, so minority candidates get preference as far as the interview process goes. If a principal has an opening, they are first given the names of any minorities who have applied and we are required to interview them first and hire

them if they are qualified. This agreement has been made with the NAACP and Urban League and is a memorandum of understanding in our union agreement.

Question #16: Do you feel the hiring process currently in place, in your district, gives you the opportunity to always hire the best candidate for the position?

Districts where there is not an established policy or procedural process to screen and hiring candidates, all felt the process in place allowed them the opportunity to hire the best candidate. However, with the hiring official's practicing their own procedure to carry out the process to respond otherwise to this interview protocol would call into question their own personal philosophy of the process. When a district has a policy in place that limits the authority of the hiring official's final decision on who to hire for their building, the official did not feel that the process allows them to hire the best candidate.

District H stated:

No, it does not. We are pretty much told by HR now who we can and cannot hire. That is something new, and in the past, the principal was always the one that made the final decision on who to hire. Now we have to have permission by HR before we can offer the position and if they have somebody else they want in that position they will place them there.

District B administrator shared a view comparing the two districts on experience:

I think in this district our process does because of the flexibility. Before coming here, I worked in a large district and this process was very structured and restricted. I do not think it was best to find the best candidate. In a district the size of this one, I know my people and the pulse of my building. I know the kids, so I really understand the culture of the building. When you get to a large district

where an outside office is involved in the process, they do not know the people, they truly do not know. They are so busy with the paperwork and the policies for the vacancies that filling the position is their main concern. It is not about what kind of match it is. These districts have a totally different mindset. I think the red tape hinders their process. We do not have to go through what the large districts have to go through.

Question #17: Is there any additional information you would like to say on this process that was not specifically asked earlier?

The participants indicated that district hiring officials do not view the screening and selection process as an exact science, but an attempt to do the best for the position and district in each component.

Chapter Summary

Chapter IV outlined the findings of the research study according to the responses of the participants. The key findings are described in two sections according to the research questions. First, the findings indicate the size of the district impacts the hiring process. In the small and medium districts the processes are conducted and decisions made by the hiring official. In the large districts, there were multiple hiring officials at different stages of the screening and selection processes. Second, the use of technology in the application process correlates with district size. School districts with student populations of 2000 and higher were likely to require applicants to use an online system to submit an application or application documents. Third, the findings suggest that key elements on the documents impact the decision of the hiring official. These key elements include but are not limited to applicants' written communication skills (e.g., submission

of well written documents free of structure and grammatical errors), making a effort to personalize the documents to the district's requirements, network connections (i.e., the applicant is known by the hiring official or the applicant lists a reference that is know), and the candidates' home residence. The aforementioned components can positively or negatively impact the district hiring official's decisions in the initial screening phase.

Hiring officials look for similar aspects on cover letters and résumés in screening candidates' applications through the initial process similarly. The screening of the documents is consistent amongst all districts regardless of size, but size plays a role in the process itself.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This chapter reviews the discussion, recommendations, and conclusion for the present study, and discusses the findings that emerged from the two original research questions that guided the study.

Discussion

Several significant statements emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts. From these statements, several themes were identified.

Research Question #1: What happens during the initial screening process of potential teacher candidates that categorizes them for consideration for the position?

During the initial screening process, school district size affects certain aspects of the process; while other aspects are consistent between districts of varying sizes. The participating districts of each size reported the use of the cover letter and résumé for screening applicants every time the hiring process is conducted. Additional documents about each candidate are also requested, along with the cover letter and résumé, amongst the districts. These additional documents might include letters of reference from practice teaching supervisors, letters of recommendation from building supervisors in which the applicant has worked as a substitute or student-teacher, and transcripts.

Findings in the present study show that hiring officials in districts of each size spent between 10-15 minutes reviewing the application documents for each candidate. Prior research suggests that employers spent only seconds reviewing a candidate's résumé (Crosby, 2009; "Career Directions", 2004; Peterson, 1993). While the résumé continues to be a focal aspect of the initial screen, other documents were considered in

the time spent by the hiring official in the present study. However, it does appear that school district hiring officials spent more than a few seconds reviewing the documents for each candidate.

