

## Leadership Activity: Reassessing Hiring Practices

This activity allows you to take a deeper look into your current hiring practices. The focus is on becoming more intentional with your practices to foster a sense of belonging. Your students see multiple staff members throughout the day, from the bus driver in the morning to the after-school program coordinator. Who we hire says a lot about our focus on what's best for following the formula. The outcome is a more diverse and inclusive staff that better represent and understand the student body.

**Objective:** Ensure hiring practices reflect the diversity and inclusivity values of the school.

**Materials:**

- Copies of this reproducible for all participants
- Access to anonymized hiring documents (such as interview protocols and demographic snapshots)
- Reflection worksheet or digital collaboration tool

**Duration:** Sixty to seventy-five minutes

Follow these steps.

1. **Audit existing hiring practices:** Invite a small, diverse group from your school community, such as parents, students, staff, and community partners, to review the school's current hiring practices. This process should focus on increasing transparency, inclusivity, and alignment with your school's values. To ensure that this process respects privacy and legal obligations, consider and act on the following.
  - *What can be shared*—Student demographic data, sample interview questions, job descriptions, and anonymized feedback can be shared with participants. Do not share staff names, evaluations, or candidate information.
  - *What permissions to seek*—Before conducting this audit, facilitators should seek written approval from the school principal or superintendent. If the process involves policy recommendations or public reporting, inform and possibly seek approval from the school board as well.
  - *Confidentiality agreements*—Consider having participants sign a confidentiality agreement if sensitive data or internal practices will be discussed.
2. **Assess student demographics and reflect on areas for growth:** Examine current enrollment data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, language, and ability. Then compare that data with the demographics of current staff. Reflect on any disparities. For example, if 65 percent of students are Latinx but only 10 percent of staff are Latinx, consider how hiring practices might unintentionally limit representation. Use the data to guide your discussion about the need for culturally responsive hiring.
3. **Review and revise interview questions:** Evaluate the school's current interview questions through the lens of belonging. Do the questions reflect your school's commitment to acceptance, support, and inclusion? Identify gaps or questions that might unintentionally reinforce bias. Then codesign additional questions that invite candidates to share their experiences with equity, student voice, and meeting diverse needs.

4. **Ask participants to reflect on the message your hiring process sends:** Ask participants, “What specific actions does this school take to promote acceptance, support, and inclusion?” and invite them to write and share their responses. This helps ensure alignment in how your school communicates its values to potential hires during interviews.
5. **Establish clear goals:** Based on your initial audit, work with your committee to create specific goals for developing a hiring plan in which the school intentionally recruits candidates with similar backgrounds to your students. Be specific in your intentions and avoid vague language within your goals.
6. **Train hiring committee members on implicit bias and equitable hiring practices:** Provide your hiring committee with the tools and knowledge they need to recognize and interrupt bias during the screening and interview process. They will need both preparation and ongoing support.
  - *Develop resources*—Curate a list of resources on implicit bias and the roles and responsibilities of committee members for your hiring committee.
  - *Provide training*—Lead your hiring committee through some implicit bias training. Specifically, discuss areas such as affinity bias and confirmation bias.
7. **Seek diverse school staff candidates:** Connect with historically Black colleges and universities, Latine-serving institutions, minority-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, LGBTQ+-friendly colleges, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions for support with recruiting qualified staff for your school.
8. **Conduct interviews:** Implement structured interview processes that prioritize diversity in thought and experience. Establish a rubric for candidate evaluations that reflects the school’s commitment to inclusivity and care. You could use the reproducible “Candidate Evaluation Rubric.”