

***Time to Reboot: Redefining Human Resource's Role
A Human Capital Strategy for Urban Districts***

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The mission of every school district is to provide students with a world class quality education, so that all can achieve at high levels. Therefore, highly qualified teachers and principals are the two most critical factors in accomplishing this mission. The Human Resource (HR) department plays an important role in ensuring an effective teacher and principal are in every classroom and at the helm of every school.

How much do HR executives in school districts impact student performance? This question continues to form a cloud over the HR functions executed in school systems today. There is merit to this debate because many HR departments still reflect traditional practices and have neglected to evolve over time.

This lack of evolution is the result of HR departments whose primary responsibilities center on day to day transactional functions. Such functions include policy development, workplace investigations, and governing benefits as well as process-oriented systems that involve all stages of employment. These laborious practices can stifle innovation. If HR departments are to be legitimized, then district executives will have to play a more strategic role in recruiting, developing, and retaining a talented workforce. These efforts have to be well-planned, intentional and be in the pursuit of cutting-edge ideas.

Far too many HR departments lack innovative strategies and are mired in compliance. Transactional functions that focus on inflexible policies have taken precedence over progressive behaviors that would attract and retain great principals. As principals play a critical role in human capital management, supporting these leaders through a collaborative effort by developing a workforce with top-quality talent through recruitment and leading-edge practices benefits all aspects of the district.

However, without redefining the role of HR departments and supporting principals as human capital managers, many new and veteran HR leaders are more likely to continue to focus on compliance driven work. With this traditional orientation, HR departments will not be able to acquire the best talent for their districts' need.

As the demand for highly qualified educators are needed in schools, especially high needs districts, HR executives need to focus on a clear strategy for talent acquisition, development, and retention, which will directly impact a higher performing workforce and by extension improve student achievement. This is what we call the HR Return on Investment (HR - ROI).

Overall, the school district's organizational health is dependent on a highly strategic HR department. As the need to positively impact student performance grows, we offer

district executives the following innovative strategies to transform outdated HR departments:

- (1) Leverage Relationships: focus on providing high quality customer service
- (2) Leverage human resource data so principals can serve as human capital managers
- (3) Monitor progress and make necessary adjustments along the way

Leverage Relationships: focus on providing high quality customer service

Achieving excellence means relating to both internal and external customers through a system of C.A.R.E. We define this system as follows:

- (1) Communication
- (2) Active listening
- (3) Relationship building
- (4) Establishing feedback

High quality customer service involves leveraging relationships. The C.A.R.E strategies undergird all HR functions. In this process, being intentional and listening to your customer, the district employee, is equally important as ensuring that each experience is a positive one. This means taking care of your customer and concentrating on resolving any of their concerns in a timely manner. Additionally, encouraging feedback requires making the voice of the customer a priority while anticipating their need, which ultimately will foster the relationship. Establishing feedback loops with employees who have recently been onboarded to learn about their experience can offer HR departments data that will inform their practice. Conversely, conducting exit interviews with employees will also provide valuable information to HR. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a world class experience to each customer every day.

Leverage human resource data so principals can serve as human capital managers

Using human resource data provides executives the ability to set goals and identify key metrics and benchmarks to measure impact of innovative HR strategies. So how does HR leverage data and support principals? HR must begin the shift from solely focusing on compliance driven work to more strategic work by supporting principals as human capital managers. Since principals are one of the most important factors impacting teacher retention in schools, HR departments must assist principals to manage the talent in their schools in service of student learning. Principals must be supported by HR departments to select and measure metrics such as teacher effectiveness, turnover, retention, and absenteeism rates that will assist with improving teacher quality.

Monitoring progress and making necessary adjustments along the way

A common pitfall many district HR executives make is trying to push the school system forward without any measurement strategies. The absence of monitoring tools is certain to lead to inefficiencies and not hitting performance targets. High impact HR

departments focus on continuous improvement and monitor progress to identify next steps. A healthy school organization never stops learning and uses its data to make adjustments. So how do you know you are hitting the mark? Track and measure. Smart talent decisions make a difference in how human capital managers identify priorities, set school goals, and communicate performance results.

Conclusion

To sum it up, HR departments can have a positive impact on school achievement as soon as it undergoes a major reboot. This process includes focusing on leveraging relationships, utilizing human resource data so principals can serve as human capital managers and monitoring progress while making necessary adjustments as needed. As a result, it is essential to prioritize and align your progressive HR strategies with the organizational needs to deliver the greatest return on investment.