The size of the district does impact how the application documents are submitted. The small and most of the medium districts in the study requested applicants submit paper documents for consideration and no online resource was established in the district for the application process. The largest medium district and the large districts in the study all required candidates to use an online system when submitting documents for this process. These results are consistent with Mason and Schroeder (2010) and Kersten (2008) in which both concluded that urban districts are more likely to require applicants use an online application system than the rural districts that still widely use paper applications. These mentioned studies compared rural and urban districts, which this study only refers to districts student population size to classify districts. However, the districts used in the present study would categorize the large districts as located in urban areas.

Also significant is that in the small and medium districts the building administrator or superintendent is almost exclusively making the screening and selection decisions. In the larger districts, the hiring process is done at multiple levels. A district hiring official, usually located in the district's human resources or district office, collected and conducted an initial screening to verify credentials before moving the candidate to the building administrator for further screening and consideration. This finding is similar to earlier findings in which large districts usually have a well-defined centralized process for screening teacher applicants, which may be in contrast to small

rural districts where the screening processes are developed solely by the principal (Mason, & Schroeder, 2010).

Next, the small and medium districts did not have a district-wide policy or written agreement stating how the hiring process was to be conducted, either at the initial stage or further. District F, again appeared to share similar results with the large districts. District F did not have a board or contract policy, but there was a written policy used in the screening and selection process for all positions in all buildings. The large districts did have a policy determining how the screening and selection processes be conducted. District H had a written agreement in its union contract that identified a need for minority teachers and how this issue was to be handled in the screening and selection of teacher candidates.

The last significant finding was in the hiring officials' feelings towards the policy which encouraged them to hire the best candidate for the position. The small and medium districts all stated that their systems, which were mostly created and carried out solely by the hiring officials, allowed them to hire the best candidate. The large districts did not state that their screening and selection processes allowed them to hire the best candidate. District G stated, "we sure try, we sure try." This statement does not indicate that the process was not allowing the district to hire the best, but this response was different from those in the other district sizes. District H stated, "we are told by HR who we can and cannot hire, and that is something new. We can make the decision but...if they have somebody else they want in that position, they will place them there." These results indicate that districts who establish multiple hiring officials at different levels in the process place different importance on candidates.

District B stated,

Before coming here, I worked in a large district and this process was very structured and restricted. I do not think it was best to find the best candidate. In a district the size of this one, I know my people and the pulse of my building. I know the kids, so I really understand the culture of the building. When you get to a large district where an outside office is involved in the process, they do not know the people, they truly do not know. They are so busy with the paperwork and the policies for the vacancies that filling the position is their main concern.

The size of the districts showed differences in the number of offices and people in the screening and selection process, and in this aspect there was not consistency on what determined the best candidate.

Research Question #2: What criteria are current school district hiring officials looking for on teacher candidates' application documents that determines their potential consideration status?

Findings indicate that the information sought on the cover letter and résumé are consistent between districts of varying size. In addition to elements of the cover letter and résumé, the small and medium districts preferred the candidates' listing of multiple certifications in their consideration for whom to hire. Multiple certifications were not mentioned as favorable factors by the larger districts. Next, it was indicated in the responses that the home residence and background of the candidate may play a role in the candidate's potential consideration in small and medium size districts.

The information present on the cover letter and résumé are viewed similarly by districts of varying size. The district hiring official is looking over a cover letter to find:

the position applying for, qualifications and experience, a connection to the district/school, and the spelling and grammar of the candidate. The candidate should state the position sought within the first few lines of the cover letter and not leave the hiring official questioning the candidate's interests in the district. A candidate's qualifications and experiences are viewed as the most important pieces of information by the hiring official when screening the documents. The candidate should express specific skills and experiences that directly link to the position. Hiring officials stated the importance of the candidate connecting their documents to the district. These connections are made by providing the administrators name on the cover letter greeting, referring to the districts website, or stating any other specific information linking the candidate to the district. Spelling and grammar errors on résumés and cover letters appear to exclude a candidate from further consideration if caught by the hiring official at any and all stages of the screening and selection process. Even the candidate with strong credentials in all other areas appears to be rejected from further consideration if an error is found on these documents.

The résumé should inform the hiring official of the candidate's education, experiences, and other skills in a clean and crisp format. The statements should be made using short phrases and paragraphs of information should not appear on the résumé. The spelling and grammar on the résumé should be consistent with that of the cover letter. Errors on the document can discontinue the candidate from further consideration at any stage of the screening process.

The candidate who is a recent college graduate should state experience in student teaching and other extracurricular involvement while in college. Extracurricular

activities are important to hiring officials when reviewing the candidate who is right out of college and demonstrates more work experiences. The novice candidates should only list experiences connected with the position and working with students.

The results show that certain information on the documents send up “red flags” to the hiring official. Gaps in employment, working in multiple districts in a short period of time, leaving out certain references, and where the candidate is from can affect the candidate during the initial screening and result in the candidate being rejected from the applicant pool. If a candidate has gaps in employment and/or has worked in multiple districts within a short period, then the candidate should detail reasons behind these situations on the cover letter. Neither factor was indicated to cause the candidate from further consideration, but causes the hiring official to question the candidates past.

One main theme found is that the small and medium districts made statements suggesting that where a candidate is from can affect how they are viewed in the initial screening. The findings indicate that hiring officials in small and medium size districts in this central state region view applicants from urban areas negatively. According to Monk (2007), studies find hiring officials prefer candidates whom they believe will stay in place longer. It is the perception among small and medium school officials that candidates who grew up in the vicinity of the school, or a similar demographic, tend to exhibit longer retention in the school. Townsell (2007) also concluded that the retention of teachers from small to large school districts may be greater in rural areas than the retention of teachers from non rural backgrounds who may find difficulty staying long-term in rural school settings. Even if the candidate expresses favorable information on the application documents regarding the size and location of the school, district officials may view the

candidate as not likely to be happy in the district or community, and less likely to stay in the district for more than a few years. These results were not shared by the larger district who expressed diversity of candidates as a positive in the screening process.

Last, it can be concluded that the candidate who establishes a personal connection or is known by the hiring official, or someone the hiring official respects, enjoys an increase in chances of being screened to the site interview phase of the hiring process. Whereas a personal connection does not automatically result in a position being offered to the candidate, it does usually result in the candidate moving directly to the interview phase. The size of district did not factor into these findings, as all districts stated that knowing someone in the district aids in the screening and selection process.

Recommendations

The present study was designed in hopes that it would serve as a resource for future teacher candidates in their pursuit of employment within the P-12 school system. A further understanding of how the process is carried-out and candidates screened should give future candidates a more developed understanding how to present themselves to potential employers.

Recommendations for Potential Teacher Candidates

1. Before creating a cover letter and résumé, research information about the school district and incorporate this information into your documents. This demonstrates a stronger desire for the position to the hiring official.
2. Have professionals proof read your application documents before submitting them to potential employers.

3. Begin building a list of network contacts during college, while student teaching, with other professionals. In education, people know each other and trust recommendations from their colleagues. Your cooperating teacher may have worked with a teacher or administrator in another area school. Who you know, and who can recommend you helps get you to the interview phase of the hiring process.
4. Seek out advice from professional resources on how to create job attainment documents before beginning your student teaching experiences. Understanding what information is important in the documents can assist you to perform additional duties during the student teaching experience.
5. If you have information that may come across as a weakness on your résumé, defend this in your cover letter to affirm to employers that it is not to be an area of concern.
6. Get involved in college to expand your list of experiences with extracurricular activities. Do not only join the future teacher organizations, but assume leadership roles in these and similar volunteer activities. This will establish to the employer that you put forth extra effort, and they will view it as experiences that demonstrate your work ethic.
7. In districts of small and medium size, the candidate who possess multiple certifications areas and more likely to receive further consideration than candidates with only one certification area. College education majors should earn multiple certifications during their training.

Recommendations for Future Studies

1. The significance for candidates from urban areas applying for positions in rural communities was a consistent theme present throughout the present study. Further consideration and future study should be given to the finding that candidates from large

urban districts are perceived as unlikely to exhibit high retention rates in districts in small communities.

2. It might be wise to compare districts using an online screening process to districts using a paper document screening process for similarities and differences.
3. Examine the possibilities of being a “known versus unknown” candidate to the hiring official and the likelihood of getting hired.
4. Examine districts with established screening and hiring policies with districts without comparable established policies.

Recommendations for Arranging Interviews with District Administrators

When arranging interviews with school districts, several important issues that should be considered include.

First, the time of the year the interview is scheduled which will determine the level of difficulty in arranging and conducting the interview. During the present study, interviews were sought and conducted between the months of January through March, with most interviews taking place in February. It happened that during the months of January and February, the weather caused many schools to be closed for multiple days at a time. Many of the present study’s interviews had to be rescheduled multiple times due to inclement weather conditions.

Second, in any school year, the spring starts the standardized testing season in a district. It is during these months that the researcher might not be able to have a one-on-one interview because school officials are busy in their buildings preparing for state mandated and national testing.

Third, it is recommended for future studies of this type to arrange interviews with school district administrators during the summer months, early fall, or late spring. The

availability of these administrators depends on what is currently taking place in their district that will afford or hinder them time to take part in a research study.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of the present study was to understand what factors go into the initial screening of applicants, and how hiring officials determine if a candidate gets consideration for a face to face interview. The focus of this study was to examine what occurs during the initial screening process of potential teacher applicants, and what information on the application documents factor into the decision of potential consideration by the hiring official.

The initial screening process is designed to remove applicants from the pool who are unqualified or whose weak credentials place them in the bottom percentages of the applicant pool (Hindsman, 2008). Research agrees that hiring teachers is the most important decision a building principal must make, but the actual screening and selection process differs between districts (Mason, & Schroeder, 2010; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1987). Teacher selection includes activities starting with an initial paper screening leading to interviews and selection. Collecting the written documents is important in initial screening process (Bredeson, & Caldwell, 1988). It is the candidate's ability to market their skills to the employer through the application documents that will determine their potential as a teacher candidate.

The present research study found similar results through qualitative interviewing methodology regarding district hiring officials responses of the process conducted in their district and perceptions and preferences towards information presented in the candidate's application documents. This study showed that the initial screening process is similar in

small and medium size district where the building administrator structure the process, and large districts have more of a centralized process conducted through the district office.

More importantly, it showed that even with differences in the process the hiring official look for similar information on the candidate's documents which determines the candidate's potential candidacy. The study showed that smaller district in rural settings do screen candidates in the initial screening on the basis of the candidates urban upbringing, which did not appear relevant in initial screening of large districts.

References

- Atha, J. F. (2009). Teacher hiring practices: A study of the teacher hiring process used by Indiana public school principals. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ball State University, Muncie, IN.
- Berg, K. A., & Brimm, R. P. (1978). Screening teacher applicants. *NASSP Bulletin*, 62(417), 32-35. doi:10.1177/019263657806241707
- Bredeson, P. V. (1983). The teacher screening and selection process: A decision making model for school administrators. *Report to American Educational Research Association*, Montreal, QC (pp. 1-31). Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
- Bredeson, P. V., & Caldwell, W. E. (1988). Personnel screening and selection: An analysis of legal compliance in schools. *The High School Journal*, 71(2), 81-87.
- Caldwell, T. G. (1993). Hiring excellent teachers: Current interviewing theories, techniques, and practices. (ERIC Document No. ED358512). Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Cole, M. S., Rubin, R. S., Field, H. S., & Giles, W. F. (2007). Recruiters' perceptions and use of applicant résumé information: Screening the recent graduate. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 56(2), 319-343. doi:10.1111/14640597200700288
- Crosby, O. (1999). Résumés, applications, and cover letters. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, 34(2), 2-14. (ERIC Document No. EJ585106). Retrieved from ERIC database.

DeArmand, M., Gross, B., & Goldhaber, D. (2010). Is it better to be good or lucky?

Decentralized teacher selection in 10 elementary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(3), 322-362.

Gallagher, J. (2010). Your ideal job is out there! The trick is to find it! *AAEE Job*

Search Handbook for Educators, 44, 9-10.

Hayden, J. (2000). Marketing yourself: Part 1. *Health Promotion Practice*, 1(2), 118-

122. doi:10.1177/152483990000100206

Hill, M. S. & Casteel, D. (1994). Perceptions of responsibility for decision making:

Hiring a teacher. (ERIC Document No. ED390146). Retrieved from ERIC database.

Hindsman, J. L. (2008). Teacher selection: A process, not an event. *Teacher Quality*

Digest, 3(7), 1-7.

Indiana Career and Postsecondary Advancement Center, Bloomington. (2000). Job search

tips: Résumés, interviews and more. Infoseries. (ERIC Document No. ED449328)

Retrieved from ERIC database.

Kersten, T. (2008). Teacher hiring practices: Illinois principals' perspective. *The*

Educational Forum, 72(4), 355-368.

Kinseley, G., Vesey, M., & Zakin, R. (2010). Winning a teaching position in a tight job

market. *AAEE Job Search Handbook for Educators*, 44, 4-6.

Kitchen, P. J. (1994). Self-marketing is easily taught, but hard to learn. *Marketing News*,

28(18): 4, 35.

Lloyd-Dennis, D. (2010). What you don't know can hurt you. *AAEE Job Search*

Handbook for Educators, 44, 7-8.

- Mason, R. W., & Schroeder, M. P. (2010). Principal hiring practices: Toward a reduction of uncertainty. *The Clearing House*, 83, 186-193.
- McCorkle, D. E., Alexander, J. F., Reardon, J., & King, N. D. (2003). Developing self-marketing skills: Are marketing students prepared for the job search? *Journal of Marketing Education*, 25, 196-208. doi:10.1177/0273475303257517
- Monk, D. H. (2007). Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural areas. *The Future of Children*, 17, 155-174.
- Peterson, S. B. (1993). Curriculum vitae and related letters. (ERIC Document No. ED363721). Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Ralph, E. G., Kesten, C., Lang, H., & Smith, D. (1998). Hiring new teachers: What do school districts look for? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49, 47-56.
doi:10.1177/0022487198049001006
- Rinehart, J. S., & Young, P. I. (1990). Teacher selection: Research and applications. *The High School Journal*, 73(3), 176-179.
- Shakoor, A. T. (2001). Developing a professional résumé and cover letter that work. *Black Collegian*, 32, 16-20 & 70-71.
- Snyder, J. (2010). Winning résumés for education majors. *AAEE Job Search Handbook for Educators*, 44, 41-42.
- Thompson, D. S. (1993). Getting hired: Strategies for job searching that works! A résumé guide for early childhood and elementary education majors. (ERIC Document No. ED360274). Retrieved from ERIC database.

- Townsell, R. (2007). Human resource management in small rural districts: The administrator's role in recruiting, hiring and staff development. *National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal*, 20(3), 1-9.
- Quezada, R. L. (2004). From student teacher to teacher: Making the first cut (Part 1). *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 31(1), 75-85 . (ERIC Document No. EJ774052). Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Useem, E., & Farley, E. (2004). Philadelphia's teacher hiring and school assignment practices: Comparisons with other districts. (ERIC Document No. ED485310). Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Wagner, J. O. (1999). Job search methods for the 21st century. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED429189)
- Webster, W. J. (1988). Selecting effective teachers. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 81(4), 245-253.
- Whaley, J. (Ed.), & Cox, C. (Ed.). (2002). *Developing the effective teacher: Hiring, evaluation, and retention practices for the school administrator*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers, Inc.
- Wilson, M. (2006). What recruiters look for in on-campus interviews. *Black Collegian*, 37, 33-36.
- Wise, A. E., Darling-Hammond, L., & Berry, B. (1987). Effective teacher selection: From recruitment to retention. The RAND Corporation. Santa Monica: CA.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Interview Protocols

Interview Protocols

1. Approximately how many applicants do you screen from the potential candidates based on their Cover Letter and Résumé?
2. What additional information or documents are requested from applicants besides the C.L. and résumé?
3. How much time do you spend reviewing these documents for each candidate?
4. Do you require applicants submit their application documents using a certain format (online or paper)?
5. If online, how is the screening process carried-out throughout this process?
6. What specific aspects of a cover letter grab your attention (e.g., format, qualifications, paper)?
7. What specific information on a résumé grabs your attention (e.g., education, format, references)?
8. When reviewing a candidate who is right out of college what are you looking for on their documents?
9. Have you ever chosen to move along an inexperienced teacher's application over an experienced teacher's application based on quality of these documents? What was it about their documents that stood out more than the candidate with classroom teaching experience?
10. What information, or lack of information, sends up "red flags" to you about a candidate?
11. How likely are you to bring in a candidate for interview with grammatical errors on their documents?
12. Can you tell when a candidate turns in documents that are formatted with basic information and they just replace a few words to fit a certain job? What reaction do you give this application?
13. What are the main differences between an application that gets initial screening as potential hire and one that is initially screened as rejected?
14. If the applicant is known by the screener (i.e., relative of current employee, intern, substitute teacher, etc.) is their application packet viewed any differently than the application packet of an applicant who is not previously known?
15. Does the district have screening and selection criteria in place that are used for all job openings in all schools?
16. Do you feel the hiring process that is currently in place, in your school, gives you the opportunity to always hire the best candidate for each position

Appendix B
Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
The Initial Screening Process for P-12 Potential Teacher Candidates

Dear Sir or Madam:

You are hereby invited to participate in a research study conducted by Brian Neighbors, a graduate student from the department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your expertise in the screening and selection process for teaching applicants in your school district. Only district officials with your responsibilities are being asked to participate in the present study.

The purpose of the study is to assess the significance of résumé's and cover letters in the hiring process.

If you volunteer to participate in the study, you will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview with me during which I will ask a series of questions regarding your perceptions and practices during application screening and selection processes utilized in your district. The interview should last no longer than 40 minutes. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. If you would prefer our interview to not be audio recorded, this would not disqualify you from participation in the study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with your participation in this study. In fact, every effort will be made to maintain your anonymity and confidentiality.

Participants in this study may not benefit directly from participation. However, the information you contribute could be used to improve the application and interview success for students in EIU's teacher preparation program.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding your interview responses with the size of your district. Your personal name and the name of your district will not be identified. The audio tapes of the interview will be transcribed and all audio and written data will be kept on the researcher's computer under a password file. Interview audio will be destroyed at completion of the study.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Brian E. Neighbors
Principal Investigator
beneighbors@eiu.edu
217-652-9460

Dr. James A. Wallace
Faculty Sponsor
jawallace@eiu.edu
217-581-7240

Appendix C
Rights of Research Subjects

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D
Participation E-mail

PARTICIPATION E-MAIL

Dear School District Hiring Official:

My name is Brian Neighbors and I am a second year graduate student in the College Student Affairs Master's (CSA) Program at Eastern Illinois University. As a graduate student in the CSA program, I am working to complete my Master's Thesis. The topic of this study is the Initial Screening Process of Potential Teacher Candidates in the P-12 school system. This research project has been approved by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board which governs research involving human subjects. To collect data for the study, I am requesting interviews with school district officials who conduct the initial screening of candidates who apply for a position within the school district or building.

The one-on-one interview will take approximately 30 minutes and I will gladly schedule the interview to take place at a time and location of your convenience.

Please contact me and let me know if you are willing to be a participant in this study, and I will contact you by to arrange an interview date and time.

I want to thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to potentially meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Brian E. Neighbors
Graduate Student
College Student Affairs
Eastern Illinois University
(Cell) 217-652-9460
(Work) 217-581-6696

Appendix E
District F's Hiring Process Outline

CURRENT HIRING PROCESS TEACHERS

1. Jobs are posted internally, on our District Website, on AppliTrack and in various publications and outside websites as appropriate to the position.
2. A job skill set is developed to complement a building, department and/ or grade level team as appropriate.
3. Available extracurricular assignments are reviewed.
4. Applications are reviewed by the Director of Educational Services and specific Principal or Director that will be supervising the position.
5. Applications are selected and put in an electronic file by the Director of Educational Services, Principal or other designated supervisors. Screening interviews at University Job Fairs and other credentials sometimes received in a paper format are also reviewed.
6. The file is reviewed and a spreadsheet is often developed to give a visual of the possible screening group, years experience, degree, certification, College or University, grade levels taught or student taught, availability to help with extracurricular activities to take a closer look at the grouping to be screened or interviewed.
7. The file is finalized for screening.
8. Appropriate questions are developed for the interview by the Director of Educational Services in consultation with the building Principal.
9. K-6 – The Principal and Director of Educational Services conducts an initial 20 – 30 minute interview. . The desired skill set is reviewed and confidentiality is discussed prior to the final interview. The Principal and Director of Educational Services conduct a final 45 minute interview, a writing sample is completed by the candidates and they meet the Superintendent. The Director of Activities also screens applicants for availability to help with extracurricular activities. The desired skill set is reviewed and confidentiality is discussed at the end of the interviews.
Grades 7-12 – One longer interview is usually conducted and the number of interviews is determined by the number and quality of available highly qualified applicants.
10. The Director of Educational Services meets with the Director of Activities and Superintendent for their input.

11. The Principal and Director of Educational Services meet to review all of the information and come to consensus on the finalist. All credentials are reviewed again.
12. References are checked.

Vita

Brian E. Neighbors

Date of Birth: December 27, 1980

Education: 2009-2011 Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois
Master of Science, College Student Affairs

2002-2006 Blackburn College
Carlinville, Illinois
Bachelor of Arts, Social Science: History with
Secondary Education Certification